

DAWN INFORMS

Développement Alternatives with Women for a New Era



*Celebrating our
20th Anniversary Year**

March 2004

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DAWN celebrates the 20th year of its existence in 2004 and a series of activities are already in motion to mark the event. DAWN began with a meeting in Bangalore, India, in August 1984 at which a group of feminists from all regions of the world reflected on what they had learned of women's experience of 'development' through their work as researchers and activists in the 10 years of the UN Decade for Women (1975-85). The resulting document, *Development, Crisis and Alternative Visions*, prepared for the NGO Forum in Nairobi for the end of the Decade, strongly critiqued the growth model of development and analysed the linkages between systemic crises of debt, deteriorating social services, environmental degradation, food security, militarism, political conservatism and religious fundamentalism.

Since then DAWN has published two other substantive global analyses and produced shorter analytical and advocacy materials assessing the changing global environment and implications for the women's rights agenda. DAWN analyses seek to bring conceptual clarity to complex issues and address new and difficult issues. DAWN has made considerable investment in global advocacy through the series of UN conferences in the 1990s and the five- and 10-year review processes, together with sustained engagement in the global civil society movement against economic globalisation. This year DAWN held its first training institute in feminist advocacy for a new generation of young feminist researchers and activists. (See P21)

The DAWN Steering Committee plans to bring women from all over the world who have been connected with its work in some way to collectively reflect on current and future challenges for the international women's movement in the disabling conditions of the present global conjuncture. They will include participants from the first training institute.

**Anniversary design by
Romanet Zarate Marquez*

To P2

For the first time at the World Social Forum, DAWN held a panel (on Fundamentalisms) as well as co-sponsoring others, and was also part of the group that organised pre-WSF Feminist Dialogues. Here is a report by DAWN South East Asia Regional Coordinator, Gigi Francisco, followed by excerpts from DAWN panel presentations.

“Holding the WSF in Asia provided an important opportunity for feminists and women’s movements from this part of the world to initiate and hold discussions on issues that were important in their context. They included the complexities around the re-emergence of various forms of fundamentalist tendencies in the left and right and in secular and religious movements, as well as the risks these had for women. Issues linked to the economic empowerment of poor women, particularly found in anti-poverty programmes that are designed at international, regional and national levels without adequate consultations, were also widely discussed. Cultural, ethnic and religion-related issues were more highlighted in Mumbai than in Porto Alegre. Mumbai more starkly reflected diverse realities and complex dynamics than had Porto Alegre in the past three WSF events. There was more visibility of women in the Mumbai WSF, both in having their own spaces and also in engaging in debates with men.

“Bringing to the fore issues of gender and sexuality and of the control of women’s bodies by all types of fundamentalisms were, I believe, the most significant learning opportunities on gender issues for social movements in the WSF. Mass movements were exposed to a broader scope of issues linked to the more complex relations of gender, sexuality and bodies in the context of patriarchy and its interaction with other forces of subordination. Feminists spoke loudly of imposed hetero-normativity, celebrated women and men who did not exactly fit the gender scripts, and talked of how fundamentalist backlash against women’s assertion on autonomy comes in all forms, even among groups that oppose globalisation. I think feminists were united in their resounding call for democracy as being essential to the processes and structures for social change.”

The important thing that happened for feminists in Mumbai was the holding of a pre-WSF Feminist Dialogues event. (*More on Feminist Dialogues, P12*)

From P1...celebrations



A major, three-day anniversary celebration is planned for Cape Town, South Africa, 18-20 October 2004. The events will include a series of debates — controversy tables — to address current political tensions in global/regional advocacy; the implications of the new language of ‘human dignity’ advanced by the Vatican; the serious problems of activists with the ‘human security’ framework, and critical issues for feminists working for economic and gender justice. The training institute participants will be involved in a series of inter-generational dialogues that will build on the earlier training and provide opportunities for DAWN to engage in difficult questions that concern young feminists. Regional training institutions are scheduled during the year as part of preparations and in celebration of regeneration within DAWN.

A video documentary will be filmed during the celebration of some of the discussions together with interviews with DAWN members, young feminists, and others attending the event to provide not only a record but a resource for further training and women’s studies programmes.

DAWN is also working on a new book to bring together new analytical work on linking its research themes that is planned for publication and launching at the anniversary celebration.

The organised programme will allow time and space for informal small group discussions, a reception, performances by feminists artists, and films and exhibitions of DAWN work.

The objectives of the anniversary activities are to celebrate DAWN’s survival and growth over the past 20 years, to launch an anniversary publication reflecting DAWN’s new analyses, to dialogue with young feminists, experienced activists and partners in both the donor community and in the movements for economic and gender justice, social development and human rights, on current and future challenges. 🌟

The Rise of Hindu Fascism in India: Challenges for Feminist Politics

Excerpts from a presentation by Vanita Nayak Mukherjee, DAWN South Asia Regional Coordinator, from a presentation on the DAWN panel, the Many Faces of Fundamentalism, at the World Social Forum, Mumbai. The full paper is available on the DAWN website, www.dawn.org.fj

The brand of Fundamentalism often referred to as “Hindu Fundamentalism” is of a Fascist variety. If “fundamentalism” is about going back to the roots or the fundamentals of religious texts that are upheld to be authoritative prescriptions for the practice of religion in one’s day to day life, then the contradictions for Hinduism are self evident. As a polytheist religion there is no one authoritative text (though there is a tendency among the right wing Hindu practitioners to privilege some over others in an attempt to homogenise Hindus). Hinduism in its essence is a dynamic and fluid religion – often referred to as a ‘way of life’ underscored with values of love, compassion and tolerance on the one hand, and seriously contradicting itself with institutionalising the oppressive caste system on the other. This specific contradiction left little space for manipulating a unified a Hindu religious identity, except through the route of creating a religious “other”. This is what the Hindu right wing has attempted to do with great success – by creating an ideology of “Hindutva” that uses chauvinist nationalism as a platform and promotes the notion of what it calls a “Hindu Rashtra” – a Hindu nation with the idea that only Hindus have a right to be Indians (citizens) and other religious minorities, especially Muslims, should accept being second class citizens.

The creation of a religious “other” and the brutal and systematic violence associated with it in the very recent past has its seeds about 80 years ago with the formation of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). The RSS venerated Hitler and Mussolini and fashioned its organisation along a Nazi model by recruiting young men and training them in military combat. A woman’s wing was added a decade later. RSS calls itself a “cultural organisation” and was just one actor in the emerging landscape of civil society in India at independence. Its exponential growth over the last few decades can be attributed to a successful and systematic peddling of its ideology of “Hindu Rashtra” and the “othering” of Muslims. To achieve Hindu Rashtra, the RSS encourages violent masculinism and professes to masculinise Hindu men away from the values of tolerance and compassion espoused by Hinduism. Muslim men are constructed as “virile” as they are supposed to have used violence to rule and pillage India for centuries and rape and molest Hindu women. This is unlike the “effeminate” Hindu men who did not resist and “allowed” this to happen. By creating a male binary of the Virile Muslim versus the Effeminate Hindu, the RSS positions violent masculinity squarely at the center of its politics and exhorts Hindu men to retaliate for the all the historical ‘wrongs’ of the past.

The RSS shaped the polity and politics of India into fascism and gathered political support, power and mass appeal in a little over two decades by presiding over the birth of several brother Hindutva organisations with a different agendas ranging from politics, economics and the religious – collectively called the “Sangh Parivar” (Sangh family) The key strategy of this right wing conglomerate is to encompass power in both the State at all levels and in civil society, into which its vicious tentacles have penetrated as far as remote pockets of Dalit (people occupying lowest rung in the caste-hierarchy) and Tribal communities.

The ascendancy of the fascist-leaning, right wing political party, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has been through a route of coalitional politics. Some of the coalition partners were even secular or espoused liberal ideals during the national-independence struggle. However, by retaining key portfolios, the BJP initiated a calculated transformation of former democratic state institutions by altering their independent character. Right wing leaning bureaucrats, police officials, intellectuals and academicians were placed in key positions within state institutions and maneuvered to further the fascist agendas.

Civil society organisations of the right wing comprise a clutch of different groups with women’s wings which have penetrated slowly but surely into rural and remote areas by providing free education and health services, even in states with Left and liberal traditions.

This twin strategy of capturing state power at the center and engaging with civil society and grass roots marginalised communities through provision of essential services has meant a rapid and rampant spread of the fascist agenda of the Sangh Parivar and a consolidation of its power base. In recent state elections in

India, three out of four states, returned the right wing BJP to power. And in the Gujarat State elections, soon after the genocide of Muslims, the BJP came back to power with an overwhelming majority. Gujarat has marked a watershed in consolidating communal fascism in India.

The defining feature of this Gujarat Genocide in March 2002 that left 2000 dead and more than 150,000 homeless was the brutal and horrific violence against women and children. As Tanika Sarkar puts it, “more important than the statistics of loss is the nature of terror, for violence now consists of public acts of sadism that have been missing from earlier histories of carnage in our country.”

The active collusion of the state machinery — police and bureaucrats — and the mobilisation by right wing civil society organisations of women, Tribals and Dalits demonstrates the extent of penetration of the Sangh Parivar. With such an entrenched hold over power, no arrests have been made. Violence was perpetrated on the Muslims in a cold, calculated and systematic way with the aid of technology like cell-phones and computer print-outs with Muslim home and business addresses. These marauding mobs were ordinary men and women from everyday life. Men who could torture, rape, rip apart pregnant women, dismember fetuses and then burn them while women openly acquiesced and found nothing wrong in these macabre acts of perverse sexual violence. Innocent babies crying for water were filled with petrol and lit up.

