

DAWN INFORMS

Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era

REMARKS ON THE HIGH-LEVEL PANEL'S RECOMMENDATIONS ON UN SYSTEM-WIDE COHERENCE

At A Luncheon Discussion With The Deputy Secretary
General, Ms Asha Rose Migiro, Wednesday, May 2, 2007
UN Delegates' Dining Room, 1-3pm

By Anita Nayar, DAWN Research Coordinator for Political Ecology and
Sustainability PEAS

Madame Deputy-secretary General, my name is Anita Nayar and I am representing Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era. DAWN is a network of women scholars and activists from the economic South that works globally and regionally in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America, and the Pacific. Our Secretariat is located in Calabar, Nigeria.

DAWN would like to raise three interrelated points and three questions that address the broader context within which the new gender entity is being proposed. First, as you know from your work in Tanzania, there is an intimate connection between eradicating poverty and achieving gender equality. The analysis leading up to the Millennium Summit showed how one cannot be realized without the other. If we are to achieve the MDGs we cannot let these two processes fall back on separate tracks. The key to this is what happens on the ground. That means strengthening the support for women's human rights, gender equality and women's empowerment programmes on the ground at the country level. And this means strengthening UNIFEM - the main advocate and on the ground ally in the UN for women in the global South. We support the Coherence Panel's recommendation to streamline three of the UN's existing gender entities OSAGI, DAW, and UNIFEM but this streamlining should happen while strengthening the existing structures that women, rely on within countries. Our first question, therefore, is, how do you see strengthening the UN's capacity to deliver for women at the country level even as the inter-governmental process about the new gender entity goes on?

This question is further complicated by our second point, which relates to the emphasis on greater "coherence" of the UN at the country level. The problem is that the "One UN" pilots have no specific gender criteria. Without such criteria and without any insistence that our gender advocates within the UN system have an equal voice at the table, gender will continue to be marginalized on

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INTEGRATING GENDER IN THE UN REFORM

Angela Collet, (DAWN Training Institute Alumnae) represented DAWN at the Fourth Session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva, March, 12 - 30, 2007

DAWN has been following the debates on UN reform and had signed onto two statements on the issue:

- The collaborative *statement on Reforming the Gender Equality Architecture of the UN* (November, 2006 (http://www.awid.org/go.php?pg=un_reform)); and

- *Open Letter to UN Member States and The Secretary General regarding Women's/Gender Equality Architecture at the UN from the NGO Linkage Caucus taking part in the 51st Commission on the Status of Women* (March 8th, 2007 (<http://www.wed.org/library.aspx?ResourceID=172>))

On March 24th, the Center for Women Global Leadership, organized a

Workshop on *Gender Integration and the UN Human Rights System*. Part of the meeting focused on strategies for engaging with the HRC. Another part of the workshop provided an overview of previous UN reform debates, and raised the following key concerns:

Creation of the new high-level agency that will combine OSAGI, DAW and UNIFEM:

An important aspect of the debate concerns the fact that DAW and UNIFEM

are not in agreement about what the new agency should look like, nor about, and who should head it. There is, therefore, a risk that the new agency will be created in an atmosphere of division and competition.

It is known that the head of the new agency will not be from OSAGI, DAW or UNIFEM. It is possible that

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the ground.

While we expect that eventually the new gender entity will have the clout and capacity to contribute to this process, women in developing countries cannot wait. Our second question, therefore, is, how do you envision addressing the problem of gender being squeezed out of the "One UN" country process?

Our third and final point relates to a possible unintended consequence of the coherence panel recommendations. As you know, women's organisations were among the first to point out in Beijing and elsewhere the negative effects of neo-liberal economic models on women's well-being and economic and social rights. The UN system has often been with us on this. Given this, we are very concerned by what appears to us as a narrowing of the wider development agenda of the UN and an increasing deference to the Bretton Woods Institutions. This is evident in the emphasis on aid effectiveness which is about making aid more "efficient" but is not necessarily connected to development effectiveness and does not centrally position the cross-cutting issues of gender, environment and human rights that are so important to development.

Our final question then is, how are you going to ensure that the UN will assert its role of providing alternatives to the neoliberal Washington Consensus and pay attention to the cross cutting issues?


As you know women's movements view the UN as a very valuable forum for advocacy on gender justice issues, which we have worked hard to translate into policy gains in our countries. We are committed to working with you and member states to ensure that the UN continues to be a powerful forum for women in the global South. Thank you. 🌸

YOGYAKARTA PRINCIPLES



The Yogyakarta Principles on the application of international human rights law in relation to sexual orientation and gender identity was formally launched during the fourth session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva on Monday, March 26, 2007.

