



DAWN INFORMS

Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era

Gender Mainstreaming in Trade Policies

By Gigi Francisco, DAWN South East Asia Regional Coordinator, who is on the DAWN team for the WTO Ministerial Meeting in Cancun. The article is based on a brief presentation at a forum on "Doha, development and distribution: do we have a viable trade agenda for development?", at a Financing For Development Summit Conference side-event organised by the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, 18 March 2002, Monterrey, Mexico. The perils of gender mainstreaming mechanisms remain relevant at Cancun.

"Gender" as mainstreaming

In response to the activism of women's movements world-wide, the buzzword in international conferences since the 1990's has been to "engender" policies and programs through gender analysis and mainstreaming. There are two ways in which this continues to be officially interpreted. The first is to integrate textual references to the principles of gender equality and equity, usually in the preambular section of agreements and declarations while the key policy thrusts and elements remain gender blind. The second is to ensure that the implementing programmes, processes and mechanisms are inclusive of women's participation and responsive to poor women's needs only in so far as to encourage and sustain their involvement without any real policy impact.

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INAUGURAL DAWN TRAINING INSTITUTE

A total of 28 young feminists from 16 countries of the South are in Bangalore, India, for DAWN's first three-week training programme from 14 September to 3 October 2003. DAWN's coordinators and other internationally experienced feminist advocates who work in DAWN's theme areas are providing training in analysis and advocacy skills. A particular thrust of the programme is to give an understanding of power relationships and interlinkages between DAWN's four theme areas—the Political Economy of Globalisation; Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights; Political Restructuring and Social Transformation; and Sustainable Livelihoods and Environmental Justice. By strengthening feminist capacity in understanding linkages between different issues and advocacy agendas, the DAWN Institute will contribute to creating a new generation of feminist activists prepared to work in the difficult political terrain of the present struggle for gender justice. The DAWN Institute is intended to be an annual event. Information on the next Institute will be available on the DAWN website www.dawn.org.jj by May 2004.

The call for gender analysis and mainstreaming also reverberates on the trade front – within WTO and other trade fora. Official efforts to engender trade rules and reforms in general, whether at the global or regional levels, have so far resulted in two near universal outcomes. Either gender analysis and mainstreaming end up softening the impact of de-stabilising trade liberalisation policies through targeted social safety nets, or they lead to interventions that make poor women more efficient contributors to – and women in politics more effective policymakers for – the systematic expansion and deepening of trade liberalisation reforms. Very often, these are inter-linked objectives.

Such interpretations and outcomes emerge out of a narrow, instrumentalist and managerialist understanding of gender by governments and multilateral bodies. For them it is a simple matter of women getting their share of benefits from, while uncritically participating in, policies and programmes just like the men.

This prevalent official interpretation and implementation of gender analysis and mainstreaming subverts the real meaning of what a gender perspective is, and enables a “gender agenda” to be co-opted and squarely fitted into the dominant neoliberalist regime for trade, development and governance.

“Gender” as analysis and critique

A critical gender perspective applied to trade, development and governance cannot but fundamentally challenge paradigms and models that continue to promote in an inter-linked fashion the following trends: (1) invisibility of social reproduction in the economy, (2) re-creation and consolidation of processes of accumulation that result in massive poverty for certain groups of people the world over, and (3) instrumentalisation of democracy and human rights.

A set of rules for trade, development and governance that insists on the centrality of market forces above persons, communities, and governments; promotes the rights of the business sector over those of people, communities and states; and continues to overlook the structural, institutional and cultural barriers to women’s self autonomy, is immediately and fundamentally in discord with the visions and politics of gender transformation.

To embark on gender mainstreaming in such a context is at once artificial and leads to the transmogrification of “gender”, something we are now witnessing in many places. The alternative is to re-claim “gender” and re-position it as a source of sound analysis and sharp critique of the mainstream’s politics, perspectives, documents, rules and programs.

A gender analysis of the impact on poor women’s workload and social conditions of rapid liberalisation in the agricultural and manufacturing sectors provides us with enough evidence for demanding that the WTO immediately act on more than 100 cases of implementation issues lodged by developing countries, before it goes on with its business as usual.

Such a gender analysis and critique inter-connect women’s organisations and networks to a broader range of civil society groups and social movements that continue to challenge and resist unfair and undemocratic WTO rules and processes, and to explore alternative trade, development and governance arrangements. This – and not the mainstream – is the genuine place of gender, if it is to be a truly transformatory project and process. 🌅

DAWN-SEA Regional Coordinator Gigi Francisco appears briefly in a new video documentary produced by Focus on the Global South, *WTO: Why is it bad for YOU*. She speaks about TRIPS, health and the WTO. The video has been produced in both English and Spanish, and the seriousness of the discussion is balanced by lively hiphop images and creative graphics. (For more information, contact MaryLou Malig, marylou@focusweb.org.)

Focus has also produced a new book, *Behind the Scenes at the WTO: the Real World of International Trade Negotiations* by Fatoumata Jawara and Aileen Kwa (Zed Books, London) <http://www.focusweb.org/publications/Books/Behind-the-Scenes-at-the-WTO.html> This immensely important book on the politics of the WTO, takes the lid off how the WTO really works, and what really happened before, at, and after the Fourth WTO Ministerial Conference in Doha in 2001, on the basis of interviews with 33 Geneva based delegates to the WTO and 10 Secretariat staff.

PROTESTING WTO AT CANCUN

Mariama Williams, DAWN Co-Coordinator for Globalisation (Trade) was at the International Gender and Trade Network meeting in Rio de Janeiro in June 2003 to plan an advocacy position for the 5th World Trade Organisation Ministerial Meeting to be held in Cancun. IGTN made a statement to the women's networks in Latin America, from which these extracts are taken.

IGTN supported the call in Latin America for a global day of protest against the WTO on September 13, 2003 and the efforts of several women's networks to hold an International Women's Forum as part of the People's Forum in Cancun.

"Structural reforms and policies linked to trade intensification and financial liberalisation are peddled as engines of women's increased access to incomes and employment. However, studies show that these policies and reforms have generated a host of concerns over poor women's rights and welfare. The rapid opening of the economies of developing countries, associated with decreased real incomes, lack of labour protection, and retreat of states from their welfare-providing responsibilities, has compromised the provision of care and social services at the macroeconomic level. At the same time, it has increased the vulnerability of women's health, bodily integrity, and well-being as they are forced to manoeuvre both the productive economy and the socially reproductive care economy. As women gather at the planned International Women's Forum, concern must be raised over the lack of women's perspectives and participation in the politics and leadership of progressive mass organisations. We must unite with our sisters and brothers in global social movements and NGOs that are using critical, feminist constructivist engagement in fighting for our rights within a volatile economic system."

On WTO's contradictions and the need for ongoing national campaigns:

"The WTO Secretariat and trade ministers from developed and selected developing countries

NGOs CELEBRATE CANCUN VICTORY

As this issue of DI was going to press we received news of the collapse of talks at the 5th WTO Ministerial in Cancun. DAWN's Gigi Francisco, who was in Cancun for DAWN/IGTN reported on 14 September: "There is much jubilation among the NGOs and social movements in Cancun. Tonight is the night of celebrations. Once again the rapidity with which economies of the South are being prised open by the WTO, causing harm to their peoples' livelihoods, has been halted. Critical to the outcome of the meeting were the impressive unity and solidarity among the developing countries in rejecting a trade agreement that is anti-development, and the close relationship between them and the NGOs and social movements throughout the Ministerial Meeting. Several mass actions inside and outside the WTO meeting perimeter were carried out to show dissatisfaction with the arrogance and high handedness of developed countries".

have continued the exclusionary and undemocratic processes characteristic of the world trading body by holding mini-Ministerial meetings in various parts of the world. Bilateral talks between the US and the EU continue in hopes of resolving differences in their Cancun trade agendas. And an aggressive public relations feat by the WTO General Director Supachai led to the recent formation of

two advisory groups composed of NGOs and business people. These activities are in response to two inter-connected developments: in Geneva the stalemate in the negotiations and unaccomplished work plans of all of the WTO working committees that IGTN sees as arising from the active and informed negotiations by developing countries as an opportunity; and elsewhere in the world an expanding base of discontent and global opposition to the multilateral trading system as public awareness of the assault of the free trade system on their lives and communities grows.

Amidst these contradictions, the WTO is again reeling from both external public pressure and internal differences. The developed countries and trans-national corporations, however, are determined to persist and utilise their political edge to get the agreements that will secure their commercial interests above all else. The pressure tactics of developed countries that succeeded in eroding the unified stand of developing country negotiators at the previous meeting in Doha are expected again in Cancun. It is therefore important to maintain ongoing national campaigns to seek greater public accountability from elected officials and intensify pressure from civil society in Cancun."

IGTN's Demands on Country Negotiators

Agriculture:

"IGTN joins the worldwide call of social movements and NGOs for food sovereignty for all states and peoples, a concept not only related to food production, agricultural expansion and availability of food in the market but also to the operation of a broader social and political arrangement in which the role of government and people-sensitive public policy in both production and social reproduction is central. It is linked to a desire to stop the spread of hunger. Despite increasing deprivation of traditional livelihoods, many women and families living in poverty, especially those in rural areas are still expected to be the default providers of food, water and other consumption needs of their households. The structure of the Agreement on Agriculture (AOA) only exacerbates the inequalities in world agricultural trade. Furthermore, its central focus is not about promoting agricultural trade between countries, but rather is aimed primarily at accumulation and profit taking for a handful of big agribusiness corporations.


General Agreement on Trade in Services:

We are currently experiencing a crisis in social welfare in much of the world. The South has already experienced the assault on social services through the structural adjustment programs of the 1980s while the welfare states in the North have recently been threatened by the liberalisation of services under the WTO discipline. The gross neglect of social reproduction in economic debates among policymakers and government negotiators can be clearly seen in the discussion of the liberalisation of services. Moreover, developing countries, many of which have low "social capital," have not been paying enough attention to the issue of essential services and its implications for the development of the capabilities of their citizens. Not surprisingly, the cost of social reproduction of the labour force is being left to women's unpaid care functions within households and communities and to labour's current earning power. Compared with state control, services in the hands of transnational corporations have become less efficient, less accessible, and less affordable to households and their management has become less accountable through the use of measures such as immunity from liability. This liberalisation process has an adverse impact on human development objectives and exacerbates existing social and gender inequalities. Therefore, the IGTN demands the removal of services essential for social reproduction from GATS.

TRIPS:

TRIPS essentially promotes monopoly privilege of transnational corporations and blocks developing countries from realising their potential by restricting affordable access to drugs that benefit social reproduction. For instance, TRIPS protects patents of the pharmaceutical industry of a select few developed countries while preventing a majority of countries that are without a pharmaceutical industry from pursuing their capabilities in research, innovation and production of essential life-saving medicines. The Doha Declaration on TRIPS and Public Health that was widely hailed by member states as a clear expression of the WTO's commitment to human development has generated a number of complex issues and concerns and is still undergoing a difficult negotiation process. Moreover, TRIPS has the effect of exacerbating the balance of payments problem for developing countries through transfer payments for royalties and licensing fees, thereby neutralizing actual and potential gains that developing countries could get from the export of their products. The most fundamental opposition to TRIPS lies in its patenting of life forms and its direct assault on the sovereign rights and responsibilities of nations and indigenous peoples in protecting their traditional knowledge and biodiversity. IGTN wants TRIPS out of the WTO, which should confine itself to trade issues only.