In any communal conflicts or ethnic cleansing women’s bodies become the vehicle for dishonoring the community and symbolise a patriarchal reassertion of and material control over “the Other” men’s women, targeted to plunder the so-called community lineage and purity.

Tanika Sarker explains the killing of children and the savage attacks of women’s reproductive and sexual organs as expressions of anxiety by Hindu men of Muslim fertility rates and of their outnumbering Hindus – a fear fiercely contested by Indian demographers. There were, thus, many layers of symbolic meanings – from the sexual dishonoring to the decimation of numbers – carried out in identical lines in different geographic areas of Gujarat state. This strongly suggests a planned aggression fashioned on the lines of the right wing Sangh Parivar’s teachings and the indoctrination of its cadres with brutal forms of masculine violence.

Today, there is an apartheid in progress within Gujarat where Hindus are clearly the first class citizens and Muslims are either being hounded out or denied their rights as citizens in multifarious ways in their day-to-day life. In India, Gujarat is now symbolic of the demise of the last vestige of secular politics that India struggled with after its independence. It has forever altered the course and the ways in which we perceive our day-to-day politics.

Many challenges face the feminist thinking and activism in India.

The negative agency of the right wing Hindu women and their collusion with men in the looting, plunder, maiming, raping and murdering of Muslim women. This not only challenges our essentialist assumptions of equating peace with women, but questions deeply some of our long held assumptions of the “self emancipatory” potential of women’s political participation for which feminists have struggled.

Our problematisation of women’s multiple identities in India across the axes of class, caste, ethnicity is progressively getting subsumed or obfuscated under the metanarrative of the Hindu right’s religious Hindutva identity. Conversely, the terror unleashed on Muslims is reinforcing their identities along religious lines with implications for women’s mobility and freedom to engage in daily activities in the public sphere. The earlier theorising around gender and patriarchy seems inadequate to grapple with the brutalisation inherent in communal identities and the sharp cleavages deepening among women along religious lines.

The role of religion or spirituality in peoples’ and women’s lives has been given a short shrift by progressive thinkers and activists thus far, including feminist activists. The emergence of religion as a defining factor in politics challenges us to acknowledge the role played by religion and to recover the positive and emancipatory values inherent in most religious beliefs that underscore tolerance and compassion.

The risk of the rich, textured, varied, but contested political spaces in India that exist now for minorities among Hindus - such as Dalits and Tribals - is shrinking rapidly. Reconversion of Dalits who had earlier converted to Christianity (in protest of the Hindu caste oppression) back to Hindus in what is termed as “Ghar Vapasi” (Homecoming) and the intensive mobilising of Tribals in massive numbers within the Hindutva fold portends an obfuscation of genuine issues of the sub-altern communities and a reinforcing of hierarchies along new lines.

Gujarat has fundamentally changed our everyday ways of thinking and categorising the world. The liberal and secular political spaces are being rapidly overtaken, leaving us in two states: a state of paralysis and confusion about what we can do, where to begin and how to move ahead; and of constantly revisiting movements, including the feminist movement, for exploring ways to play a constructive role in combating fascism. 🌻

THREATS TO SECULARITY: As churches struggle for hearts and minds in the religious market

From the presentation by DAWN Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Research Coordinator, Sonia Correa, for the DAWN panel at WSF 2004.

Since the 1980's feminists – including DAWN – have systematically called attention to the fact that fundamentalism, although proliferating from the religious sphere and deploying religious discourses, should be seen as a political phenomenon. The Latin American example can provide an understanding how this plays out both historically and in contemporary conditions; and how current fundamentalism in Latin America differs from other Southern regions.

Fundamentalist forces, although being religious, aim at controlling state power: first by capturing peoples' hearts and minds and then gaining power via electoral politics. This is occurring at a conjuncture in which the progressive discourse and analysis of states is that they are systematically being divested of power. If nothing else, political activities of fundamentalist forces in the current scenario should inspire us to seriously interrogate this conclusion.

Until the 17th-18th century the very notion of political power being distinct from divine power was entirely unknown. In the case of Latin America, colonisation was mobilised by a combination of mercantile and missionary interests. When Latin American countries became independent, there were still linkages between the Spanish and Portuguese crowns and the Catholic Church. Contemporary fundamentalism is deeply rooted in the Spanish and Portuguese Inquisitions that, in a first phase, were less concerned with heresies than with chasing out Jews and heterodox sexual practices. A later phase of the Inquisitions collaborated with secular arms of the empires to contain the spread of modern scientific, philosophical and political ideas.

The doctrinal and moral premises that inspired the colonial inquisition have not died, but are constantly revived and adapted to new conditions. For instance, Catholic lay orders such as Opus Dei and Knights of Christ continue to substantially influence state policies. The 'cult of

Mary' promotes positive female qualities such as love, compassion and care, while crystallising a social imagery that portrays women as fundamentally wives and mothers. (This may explain why only one Latin American country, Cuba, has fully legalised abortion).

Independence struggles in the 19th century were mostly inspired by Enlightenment ideals and formally committed to secularism, but the Catholic Church retained a strong influence on political elites and the States themselves. Most recently in countries experiencing political and social crisis – Bolivia, Colombia, Peru and Venezuela – the Church is again playing the role of political mediator, which gives it great power to influence policies and legislation.

Positive political expressions are also identified with Catholic tradition in the region. In colonial times Jesuits struggled with colonisers and the Crowns to protect the indigenous population, and notably the Latin American Catholic Church became the most important stronghold of liberation theology in the world in the 20th century – although it has never been open and progressive on sexuality and reproduction issues, apart from a few exceptional voices. Grassroots community work inspired liberation theology, however, has clearly expanded women's social and political participation.

During many years of virulent dictatorships the Catholic Church became a critical actor in



relation to human rights and fundamental freedoms. This "golden era" gradually dissolved under the papacy of John Paul II, with the step by step removal of the most progressive cardinals and bishops from important positions. Work for human rights during military regimes was later used by the Church hierarchy as trade-off currency to block policy changes on abortion, contraception and divorce. But on issues in the 'moral domain', there are differences between the Catholic hierarchy and the faithful, particularly on personal decisions relating to sexuality and reproduction.

Protestantism has been expanding, from the late 19th century to the mushrooming of Pentacostal churches in the past three decades, particularly in rural areas and among the poor. As with Islamic fundamentalism, they provide support networks in areas where the State is entirely absent and create spaces of sociability that are particularly attractive to women.

Traditional denominations and the new Pentecostals have both acquired radio and TV media and in the last decades, particularly in Brazil, have been openly involved in politics through the election of parliamentarians. While there are tensions between Pentecostal sects and the Catholic Church as they struggle for hearts and minds in the "religious market", at the parliamentary level (at least in Brazil) they operate in close alliance on issues related of sexuality and abortion.

Latin American states cannot be seen as consistently secular across history, but at least at the formal level the commitment to secularity has been retained and during the democratisation processes of the 1970s and 1980s, gradually gained strength. But states are once again being increasingly taken over by religious forces in a pattern similar to what has happened in the US. In this new and dangerous context, few progressive voices have been raised on the threats to secularity as the cornerstone of modern democracy. Feminists are often alone in their analyses of the

For centuries the Church controlled educational and health institutions, including the first law schools. Even in the Republican context that has prevailed from the 19th century on, the Church hierarchy remains able to influence State policies through diverse means, including personal and family connections with political leaders.

demise of State secular principles, for reasons including the great outreach of religious forces and their systematic investment in philanthropy and social services that have become 'fashionable' in the current climate of prioritising poverty reduction.

Differently from Islamic fundamentalism, in Latin America both Catholic and other religions do not contest women's rights in general. Nor do Protestants have a strong position on fertility regulation. The Catholic Church, while continuing opposition to contraceptive methods, has had to adjust to the reality of contraceptives being prevalent in most countries. The fundamentalist forces have instead come to gradually concentrate on abortion and homosexuality.

Viewed from a global perspective, the risks and atrocities of fundamentalisms in Latin America can be somehow (erroneously) 'minimised'. It is relatively easy to demonstrate the brutalities of the Taliban against Afghan women, or Sharia death sentences. But a narrow focus on these as a full expression of fundamentalism must be challenged. What exists now in the regional scenario must be critically analysed from a longer historical perspective of at least two centuries, during which the cumulative process of democratisation and secularisation have been evolving. As fundamentalist forces acquire power over states and policies, the incremental gains of democracy and secularisation that were achieved with such difficulty will be eroded. In this worrying scenario few voices other than feminists' are being raised to illuminate the dangers.

The reason for this intriguing silence requires further analysis, but clearly one factor is the historical parliamentary affinity between the Left and religious forces. ☀



Fundamentalisms of the Progressive?

Extracts from the presentation by Anasuya Sengupta for the DAWN panel at WSF 2004. She was a participant in the DAWN Training Institute held in Bangalore, September-October 2003. Here she reflects on how episodes of communal violence, fundamentalism and facism changed her life while changing so little the "progressive forces" of which she is part — in terms of their effectiveness and strategising, leaving them feeling that they "struggle endlessly, often without hope and rarely with clarity."

Perhaps the time has come for us to look within ourselves, critically and honestly, and examine what might well be called our own 'fundamentalisms', our own entrenched and embedded notions of the way we are and the work we do, and the manner in which these play out in our attitudes and our in/actions.