These principles were developed at a meeting of international human rights experts in Yogyakarta, Indonesia last November, co-hosted by the International Commission of Jurists and the International Service for Human Rights, on behalf of a coalition of human rights organizations. The principles identify binding human rights standards with which governments must comply, and have been adopted by judges, academics, a former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, UN Special Procedures, members of treaty bodies, NGOs and others.

The full text of the "Yogyakarta Principles on the Application of International Human Rights Law in Relation to Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity" is available at: <http://yogyakartaprinciples.org/> 

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The person appointed by the SG to the post will be from the economic South and women's and feminist groups have been lobbying to ensure that whoever is appointed to head this agency has experience in working on gender equality issues and with social movements. It is a good moment to consider potential candidates for this post and to lobby for them.

The new agency should not be seen by women's groups as the only important matter within the UN reform

Although the new high level agency is a key part of the UN reform in terms of gender integration, it was stressed that feminist and women's organizations should take into account within the UN reform debate other factors such as:


- The relocation of the CEDAW office to Geneva: This shift is seen positively by many NGOs, as better integrating CEDAW with the other UN treaty bodies. It

makes it even more relevant for feminists to engage in the HRC.

- The need for closer integration between CSW and the HRC. The idea that CEDAW meets twice a year, once in Geneva, during a HRC session and once in New York, during CSW, may help integrating them.

- The likely status and capacity of the new agency. One of the criticisms of the current UN women's agencies is that they have low-status and cannot do much with the limited resources they are allocated. Although the new agency is meant to be accorded the

same (high) level as other agencies (such as UNICEF and UNFPA), it is anticipated that it will likely have a lower budget than the other agencies.

- Gender mainstreaming: The new agency should not replace gender mainstreaming in other UN agencies. 

It is possible that the person appointed by the SG to the post will be from the economic South and women's and feminist groups have been lobbying to ensure that whoever is appointed to head this agency has experience in working on gender equality issues and with social movements.

SEXUALITY IN AFRICA: REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Presentation by Bene E. Madunagu, DAWN General Coordinator, at the DAWN Panel on "Citizenship and Democracy: Retribution and Rights" at the World Social Forum (WSF), Nairobi, Kenya. January 22, 2007

Introduction

The rights of expression, of full participation in all spheres of human endeavour as per one's choices, and of opportunities and freedom to engage on a daily basis in what makes meaning and gives pleasure and fulfilment in one's life, including freedom of movement within and beyond artificial boundaries and freedom of choice of abode there is a huge gendered spectrum when it comes to issues of citizenship weighted against the rights of women.

Of particular concern are conflict situations, including communal clashes, and their consequences for women (eg in Darfur, Rwanda and DRC), which include sexual abuse, even from peace-keeping forces; state/institutional homophobia in Zimbabwe, Nigeria and Kenya; legal restrictions on women's rights to abortion; and restrictions on women's movement.

The term, or the concept of sexuality is not peculiar to any individual (male or female), groups of individuals, or regions. None can claim ownership and, therefore, reserve the right or authority to pronounce on it, or place restrictions as it applies to anyone or any group. It is an attribute of all human beings irrespective of sex or region, and as such is a fundamental freedom and human right.

Talking about sexuality in the context of the region however reflects the influence of culture, the state and, therefore, those in position to exert power over others as it relates to culture, religion, economy, politics, the social spheres and interpersonal relationships. To proceed further in this

discourse, it is therefore, necessary to recall a globally working consensus of sexuality.

The World Health Organisation defines sexuality as follows: "Sexuality is a central aspect of being human throughout life and encompasses sex, gender identities and roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy and reproduction. Sexuality is experienced and expressed in thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviours, practices, roles and relationships. While sexuality can include all of these dimensions, not all of them are always experienced or expressed. Sexuality is influenced by the interaction of

Sexuality is experienced and expressed in thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviours, practices, roles and relationships. While sexuality can include all of these dimensions, not all of them are always experienced or expressed.

biological, psychological, social, economic, political, cultural, ethical, legal, historical and religious and spiritual factors." ¹

From this definition, it is evident that the fundamental human rights of all individuals include the right of expression

of one's sexuality. That is, the right of choice as to how one expresses one's sexuality. What is crucial is doing so in a way that is healthy and protective of oneself and any partner with whom one expresses a part of one's sexuality.