SINGAPORE ISSUES:

The controversy around the Singapore Issues, also known as the New Issues, will rear its head again in Cancun. The set of Singapore issues, both individually and jointly, aim to ensure and protect the entry and exit of transnational corporations in developing countries as part and parcel of Foreign Direct Investment-led growth strategy. They are designed to reach behind national border measures to eliminate market access barriers faced by transnational corporations. Furthermore, these instruments, jointly and individually, will have an adverse impact on the ability of governments to design and implement industrial policies that promote Small and Medium Enterprises and local capital as part of long term sustainable, gender equalizing economic development. Women, historically disadvantaged populations and peoples, and small and medium-sized firms, that are often under-capitalized in developing countries, will be unable to compete with the unrestrained and unregulated presence of giant TNCs based in developed countries." 

MSF's Concerns on the Draft Statement for Cancun

Médecins sans Frontières is deeply concerned about the text and the intention of the 21 August 2003 draft Chairman's statement that may accompany the "Motta text" when it is submitted for consideration by the World Trade Organisation's 5th Ministerial Meeting in Cancun.

"The text is a sad reflection of how removed the Paragraph 6 negotiations (on production and export of generic medicines) have become from their original goal of getting medicines to the people who need them. Rather than allowing the poorest countries to make effective use of compulsory licensing, this text seeks to throw up as many obstacles and discouragements as possible, and opens the system up to constant political intimidation from powerful Members.

The Chairman's statement adds an extra layer of requirements and conditions for the production and export of generic versions of needed medicines. It introduces new obligations for Members and are contrary to the Doha Declaration on TRIPS and Public Health. A few examples include:

1) **New statement of purpose.** The Chairman's statement introduces an extra *statement of purpose* when it says "Members recognise that the system established should be used in good faith to protect public health and, without prejudice to paragraph 6 of the Decision, not be an instrument to pursue industrial or commercial objectives."

On the surface, this may seem reasonable because the protection of public health should indeed be the prime objective of these negotiations.

However, it is false to assert that


protecting public health and pursuing industrial or commercial objectives are contradictory objectives. MSF's experience in the field demonstrates that the most affordable medicines are those that are produced by multiple firms. Generally, companies in developing countries produce the most affordable medicines. Production and trade in medicines is largely in the hands of commercial companies and are clearly industrial activities. This Chairman's note seems mainly targeted at halting affordable generic production rather than encouraging it.

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2) **Extra anti-diversion measures.** The Chairman's statement puts further demands on packaging and labelling that are likely to increase the cost rather than reduce it. It is well-known that poor populations are extremely sensitive to price.

3) **New powers to TRIPS Council?** The Chairman's statement seems to introduce an extended role for the TRIPS Council and the WTO in policing the system. Members are encouraged to "seek to resolve issues arising from the use and implementation of the Decision expeditiously and amicably". However it is entirely unclear what these 'issues' could be.

In conclusion, while the objective of the Chairman's text is to clarify how the decision will be interpreted and implemented, this text does the reverse by introducing cloudy language that makes it more risky to use the system. Furthermore, it introduces cumbersome procedures in addition to those already included in the Motta text, irrelevant advice and inappropriate references to specific drug companies and their products. The sum total of the Chairman's Statement and the Motta text is a system in which countries must jump through a multi-layered tangle of hoops to get access to a few medicines. Any one of these hoops can easily be closed off by political pressure or economic infeasibility, rendering the system extremely vulnerable.

We call upon the Members of the WTO to reject this text. Sometimes it is better to agree to disagree than to adopt solutions that will undermine the very objectives of the talks: to protect public health and promote access to medicines for all. 

MDGs — MOST DISTRACTING GIMMICK

Peggy Antrobus examined how the Millennium Development Goals could be made to work to promote women's equality and empowerment in the CARICOM region in a presentation at the UNDP Caribbean Regional MDGs Conference held in Barbados, 7-9 July 2003. This is an extract from the full paper that can be found on the DAWN web site, in the Regional Engagements section.

I first heard of the MDGs in the outraged response of the global feminist community when the hard-won goal of women's sexual and reproductive rights was excluded from the list. This is even more inexcusable given that women's sexual and reproductive rights is a crucial target and/or indicator of progress under at least 4 goals - goal #3 (women's equality and empowerment), goal #4 child mortality, goal #5 (maternal health) and goal #6 (combating HIV/AIDS). The deliberate exclusion of this fundamental indicator of women's human rights and empowerment from the MDGs symbolises both the lack of sincerity on the part of the majority of those who voted on them, and the struggle that lies ahead for anyone who seriously seeks equality, equity and empowerment for women.

In fact, a major problem of the MDGs is their abstraction from the social, political and economic context in which they are to be implemented - the 'political economy' of the MDGs.

The Political Economy of the MDGs

Specifically, the exclusion of the goal of women's sexual and reproductive rights reflects the power of the forces of religious fundamentalism that emerged in the processes surrounding the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development, that continued to gain strength in the context of the on-going economic struggles of the South against the spread of neo-liberalism in the late 1990s, and that have received a boost with the right-wing control of the current US Administration.

In addition to the political context of the spread of religious fundamentalism and the male backlash against women's rights, there is the spread of economic fundamentalism in the form of the neo-liberal agenda

I do not believe in the MDGs. I think of them as a Major Distraction Gimmick - a distraction from the much more important Beijing Platform for Action with its 12 Priority Areas of Concern, representing a much closer approximation to the complexity of the relationships between women's equality and empowerment (MDG Goal #3), and other MDGs and targets - eradicating extreme poverty and hunger (MDG Goal #1), universal primary education (MDG Goal #2), reducing Child Mortality (MDG Goal #4), improving maternal health (MDG Goal #5), combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases (MDG Goal #6) and ensuring environmental sustainability (MDG Goal #7, including Target #10 - access to safe water).

through WTO-enforced trade liberalisation. In fact, the major limitation of the MDGs lies in the fact that, in the official literature on these goals, I can find almost no acknowledgement of the extent to which the neo-liberal policy framework, starting with the 1980s macroeconomic policy framework of the Washington Consensus (including structural adjustment policies) served to halt and reverse progress toward the achievement of these goals (with the possible exceptions of goals #3 and #7) around which there was widespread consensus in the UN Development Decades of the 1960s and 1970s - in other words until the election to power of Ronald Reagan in the USA and Margaret Thatcher in the UK as the 1970s came to an end.

This policy framework, with its 'marketisation of the state' through the substitution of the profit-driven market for a democratically elected state that holds itself accountable to the electorate as the guarantor of the well being of people and the protector of the environment, and its emphasis on privatisation and reforms that diminish the role of the state, has been reinforced by trade liberalisation and the new trade agreements enforced by the WTO. A consequence of trade liberalisation that has immediate relevance for the implementation of the MDGs in the Caribbean is the loss of government revenues resulting from the reduction in tariffs and the sale of profitable government assets. How are governments to finance primary health care and basic education when they are under pressure to reduce their sources of public finance?

To the extent that all the goals relate to the role of the state, one must ask now feasible it is that states weakened by the requirements of policy

frameworks of neo-liberalism and whose revenues are reduced by privatisation and trade liberalism can be expected to achieve the goals and targets of the MDGs?

Women and the MDGs

From the perspective of women, the context in which these Goals are being discussed contains the twin demons of religious and economic fundamentalism, both of which have at their core the subordination and exploitation of women's time, labour and sexuality for the benefit of patriarchal power on the one hand, and capitalism on the other. I cannot imagine a less 'enabling environment' for the promotion of policies and programmes for the achievement of women's equality and empowerment – as well as for all MDGs, dependent as they are on this central goal.

On the other hand, since all the goals (with the exception of the last) relate to biological and social reproduction, women's equality and empowerment are critical to their achievement. This provides women with a strategic opportunity for engaging in the policy dialogue around goals that have come to occupy a privileged position in the processes of socio-economic planning and in the policy dialogue between governments and donors. The inclusion of goals and targets of major interest to women in the MDGs provides a strategic talking point for assessing the barriers to the achievement of goals, and to the extent that women's subordination and exploitation represents a major barrier to the achievement of most of the goals and targets, the MDGs can provide a tool with which to hold both donor agencies and governments accountable.

Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

Goal #3, gender equality and women's empowerment, has many problems, in particular its totally inadequate Target (#4) of "Eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education" and its Indicators. While the Indicators on education and literacy represent major achievements for women everywhere, the Caribbean experience shows how inadequate they are as indicators of empowerment, where they have certainly not translated into higher access to employment, incomes, decision-making positions in the public domain, or political office. Women in CARICOM countries have already achieved the Target, yet can hardly speak of equality, equity and empowerment in a situation where

- poverty persists,
- violence against women continues unabated,
- there is increasing hostility against women (possibly generated by these very achievements in education and employment),
- the spread of HIV/AIDS is the second highest after Sub-Saharan Africa and spreading most rapidly among women; and
- only two CARICOM countries (Barbados and Guyana) provide for abortion services that are accessible, safe and affordable.

Moreover, despite efforts to change this, there is still a great deal of sex-role stereotyping in the school curriculum that limits the options of girls.

Regarding the indicator on the number of women in parliaments, as an indicator of women's empowerment, it depends on the circumstances under which women candidates take part in elections. In CARICOM, with few exceptions, the few women who

run for and win seats owe their preferment to the men who make the decisions within the political parties: women who challenge male privilege are not likely to be

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among these. Once in office, women (and men) tend to cede their own power to that of their government and are unlikely to have the freedom to demonstrate empowerment and agency, especially in relation to gender issues.

UNIFEM has proposed additional indicators, but they are still inadequate and would have to include others such as access to control of land, equality before the law, incidence of domestic violence and rape, and access to health services that embody the ICPD Programme of Action principles.

There is much more to gain from paying as much attention to the gender dimensions of the other goals as that of Gender Equality. Particularly for women in CARICOM countries, goals #1 (eradication of extreme poverty) and #6 (combating HIV/AIDS) should be of much greater concern. One obvious problem with the targets and indicators of these goals is that they are not disaggregated by gender, although the gender dimensions of all are clear.

Poverty eradication

Poverty reduction programmes must take into account that "outcomes of poverty are embedded in processes and relations of gender". For example, programmes must provide low income housing, access to water and sanitation, health services that integrate primary health care, maternal and child health, family

planning, cancer detection, services for the detection and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS, free and compulsory primary education, day care programmes, and women's access to credit, land and skills training. They must also ensure that the minimum wage legislation extends to domestic workers and other categories of low-income work. Because of the primary responsibility that women have for the care of children, the elderly, the sick and disabled, women's income-earning capacity is more limited than that of men. Women's poverty is therefore more severe than men's, and carries more serious consequences for vulnerable groups.

The tendency of governments and donors alike to "collapse gender concerns within the wider category of poverty as it enables the use of a fairly depoliticised and needs-based discourse as requiring focus on women within poor households, rather than gender disadvantage per se" masks the uneven distribution of power and resources within households. Caribbean women know that when a man is present he receives the major share of food in the household, and his needs take priority. The link between gender equality, women's empowerment and food security is critical in poor households: while Caribbean men can (and do) walk away from household responsibilities when they are not in a position to offer financial support, women stay and will do whatever it takes to "put food on the table".