Purity

As we rail against fundamentalists and their constructions of 'purity', it seems somewhat ironic that we too have our own entrenched notions of purity – certainly not consciously and carefully constructed as those we struggle against, but self-defeating nonetheless. 'Multiplicity' or 'intersectionality' seem to be our stumbling blocks in coming together powerfully. Our most critical need today is the 'expanding of constituencies', of convincing people who might otherwise be confused about their political decisions that the world cannot be a better place if bias and bigotry are fostered and institutionalised. And yet we spend much of our time implying – and trying to convince – our colleagues in different social justice movements, that "my issue is more important than yours". We do the same with ideologies, with strategies, with methods of mobilising.

Dissent vs. Consensus

Dissent is one of the most important organising principles of progressive groups, and it is often the real difference between 'us' and 'them'. But what is the fine balance between dissent and consensus? This is both conceptual and strategically critical – we cannot move forward without this. What are the ways in which we can accept and embrace dissent while acting powerfully (which always requires some degree of consensus, some degree of joint action)?

Faith/religion/spirituality

What is the feminist understanding of faith and spirituality? We need to create, in particular, the

feminist understanding of religion and its implications for the ways in which we live and work. However we might reject organised religion ourselves, do we have the right to reject organised religion without thought, when so many of the women we claim to represent or whose voices we amplify, have strong faith bases, and cannot reject them in the same way we can, and do? There is also confusion between organised religion and its use as a political agenda. For instance, so many Indians find it difficult to understand or analyse the difference between Hinduism and Hindutva, a political agenda based on fear and violence. Right-wing forces of course cash in on this confusion, while we do little to dispel it.

Being reactive vs. a positive vision

'Secularism' in India is taken to mean a profusion and celebration of multiple religions, rather than a rejection of all religions. While the term "pseudo-secularists" is meant to be a crude right-wingers' insult to the progressives, there must be some truth in it for the name to stick, for it to resonate with many of those who might not otherwise consider themselves to be politically right wing. Is it that we are too often reactive, that we are constantly fighting against positions, vocabularies, actions created by the right, rather than creating a positive vision ourselves? It is important to react in certain contexts, we cannot afford not to, but it is equally important that we are able to reach out with messages of hope, of joy, of celebration.

So how are we going wrong in the how, where, what and whom of advocacy? We know that the majority of Hindus are not necessarily right-wing: then what is our vision of pluralism for them? How can we explain this cogently, honestly, powerfully? Perhaps our new understanding of 'belonging' can begin with the notion of 'citizenship'; yet we must analyse this in the context of fractured nation states (and within the global

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context of fundamentalisms and fascisms, as well as the resistance to these that is equally and inspiringly global). Perhaps we need to move from the notion of 'citizenship' as being bound by geography (even if imagined as such) to being about the integrity of personhood in all possible ways. How do we do this? How can we combine international mechanisms like the International Criminal Court with local assaults upon citizenship?

The Politics of Intimacy

Fundamentalism ultimately tries to govern/manipulate our most intimate relationships, finally creating a sense of **community** which is both inclusive and naturally excluding. These 'politics of intimacy' we all play out but rarely reflect upon; we now need to look at these processes from the perspective of both honesty and strategy. Our most radical understanding needs to come from these intimate relationships and how they can be manipulated. How do we create a sense of

"Political party presence was less visible, it was much more grass roots, Dalits, Tribals, sex-workers, hijras, women's unions and others. There were more gender and women visible in the WSF mainstream. The dialogue between the movements was a real blast!"
Sonia Correa.



WSF 2004 was an amazing experience at different levels. There were 75,000 who registered, most of whom were Indians, with a major and visible presence of grass roots organisations who kept marching and demonstrating throughout the day and night — a challenge to people's abilities to attend and hear panels and discussions. There was lots of energy everywhere and a mind-blowing array of events, hundreds running parallel every day.
Vanita Mukherjee.

community that is positive and powerful?

We also need to understand how the personal is made into propaganda. For instance, personal conversations and gossip can make grotesque leaps of imagination and are often the way rumours are created, stereotypes constructed and images cast, sometimes permanently. It is these leaps of imagination that masquerade as truths that we are constantly battling against.

If these personal conversations telescope out, our **strategies** must also telescope back in to the people and communities we work with — both in terms of the issues we discuss as well as the ways in which we discuss them. From personal to collective action, our only way to change attitudes is to understand levels of intimacy and to create those levels of trust and intimacy in our mission and our messages.

The feminist slogan is 'the personal is political', but in strategising and mobilising against fundamentalisms, I increasingly feel that the political needs to be personal. 🌻

O My People

When the blood settles, with tired sighs
upon the flagellated earth
when cries and gurgles stretch the sky
breathless -

When little human beings
after an obesity of self-indulgence
gaze fearfully at creatures of pain
unrestrained -

Who are they, then, these strangers?
come to celebrate my inadequacies -
I watch my people and do nothing.
I can do nothing?

I have travelled these days
clutching anger like a shroud
watching a platitude-stricken multitude
with... patience.

Who are these strangers at my door?
Which deformed dispensation
do they worship like a god?

O my people, what have I done unto thee.

Anasuya Sengupta
(New Delhi, 1993;
written after the demolition of Babri Masjid)

Rights of the Body and Rhetorics of War

From a paper by Ros Petchesky, who spoke on the DAWN panel at the World Social Forum, Mumbai, 18 January 2003.

Fundamentalisms come in many guises, usually religious but also political and economic. Religious fundamentalisms are always and everywhere political in their aims and strategies, and are intimately tied to forms of patriarchy. To challenge the threat of nationalist violence, e.g. in Gujarat or Israel and Palestine, or imperial violence, e.g. in Iraq, there is a need to understand not only their political and economic roots but also their roots in and perpetuation of masculinist and homophobic sexuality.

Fundamentalism and its manifestations in US foreign policy under Bush

Feminists at WSF reject the xenophobic identification of fundamentalism primarily with Islam. Whether Christian, Muslim, Hindu or Jewish, fundamentalists “share a preoccupation with the erosion of values, traditions and meaning seen as constitutive of post-Enlightenment modernity”. (Roxanne Euben, *Enemy in the Mirror*, 1999) There are differences between Islamic and Christian fundamentalists, since the former have experienced modernity with colonisation, as an imposition by the west; whereas the latter criticise the secularism of the liberal state but are perfectly committed to its imperialist and expansionist project.

The US under Bush is a fundamentalist power.

Right-wing Christian American fundamentalism is just as patriarchal, homophobic and nationalistic (while also imperialist) as its right-wing Hindu, Islamic and orthodox Jewish counterparts elsewhere in the world. The three dimensions of fundamentalism—strategic (geopolitical), religious, and masculinist—are inexorably intertwined.

The junta of leaders who planned and led the Iraqi invasion and occupation personify all three fundamentalist aspects and share a common neoconservative ideology. This ideology rests on the premise that, having “won” the Cold War, the US should not allow any other power to rival its supremacy in the world, with the objective of

maintaining global dominance through unilateral action and incontestable military superiority. Under this new regime, “every imperial war is a civil war, a police action,” according to Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (*Empire*), designed to stabilise the boundaries and parameters of empire.

The Bush government thrives on a permanent state of war, not only against terrorism but for Unocal, the Carlyle Group, Bechtel and Halliburton; for cheap crude, unimpeded pipelines, unlimited SUVs, and a president whose image finally looks manly.

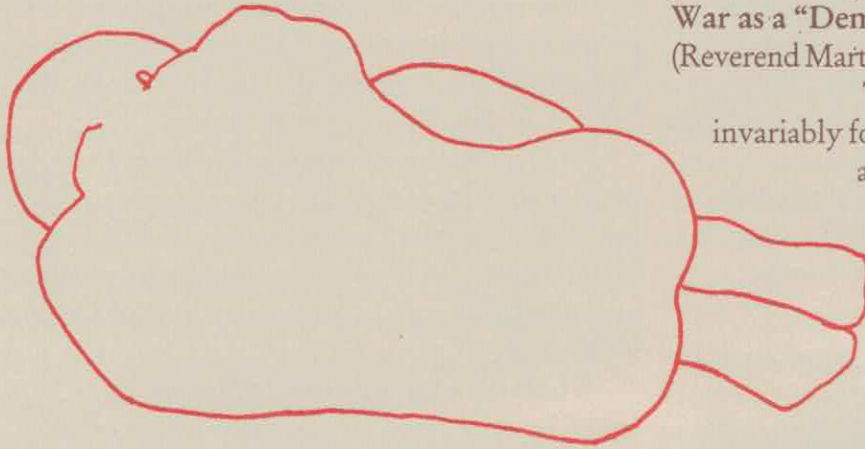
The Bush administration’s concept of sovereignty is based on a peculiar fusion of neo-realism and apocalyptic evangelism that is unprecedented in modern times. It is a Hobbesian view of the world that assumes everyone will act based only on calculations of self-interest; that the world is a “dangerous place” (as Bush, Cheney and Rumsfeld remind us over and over); and so it’s better to act preemptively to maximize your own advantage. As many have pointed out, this neo-realist view becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, feeding the dangers and threats it so readily perceives everywhere. At the same time, the common denominator in both military and “humanitarian” aspects of the Bush administration’s foreign policy is not only unilateralism but the punitive, moralising approach typical of fundamentalist religious doctrines of ‘good’ and ‘evil’. This means an HIV/AIDS policy that mandates criminal penalties for all forms of sex work and prostitution and de-funding programs that provide outreach and services to sex workers, as well as teaching your enemies a lesson through “shock and awe” strategies in Iraq.

