

***DAWN Launches New Book, “The Remaking of Social Contracts:
Feminists in a Fierce New World”***

Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN) launched its new book on 31 October 2014, entitled “*The Remaking of Social Contracts: Feminists in a Fierce New World*”. The book, published by ZED Books London is a result of a long process of debate and reflection by DAWN members, partners and allies in various civil society organisations and social movements. It follows from previous groundbreaking books published by DAWN in the past, beginning with *Development, Crises and Alternative Visions: Third World Women’s Perspectives* (Sen and Grown, 1987).

DAWN works on four analytical themes: Political Economy of Globalisation (PEG), Political Ecology and Sustainability (PEAS), Political Restructuring and Social Transformation (PRST) and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR). However, in the last decade, the focus of DAWN’s work has been on the inter-linkages between these themes, in recognition that women do not live compartmentalised lives. For instance, whether or not they are able to exercise and enjoy their reproductive rights impacts on the way they do their work and manage their livelihoods.

The conceptual framework of this new book has been publicly debated by DAWN for the past 10 years. It finally took shape during the DAWN Development Debates in Mauritius in 2010. It continues to be the framework that guides the Gender, Economic and Ecological Justice (GEEJ) discussion of DAWN with young feminists from all over the southern regions of the world.

In the introductory overview, the book discusses the emergence and fracturing of social contracts, the rise of social movements, and the promise of human rights. The term “social contract” is used differently from those found in political science textbooks and certainly far removed from the notion of free and equal persons creating a society based upon rules to which we all agree. While a social contract may indeed be a collective agreement, it is an agreement embedded in the political economy of power and inequality. Social contracts have fluidity due to contestation from above and below thus it is imbued with the potential for change.

The book argues that change is possible even as we recognise the difficulty of doing so in a fierce new world. The early 21st century has been marked by the “war on terror” and the series of financial and economic crisis. It is also a time of climate change and ecological crisis; a time when the world of work was drastically transformed towards flexibility and precariousness; and a time of backlash against progress towards social justice and human rights. We live in a fierce new world--a world full of shaken promises, complicated

contradictions, serious fractures, severe backlashes, broken promises, and uncertain outcomes for the world's peoples.

Feminism in this Fierce New World asks us to confront and interrogate the interfaces of multiple systems of power. Gendered power relations, as well as other social power relations, are interwoven into other power systems, such as economic, international relations, military conflicts, and political ecology. Each system shapes the others. We recognise and analyse each system of power's relative autonomy as much as we acknowledge that the interfaces between and across systems of power cannot be ignored.

The book speaks of the promise of human rights. DAWN's approach to feminism has been based not on a calculus of identity alone but on the recognition that women's human rights



are lost or gained in the midst of the interplay between the personal and the structural environment. For women as women, the politics of personal relations, of the body, of sex and reproduction matter greatly. The household and family relations are a critical site of gender power expressed in multiple dimensions. At the same time, women are workers juggling double and triple burdens under increasingly harsh conditions;

are members of communities struggling for land and livelihoods; are agents in societies undergoing cultural transformations; are actors in economies shaped by globalisation and militarism; and are parts of production systems unmindful of ecological limits. An approach to feminism that cuts across and is inclusive of these distinct yet interconnected spheres is still uncommon and calls for greater conceptual clarity.

The books' essays and boxed features are a mixture of in-depth analysis and proposals for the remaking of the broken social contracts in this fierce new world. The first set of chapters are a series of critiques against the systemic reproduction of inequality. Stephanie Seguno argues that macroeconomic frameworks must allow for the disciplining of capital and the alignment of profits interests with broader social and economic interests. Yao Graham and HibistKassa use the case of Africa to illustrate how cooperation and contradiction among South countries play as the balance of power shifts away from imperial USA and 'old' Europe. Oscar Ugarteche sees the growth of illicit economies as the outcome of declining productivity in the traditional leading economic powers. Aldo Caliari explores the drawbacks of the human rights and political economy frameworks from a

feminist perspective and argues that their synthesis is an urgent task for the feminist movement.

The second set of chapters tackles the issues of sustainability and climate change. Anita Nayar outlines policy responses to the convergence of dilemmas around existing patterns of consumption and production and its demands on ecological systems as well as around the resurgence of defunct Malthusian notions of population stabilisation and climate change. Diana Bronson discusses and reflects upon how a band of scientists, venture capitalists and corporations are moving ideas of re-engineering the planet into the mainstream. ZoRandriamaro highlights the consequences on food security and ecological balance as aggressive land-grabbing operations continue in the African continent.

The third set of chapters confronts fundamentalism and attempts to decipher the complexity of biopolitics. Alexandra Garita and Francoise Girard reminds us to continually secure full and equal participation in decision-making, as the work towards promoting and fulfilling sexual and reproductive rights is treacherous and complex. Fatou Sow and MagalyPazello explore the difficulties in 'secularising' the social contract through the lens of three major religions – Christianity, Islam and Hinduism. Rosalind Petchesky argues that a feminist politics relevant to the twenty-first century cannot take sexuality or gender out of political economy and development; nor can political economy and development be taken out of sexuality and gender.



The last set of chapters looks into the complex act of building nation-states and the need to galvanise social movements. Claire Slatter discusses women's post-colonial experiences of state and governance, including citizenship gains secured through legislative reform or legal challenges, and current challenges in discourses on the state and governance. Amrita Chhacchi discusses the difficulties of distinguishing in practice between religious fundamentalism and secular governance arguing for the creation of public spheres of deliberation that accommodates democratization. Kumudini Samuel calls for a nuanced understanding of masculinity and femininity that are reproduced and reconstructed in settings of militarisation, war and conflict. Josefa Francisco and Peggy Antrobus draw our attention to feminist movements negotiating for rights, inclusion and equal power in a dysfunctional multilateral system.

The book includes several boxes looking into specific instances of confusion, contradiction and crisis. Many of these boxes were written by young feminists on whom hope has been placed for the continuation of intergenerational politics of open debate and meaningful partnership.

Book launch: The book launch was held on the occasion of DAWN's 30th Anniversary celebration on 31st October, 2014 at the GT-Toyota Asian Center Auditorium, University of the Philippines, Diliman Campus, Quezon City. Over 50 academics, civil society activists and government officials attended the event. The program was opened with a welcome message from Dean Eduardo Gonzales of the Asian Center; followed by a short video presentation on DAWN's work; an introduction to the book by co-editor Dr. Marina Durano; and a brief panel discussion amongst seven of the book's authors. The panel was moderated by Dr. Gita Sen, a Co-Editor of the book and DAWN's Executive Committee member. The questions posed to the panelists, created an engaging discussion on global issues such as Climate Change, Militarism and Democratisation.

The book launch was also a fitting culmination to the Inter-Regional Gender, Economic and



Ecological Justice Workshop Consultation held from 29-31 October, in which 20 young feminist activists, researchers and academics from the Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Pacific took part. The inter-regional GEEJ provided a platform for these young feminists to exchange experiences and insights on DAWN's inter-linkages and analysis.

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