Combating the spread of HIV/AIDS

Central to the spread of HIV/AIDS is the issue of sexuality and women's sexual and reproductive rights: no amount of education can protect a woman from exposure to the virus if she cannot negotiate safe sex. Young women and girls are particularly vulnerable when they engage in sex with older men, especially those in positions of authority, like clergymen, teachers and employers. According to a UNAIDS Fact Sheet of February 2001, in Trinidad & Tobago HIV rates are reported to be five times higher in girls than boys aged 15-18 years, and this is probably true of other countries in the region.

Women's sexual and reproductive rights must be the cornerstones to any effective programme for combating the spread of HIV/AIDS, even if this is presently excluded from the Goals and Targets and Indicators.

Other goals/targets of special concern to women

- Reduction of under-5 mortality rate (Goal #4)
- Improved maternal health (Goal #5)
- Access to safe drinking water (Goal #7, Target #10) and

- Improvements in the lives of slum dwellers (Goal #7, Target #11)


To limit the indicator for Target #5 of reducing maternal mortality rates by three quarters to the "proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel" is to ignore the importance of women's access to maternal and child health services, including family planning services. In the context of deteriorating public health services and the hostility of the current US Administration to the inclusion of abortion within family planning programmes and even to the use of condoms, this indicator is particularly inadequate.

Steady improvement in the provision of public health services throughout the 1960s-70s has been placed in jeopardy with the pressures on states that came with the spread of neo-liberalism. It would be important to assess the status of public health services, especially in the context of pressures to liberalise trade in services.

There is a similar risk to public water supplies. It is difficult to reconcile the pressures of powerful governments on poor countries to privatise water and liberalise trade in services while appearing to support the goals and targets of poverty reduction, access to safe drinking water and improvements in the lives of slum dwellers.

Strategies to ensure that gender inequalities are identified and addressed in the MDG monitoring process and national government policy responses include not only better statistics but a strong women's movement to monitor those officials who are mandated to monitor, and linking MDG work with gender budgets.

Given that the MDGs are weak on the Goal of Gender Equality and that the gender dimensions of the other goals are almost invisible, those committed to the advancement of women's equality and empowerment need to consider putting their efforts into developing strategies for monitoring and measuring progress toward the achievement of the Beijing Platform of Action, rather than abandoning it for the MDGs. After all, the BPA is theoretically consistent (which the MDGs are not), it includes all the MDGs and already has a constituency of support. Work will have to be done to make links between the MDGs and BPA in terms of targets and indicators, and new indicators such as violence and time use, may have to be added.

When others talk MDG, we must think BPA, and substitute the Best Plan of Action (BPA) for the Most Distracting Gimmick (MDG). 

NEW HEALTH SECTOR REFORM REPORT

DAWN's project on Health Sector Reform, Maternal Mortality and Abortion: A Global Policy Research Effort led by Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Research Coordinator, Sonia Correa, has produced the first report on Latin America. IDRC, International Development Research Centre, is supporting the Policy Research Effort and the results will be published by DAWN. The project is aimed at better understanding the ways in which health reform processes are affecting national response to maternal mortality and post-abortion care, and was inspired by the approaching 10th anniversary in 2004 of the International Conference on Population and Development, providing opportunity to revisit policy progress in a group of countries that were involved in a DAWN assessment in 1999-2000 that resulted in the publication of *Weighing Up Cairo* (DAWN, 2000).

The conclusions of the 1999/2000 investigation had already indicated the need to more systematically address the connections between health sector reform and the implementation

"Argentina is probably the sharper illustration of how policies of privatisation, deregulation and economic liberalisation adopted in Latin America have caused the public health system to deteriorate. It is probably the country in which the neoliberal systematic attack on universal public services has been the most effective."

"Abortion is still a major cause of maternal mortality and a significant proportion of women who undergo clandestine abortions search for additional care in the public health network. Calculations made in the mid-1990's indicated one in four female hospitalisations were due to abortion."

of sexual and reproductive health policies. Within the DAWN analytical frame, health sector reform can be explored as a critical juncture between macro-economic trends (fiscal stringency, SAPs, etc), processes of state transformation, and sexual and reproductive health issues, as components of a renewed citizenship and part of the human rights agenda. Within this frame, DAWN is looking more closely into aspects relating to maternal mortality and abortion. These two areas have assumed distinctive profiles and meanings in the post-ICPD and post-Beijing era. The countries being covered in this project are Mexico, Bolivia, Uruguay, Argentina, Brazil, Nigeria, Cameroon, Ghana, India, Philippines and Fiji. Preliminary findings on Latin America were discussed at a meeting in Montevideo in May 2003, and a mid-term report on Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Mexico and Uruguay has been finalised.

The Montevideo meeting debates identified the impacts of unstable and changing political environments of the countries under study as a major factor in explaining either the progress or regression of sexual and reproductive health policies. Within that situation, the expansion and virulence of fundamentalist forces is a cross-cutting concern.

"In Mexico the most important element in the Mexican reproductive health policy scenario after 2000 is the expansion and effectiveness of moral conservative forces in directly influencing federal and state level policymaking. The other side of the coin is the increasing capacity of feminist organisations to denounce and resist them."

Another clear commonality is the increasing visibility and legitimacy of policies aimed at reducing poverty levels and the lack of consistent connections between them and the post-ICPD and post-Beijing agendas. In a few cases, the political relevance of poverty alleviation seems to be operating as a force to make reproductive policies retreat to pre-Cairo/Beijing, into conventional maternal and child health care and family planning. These dimensions will be examined more closely in the next research phase. 

"In Bolivia in 1995 it was estimated that 115 abortions occurred each day, amounting to 40,000-50,000 per year. Specific research has also suggested that roughly 30 per cent of maternal deaths result from unsafe abortion."

"By and large, the findings concluded that quality of care was not being prioritised by local authorities, who had gained greater managerial power over services as a result of health sector reform."

"Brazil is one of the few countries in the region where public funded universal access to health care is strongly established as a constitutional right."

"On the whole, the Brazilian experience is exemplary regarding the challenges of articulating a women's reproductive health policy and the dynamics of health system reform."

"In Uruguay abortion legal reform, a law 'in Defence of Reproductive Health' was approved in December 2002. To become effective the provisions must still be approved by the Senate and sanctioned by the President. Given the current Uruguayan political, economic and policy context — particularly increasing poverty and the expansion of moral conservatism — the full approval of the provision will mean a major breakthrough at all levels."

Sexual and reproductive rights in the political arena

While in Uruguay for a meeting on DAWN's research project on Health Sector Reform, Maternal Mortality and Abortion: A Global Policy Research Effort (see article previous page), Sonia Correa, DAWN Research Coordinator for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, spoke at Montevideo City Hall on 20 May 2003. This is a brief excerpt from her presentation.

It is important to highlight that sexual and reproductive rights are a very recent human invention. In the late 1970s American feminists first started talking about such rights in closed spaces. But in the mid 1980s the concept went through the first process of social and political legitimacy. This happened in a meeting in Amsterdam in 1984 co-organized by networks where the debates led to a first global consensus among women on reproductive rights. A decade later, the Programmes of Action of Cairo and Beijing would adopt clear definitions of reproductive rights and women's sexual rights. These two documents are not binding as international conventions. But, as texts agreed to by the international community (with reservations from the Vatican, Islamic countries and a few Latin American delegations) they can and should be seen as emerging ethical frames that constitute a moral obligation by the States that signed them.

But we must also acknowledge that the conceptualisation of reproductive rights and particularly of sexual rights, is far from complete. This is a domain in which we are still embedded in a constant and complex process of thinking and re-thinking, and engaged in harsh ideological and political struggles. Today, as we know, the core ideas contained in these two concepts are being openly attacked by moral conservative forces that are expanding their tentacles in the most diverse societies. At the same time we are challenged to move forward regarding the conceptualisation of these novel rights. One important step in that direction is to examine the meanings of reproductive and sexual rights as part of the wider and complex task of reconstructing existing social contracts. As we know the modern western social contract was built on the basis of philosophical ideas of the 18th century Enlightenment and within it women were placed in a clearly unequal position. Since then women have experienced restrictive citizenship (when not a full lack of citizenship) and have been symbolically identified with and constrained within the so-called "natural" space of the private world. Similarly, sexuality and reproduction were embedded in the modern social contract in a peculiar manner that viewed these two domains as fundamentally belonging to nature. The most striking illustration of this ideological operation is probably the persistent treatment of sex and reproduction as related to "instinct".

But as we know time went by and transformation of the juridical concept and legal frames occurred throughout the 20th century. One clear illustration is the Universal Declaration on Human Rights adopted in 1948 that included principles of equality between sexes, non-discrimination, protection against violence and torture. But it is important to recall that the 1948 human rights frame remained impregnated by 18th

century premises, having been conceived as a universal instrument to correct abuses perpetrated by States against their citizens (negative rights of protection against absolute power or tyranny). However 45 years later at the Human Rights Conference of Vienna in 1993, the 1948 human rights frame was transformed and expanded. The rift between civil and political rights on one side and economic and social rights on the other that marked the human rights debate during the cold war was overcome. The new conceptualisation emphasizes the integrity and indivisibility of all human rights. Also in Vienna, feminists proactively influenced the negotiations in order to ensure recognition of the fact that human rights abuses also take place in the private domain, where they are perpetrated by private agents. Another important gain of the Vienna debates was the characterisation of systematic rapes in situations of armed conflicts as major human rights abuses.

It is vital to situate the right of women to decide in relation to unwanted pregnancies as another important element of the recent transformation of human rights discourse. For centuries abortion was basically debated in the frame of religious norms. From the 17th century on in the Western World it would become a criminal code matter. In Cairo and Beijing, however, consensus was reached that abortion must be considered a major public health problem and that women who undergo abortion must receive quality care and humane treatment. Most importantly, in Beijing, a recommendation that was adopted was that countries should revise their punitive legislations. Even if in the context of these two conferences it has not been possible to fully place abortion within a clear rights frame the overall definitions then adopted — reproductive rights means that people have the right to decide upon the number of children free of coercion and discrimination — allows us to say that women's decision-making in regard to unwanted pregnancies can and must be included under the same overarching frame. Precisely for this reason abortion should also be regarded as a democracy-related issue, as one critical domain in relation to which it becomes increasingly necessary to reframe, amplify and update the modern social contract we have inherited from Enlightenment philosophers.

However, it is not an easy task to transmit to societies at large the full meaning of what a woman's right to make reproductive decisions free of coercion and discrimination really is. One major obstacle to that understanding is that abortion is enshrined in existing codes as a crime against life, when in fact its criminalisation was basically aimed at disciplining women's sexuality. By and large women who resort to abortion are penalized because they are portrayed as being irresponsible and sexually lax. In addition, anti-abortion forces are constantly suggesting that if abortion is made legal this

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Africa's first regional consultation on unsafe abortion held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in March 2003 and attended by DAWN's Bene Madunagu, (DAWN Informs, April 2003) made some strong recommendations, among them the inclusion of the protocol on the rights of women in Africa to supplement the African Charter on Human Rights. In July this year, the African Union adopted the Protocol.

African Union Adopts Protocol On The Rights Of African Women

- Right To Abortion Articulated For The First Time In International Law

The African Union adopted the Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa on July 11 2003 as a supplementary protocol to the 1981 African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. Advancing the human rights of African women through creative, substantive and detailed language, the new Protocol covers a broad range of human rights issues. For the first time in international law, it explicitly sets forth the reproductive right of women to medical abortion when pregnancy results from rape or incest or when the continuation of pregnancy endangers the health or life of the mother. In another first, the Protocol explicitly calls for the legal prohibition of female genital mutilation. In other equality advances for women, the Protocol calls for an end to all forms of violence against women including unwanted or forced sex, whether


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would mean that all women "must abort", when in fact legalizing abortion simply means that women who for specific reasons want to interrupt an unwanted pregnancy may be able to do so.