The evangelical right’s agenda at home and abroad has many pernicious aims that it now claims are in defense of “human rights”: the reimposition of the global gag rule; blockage of funds to UNFPA because of alleged forced abortions in China; promotion of strict abstinence-only doctrines; channeling funds in the US to faith-

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based organisations while denying those funds to programmes that provide condoms and comprehensive reproductive and sexual health services; pretending to “rescue” the victims of sexual trafficking through punitive provisions that would criminalize all sex work.

Masculinism is socially constructed, not biological or hereditary. So we shouldn't be surprised when women participate in and are



complicit in it—for example, egging on Hindu right-wing rapists in Gujarat or instigating campaigns to “rescue” sex workers from moral evil; or that when men attempt to subvert and resist it they risk repudiations of their “manhood” (for example, the “refuseniks” in Israel who reject military service in Palestinian occupied territories).

Masculine rescue fantasies as pretexts for aggression: “rescuing downtrodden Muslim women,” came up against some inconvenient realities in Iraq. Saddam Hussein's brutal dictatorship had also provided women with free health care and education, and many women felt free to dress as they desired. Instead of “liberating” Iraqi women, the US invasion and occupation have unleashed terrifying instability and insecurity that make it dangerous now for women to walk unescorted in the streets. Whether an “Islamic Republic of Iraq” will be truly democratic with respect to the rights of women and girls is an open question, but it's certain that Iraqi women shouldn't count on the Bush administration to be their “defenders” after the oil and business contracts have been secured.

Women's groups advocating for reproductive and sexual rights in U.N. conferences have long come up against the “unholy alliance” of the Vatican, the Islamists and the U.S. Allying with your enemies to deny the sexual and reproductive rights of women and girls may seem in utter contradiction with waging war

against these same “evil-doers” allegedly to rescue their women. But there is also an inherent and perverse logic here as well as political opportunism. To the extent that the perpetual war machine and the total security state are about asserting “true manhood” and masculinist strength (as well as white supremacy, Sunni supremacy, Hindu supremacy, etc.), then democratic freedoms of reproductive choice, sexual expression and desire will always be perceived as a grave danger.

War as a “Demonic Destructive Suction Tube”
(Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr.)

The sexual abuses and coercions that invariably follow in the wake of armed conflict are now codified in public international law as war crimes and crimes against humanity, thanks to years of work by the Women's Caucus for the ICC. But many violations of sexual rights and sexual health and wellbeing aren't specified in law:

massive spread of HIV/AIDS through sexual abuse, disruption of all conditions that make meaningful sexual and erotic experience even possible, war-devastated economies and infrastructure that breed sexual trafficking.

The Bush Doctrine of preemptive attack is the consummate expression of masculine anxiety and its compulsion to prove its manhood, even at the cost of all social wellbeing, all sustainable human development, and the very planet. Many more billions of dollars are spent on war than on the Global Fund Against AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis (which the Bush HIV/AIDS policy is also trying to undermine with its own fund, geared to “abstinence-only” and “faith-based” programs). And how can sexual health, freedom or pleasure even be feasible in the absence of food security, decent housing, livelihoods, environmental safety, basic education - and all the other social rights that a war economy and war culture undermine for so many?

In this frightening context, our response must be a renewed effort to build broader coalitions around a politics of bodily integrity—coalitions of feminists with sex workers, HIV/AIDS activists, LGBT groups, labour rights and human rights groups, and all those who oppose imperialist interventions, war and racist and communal violence. We have to reclaim our bodies from wars. 🌺

CHALLENGING THE 'FREE MARKET' FUNDAMENTAL

WORLD SOCIAL FORUM 2004

From a presentation by Marina Fe B. Durano of DAWN-SEA on the DAWN panel at WSF 2004.

The primacy of markets can be considered one of the fundamental arguments of the neoliberal economic project. We have been and continue to be market-bound as our governments implement the package of economic reforms comprising the Washington Consensus that have now become familiar to us. We are also quite familiar, perhaps even more so, to the limits of its promises. What we need to remind the neoliberal practitioners is that the market is not as free as they think it can be, that is, that markets are bound by the institutions that create them.

Market-bound: Hooray for free markets

The primacy of the market is crucial to the neoliberal project because it is a powerful mechanism for achieving allocative efficiency if we 'get the prices right'. Getting the prices right means leaving market forces to themselves, and, thus, the scarce resources (land, labour and capital) in our respective economies will be distributed across sectors that are able to make the most and best use of it.

This phrase of 'leaving the market forces to themselves' has become a rhetorical device to imply that the market is an omnipotent and omniscient presence that will solve economic problems if we just allow it to do so. To quote Ha-Joon Chang, an economist from Cambridge University, "[t]he market primacy assumption implies that markets are natural institutions, and states and other institutions are man-made substitutes (Chang, 2003: 50)." Market forces take on the character of a "natural institution" that is separate from us. Attempts to bring in the state, the government or public sector create distortions and cause imperfections since these institutions are "man-made substitutes" for the market.

Markets bind: Limits of the free market

The project of getting the prices right did not deliver on its promise of high growth. Indeed, it is not unlikely that getting prices right can lead to slow or no growth. It is not even necessary to get the prices right to achieve high growth, to continue with Chang's arguments.


The past two and half decades have shown us that setting the market free cost us our own freedoms. The package of policies centering on fiscal conservatism, monetary tightness, trade liberalisation, and privatisation that is labeled as 'economic reforms' has increased inequality, vulnerability, and the exclusion of large numbers of peoples. We wonder about the price that we have to pay just to get the market prices right.

Markets are bound: There is no free market

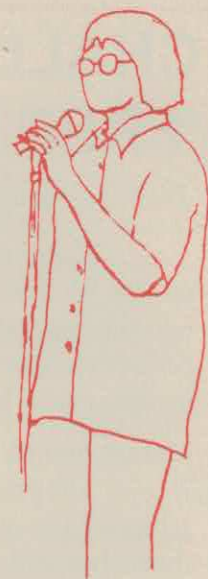
The free market, however, is a myth. A set of institutions is required for a market to function, according to Dani Rodrik, an economist from Harvard University, "...markets need to be embedded in a range of non-market institutions in order to work well. These institutions perform several functions critical to markets' performance: they create, regulate, stabilise, and legitimate markets." (Rodrik, 2002: 3) In other words, (Chang 2003) said that there are laws, rules and regulations that specify who can participate in the market (e.g., migrants can but children cannot), what can be traded or exchanged in the market (e.g., narcotics are illegal but bananas are not), the rights and obligations of participants (e.g., safety regulations, zoning laws, pollution controls, etc.), and the regulate the process of exchange (e.g., fraud, bankruptcy). If these institutions are necessary for the existence and functioning of markets then that can only mean that "[t]he market is a political construct (Chang, 2003: 52)" since every law, rule and regulation is politically-determined. Therefore, markets are not free from intervention, rather markets exist because of it.

Since markets are political constructs and institutions are politically-determined, it is no stretch of the imagination to see that markets will carry the gender-biases embedded in the institutions that created them. It will not be surprising to find gendered differences among market participations (e.g., in financial markets), on objects of exchange (e.g., land), on rights and obligations (e.g., performance of caring functions and socially reproductive activities), and the regulation of these processes. We need to remind ourselves that it is not only the formal institutions that are important in the functioning of markets but that informal institutions—the social norms surrounding personal relationships and exchange—are just as crucial in determining the gendered character of market outcomes.

Conclusion

Markets are bound by institutions. They are bound by institutions that we create. There is no "natural order" to markets. They are created. Hence, markets can be recreated. 

FEMINIST DIALOGUES: Building Solidarity




A two-day strategising meeting, Feminist Dialogues: building solidarity, was held in Mumbai 14-15 January, a few days before the World Social Forum opened. It was an initiative of the groups who met for a Women's Strategy Meeting in Porto Alegre during WSF 2003, with a core planning team that includes DAWN, Marcosur Feminist Articulation (AFM), African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET), INFORM (Sri Lanka), ISIS International Manila, Women's International Coalition for Economic Justice (WICEJ), Women's Environment and Development Organisation (WEDO), and the organising groups of India gathered under the National Network of Autonomous Women's Groups (NNAWG). It was planned as a democratic space for feminist organisations and feminists working with other organisations to promote ethical discussion on the challenges before the women's global movement; to deepen feminist understanding about the relationship between neo-liberalism, militarism, neo-conservatism, religious fundamentalism and gender/racial/ethnic inequalities; and to consolidate relationships among global feminist networks within WSF and strengthen those with other social movements.

A statement drafted for FD said: "This Meet represents diverse feminist perspectives and seeks to address the complexity of emergent issues vis-à-vis globalisation. It is aimed at supporting activist and feminist dynamism in the global peoples' movements for alternatives and their sites. Above all, it is an attempt to transnationalise feminist debates and visions so as to devise and take forward collective strategies beyond WSF 2004."

The themes that emerged as the content for the Feminist Dialogues: Sexuality, Reproductive Rights, Bridging the Local/Global Divide (on forms and strategies for organising), and Women's Human Rights in the context of fundamentalisms, and papers were prepared to spark discussion.