We should also be aware that existing punitive laws against abortion do not exist to effectively arrest those women who abort. For example, it is seriously in no-one's mind to take to trial and jail the 600,000 Brazilian women who have abortions every year. The objective of criminalizing laws is to sustain a moral environment of guilt. Existing laws mostly favour the existence of a clandestine market through which women can have access to the procedure. In relation to this particular aspect we must also call attention to the fact that abortion is an issue of social justice. In our unequal societies, women with resources have access to safe abortion procedures and up-dated technology while poor women and young women must seek clandestine abortions of poor quality that risk their health and lives.


There are also ethical-political aspects around abortion that go beyond the usual public debate on abortion "morality". The decision to have an abortion is never an easy one for a woman. But prevailing arguments against legal abortion more often than not completely neglect women's capacity to make ethical decisions when they face unwanted pregnancies. In a text written with Rosalind Petchesky in 1993, we affirmed that one of the ethical principles that provides the basis for sexual and reproductive rights is the recognition of women's personhood, which simply means that women are entirely capable of taking ethical decisions about their bodies and their lives.

As a result of these many obstacles, after Cairo and Beijing the only progressive changes in abortion legislation in the developing world have occurred in South Africa (1996), Mexico City (2001) and, more recently, in Nepal (2002). If Uruguay advances in this direction, this country will become a real "model" and, above all, it will contribute to opening up the debate in neighbouring countries and the Latin American region at large. This step will also be critical to sustain a progressive regional position in relation this matter in forthcoming global debates.

This is crucial because — though the mainstream media and policy analysts in our countries do not mention it — the agenda of moral conservatism against abortion is as important today for the Washington hawks as their Hobbesian unilateralism and greed for oil. Legalizing abortion in Uruguay will not necessarily be translated into an invasion by the US marines, but it will surely turn into increasing political pressures by the US government in the context of global negotiations that will occur during the next few years, for instance in relation to trade. As I see it, the full approval of the Uruguayan sexual and reproductive health law can effectively mean a major step to counter these sombre global trends. 

it takes place in private or in public, and a recognition of protection from sexual and verbal violence as inherent in the right to dignity. It endorses affirmative action to promote the equal participation of women, including the equal representation of women in elected office, and calls for the equal representation of women in the judiciary and law enforcement agencies as an integral part of equal protection and benefit of the law. Articulating a right to peace, the Protocol also recognises the right of women to participate in the promotion and maintenance of peace.

The broad range of economic and social welfare rights for women set forth in the Protocol includes the right to equal pay for equal work and the right to adequate and paid maternity leave in both private and public sectors. It also calls on states to take effective measures to prevent the exploitation and abuse of women in advertising and pornography. The rights of particularly vulnerable groups of women, including widows, elderly women, disabled women and "women in distress," which includes poor women, women from marginalised population groups, and pregnant or nursing women in detention, are specifically recognised.

Efforts by Equality Now and African women's rights activists, and concerted lobbying of African governments by NGOs and networks all over Africa on a consensus text, resulted in significant gains to the original draft. The Africa Office of Equality Now in Nairobi issued a statement saying the final Protocol is indicative of the achievements that can be made when governments and civil society use their collective resources to advance the cause of human rights. 

PROSPECTS FOR REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

From Gita Sen, who was in Peru at the start of several tumultuous weeks beginning with the drafting of new health laws and culminating in the resignation of a senior health official.

Peru's first female Prime Minister, Beatriz Merino, was appointed in July 2003 to head a 16-member cabinet that includes a new Minister of Health, Alvaro Vidal Rivadeneyra, who is a surgeon and former president of the Colegio de Medicos. These replacements—of Luis Solari, the former prime minister and one-time Minister of Health, and Fernando Carbone, the former Minister of Health, both active members of Opus Dei—bodes well for more professionalism and less ideology in the health ministry.

In *El Comercio*, Peru's major newspaper, under the headline "Minister of Health looks for rapprochement with feminists and experts in family planning", Vidal is quoted as saying that he is committed to reviewing health policies regarding reproductive, sexual and demographic issues and to improving relationships with groups defending women and (family) planning, who label the approaches adopted by the government as conservative. He went on to say that there would be changes in family planning policies to apply "universal medical and scientific knowledge". Merino has also made encouraging statements about the role of women and that opposition is an important element of democracy.

These appointments come on the heels of several tumultuous weeks in Peru, where the fallout of an outrageous draft general law of health by the Ministry of Health proposing that women register all pregnancies, aka "unborn children", and banning assisted reproductive technologies etc., culminated in the highly public resignation of a senior Ministry of Health professional who was not consulted in the development of the new law and heightened media interest and coverage.

Meanwhile, on 15 July in the United States, Congress voted to withhold US funds from the UN Fund for Population Activities. International Women's Health Coalition President Adrienne Germain deplored the decision: "The vote to deny funding to UNFPA is one of dozens of actions in a systematic war on women by the Bush Administration and the Republican Congress," said Germain. "Their sole motivation is domestic politics, and they have supported the Bush administration's wilful misrepresentation of facts collected by their own State Department investigative team. This callous decision jeopardises hundreds of thousands of girls' and women's lives in the poorest countries, which depend on UNFPA assistance for safe motherhood, child survival, and HIV/AIDS prevention programs."

"It is particularly tragic that Congress has made this decision in the wake of the President's trip to Africa - from which both he and they should have learned that AIDS has a woman's face, and that reproductive health and family planning services, such as those supported by UNFPA, are required to stem the epidemic. In taking this action, neither Congress nor the White House has shown a shred of compassion for the world's most vulnerable people."

And Reproductive Freedom News reports that adolescent reproductive rights are under siege in the United States. Across the country opponents of reproductive rights are waging an attack on the right of adolescents to access abortion and contraceptive services, and pumping millions of dollars into abstinence-only education programs at the expense of comprehensive sex education. <http://www.reproductiverights.org>



NO TO NEGOTIATIONS FOR B+10?

Women's NGO representatives who gathered in New York for the March 2003 Commission on the Status of Women session agreed that a world conference on women should be held, but not in 2005; and that Beijing+10 reviews should not have any text negotiations.

The Centre for Women's Global Leadership, Conference of NGOs, European Women's Lobby, and Women's Environment and Development Organisation convened several meetings at the 47th session of the CSW to facilitate discussion among women from different parts of the world on the question of the ten year review of implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and a fifth world conference on women.

A statement from the convening group said: "Many different perspectives were raised but consensus was reached that a fifth World Conference on Women should be held before 2010 (although not in 2005); but its exact timing and form remains to be

carefully considered in the light of the Beijing+10 assessment in 2005, the results of the ad hoc Working Group established by the General Assembly on conference follow-up, the experience of other review processes such as Cairo+10, and the political climate in general. The CSW Beijing+10 assessment to be done at its regular session in 2005 and any regional reviews that year should be focused on implementation without any text negotiations. The idea of having a world conference(s) focused on women's issues and perspectives organised outside the UN was also discussed and received some support."

Those in favour of a fifth world women's conference cited a need to keep up momentum and provide a critical place where women could demand accountability from their governments. Others who questioned the advisability of holding a conference, especially at this time,

noted amongst other factors the lack of implementation resources, the geo-political climate and backlash that poses a danger of losing ground. Practical problems for a 2005 conference included lack of necessary lead-in time and the moratorium imposed while the UN waits for recommendations from its ad hoc Working Group.

A UN General Assembly resolution set up the Working Group in January 2003 to review the implementation of the conference and summit outcomes of the 1990s and how they can contribute to an integrated framework for implementing the Millennium Development Goals. The resolution established that


BRAZIL SAYS NO

Brazil's Minister Emilia Fernandes, who heads the Special National Secretariat on Women's Policy, has declared that the Brazilian Government's position will be to always honour and defend commitments agreed in Beijing. She stated this at a public discussion with representatives of the national coordinating group of the *Articulacao de Mulheres Brasileiras*, at the end of April. She declared that she would not support, nor intends to promote, any meeting that would risk opening and reviewing the contents of the Beijing Platform of Action.

The AMB Executive Secretariat requested this specific discussion to stress the position of different international feminist networks on Beijing+10. They said that in light of explicit North American unilateralism and the clear advancement of various forms of fundamentalism, the possibility of a UN Women's Conference in 2005 could mean great risk of setbacks in regard to the advancements achieved in women's rights, particularly in the area of sexual and reproductive rights. The discussion with Minister Fernandes reaffirmed for Brazilian women's organisations that the Brazil Government's National Secretariat on Women's Policy will position itself against any proposal of activities, either global or regional, that could imply opening and reviewing agreements made in Beijing in 1995 and in 2000 in New York at the Beijing+5 Review.

individual conference outcomes should not be renegotiated in the follow-up phase; and all decisions on follow-up to conferences whose ten-year anniversaries are imminent are pending, while the committee works. Representatives at the CSW session expressed concern that the MDGs do not reflect all of the recommendations made at the conferences, including those on reproductive rights.

The women's NGO representatives involved in the discussion on a future global conference at the CSW session recommended discussions should continue and that the NGO Committee on the Status of Women in Geneva would be a focal point (see following article.)

A full report of discussions convened by CWGL, CONGO, European Women's Lobby and WEDO at the 47th CSW session is available on the DAWN website. 

DEBATE CONTINUES ON 5TH WCW

Report from NGO CSW Forum – Geneva 21 – 22 July, 2003

A panel on WCW5, a fifth World Conference for Women, was part of the programme for the 30th anniversary of the NGO Committee on the Status of Women, held in Geneva 21-22 July 2003. DAWN Coordinator for Sustainable Development and Environmental Justice, Ewa Charkiewicz, attended and followed up on DAWN's efforts in CSW to prevent a fifth WCW in 2005.

DAWN took the lead in opposing a fifth WCW because of serious concerns about the enormous risks to the gains in women's human rights made in the 1990s UN conferences if negotiations are reopened at a Beijing+10 or Cairo+10 conference. A DAWN statement was distributed and read out at the last CSW (DAWN Informs April 2003 and www.dawn.org.fj). Ewa Charkiewicz circulated the statement at the NGO Committee on the status of women meeting in Geneva and expressed concern that the panel had not heard from those opposed to WCW5. She pointed out that there is a difference between a governmental conference and a women's movement conference, which was discussed by Sara Longwe of Femnet — "we may need the second, but the first is dangerous to have."

Ewa Charkiewicz described the experience of seeing the rights-based framework of Agenda 21 being rewritten at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in September 2002. The framework shifted from rights to Millennium Development Goals and neoliberal development, with its icons of trade liberalisation and privatisation. Another example is how the right to clean water was treated in the UN in the 1970s and how it is treated in the MDGs. "If the next WCW5 takes place soon, and if the Beijing Programme of Action is rewritten in the same manner as Agenda 21, then all the values and concerns that women who have supported a fifth conference stand for will be undermined."


Speakers in support of DAWN's position included the former chair of WIDE, Carmen de la Cruz, who warned against taking tribal positions on WCW5. Consensus was needed, women could not risk losing what they had acquired. WCW5 had to be discussed in the context of the current state of global governance. Others who expressed concerns included those from WEDO, the Federation of University Women, International Council of Jewish Women, International Council of Women and Federation of American Women's Clubs Overseas.

A Director in the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dorrit Alopaeus Stahl, described the priority given to poverty eradication in Swedish Overseas Development Aid, and stressed the importance of implementing the existing documents. She said the Swedish Government would not support any automatic follow-up on Beijing in the foreseeable future, because of costs and other reasons

including the risk of going back on commitments and agreements.

NGO CSW Vice-President, Krishna Patel, of WILPF, was amongst those who want WCW5 and argued that the women's movement was not fatigued. Others who supported a WCW5 included Conchita Poncini of IFUW, Mary MacPhail of the European Women's Lobby, African networks, including the InterAfrican Committee that also supports NEPAD, and panel chair, Hilka Pietila, who suggested the MDG Review conference in 2005 should be connected with the review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform of Action.

Ewa Charkiewicz's intervention noted that MDGs were a retrograde development, and used the example of how debate on water and sanitation had shifted from water as a basic need and right, to water delinked from sanitation as a privatised commodity. This entailed a parallel shift in agency from citizens with rights to consumers. There was little other critical analysis of MDGs, and a paper distributed by the World Bank on Gender Equality and MDGs by Karen Mason of the Gender and Development Group reduced the agenda on gender equality to MDGs and adopted an essentialising approach to poor women as victims of men and local traditions. There was no discussion on operationalising MDGs.

Although the Forum was informed that the town of Salvador de Bahia in Brazil had offered to host a WCW5, the Brazilian Minister Emilia Fernandes has told the Brazilian women's movement at a public audience in April 2003 that she will not sponsor any Beijing+10 negotiation that will put at risk the 1995 gains (see previous page). 

Ewa Charkiewicz participated in a workshop on reproductive rights in the NGO CSW Forum, which raised three issues: the positive role of religion and how religion is used in fundamentalist political projects; the necessity of historical analysis of changes in global governance, and how rights-based frameworks and women's rights are eroded; and keeping informed about developments in conservative circles on women's rights and human rights.

What happened to human rights, gender justice and sustainable livelihoods?

Comments on the "Follow-up on Johannesburg and the Future Role of the Commission on Sustainable Development - the Implementation Track", report of the Secretary-General for the Commission on Sustainable Development, Eleventh Session, 28 April - 9 May 2003, E/CN.17/2003/2.; and Priority actions and commitments to translate the WSSD outcomes into reality, "Framework for Discussion" paper by the CSE-11 Chair for the Interactive Ministerial Roundtables by DAWN Sustainable Livelihoods and Environmental Justice Research Coordinator, Ewa Charkiewicz.

The report is based on an optimistic appraisal of the World Summit on Sustainable Development. "The Johannesburg Summit tapped into a new reservoir of energy and brought greater strategic focus for international efforts to achieve sustainable development" says the UN report. Although the claims of bringing greater focus via the WEHAB¹ (water, energy, health, agriculture and biodiversity) initiative and Millennium Development Goals are well founded, the report sweeps under the carpet conflicts over meanings of sustainable development; and the shift in policy frameworks away from the rights-based approach agreed in Rio towards the trade-centred neo-liberal sustainable development articulated in the WSSD Plan of Implementation. At the WSSD, liberal sustainable development was located between the disappearing rights-based framework and the new emerging neoliberal sustainable development. According to the latter, the WTO-based trade regime is framed as the principal solution to poverty reduction and the main avenue to prosperity and economic growth.

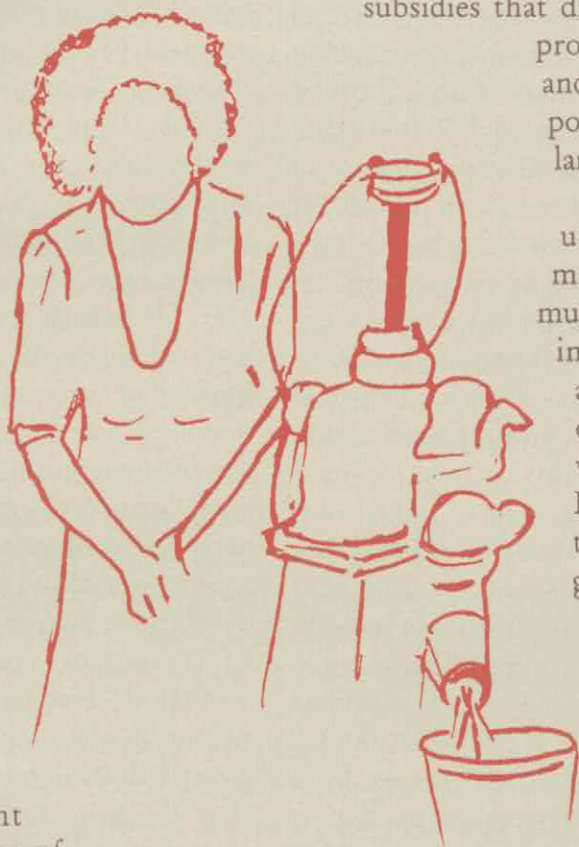
At stake now is how the issues and policies in WEHAB areas will be defined, and how and which social, economic and environmental components of sustainable development will be integrated. What kind of sustainable development is the Secretary-General and his staff talking about? It seems to be a hybrid notion which reflects a mix of eco-

technocratic approaches with modest propositions to make markets work for the environment (corporate social and environmental responsibility, reduction of subsidies that distort energy markets or promote unregulated fishing) and for the poor (improving poor people's access to credit, land, water and energy).

The report underscores the role of multilateralism and multistakeholder participation in the CSD process. (The access of civil society organisations to negotiations was a big gain achieved in Rio). Now on the agenda is the expansion of the major group format to new groups (legislators, journalists). Needless to say access alone does not always translate into influence. However, when compared to the undemocratic style of the WTO negotiations, the preservation of the

participatory format of the CSD shows resistance to the authoritarian trends in global governance. The Secretary-General's plan for CSD entails regionalisation of the follow-up on Rio and Johannesburg, and preservation of the participatory format at regional meetings. These developments show that the CSD will be preserved as a rather unique experiment in participatory governance.

Another interesting development is the proposition to develop guidelines and a monitoring system for public-private partnerships. The laissez-faire promotion of partnerships without clear terms of reference and guidelines was strongly criticised at



the WSSD by organisations representing public interest and quite a few governments from the North and the South.

On the positive side is also the preservation of the combination of water and sanitation measures. While by the time of Rio access to water and sanitation was agreed to be one of the basic needs and basic rights, in the late 90s water changed into a privatised commodity. In the MDGs it was delinked from sanitation. In Johannesburg acrimonious battles took place over the right of the poor to toilets – and eventually water and sanitation were brought together again. This approach is maintained in the CSD follow-up.

The major purpose of the report was to create a roadmap for CSD. The report reflects concerns about organisational efficiency and coherence – how to prevent the overlap between different UN fora – but it also gives justice to the cross-sectoral nature of sustainability issues. Here an exception is made for trade. In Johannesburg, governments agreed that the relationship between trade, environment and sustainable development, and in particular between MEAs and trade agreements, will be discussed by the respective WTO Committees on Development, and on the Environment. These Committees consist of trade diplomats, and are not known to have environment and livelihoods close to their heart. Now trade does not appear on the new CSD roadmap, either. So what other spaces/avenues are there to intervene on behalf of the environment as a basis for livelihoods?

Since the WSSD decided to conduct CSD negotiations every two years (at one point the US proposal was to do it every 4 years), the new roadmap deals with the problem of long intervals by developing a scheme of two-year policy cycles. In the first year the regional and global implementation forums will take place, while the policy negotiations are to take place in the second year of the cycle. This solution, if agreed, is one of the few cases when one can have the cake and eat it too.

Concerns about policy coherence have led to establishing a scheme of issues, whereby globalisation, poverty, and gender are seen as belonging to the domain of ECOSOC and specialised organisations. This, however, will not preclude discussing them at CSD.

Regarding changing consumption and production patterns, the outcomes are more ambivalent. This is the strategic policy debate for transition to sustainable development. After Rio,

poverty and changing consumption and production patterns were built into annual meeting agendas as cross-sectoral themes. At WSSD, changing consumption and production patterns barely survived the negotiations. However, a rather vague reference was included on the promotion of the 10-year framework of programmes for changing consumption and production patterns. The framework of programmes got prime attention at the UNEP Governing Council meeting in Nairobi.

To sum up: it appears the CSD is envisaged as a protected area to safeguard sustainable development and related experiments in participatory governance. The plans for reaching out to regions could provide space for developing regionally and locally owned perspectives on sustainable development. The absence of such perspectives, in particular from regions of the South, has been one of the major weaknesses in the sustainable development debate until now. The space for discussion of alternative frameworks for sustainable development has been substantially shrunk, or perhaps it was evacuated to other places such as the World Social Forum with its logo/manifesto: *An Alternative World is Possible*. The horizon of current debates is how to make markets responsive to environmental and social concerns while the main economic assumptions about economic growth patterns are hardly challenged. From the perspective of sustainability, gender justice, and people's social and human rights, the challenge is to develop alternative propositions for precautionary "development", for preservation of social and ecological diversity, and making roadmaps for sustainable consumption and production that prevent poverty and wasteful use of human energies, and that do not undermine quality of life and environmental integrity.

One of the major themes for CSD next year is water. DAWN is preparing a series of case studies on women's experiences and analyses in water privatisation, pollution, on how water – our life – is taken away from us, what are the effects of manufactured global water scarcity on livelihoods. Please send us your proposal for a case study. We would also like to know your views on alternatives to privatisation of water and other basic services from women's perspectives. 🌻

¹ Prior to the Johannesburg Summit the UN Secretary General proposed to focus on selected areas in sustainable development, namely water, energy, health, agriculture and biodiversity – hence WEHAB.

The Barbados Plan of Action – Pacific countries wearily wary

DAWN Pacific Regional Coordinator Yvonne Underhill-Sem and Patrina Dumarú from the Pacific Concerns Resources Centre attended the Pacific regional preparatory meeting for the Review of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, 4–8 August 2003 in Apia, Western Samoa. This is an extract from Yvonne Underhill-Sem's report.

Close on the heels of WSSD and the Johannesburg Plan of Action, the process of reviewing the implementation of the Barbados Plan of Action began with a Pacific regional meeting. Another in the Caribbean follows in October and one for the other oceans was to be held in Cape Verde 1–5 September. An inter-regional Preparatory meeting is scheduled for January 2004, a prep-com is to be held in New York immediately preceding the Commission on Sustainable Development in April, and the final meeting is scheduled for Mauritius in August 2004.

Introductions by Manuel B. Dengo, UN Chief of Water, Natural Resources and SIDS Branch made the linkages between the Barbados Programme of Action, the Millennium Development Goals, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, the Monterrey Consensus and the Doha Agreement. All had to be carefully analysed from the SIDS perspective and results should be reflected in the decisions to be taken in the Mauritius meeting. He said much of the review process rested on the National Assessment Reports, few of which, however, were completed in time for this meeting. Those reviews that were ready drew heavily from the country reviews for WSSD last year.


The key issue at stake in this review process is how to continue to justify the Special Case of SIDS (Small Island Developing States). This is no easy task, given shrinking development resources and competing pressure from other categories of countries – landlocked, in conflict, emerging from conflict—let alone other issues such as HIV/AIDS and NEPAD and the wider issues of conditionality, new financial framework, trade-not-aid WTO dealings and the forthcoming Cancun Ministerial Meeting. In a world where traditional trade preferences were diminishing, it was clear that SIDS would have to take new measures.