- ✓ Reproductive Rights discussion point: "In the context of global wars, armed conflicts and the political ascendancy of extreme forms of nationalism and fundamentalisms that control and prescribe women's lives, the right to live, to nurture children one can call 'one's own', and the right to see one's children grow up are also being increasingly defined as part of a reproductive rights agenda by feminists around the world....Global capitalism too is a rampant violator of reproductive rights: neither women nor men should be forced to trade off their health or their reproductive capacity for jobs....New reproductive technologies have a huge impact on the lives of women.... and within women's movements there are many debates and tensions regarding the use and value of technologies such as cloning, artificial insemination and embryo freezing because on the one hand they expand women's choices, and on the other they are often instrumental in reaffirming capitalist and patriarchal control over women's lives."
- ✓ Challenging Sexual Borders and Frontiers discussion point: "We as feminists are often silent on matters related to our bodies and our sexual lives, manifested, for example, in the ways in which many of us are uncomfortable in talking about our right to sexual pleasure....The pervasiveness of heteronormativity is as much a part of patriarchy as is control over women's bodies. Along with racism and ethnic chauvinism and capitalism, this forms the intricate matrix through which sexual choices are mediated and subverted...It prompts feminist critiques of institutions like the family, law, religion, conventional morality and their support by state interventions that continue to construct 'acceptable' and 'deviant' sexuality..."
- ✓ Contested Terrains: women's human rights at the intersection of globalisation and fundamentalism, discussion point: "Human rights principles of equality and non-discrimination have historically been key to struggles for women's rights. Yet the adoption of a 'rights-based' approach to development by international aid agencies and by the multilateral financing institutions has led

to the co-option of the language and principles of human rights... The human rights discourse has been unable to challenge the forces of global fundamentalisms that advocate extremist positions that restrict and advocate against the enjoyment of critical human rights... by working through specific interpretations of culture, religion, tradition and custom that lead to the political use of identities based on religious beliefs, but also on ethnicity, language and culture to capture and exercise political and economic power. The UN, however enfeebled and corporatised, remains a terrain of struggle and a site where global civil society organisations are seeking an effective role and voice."

✓ Beyond the Local-Global Divide: Resistances in current geopolitics discussion point: "New dynamics have brought into sharper focus the need to form new and different types of alliances across geopolitical boundaries. Yet in the face of growing forms of extreme nationalism and religious fundamentalisms worldwide, the very nature of these potential alliances create situations that bring into question the principles that underlie people's movements. For example, women have joined fundamentalist and right-wing political movements in massive numbers. This marks a high level of women's political engagement, but with a very different outcome than that urged by women's rights activists." 

The *Feminist Dialogues* was a successful follow-up to the Women's Strategy Meeting that was initiated by Latin American women at the 3rd WSF. In the end, what did we achieve? For me the important thing is that the space for feminist dialogues that was carved out by the Latin American women last year had become more of a 'reality' in Mumbai. Now feminists will expect to have feminist dialogues at the next WSF and beyond. Next time around, perhaps there will be another group of feminists who will launch the event and mark it with their own spirit, but who will also commemorate the thread that ties back to the previous FDs, just as we always link back to Porto Alegre for the WSF." Gigi Francisco

VICTORY AND REAFFIRMATION IN SANTIAGO

*From DAWN Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Research
Coordinator, Sonia Correa, and Francoise Girard in Santiago, Chile.*


A consensus document from 37 countries at the ECLAC Cairo + 10 meeting in Santiago, Chile, 10-13 March, has reaffirmed ICPD and ICPD + 5.

The document explicitly mentions reproductive health services; the rights of adolescents to services and information with respect for their privacy and confidentiality; has a strong paragraph on HIV prevention, treatment and care that emphasises human rights; and has a paragraph on maternal mortality that asks countries to redouble efforts, taking into account the multiple causal factors including lack of family planning and obstetric care, and the "factors referred to in Paragraph 63 of ICPD + 5."

Nothing of what the US wanted is included, not even the rights of parents or a footnote referencing the Report of the ICPD. There was a battle to reach that point, with the US raising various arguments of procedure, insisting that this was a technical meeting and that the process was not transparent — but to no effect.

Finally the US delegation chose not to join the consensus. They did not reaffirm ICPD and they read their usual reservation about abortion, adolescent services and such, with strong emphasis on how much funding they provide.

While the US stance was certainly less arrogant than in Bangkok, their opposition to ICPD helped to mobilise the Latin American-Caribbean countries and to crystallise positions. All the country speeches except that of the US were positive - including Nicaragua, Honduras and Guatemala. A significant number of countries mentioned topics such as sexual rights, the rights of youth, and unsafe abortion. Some who were in Cairo ten years ago remarked that such speeches would have been unthinkable at that time.

The speeches by the NGOs, women's groups and youth, were strong and had great impact. They were extremely well-received by delegates and drew standing ovations and brought some people to tears. 

ICPD+10 in the Caribbean: Missed Opportunity, Risky Strategy

By Françoise Girard, Director of Eve & The Snake and a resource person for DAWN's Feminist Training Institute.

The United States casts a long shadow on reproductive rights in the Caribbean, even when it does not participate in a negotiation. Yet US pressure on its own will not roll back ICPD - overcautious strategy in anticipation of US attacks is the greater danger.

This is the lesson we should draw from the outcome of the meeting of the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee (CDDC), held on November 11 and 12, 2003 in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. The CDDC meeting was the first of three ICPD at Ten progress reviews for Latin America and the Caribbean (followed by the Meeting of Presiding Officers of the Ad Hoc Committee on Population and Development of ECLAC - the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean - on March 10-11, 2004 in Santiago, Chile [see report P13]; and the meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee itself, on June 29-30, 2004 in Puerto Rico).

In many respects, the result of the CDDC meeting was positive. The twenty Caribbean countries and territories in attendance adopted, by consensus, a Declaration that "unequivocally" re-affirms ICPD and ICPD + 5, and restates the commitment of all countries of the Caribbean to reproductive rights, and to the rights of adolescents to youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health information, education and services. The Declaration states that the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action and of the ICPD + 5 Key Actions is essential for the realisation of the Millennium Development Goals. Governments also recognised the important role of NGOs and agreed to support mechanisms to build and sustain partnerships with NGOs, in a manner that does not compromise NGO autonomy. No government issued any reservation to the Declaration.

Nevertheless, a significant opportunity was missed in Port of Spain. The Declaration makes no mention of unsafe abortion, not even in the context of its significant impact on maternal mortality in some countries of the Caribbean. Yet unsafe abortion as a "major public health concern" and access to safe abortion services in circumstances where abortion is not against the law, are part and parcel of the ICPD and ICPD Plus Five consensus - which all Caribbean countries joined. Several countries and territories of the Caribbean have liberal abortion laws (Aruba, Barbados, Cuba, Guyana, Puerto Rico). During the plenary, a number of delegations explicitly mentioned the need to address unsafe abortion (Anguilla, Barbados, Belize, Dominican Republic, Guyana and Puerto Rico). Neither the

US government nor anti-abortion groups attended the CDDC meeting. It should therefore have been possible to include language on unsafe abortion in the CDDC Declaration, in conformity with ICPD. That inclusion would have strengthened progressive positions going into the Santiago meeting in March.

US pressure obviously played a part in this result. A few delegations reported that they were worried about being penalised by the US in regional trade negotiations if they supported language on abortion. But some of the participants and organisers had also been persuaded that, by omitting mention of abortion, they could avoid a more violent attack on ICPD by the US delegation in Santiago. NGOs participating in the CDDC meeting were asked by the organisers not to call for access to safe abortion services in their statement, and youth groups were not allowed to address the plenary. When Cuba tried to introduce mention of unsafe abortion in the Declaration, its proposal was rapidly rejected by other delegations.

Pressure from conservative forces is nothing new, and cannot be avoided. The Vatican has always used its considerable political influence to try to affect the positions of Latin America delegations in reproductive health negotiations; yet its power has been resisted by many of these governments, most notably at ICPD + 5. The United States is an even more powerful actor, but it can also be resisted. The resounding victory achieved by reproductive rights advocates at the Fifth Asia-Pacific Population Conference in Bangkok in December 2002, illustrates this clearly.

In the face of US power, a strategy of caution, of isolating abortion in the false hope of averting controversy, of entering a negotiation with our bottom line, - however well intentioned - can only lead to missed opportunities and put ICPD at risk. Our past successes in sexual and reproductive rights negotiations were predicated on bold positions.

The US will come to Santiago and Puerto Rico prepared to launch a full blown attack against reproductive rights, with its usual arsenal of abstinence-until-marriage; control of adolescents by parents; marriage only between a man and a woman; life beginning at conception and natural family planning methods. Given recent US actions in the UN General Assembly and at the Executive Board of WHO, we should expect a particular US offensive on "the family," at the expense of women and adolescents.

Silence on abortion will not save us; nor will timidity. We have to bring to the table our own brave, forward-

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WORSENING REALITIES FOR WOMEN:

ICPD and Beijing POA's only partially fulfilled

Extracts from a keynote paper giving an African perspective by DAWN Anglophone Africa Regional Coordinator, Bene Madunagu, at a conference on Reproductive Health: Key to gender equality, poverty reduction and development, in Amsterdam, 21 November 2003.

The centrality of sexual and reproductive health and rights to population and development issues in key UN and regional organisation outcome documents arises from the worsening real life experiences of women and children and acknowledgement that the core of the ICPD and Beijing FWCW programmes of action remain only partially fulfilled.

The reality of women's lives in most parts of Africa today is that rural livelihoods are disintegrating, household earnings are dwindling while the cost of living is rising exponentially in Structural Adjustment Programme-d and globalised economies. The HIV/AIDS pandemic, coupled with rural-urban migration, is presenting new forms of poverty. As women in Africa are the carers of families and communities, and HIV/AIDS spreads disproportionately among girls and women, not only is there feminisation of poverty but also feminisation of AIDS in Africa.

Over 270,000 women in Africa die annually from mainly preventable pregnancy-related causes, over half the global total. Of these maternity-related deaths, 99% occur among the poor and in low-income countries in Africa. An estimated 1 in 19 women dies from pregnancy-related causes in Mali and 1 in 7 in Somalia, while the risk for Swiss women is 1 in 6,900 and for American women 1 in 3,500.

Despite medical advances, the health status of most African women continues to worsen due to gender inequalities: HIV/AIDS infection influenced by male/female domination in interpersonal relationships; lack of political will to implement agreements such as those contained in the ICPD POA and Beijing PFA; lack of accountability for women's health; and limited choices available to women, particularly poor African women.

The increasingly aggressive forms of fundamentalisms and militarism coupled with debt crises in Africa have presented serious risks to women's sexual and reproductive health and rights. One African country alone was made to pay \$716 million in 10 months on debt servicing, leaving thousands of millions still to pay. At the same time US President Bush announced a fund of \$10 billion over five years to solve the AIDS pandemic in Africa. Of this,

\$9 billion would be granted under bilateral negotiations to a limited number of countries. This was after United States blocked WTO negotiations over access to generic drugs in December 2002. It is clear that the Bush brand of humanitarian gesture contained a hidden motive — for a drug monopoly, through forcing poor countries in Africa and other regions into purchasing expensive brand-name products from American pharmaceutical companies by limiting production and distribution of generic products in these poor countries. A more honest approach would be an arrangement that frees the African nations to be in control of their budgetary allocation in a way that allows them to be accountable and responsive to the wellbeing of their citizens.

The strong attempt in the Millennium Development Goals to sideline focus on sexual and reproductive health and rights issues was not accidental. It is a recognition that sexual and reproductive health and rights issues have deep economic, social and political dimensions and pose challenges to the present-day market-oriented forms of fundamentalism. These fundamentalisms seek to perpetuate control over women's life choices and bodies as well as to keep them in poverty in order to limit the challenges of empowered women to conservative families and legal, traditional, cultural and economic institutions. The provisions of the ICPD POA and Beijing PFA are capable of transforming deep-rooted gender discrimination in the dominant political economy of marketisation of governance and conservative, patriarchal systems to free women to develop and therefore reduce poverty. This is why we are currently experiencing extremely aggressive unilateralism, support for militarism, and worsening forms of fundamentalism using September 11, 2001 as a smokescreen.


Given these experiences, it is very important not to place the gains of Cairo and Beijing at risk through agreeing to any mechanisms, meetings or formats at regional or international levels that can be used to set back advances made for women's rights in the UN Conferences of the 1990s. What can be acceptable are technical reviews and assessments of implementation of the action agreements of the ICPD POA. It is dangerous in the present climate to accept any official negotiation on conference documents, plans of actions or any texts whatsoever.

Conclusion

Effective poverty reduction must start from poor women and men through recognition of their human rights,

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looking vision of what we want for the future (including what we want for families), and push for it. Otherwise, we could leave with the ICPD Programme of Action in tatters. 

GETTING GENDER INTO SIDS

Joan Grant-Cummings represented DAWN at the Inter-Regional Preparatory Meeting of Small Island Developing States, SIDS, for the 10year review of the Barbados Programme of Action, and gives this report.

The meeting of 43 SIDS countries was held in Nassau, Bahamas, 26-30 January 2004. A team of feminists working with the civil society caucus and women's caucus were able to get a recommendation to study the gender impact of the BPOA introduced and adopted by the drafting group as part of the implementation plan.

Both the original Programme of Action and the civil society position do not reflect a strong women's equality or even a gender equality component. We put forward gender equality as a crosscutting theme in all areas, whether water and sanitation, climate change and sea level rise, agriculture, or other areas. We called for a gender impact assessment of the SIDS/BPOA, particularly with respect to the issues of the impact of economic globalisation and trade liberalisation on women and men within SIDS. We noted the special impacts so far on women and their families.

Jamaica's Minister for Land and Environment, who was head of delegation, tabled the recommendation in the plenary, and as such it was adopted by the Drafting group. The civil society caucus also adopted the recommendation as part of the proposed civil society action plan, and part of the civil society statement.

The recommendation: "Given the growing body of work pointing to the impact of international trade policies on SIDS, and in light of UNIFEM's ongoing work on gender and trade, emanating from its sub-regional meeting in Grenada 2002, we recommend that UNIFEM or another agency in collaboration with Caribbean governments, and NGOs, undertake a gender-

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including sexual and reproductive health and rights, that would free them to realise their potential for rising out of poverty.

Any improvements in sexual and reproductive health, and hence basic health of African women, must be linked to positive transformative change and promotion of women's fundamental rights and capabilities, responsive to their vulnerabilities that include social and cultural barriers, harmful traditional practices, gender-based violence, armed conflict, ignorance, inaccessible health services and narrowly focused vertical interventions addressing only specific diseases such as HIV/AIDS, malaria and TB. A total reorientation is required to place resources for women's sexual and reproductive health and rights above unequal trade arrangements and militarism to create an enabling environment for reducing poverty. 🌻

impact assessment of the BPOA with particular focus on emerging trade challenges on SIDS. Such a study would seek to define a strategy for implementation in ensuring the resilience of SIDS in relation to trade-related issues."

No provisions were made to facilitate a civil society forum *per se* at the meeting, but the caucus resulted from the proactive stance taken by organisations present. Within the caucus, the key issues were governance and citizen's participation, strengthening and capacity building of regional and sub-regional bodies; gender equality; environmental protection issues, intellectual property rights and cultural protection; sustainable livelihoods and youth development, access to diverse resources and capacity building. Issues put forward by delegations that resonated in the SIDS regions included the widening poverty gap; impact of international trade agreements; continuing brain drain including the recruiting for British and US armies and police; crime, violence and narco-trafficking; rising health care crises with HIV/AIDS; water and sanitation pressures; and need for renewable energy sources.

The civil society caucus presented a declaration that noted the grave shortfalls in the implementation of the BPOA by governments and the international community, and called for real action to strengthen and support SIDS and that the Regional Civil Society Coordinating Mechanisms be acknowledged and its regional focal points strengthened and supported. The NGOs are establishing a Civil Society Sustainability Fund and anticipate participation by governments and agencies. They also called for a Civil Society Forum for the forthcoming meeting in Mauritius, which they hope at least 200 organisations will attend.

To ensure a strong civil society voice in Mauritius and beyond, the caucus agreed to measures including organising an international steering committee to plan the forum over three days preceding the official UN conference, participate in UN preparatory meetings, and to support a youth forum and a cultural event. A civil society action plan will be agreed and used to lobby for incorporation in the Mauritius document. Success depends on each country's and region's organising machinery and commitment to sustainable development. Mauritius is just a watering-hole on the journey, but its importance should not be underestimated. 🌻

CANCUN: Momentary but significant victory

By DAWN South East Asia Regional Coordinator, Gigi Francisco, who represented DAWN and IGTN-Asia at the WTO Ministerial Meeting in Cancun, Mexico, in September 2003.

Despite the immediate reaction by some negotiators and Northern-based NGOs about the "missed opportunity" arising from the collapse of the WTO Ministerial in Cancun, IGTN-Asia joins many other negotiators and NGOs in the South that see the collapse as a momentary but significant victory for developing countries. When developing countries come to the negotiating table well-prepared with their positions and counter-proposals as they did in Cancun, then we begin to see the dynamic of real and not farcical negotiations.

We should remember that the proposals and arguments from developing countries were clearly situated within a framework of market access and trade liberalisation. The G22 position did not really "push the envelope" in demanding for the immediate dismantling of farm subsidies in the US and EU. Rather, the proposals were meant to simply counter-balance the existing subsidies in a free market regime. It also did not go far enough in terms of food security and from all indications the group was prepared to negotiate on a more limited set of special products that could be protected from rapid liberalisation.

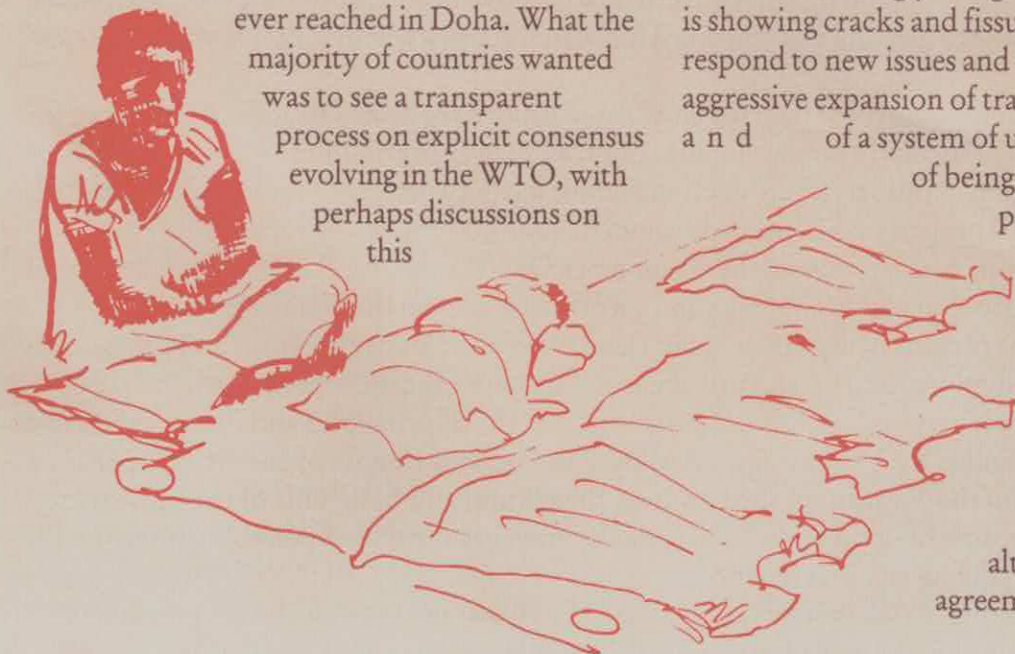
Neither was the position of "No to New Issues" taken by 70 developing countries unjustified. Here, again, the developing countries presented sound arguments on why they did not think

a consensus on the New Issues was ever reached in Doha. What the majority of countries wanted was to see a transparent process on explicit consensus evolving in the WTO, with perhaps discussions on this

beginning in Cancun itself. Of course this did not happen and might never ever happen. Why? Because the QUAD had not only strongly given their support for the New Issues but are the most confident about the non-transparent processes in the WTO. The last-minute offer of the EU to unbundle the New Issues by dropping investment and competition policy was nothing but a clever tactical ploy. Had developing countries agreed then this would have meant undermining their own demand for explicit consensus.