But it was rather the political imperative from New York and the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs that appeared to be driving this process, more than the countries who were so fully behind it in 1994. The meeting was therefore a struggle as countries weary of WSSD became increasingly wary of UN DESA's desire to uncritically follow the UN 10 year review process. Lost were the debates around unsustainable production and consumption issues. Countries generally agreed to stick with everything said in the Johannesburg Programme of Implementation, to the extent that large areas of text were lifted from one document into the meeting report.

Overall the meeting was characterised by poor drafting, with UN DESA taking a defensive position over UN processes and failing to acknowledge the positive role of other agencies such as UNEP and UNESCO in funding national initiatives; poor recollection of discussion; and ambivalent government engagement with most participants from foreign affairs ministries and a few from technical departments.

Despite the rhetoric of NGO involvement in the country review process, the lack of national NGOs at the meeting spoke loudly of a faulty process in-country and lack of interest on the part of UN DESA, although they said they had secured some financial commitment to support national NGOs and community based organisations at the inter-regional meetings.

That women and poor communities were overlooked, indicated a lack of commitment to people in this process. A paragraph in the meeting report urged governments to continue to implement the Beijing Programme of Action and the outcomes of ICPD in the light of some who were trying to open new debates about population and development and seemed to miss the production and consumption message.

Without a wider frame of reference that includes acknowledging the competing demands of other country groupings, the special case for SIDs is weak. Thus countries need to work together on issues around WTO, Cancun and even WSIS. The UN clearly sees success at SIDS as a litmus test for the future of the UN development effort. But more is needed than further pledging to honour commitments. More is needed than berating governments for not honouring their commitments. Much more could be said about honouring commitments to reach .7% ODA. 

WOMEN AS ECONOMIC PLAYERS IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Geneva Women in International Trade, with the support of the Canadian International Development Agency and the Women Ambassadors in Geneva recently organised the first ever session on gender and trade at WTO Public Forum. The purpose of the session titled "Women as Economic Players in Sustainable Development" was to draw the attention of the WTO and the multilateral trading system to the significant contributions that women make in international trade, to lay a marker for further discussion of this issue at the multilateral trade level, and to highlight the impact of trade liberalisation, both benefits and adverse effects on women. DAWN Co-Coordinator for the Political Economy of Globalisation (Trade), Mariama Williams, was one of the speakers, and these are some extracts from a report of the session on 16 June 2003.

Other speakers included Reema Nanavaty, the Secretary General of the 530,000 member Self-Employed Women's Association in India; Tembeka Nkamba-van Wyk, a successful South African entrepreneur; and, Heather Gibb, a researcher from Canada's North-South Institute. Their key messages were that women, as producers and consumers, are important contributors to world trade; women are, at the same time, profoundly affected by trade liberalisation and WTO rules which impact adversely on market access and employment opportunities, as well as social policy of developing countries; 70 percent of the world's poor are women, many of whom labour in the subsistence agricultural sector or in the unvalued household and informal sectors; and women should play a more active role in the formulation of national as well as international trade policy. For these reasons, WTO Members should initiate consideration of the gender and trade issues in the multilateral trading system.

The session was well-attended and a number of concrete suggestions addressed the differential effects of trade policies and programmes on women and men.


Canadian Ambassador, Sergio Marchi, outlined a number of steps, including a GWIT presence at the upcoming WTO Ministerial in Cancun; organisation of a conference on gender and trade next year, sponsored by the WTO and its sister institutions; and an active policy of considering female applicants in the making of hiring

decisions with respect to the delivery of technical cooperation, and political appointments within the Secretariat and the staffing of the newly appointed Advisory Boards by the Director-General of the WTO.

Heather Gibb suggested the WTO's adoption of a formal policy of gender integration, involving, inter alia, gender training for Secretariat staff and Secretariat-led research on the gender implications of trade agreements; integration of gender concerns into the courses offered by the WTO Training Institute and creation of a Working Group to consider how the organisation might best address gender and trade issues.

Participants also called for a Ministerial statement in Cancun that would recognise the importance of taking women into consideration in trade policy formulation. A delegate from Oman said that there was a need for training for female delegates. Finally, a number of questions addressed the issue of entrepreneurial cultures amongst women and how they might be cultivated in countries where they are less prevalent.

While DAWN believes it is important that the WTO/Multilateral Trading System, at the international, regional and national levels, is cognizant of the importance of women's contribution to the trade system and takes gender concerns and gender analysis as integral to trade policy making, it is important that the MTS itself be examined for its impact on democracy, human rights, women's rights and sustainable development. Simply taking on any simplistic notions of gender concerns will not change the existing democratic, human and social deficits in the trading system.

Any attempt to engender the WTO/MTS must be historically grounded, pro-development and consciously critical of the power dynamics in the international relations surrounding the WTO. Such strategies require considerable political analysis of the institutional framework, the historic moment/conjuncture, and how gender mainstreaming efforts might get used by other actors for other ends that are not conducive to the long term social and economic empowerment of women and men in the North and South. 

DAWN is well-represented in the latest issue of 'development', the journal of the Society for International Development. The issue (development 46.2) is on the theme of globalisation, reproductive health and rights and is edited by Wendy Harcourt. Those who have contributed articles include Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Research Coordinator Sonia Correa - Quandries at the site of Human Rights, Political Economy of Globalisation Research Co-Coordinator Gita Sen - Inequalities and Health in India, South East Asia Regional Coordinator Gigi Francisco - Paradoxes for Gender in Social Movements, and Pacific Regional Coordinator Yvonne Underhill-Sem - Marked Bodies in Marginalised Places.

There is also a section in the journal on local/global encounters - situating women's sexual and reproductive rights; and another covering on-line dialogue on mobilising for women's rights and health.



VIRTUAL SEMINAR ON INTERSECTIONALITY

A number of DAWN researchers joined a discussion on intersectionality and multiple discriminations in a Virtual Seminar on Education for Inclusion Throughout Life that the Gender and Education Office of the International Council for Education ran from 14 July to 1 August 2003. Short papers were distributed daily by email, along with comments by participants and summaries. The seminar objectives were to deepen analysis on learning for non-discrimination and inclusion in different spaces and throughout life, and to outline a future path from a perspective of gender justice.

Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Research Coordinator, Sonia Correa, gave a paper on Fundamentalism and Politics, drawn from an article prepared for the Brazilian Coalition of Women journal: "There are many and complex fronts on which we must place ourselves in order to counteract the harmful impacts of religious fundamentalism on law, public policies and daily social life. This is why it is so important to incorporate the defence of secular states into our agendas.

But there are other forms of fundamentalist expression that, though not religious, are characterised by the intransigent belief in an ultimate truth, such as so-called market fundamentalism — the "belief" in a single economic model that can and should be applied in every corner of the world. Such "belief" prevents the recognition of problems and crises emerging from the implementation of the model.

Fundamentalism also reveals itself in political parties and civil society through standpoints on identity, communalism and cultural policies. Although not religious, in many cases such thoughts and actions are based on fundamentalists precepts and the rejection of those inherent in democratic politics. We must remain alert to the subtle temptations of economic and political fundamentalism.."

Alejandra Scampini, of DAWN/REPTEM, gave a paper on the World Trade Organisation and education: "The General Agreement of Trade in Services, GATS, treats education services as if they are simple goods. The subordination of education to market forces may well undermine its accessibility and aggravate social inequalities. Public education is undoubtedly facing this danger in several countries already."

Las Dignas, El Salvador: "Some educators 'test' in a systematic and insistent manner, all year round, the skills and capabilities of female students who decide to study for careers or professions considered traditionally masculine, such as specialities in agriculture and electronics. Such conscious pressure is not experienced by male students who decide to study "feminine" careers that, on account of being less valued socially or economically, do not usually attract men."

DAWN Francophone Africa Regional Coordinator Fatou Sow's paper was drawn from her Dame Nita Barrow Lecture at the University of the West Indies and published in DAWN Informs April 2003: "What African activists and feminists are questioning is not Islam as a religion with moral values that anyone can obey in her/his own right. The challenge is the political use of Islam to get access to power by controlling peoples minds, bodies and their lives."

Carmen Colazo, Paraguay: "In terms of education, indigenous women are the most neglected, together with peasants. They represent 94% of the illiterate people and their languages are not considered in the teaching/learning process."

Celita Eccher, DAWN Latin America Regional Coordinator and Secretary-General of ICAE: "Even languages build walls, like the word 'non-EU'. In a few years this term has come to mean poor, ignorant, thief, lazy, and now fanatic and terrorist, added to discriminations based on race, ethnicity and gender... When we talk about learning spaces and intersectionality and we distinguish between formal and non-formal spaces and the conscious and unconscious learning that constitute life-long learning for migrant peoples, we see the loneliness in which they learn and the high emotional costs they bear."

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REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS IN AFRICA

Papers from DAWN's participation in the AMANITARE conference that was held in Johannesburg 4-7 February 2003 have been made available on the website. DAWN's involvement included support for four young African feminists: Anthonia M. Essien, Cesnabmibilo Dorothy Aken'ova, Khoudia Sow and Dina N'fon Priso. Bene Madunagu, who serves on AMANITARE's technical advisory committee, and Sonia Correa represented DAWN on a number of panels. These are some excerpts from their conference presentations, that can be accessed in full on www.dawn.org.fi


"In Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria, churches are the main 'industries' of the people. The Human Empowerment and Development Project that works to address issues of sexual and reproductive rights and health in the context of the religious situation of young people identified two major problems requiring intervention: the culpable culture of silence of churches in sexual and reproductive health issues that exposed young people to the risk of sexually transmitted infections including HIV/AIDS, along with women's lack of self confidence and control over their own lives; and the turning of rural churches into quasi-hospitals through the practice of nkukut (divination), often interfering with complicated issues of reproductive health they know little about.

A survey of a group of young people from church groups showed that nearly 80% had not heard of HIV/AIDS, more than 65% did not know the negative consequences of unprotected sex, 65% did not

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Fanny Gomez of REPEM, Colombia: "Ethnic group difference is a critical factor in access to power and resources. Denial of access leads to the emergence of tensions and it is in these situations where women and their role in the community reach critical point in terms of the identity of the community. More often than not this implies going back to traditional forms of behaviour and costumes, even in those communities where these practices were abandoned long ago. Women are exhorted to keep silent about their gender demands since they may divide the community. Issues such as incest, domestic violence and lack of equal rights for women are seen as issues that divide and women who raise their voices are seen as traitors and agents of foreign interests. So women who belong to communities where the ethnic group defines their identity find themselves divided for their different sense of loyalty towards the community, the women's community and to themselves.


We urgently need to analyse the intersectionality in discrimination in the context of globalisation, since the imposition of the economic global model determines, aggravates and deepens exclusion and interferes with the construction of alternatives to change this situation, no matter if we are talking about a co-educational or non-discriminatory project at school or if we are talking about 'global citizenships'." 

MEDIA AND VIOLENCE

DAWN Anglophone Africa Regional Coordinator, Bene Madunagu, suggested media workers could publicise and shame men who batter their partners as part of a strategy for preventing violence against girls and women.

She gave a presentation on violence against women at an advocacy skills training workshop on women's health rights and the media's role towards achieving the UN's 5th Millennium Goal, held in Accra, Ghana, by the Multi-Disciplinary African Women's Health Network.