The US threat of using bilateral trade agreements in order to get what it wants has now terrorised some countries and even NGOs. What we should not forget is that these terror tactics have all along been a part of WTO dynamic through all sorts of arm-twisting and pressure applied to political leaders in the south. Equally important is the sad reality that multilateral institutions by and large have not been able to stop this monster called unilateralism. At best, it has prevented more harrowing forms of unilateral actions; at worst it has sugar-coated ("humanised") unilateralism itself. This is not to say that we should simply give up on multilateralism and pluralism. But we do need to raise difficult questions, including questioning the role and the need for the WTO, the Bretton Woods institutions and of the UN itself.

Increasingly this global governance complex is showing cracks and fissures in its ability to respond to new issues and tensions arising from the aggressive expansion of transnational corporations and of a system of uni/multipolarity. Instead of being terrorised into taking a position of "stepping back and seeking piecemeal opportunities within a multilateral framework that doesn't work", developing countries should continue their vigilance in the face of unilateralism and to seek alternative regional trade agreements among themselves.



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SWEET MOMENT


Some of the euphoria of the “sweet but momentary victory” and the excitement of the negotiations and NGO strategising were transmitted by Gigi Francisco in a presentation she gave to the DAWN Training Institute immediately after the Cancun Ministerial. She described some of the efforts to keep abreast and in touch with delegations, from providing almost instant analyses and statements, to scrambling over tall concrete road blocks in order to get to negotiations on time. She examined what had been successful, and what had led to collapse of the talks.

Why did Cancun fail?

Developing countries came into negotiations more aware of the issues linked to deepening liberalisation — agriculture, services, new issues, TRIPS. They were not only more aware of substantive issues, but also of the process issues, the use of green rooms, divide and rule tactics,

pressures on governments, and dubious drafts. Brazil, India and Kenya provided strong moral leadership for developing countries, while decisive leadership by the Mexican Trade Minister allowed for more transparency. The CAIRNS group was wracked with internal differences of over agriculture, including market access, subsidies and the US peace clause. There were also differences among developed countries over investment. The European Union offer to negotiate came too late, and the US attitude was that it doesn't care. There were effective linkages between South negotiators and NGOs and well-coordinated NGO strategising.

Gender in the Cancun process

A pre-ministerial women's forum was held two days before the ministerial and there were parallel NGO-organised sessions, including one on gender and the WTO that exposed weaknesses and risks of gender mainstreaming in the WTO. There were also daily women's strategy sessions led by IGTN. 

WSIS: moving from Geneva to Tunis

By Magaly Pazello, who is following the process for DAWN


The World Summit on the Information Society is the first UN process in two negotiation phases in two different countries. It also attempts to establish mechanisms to enlarge civil society and private sector participation, and has a main objective to build a common vision of the information society. The first phase, Geneva, 10-12 December, 2003, approved the Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action. However, they can be modified up to the second part of the summit in Tunis, November 2005, so some text is still in brackets.

The internet governance was the most difficult subject in the Geneva process, which with intellectual property is directly related to the trade and services debate. The Declaration includes a request to create a working group on internet governance to move negotiations forward. To feed the WG, the UNICT Task Force meeting was scheduled for March 2004 (www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2004/pi1560.doc.htm).

The debate about the control of internet and related issues have gained strategic importance for economic development, particularly for developing countries such as Brazil. Internet generates billions of dollars and centralisation of this service creates tremendous inequity between rich and poor countries. Discussion on intellectual property concentrated around free and copyright software.

Governments from Africa proposed the creation of a Digital Solidarity Fund with the support of some Latin America-Caribbean region countries and a working group on the financing was create.

Human Rights is present in documents, but there were difficult negotiations and pressure on civil society because it involves security and privacy issues that are a sensitive point with the US post-September 11. The Vatican put religion-based proposals on ethical principles and moral values in a paragraph that was defended by US and supported by Pakistan and League of the Arab Countries. Another paragraph from the Vatican on the family as the natural and basic unit of the information society was removed because of opposition from Canada, however the widest possible protection for the family and its role in the society was retained.

An informal meeting of stakeholders in Tunis 2-3 March was held to evaluate the process and to discuss how to implement the action plan, and what deliverables are to be for the second phase. 

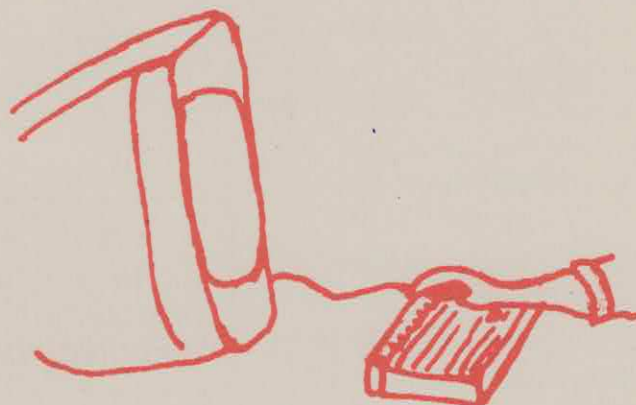
ICTs: Creating new polarisations, strengthening distortions

Brief extracts from a presentation by Anita Gurumurthy, DAWN representative to the World Summit on the Information Society, given at a panel organised by the Gender Caucus, 11 December 2003, on Critical Voices: Women's Perspectives on the Role of the Information Society in Fostering Human Development.

A fundamental challenge for the information society in fostering human development is to address human development within a human rights framework. The question therefore is - what conditions will allow ICTs (information communications technologies) to promote the development of people that is based on principles of justice and equity.

Indisputably, the new economy is thriving on the destruction of knowledge and livelihoods of the South. Knowledge is claimed to be a continuing invention of the 'new world' and the packaging, branding and re-branding of knowledge within a global Intellectual Property Rights regime is far from benign. At local levels, communities are forced to reckon with the corporatisation of agriculture, and at national levels, the future prospects for any meaningful technological research and growth are heavily stifled. The prominent ICTs for Development model takes this tragedy a step further. A much-celebrated network of farmers in India was set up by a global corporate ICT to maximise agricultural output from the hinterland that it sources its raw material from. Right after the network was in place the ICT distributed seeds from Monsanto (US multi-national corporation) to the farmers. This seemingly facilitatory act actually hides new dependencies on global agri-support industries. The "benefits" in terms of better productivity and ensured markets to farmers hardly redress the global crisis in agriculture and food security and directly further the corporate control of agriculture.

The new economy and its new 'production' chains are no different from in the same old assembly lines from post-industrial societies. Women workers are concentrated at the lowest and poorest paid parts of the new production chain while most countries in the South continue to pay poor policy attention to building the human resources of girls, taking IT education to rural areas, investing in public infrastructure, and encouraging girls and women to define and innovate in new technologies.



Policies, on the other hand, eagerly sell the labour of their women and youth to neo-liberal capitalism that thrives on an increasingly disempowering division of labour for developing economies.

The use of ICTs in realising human development goals is constrained by the larger socio-economic context, which itself is rooted in neo-liberal policies. Globalisation has meant the loss of self-reliance, de-industrialisation, privatisation, destruction of natural resources and the retreat of labour protection. From rural hinterlands of global cities such as Hyderabad, celebrated as the national cyber-capital of India, emerge narratives of despair that have been referred to as "peripheralisation of poverty." Increasing suicides of poor farmers and weavers and starvation deaths, and the increasing militancy of underserved marginalised people, are testimonies to the far-reaching impact of neo-liberal globalisation on human life. ICTs can only build on a supportive economic environment that takes the poverty bull by the horns. ICT efforts that seek to bring information resources such as market prices of agricultural commodities to local communities have enormous value for those who have the means to belong in the marketplace, but are not relevant to the vast majority, only adding to widening inequities.

The redefining of power relations has long since been held as a possible solution to structural poverty but introduction of ICTs have not made

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any impact — on the contrary, they have only strengthened the existing skewness by creating new polarisations.

The geographical politics of the global economy accentuates inequities at national levels. Traditional sectors in global cities are increasingly pushed into the informal economy, unable to compete with the extremely high profit-making capabilities of the new firms, which bid up the prices of commercial space, industrial services, and other business needs.

These global cities become sites of stark polarisation: the super-profits of neo-liberal capital are embedded in the invisible and cheap manual labour of the poor in these cities.

It is not enough to make women managers of community owned technological assets.

The level playing field is an established myth from a resource availability point of view.

International aid is already taking the direction of the micro-management of poverty, and an abandonment of the rights and concerns of the global south. The moral responsibility for and financial burdens of development of people in the South are being transferred to the South while governments in the South are having to cut back on development expenditure. Under neo-liberal prescriptions, how can countries that have cut back their social development expenditure hope to draw upon the much-touted miracles of ICTs?