Her paper identified types of gender based violence at different stages of women's lives, including differential access to food and medical care for girl and boy babies; child marriage and female genital mutilation for girls; date and courtship violence in adolescence; marital rape and abandonment of wives; and the abuse of widows and stoning of elderly women as witches.

Suggestions for the role media can play in preventing violence included regular reporting on violence and calls for justice, refusal to remain silent and writing about abusive, violent incidents, recognition of how inaction and attitudes can perpetuate sexism and gender violence, and refusal by consumers to buy publications, video films, music and other media that portray girls and women in a degrading manner. 

discuss issues of sexuality and HIV/AIDS with parents or church leaders, but 62% had already experienced sexual intercourse.

In the traditional and religious belief system in the area, Sacred Specialists are popular and busy figures and nkukut is big business in many Christian churches. There has been a subtle transposition of the practice of nkukut into Christianity, particularly in independent churches, because of the elements of prophecy, visions and trances already present in the Christian religious climate. Sacred Specialists are believed to have spiritual powers and expertise to uncover the past, predict the future, detect witches, uncover the source of problems and failures in life, provide antidotes to problems, and to have the answers on all matters of female reproductive health through extra-sensory devices and perceptions. Nkukut deals with all female reproductive health matters at a spiritual level and disregards orthodox medication, making women of reproductive age vulnerable to all kinds of risks including death, particularly in childbirth." Churches and HIV/AIDS in Rural Annangland, by **Dr Anthonia Essien**, of the Human Development and Empowerment Project.

"The interviews and group discussions confirmed that traditionally, there was silence on sexuality issues, but sexual pleasure in women was more 'tabooed'. Women's sexuality was strictly censored and checked from childhood to adulthood. Women have been punished for daring to express pleasure during sexual intercourse. In some instances women are told to be ashamed of themselves, admit that something is wrong with them if they experience sexual desire or pleasure or if they desire to have sexual intercourse.

You hardly find an NGO that has an intervention on sexual pleasure in women. They are busy working on sexually transmitted infections, unsafe abortion, teen pregnancy, sexual violence, HIV/AIDS, maternal mortality, but have sidelined pleasure, been silent on it. Key sexual and reproductive health workers in Nigeria and other parts of Africa argue that lack of sexual satisfaction is not a life-threatening condition. Designing programmes for sexual pleasure in women is wrong prioritisation because people are still battling over issues such as female genital mutilation, STIs, maternal mortality and early marriage. There is also fear over where such work would lead, to issues

where values have not been clarified and make people uncomfortable to deal with them. Women need to bring this essential aspect of their sexuality out and understand that sexual pleasure is a human right. Women's lives cannot continue to be compartmentalised, issues have to be taken on in a holistic manner." Attitude/Perception: Programming for sexual pleasure in women, by **Cesnabmihilo Dorothy Aken'ova**.

"In DAWN's view, women's agency means that women are autonomous subjects, full persons or owners of themselves, even though we also recognise that the reasoning and emotional experiences of women and men do not take place in a void, but are situated in a complex web of relations and power flux. It is vital to acknowledge that resistance to women's agency, in its full sense, is not an exclusively bad trait of religious and political fundamentalisms. Many other actors and political forces are not entirely convinced of its legitimacy as a foundation of citizenship and human rights, particularly when the principle of women's agency is applied to the domains of reproduction and sexuality. Many important political actors who otherwise widely praise women's agency in other spheres, as in political participation, the labour market and access to education, remain greatly suspicious of women's sexual and reproductive agency and freedom, especially when homosexuality and abortion are at stake.

Always and everywhere the social contract has been a contested terrain in which harsh disputes regarding resources and entitlements take place. In addition, although the social contract has a clear institutional dimension, it is much more than state institutions. It is also a social representation that impregnates the way through which individuals and groups perceive themselves in relation with each other and societal regulations. The social contract deploys perceptions, rules and disciplines through the most varied discourse, which impact on both public and private spheres (and that can enhance or erode sexual and reproductive freedom). Most importantly, its content depends on who is or who is not involved in its crafting in each historical moment. One constituent trait of the modern social contract, as we know it, is clearly a delicate balance of both secularity and religious freedom. The concrete political circumstances determining the limits and

possibilities of women (and human agency) in the domains of reproduction and sexuality indicate that a critical barrier we face is the gradual abandonment of the balance.

The gendered and sexualised nature of the modern social contract is just one side of the coin. On the other face we will find other structural dimensions relating to the distribution of power and economic resources. This has been the terrain of permanent struggles in the past two hundred years, which have clearly assumed new and more complex features in the era of globalisation. It seems fair to say that in our endeavours to make Cairo and Beijing a reality for women around the world, we have been caught between the right and left hand of the global governance system. Precisely for that reason, in order to move forward, it is crucial to link the sexual and reproductive health and rights agenda and the macro-economic processes that determine the shape of social contracts in relation to redistribution and social reproduction." *Women's Agency and the Social Contract as Lens to Examine Barriers to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights*, by Sonia Correa.

"For us in Africa, the beginning of the present forms of neo-liberal political economy of globalisation through structural adjustment policies of the 1980s carried with it the antithesis of feminist activism. It is this present imperialist model of capitalism that led to the so-called weakening of African states, such that while our leaders colluded with Western powers in the erosion of human well-being in the pursuit of profits through the market economy, state responsibilities, the social security system, health, transportation, education etc. were placed on the shoulders of citizens. 'Civil society' is increasingly taking on state responsibilities. Women bear the burden of family and community, and labour for sustainability of their families at the expense of their health. Thus while the transnational capitalist class in the globalised economy appropriates national resources, the subordinated class and groups, most of whom are women and youths, bear the burden of sustaining life in a depressed economy. This is happening at a time when HIV/AIDS is taking a devastating toll on the continent, with the worst victims being women and youths. As the male contractors and subcontractors (most African leaders) of the market economy enter into



disagreements, they resort to armed conflicts and wars, creating refugees, most of whom are women and children, mainly girls, as the young men become recruits on the battlefield.

Unequal gender power relations are entangled with other inequalities such as undemocratic male governance, political dominance and economic injustice against women. Only through women's autonomy, self-determination and empowerment can feminist struggles lead to the transformation of gender power relations. This is why the Bush Administration is pushing African governments to renege on their commitments embedded in CEDAW, ICPD and other agreements that contain elements to protect women's rights and their equal participation in decision-making on matters that affect their lives. The enabling environment created by women and their allies cannot be sustained if we do not pass on the struggle to the next generation. Girl's Power Initiative in Nigeria is one such attempt at educating adolescent girls towards sustaining the changing parameters." *The Empowerment of Girls - Towards Empowered Womanhood*, by **Bene Madunagu.** 🌞

PR&ST DOCUMENTS ON THE WEBSITE

Selected papers from South Asia research that contributed to DAWN's 2000 Political Restructuring and Social Transformation analysis, The Marketisation of Governance: Critical feminist perspectives from the South, that was produced by Vivienne Taylor for the World Summit on Social Development 5-year review in Geneva, are now available on the website. These are some excerpts from the papers.

From Globalisation and the State: some reflections on South Asian women's experience, by **Indu Agnihotri**.

"In their attempt to make an impact on democratic processes and institution-building for good governance, South Asian women have been struggling to open closed doors, reflecting, in the process, the stresses and dynamics of social change in the region. Straddling several different social worlds in their everyday lives, these women now have to confront challenges of a new global era, even as a fresh wave of orthodoxy attempts to push them back into an imaginary past invoked in the name of 'tradition' and 'identity'. What stands out in the region is the tremendous fortitude and courage with which women have stood up to the challenges.

The state operates within unequal structures as well as through structures that maintain and perpetuate inequality. Diversity does not preclude inequalities, just as the fantasy of freedom unravelled by the infotech revolution does not even attempt to address inequalities. These inequalities persistently determine both our present and our future, as well as any attempt to boost strategies of political restructuring by globalisation in countries such as India.

The various modes of globalisation are tantamount to a universalisation of power, now being concentrated in the hands of new multinational actors. The new structures and protagonists of world power are relatively anonymous. They lack accountability and often operate without controls. The power of the macro-structures and mega-corporations is too enormous. While nation states buckle under these immense pressures, it is only social movements, with more fundamentally transformative social agendas, that can intervene to shift the focus and direction of the ongoing process of political restructuring. The women's movement emerged as one of the most powerful and sustained blocs within this segment in almost all countries."

Political Participation of Women in South Asia, by **Farah Kabir**.

"The many barriers to political participation that South Asian women face exist at different levels and arise from socio-cultural values and practices that are firmly entrenched in systems and structures of society. By and large, in the entire Indian subcontinent, women who interact outside prescribed relations are viewed with suspicion. The family still regards its female members as weak and in need of protection throughout their lives. It is a popular perception that politics is a 'dirty game' not meant for women.

Almost every country in the region, with the exception of Nepal, has had a woman leader at its helm at some point, a phenomenon unparalleled in other regions. This is in stark contrast to the dwindling numbers of women who are elected to national parliaments and legislatures. This apparent paradox can be explained in terms of a phenomenon known as 'over-the-dead-body' syndrome. A woman leader derives her legitimacy for leadership from being a close relative of a dead leader, as a wife or daughter. This phenomenon of catapulting women as leaders form 'dynastic' families, and offering limited options to the others for contesting elections, is part of the common patriarchal legacy of South Asia.

The women's movement in South Asia has developed strong networking across borders to strengthen advocacy for women's political participation. The state's initiative of granting quotas or reservations for women has proved to be a mixed bag, depending on the country and the stipulation for reservation. In Pakistan and Bangladesh, women depend on political patronage and become 'secondary members'... affirmative measures end up as merely notional. South Asia boasts no documented case of political parties promoting the active participation of women in the party hierarchy or politics. The interaction of women in the public sphere has improved as a

consequence of the women's movement, particularly at the grass-roots level, and due to the proliferation of non-political women's organisations...that created alternative political spaces for women outside the party and formal political structures.

The mere fact of being elected to office as a woman does not, however, automatically ensure gender sensitivity. This is a serious issue that needs to be dealt with, as it involves matters of class and caste."



Social Movements, Feminist Movements and the state: a regional perspective, by **Sunila Abeyssekera**.

"A major problem with the women's movements in the region continues to be the separations that exist within the spectrum of social movements and the difficulties of informing all the different struggles for social justice with a gender perspective. For instance, despite the affirmation that women's rights are human rights, issues such as abortion, criminalisation of prostitution, victimisation of trafficked women, and related issues are not perceived as 'human rights' issues by the human rights community in general.

Discrimination against people living with HIV/AIDS is not perceived as an issue for struggle by people who work against discrimination based on caste, race or language. At the same time there are many divisions within the women's movements in the region that are based on differences in perception and analysis of current issues. The wide range of problems faced by women in conflict situations, for example, has been at the root of many separations in the women's movements. The trend towards 'gender' analysis that is devoid of the politics of understanding patriarchy and power poses a major obstacle to the ability to create an analytical framework that encompasses the totality of woman, as mother and as citizen.

There are fewer and fewer women's groups in South Asia that want to identify themselves with a feminist analysis of society or declare themselves to be feminist. This may be, in part, due to continuing prejudices regarding feminists, which are similar in many parts of the world, the most common allegations being that they are 'westernised', alienated from indigenous culture, and intent on destruction of 'family values'. But it is also partly due to the inability of many feminists to

take on the challenges posed by modernity and the processes of globalisation, and evolve new modes of analysis that respond to the rapid transformations taking place in our societies."