A disastrous consequence of the unavailability of resources to finance ICT for Development initiatives is the transfer of costs to the end-user. The flip-side is the construction and deployment of e-governance as a tool of efficiency rather than of public service. Anxious to get on to the e-governance bandwagon, governments in the South have begun to use ICTs for transacting with citizens although it is a cost-intensive exercise. Investments are therefore mobilised through the involvement of the private sector, the logical extension of which has been in the pricing of public information, including charges for information about government schemes and entitlements for poor women and other marginalised groups. The promise of e-governance for the poor and the marginalised, including women, is in the spaces it can create for these groups to engage with

social policy. However, the primary motivation for e-governance seems to be in using IT for greater efficiency.

Gender-mainstreaming approaches to ICT for Development initiatives undermine the political task of women's empowerment. The overgeneralisations of the feminisation of poverty, the construction of the poor woman as responsible (and implicitly of poor men as irresponsible), and the undermining of men's role in community

development have placed undue burden on women to face and address development challenges. It has also implied a long history of crisis at conceptual and implementation levels to involve men for gender equality. Many ICT initiatives that attempt to

address development goals are no different in their treatment of gender.

It is not enough to make women managers of community owned technological assets. Through ICTs, women need to find new opportunities for well-being – knowledge and skills that directly impact their economic returns, better access to health and education, and new spaces for setting agendas. Unless the design of policies, programmes and projects addresses the politics of gender, they will fail at women's empowerment. Women's agency, critical thinking, negotiation and choice have to be part of the model used for ICT diffusion. It also means using ICTs to address women's manifold experiences as workers, producers, managers, care-givers, and autonomous human beings.

Conclusion

Myriad innovations exist all over the South that demonstrate the democratic face of technology. But the reality is that most ICT models at micro-level seem to offer options in a larger environment of shrinking choices. For micro-models and innovations to become central to the global discourse, the rules of the game in the global arena have to alter. At WSIS, negotiations between governments, as over anything that implicates global justice, will result in the adoption of the lowest common denominator. Hope lies in the proclivity of ICTs for political change and it is in this that women from the South can take heart. 🌅

DAWN TRAINING INSTITUTE

The DAWN Training Institute was inaugurated 14 September - 3 October 2003 at the Indian Institute of Management in Bangalore, India. A total of 28 young feminists from 16 countries of the South, selected from more than 80 applicants, were given an intensive three weeks of training in South feminist analysis of issues covered by the four DAWN themes, in the linkages between issues and advocacy agendas, and advocacy skills.

The primary objectives of the training were to share DAWN's analysis and wealth of experience in global advocacy for gender justice; to impart an understanding of the changing terrain of this struggle and of the interplay of new agendas around gender and development; and to contribute to the emergence of a new generation of global feminist advocates and through this strengthen future advocacy efforts at both global and regional levels.

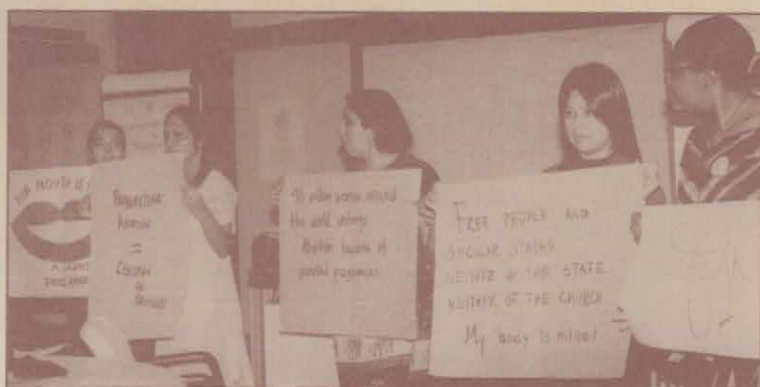


The inaugural DTI included lectures and interactive discussions, in-depth case study analysis, organised debates and role-play, and practical skill building exercises in research, analysis and advocacy, with an emphasis on group work. Participants rotated among groups for different exercises and group exercises were very lively and imaginative. Individual journals were kept in which participants were encouraged to assess each day's discussions and record personal reflections, which were sometimes shared. Participants were encouraged to engage in at least one of the range of other organised activities aimed at mind-body strengthening, such as yoga and meditation. The Institute began with introductory and orientation sessions that included discussions on values, on how to balance the



The 28 participants in the DAWN Training Institute have kept in contact with each other and set up a website: http://www.flashbuilder.net/host/fem_advocate/ The site was designed and uploaded by Shamillah Wilson in Cape Town, South Africa. The site includes pictures taken during the Institute showing many of the participants, with a section for further activities and strategies that came out of the training sessions.

programme, and an agreement on learning contract. The substantive programme entailed introductions to each of the four DAWN themes that included historical overviews and exposure to the various conceptual frameworks of analysis on which DAWN draws or which it has developed, as well as summaries of debates on critical issues under each theme. In the second week, DAWN trainers concentrated on linkages — among the themes, issues and advocacy fronts, and national, regional and global arenas. The third week focused on advocacy and activism across themes and regions, as well as at global and national levels. 'Parking lot' questions, which fell outside the subject being addressed but which participants needed to return to, were discussed at the end of each day. Organised evening activities included a meeting with local feminists, literary and drama programmes,



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Participants in the 2003 DAWN Feminist Training Institute

cultural events and a 'mehndi' night, at which participants' hands and feet were painted with traditional designs.

DAWN coordinators were involved in team teaching and other support, including a group that attended to non-learning needs of participants. Additionally, DAWN drew in three other resource persons, Francoise Girard from the International Women's Health Coalition, Cecilia Ng of Malaysia who has been a women's movement activists since the early '80s, and Marina Durano from the Philippines who has been involved in gender and trade engagements for DAWN. 🌸

In Latin America, the annual REPEM/DAWN seminar to be held at the time of REPEM's General Assembly in Porto Alegre, Brazil, 27 March - 2 April, will follow up the DAWN Training Institute. The Latin American participants in the Bangalore Training Institute will discuss the themes they worked on there and make connections with the current reality in Latin America. Some will be involved in the discussions on abortion, and will give an impression of how an understanding of the interlinkages between DAWN's research themes and the work on abortion impacts on their daily activism.

Plans are proceeding in the DAWN Anglophone Africa region to run an African Regional Training Institute, a regional initiative following the inaugural training institute in Bangalore. The training sessions will follow the DAWN research themes and focus on particular topics, including: the impact of globalisation on African women; gender, trade and social integration; gender and HIV/AIDS; economic and cultural dimensions and strategies for advocacy regarding gender-based violence, including trafficking in girls and women; water, agriculture land and gender issues; women's rights, gender systems, citizenship and governance; fundamentalisms; gender and ICTs in Africa.




DTI mehndi night....Mama Fatima Singhateh gets traditional designs drawn on her hands, watched by Sofia Barbosa.

STEERING COMMITTEE NOTES

The inauguration of DAWN's new General Coordinator, Bene Madunagu, will be celebrated at the DAWN 20th Anniversary event in Cape Town in October. She was unanimously elected by the Steering Committee and confirmed at the most recent meeting in Bangalore, India, in October 2003.

Bene has been with DAWN since 1986. She was West Africa Focal Point until becoming Anglophone Africa Regional Coordinator in 1999. She is Professor of Botany at the University of Calabar in Nigeria, and is a founder or leading member of a number of organisations in Africa, where she works as an activist and grassroots campaigner for political, economic, social, sexual and reproductive health and rights, particularly for girls and women. She is a human sexuality educator, trainer and consultant.

Bene co-founded Women in Nigeria, WIN, in 1982 and is co-founder and Chair of the Executive Board of Girls' Power Initiative. She is Chair of the Board of Trustees of Calabar International Institute for Research, Information and Documentation, CIINSTRID, the Chair of the Board of the International Centre for Reproductive and Sexual Rights, INCREASE, Chair of the Board of Trustees of Baobab for Women's Rights, a member of the Board of Trustees of Reproductive Health Matters, RHM, and YOUTH CARE Organisation, a member of IPAS Board, a member of the Cross River State Council on the Prerogative of Mercy, and coordinates the South East Zone of the Nigerian Chapter of the International Reproductive Rights Research Action Group, IRRRAG. 



DAWN thanks former Research Coordinator for Sustainable Livelihoods and Environmental Justice, Ewa Charkiewicz, for her valuable contributions to DAWN's work on sustainable development in the past three years and wishes her well in the work she is now pursuing. Ewa is widely published in the areas of gender and sustainable development, sustainable consumption and production, and gender and globalisation, and brought to the Steering Committee a broad knowledge and expertise in linking feminist and environmental agendas. With analyses and interventions, she represented DAWN throughout the process leading to the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, August-September 2002, producing a post-Johannesburg analysis that makes visible the changes in global governance and their effects for feminist and environmental justice agendas.



DAWN extends deepest sympathy to former Steering Committee member, Pat McFadden, on the passing of her eighteen-year-old son Mandla on 18 January 2004. Pat was DAWN Anglophone Africa Regional Coordinator until the end of 1998, and many DAWN colleagues shared her concern over the health of her young son and relief when he survived a heart transplant in May 2002. Although his life remained fragile, Mandla's final illness was unexpected and came in the midst of plans to realise his dreams of studying to become a computer scientist. As his mother said at his funeral, he had friends all over the world, and the members of DAWN's network who knew him or knew of him understand her loss.

For full versions of the papers from which extracts have been taken for this issue of DAWN Informs, go to the DAWN website, www.dawn.org.fj

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