Politics and Power: a gendered perspective from South Asia, by **Farida Shaheed**.

"The onslaught of modernity and technological revolutions has failed to displace religion as an essential reference point for the majority of South Asia's people. The sense of alienation and injustice produced by the policies of the New World Order may contribute to a renewed assertion of a collectivity in terms that are meaningful to the average citizen, even at the expense of individual agency.

The presence and nature of institutions of civil society in South Asia are pivotal to renegotiations of the State-citizen relationship. When the state does not provide its citizens equal access to resources and benefits, it increased the importance of intermediary institutions as citizens' negotiators. In the absence of effective alternative means for self-expression and collective intervention, religious, cultural and/or ethnically defined institutions continue to play a major role in mediating between the state and its citizens.' Since women's rights flourish under democratic dispensations and weaken under authoritarian ones, it is vital that democratically inclined civil society institutions be strengthened as negotiators for women as a whole.

Though NGOs have gained acceptance, sometimes grudgingly, as legitimate actors in the policy-making process of states and the UN system, NGOs are no replacement for political processes. Structural and systemic changes only come about through social movements.

Many women's groups do not necessarily share perceptions or priorities, and effective coordination amongst the various groups has been a long-standing issue. There is increased concern amongst South Asian women at the apparent ease and visible success with which identity-based politics have mobilised a sizeable number of women."



WOMEN ON WAVES: Debate on abortion in Poland

From Ewa Charkiewicz, who tracked the Polish media and public reaction as the situation developed.

The visit of Women on Waves, a floating abortion clinic, to Poland in June caused waves over the Polish policy on abortion. An informal coalition of Polish women, STER Committee, invited the Dutch clinic boat for a two-week visit to provoke public debate about repressive anti-abortion laws, with the aim of promoting legal changes. Women on Waves sails under the Dutch flag to countries where abortion is illegal and provides safe abortions on international waters, done legally under Dutch law.

The ship and its supporters were greeted in Poland with eggs and red paint thrown by violent anti-abortion protesters, and encountered bureaucratic obstacles from Customs and law enforcement agencies who sealed off the mobile clinic. Extensive media coverage was unbalanced, focusing on the large numbers of anti-choice protestors, Polish law and Catholic heritage. Feminists were labelled Nazi-style baby killers.

After decades of safe, state-subsidised abortion in Poland, there was a reversal of policy in 1993 and abortion was de-legalised. Poland now has one of the toughest anti-abortion laws in Europe. There are decreasing numbers of legal abortions, performed only when a woman's life is in danger, and growing underground abortion services. After winning the vote to European Union accession, which the Polish Government owes to women's votes, the Prime Minister started to talk about reversing the strict abortion law — an electoral promise from the time of the national elections. In the current anti-abortion climate, he would not dare.

Some years ago, the Pope openly supported Poland's accession to the EU against the rhetoric of nationalist Catholic parties that portrayed it as the



new colonisation of Poland, and compared Brussels to Moscow. Now the Church hierarchy is preparing a project for a new Roman Empire (a reference to the period when the Pope was Emperor of Rome). The Church discourse talks of Poland's mission to 'baptise' Europe. It has opened university departments and institutes to train employees for the European Union. The campaign against Women on Waves is part of these developments to impose Catholic religious values as the rationale for State and global policy, and as principles of personal conduct for non-Catholics.

The abortion controversy is used to divert public attention from burning social issues and give visibility to right wing and Catholic nationalist political parties. Control of women and reproduction catches on like wildfire with men who were losers in the transition from communism to the capitalist economy in 1989. Given that in Poland only 5% of households say their standards of living have improved since then, anti-feminist backlash has a lot of appeal for much of the male population.

Nonetheless, STER reports that in partnership with Women on Waves they were able to successfully provide counselling and educational services and perform advocacy activities that resulted in an initiative for legal change among NGOs and some friendly Parliamentarians. 🌻

US Conservatives Take Aim at NGOs

From Jim Lobe, of *OneWorld US*

While non-governmental organizations such as Amnesty International, Greenpeace, and Oxfam have made significant contributions to human rights, the environment, and development, they are using their growing prominence and power to pursue a "liberal" agenda at the international level that threatens US sovereignty and free-market capitalism.

That was the message delivered by a series of speakers at a conference on "Nongovernmental Organizations: The Growing Power of an Unelected Few," sponsored by the American Enterprise Institute (AEI), a Washington think tank that has been particularly influential with the Bush administration.

"NGOs have created their own rules and regulations and demanded that governments and corporations abide by those rules," according to AEI and the conference co-sponsor, the rightist Institute of Public Affairs of Australia. "Politicians and corporate leaders are often forced to respond to the NGO media machine, and the resources of taxpayers and shareholders are used in support of ends they did not sanction."

"The extraordinary growth of advocacy NGOs in liberal democracies has the potential to undermine the sovereignty of constitutional democracies, as well as the effectiveness of credible NGOs," they warned.

To shed more light on NGOs, AEI announced the launch of a new website, NGOWatch.org (www.ngowatch.org), that will provide information about their operations, funding sources and political agendas. Brian Hook of the Federalist Society for Law and Public Policy Studies, which is co-sponsoring the site, said it will cover those NGOs "with the most influence in international affairs."

NGOs, which have proliferated at the local level since the 1980s—particularly in developing countries—have become major players at the United Nations and other multilateral agencies, such as the World Bank, which had traditionally dealt only with governments. Several thousand NGOs now enjoy "consultative status" at the UN, which entitles them to participate in some debates, while their image as representatives of "global civil society" has endowed them with a moral and political legitimacy, which they have used as leverage in dealing with the other major global actors, governments and corporations.


But, unlike corporations and governments, they are largely unregulated, and their internal processes often lack transparency and accountability, according to their critics and even to many NGOs themselves. Indeed, a UN commission on civil society chaired by former Brazilian President Henrique Cardoso is expected to recommend the adoption of guidelines or other mechanisms to ensure that NGOs recognized by the UN are transparent and accountable.

To the groups who gathered at AEI, however, international NGOs raise concerns that go far beyond transparency and accountability. To them, the international NGOs are pursuing a leftist or "liberal" agenda that favors "global governance" and other notions that are also promoted by the United Nations and other multilateral agencies.

According to George Washington University political science professor Jarol Manheim, international NGOs are pursuing "a new and pervasive form of conflict" against corporations which he calls "Biz-war," the title of his forthcoming book. NGOs, for example, work with sympathetic institutional investors, such as union and church-based pension funds, to sponsor shareholder resolutions demanding that corporations adopt more environment- or human-rights-friendly policies. Such efforts, he said, should be seen as "part of a larger, anti-corporate campaign."

Several speakers praised the work of NGOs in providing services and humanitarian aid to needy people in developing countries but stressed that, at the international policy level, much of what they did actually hurt the intended beneficiaries. Roger Bate, director of Africa Fighting Malaria, cited NGOs' opposition to the use of DDT to fight malaria and to the delivery of genetically-modified maize in southern Africa as examples of policies which amounted to "eco-imperialism" and showed a "callous disregard for human life."

"NGOs definitely provide benefits in the short run, but in the long run, their influence is almost always malign," he said.

Mike Nahan, IPA's executive director, charged that international NGOs supported secession movements in East Timor and Aceh, Indonesia; put Papua New Guinea "on the road to bankruptcy" by forcing out the mining industry; and is "destroying civil society in many of these countries." 

DAWN's Sonia Correa is a board member of the Montreal International Forum, an organisation with a mandate to provide a neutral space for global civil society networks to review and assess their experiences of engagement with the multi-lateral system.

SECOND MEETING OF G8 - CIVIL SOCIETY DIALOGUE

FIM held its second G8-civil society dialogue on 19-20 May in Paris, just prior to the 2003 G8 Summit in Evian, France. 1-3 June (<http://www.g8.fr/evian/english/home.html>). The United States was the only G8 country member that was absent. The meeting provided an opportunity to exchange ideas on key items on the Summit's agenda.

The first message voiced by civil society participants was that, in terms of human security, industrialised countries must fulfil their past promises to developing countries, mainly through using existing frameworks such as the Millennium Development Goals, increasing overseas development assistance, debt reduction, opening up Northern markets, and by creating new international taxation schemes.


A second message was that Africa represents a vital stake for the international community. The civil society participants called for a more transparent NEPAD, New Partnership for African Development, through further civil society involvement. They also urged rich countries to respond positively to African demands regarding agriculture and the fight against AIDS.

Thirdly, civil society participants called for democratisation of global governance and of the G8 itself, and a renewed commitment to multilateralism.


A more comprehensive report on this G8-civil society dialogue is posted on FIM's Website at <http://www.fimcivilsociety.org/english/home.html>

A succinct report of the dialogue held in Canada in 2002 ahead of the Kananaskis Summit, is also available. There are also case studies of NGO experiences that have successfully influenced the multilateral system; and a page of civil society websites that monitor the interaction between civil society organisations and multilateral institutions in many fields.


Secretary-General Kofi Annan has set up a Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations and appointed former Brazilian President Fernando Henrique Cardoso to chair it in order to assess interaction between the United Nations and civil society organisations and make recommendations for improvements: <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2003/ngo495.doc.htm>.

Given the critical importance of such a panel for the international civil society, FIM is striving to monitor it closely. Notably, FIM took part in early June in a two-day consultation organized in Geneva by the UN Non-Governmental Liaison Service on the Crisis in Global Governance: Challenges for the United Nations and Global Civil Society. 

NEW GENDER AND TRADE HANDBOOK

The Commonwealth Secretariat has published a new book by Mariama Williams, DAWN Co-Coordinator for the Political Economy of Globalisation (Trade), *Gender Mainstreaming in the Multilateral Trading System: a handbook for policy makers and other stakeholders*. It provides an integrated framework for a sustainable, pro-poor and gender-sensitive approach to trade policy-making. The flyer says a major part of the silence around gender, trade and investment at the level of governance of the trading system would appear to be lack of understanding of the conceptual, empirical and policy links between gender and trade. This book is an information and training tool for policy-makers and inter-governmental and civil society organisations interested in building and enhancing their knowledge of the important linkages between trade and investment policy and gender equality objectives and priorities. It also presents recommendations on the key issues as well as the identification of strategies that could be utilised by different stakeholders. 

Professorship for DAWN Coordinator

DAWN Anglophone Africa Regional Coordinator, Bene Madunagu, has been appointed a full Professor at the University of Calabar, Nigeria. She was previously Associate Professor of Botany. Outside her university academic career, Bene is a human sexuality educator, trainer and consultant. Her area of interest and activism is in sexual and reproductive health and rights, as well as political, economic and social rights for women. She co-founded Women in Nigeria in 1982 and is co-founder and Chair of Girls' Power Initiative. She is also Chair of the Calabar International Institute for Research, Information and Documentation that operates a programme for conscientising male adolescents, and the International Centre for Reproductive and Sexual Rights, and on the board of Reproductive Health Matters and Youth Care. She coordinates the South-east Zone of the Nigerian chapter of the International Reproductive Rights Research Action Group. She is now also chairperson of Baobab for Women's Rights, Nigeria, and a member of the Board of Directors of IPAS, North Carolina, USA. 

DAWN *Informis* is published three times a year in three languages by Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN) as an advocacy resource and networking tool. DAWN is an autonomous inter-regional organisation of the South which advocates alternative development processes that emphasise the basic survival needs of the world's people, particularly Third World women and their children.

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