The fifth objective of this World Social Forum, Nairobi 2007, is set to address this issue. "Ensuring dignity, defending diversity, engendering gender equality and eliminating all forms of discrimination". This objective points to the expression of one's sexuality as a right. It expresses the universality of sexuality.

As part of one's sexuality every person has

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the right to experience sexual desire and pleasure as a positive and natural part of life. All human beings are sexual beings regardless of geographical location, nationality, age, biological sex or any form of human difference. Human beings are diverse in the expression of their sexuality. This means that human beings express their sexuality differently at different times in their lives. Some of these expressions and experiences have positive and some have negative consequences on one's physical, emotional and social levels. Expression of one's sexuality is positive when it is consensual, mutually respectful, where it is shared and is protective, thereby enhancing well-being, health and quality of life. On the other hand, when sexuality is limited to human construction, as in talking about regional forms of sexuality, then it is rooted mostly in the patriarchal, gender-discriminatory norms of such societies. Such limitations necessarily are exploitative, expressed through violence or abuse, and they diminish the dignity and self-worth of the less-privileged partner in the relationship, and can cause negative psychological, physical and social consequences.

Hence, the notion of a regional perspective in the expression of one's sexuality is not only a conflicting concept, it is one which has negative and even harmful consequences for women, and girls in particular.

Some Characteristics of Sexuality in Africa

In many African societies, there are extensive conflicting and sexist messages in songs, lyrics and modern media that collectively limit positive sexuality expression. These messages promote sexualised images and appearance of the female body as well as restrict sexual

expression and activity for females, while at the same time, forcing females into non-consensual sexual activity. Notions of virginity for females only restrict the free expression of female sexuality, while marriage and rape force females into oftentimes non-consensual sexual activity.

Female genital mutilation is also practised to reduce pleasure for women, violating their sexuality. Glorification of women as mothers restricts female expression of sexual activity, except for procreation and this also leads to homophobic outcomes. Social norms in most Africa societies consider it a taboo to discuss issues of sexuality, the sexual body of males and females, and the issue of pleasure in the expression of sexuality, while secretly abusing women's bodies in the institution of marriage.

Cultural and religions injunctions and norms inhibit discourse on the human body but policies pay lip service to human rights. In most African communities, while girls are forced into early marriage with its attendant risks below the age 18, boys usually do not get such pressure for early marriage. On the

surface, boys may be encouraged to delay sexual activity but are, at the same time, presented with conflicting messages to "prove their manhood", through heterosexual experiences by raping girls who are expected to be virgins. Society condones male "prowess" in boys in sexual matters, but prescribes docility for girls who are socialised to be "feminine, sexy, sexually attractive and submissive to males". Thus, women's bodies are made idealised tools for male pleasurable sexuality, at great risk to their health. The patriarchal societies in Africa also set values or standards for how a pretty girl should look, pressuring females to alter their colour, body and shape to meet

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these expectations, at the risk of their health. The African notion of marriage completely ignores other forms of sexual identity. Since, sexuality is part of being human; it is also true that human beings in all epochs of human life on earth have always experienced feelings of love, attraction and sexual desire for the same sex, opposite sex, or both.

In every society, some people have always felt strong attraction for people of the same sex, others for people of the opposite sex. Most people do not choose their sexual orientation but discover their sexual orientation and sexual identity through experience.

It is also true that a person's sexual orientation cannot be wished away or changed by religion or any form of forced therapy. It is common in human experience that people's sexual behaviour and sexual identity may change over time and through experience, though their sexual orientation may not change. Yet, in most African countries, people are largely homophobic, and there are strong social taboos against homosexuality. Indeed, people fear, hate, and are intolerant of non-heterosexual persons - gays, lesbian, bisexual or transgender. Strong negative feeling against homosexuals, based on ignorance, is very widespread in Africa, and it borders on threatening their safety and security. This domain, and the domain of women's rights to safe abortion, are serious indicators of citizenship rights.

CASES OF VIOLATION OF FEMALE SEXUALITY IN AFRICA

Sexuality and Women and AIDS in Africa

Presently, many programmes on prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS in Africa are promoting the ABC (Abstinence, Be faithful and Condom use) conditionality attached and imported with the United States President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) funding.

The success story of Uganda in reducing HIV prevalence is traceable to acknowledging people's expression of

sexuality and hence, a multi-dimensional approach. As pointed out by Girard (2004)² "The key to Uganda's success, according to the Director of Uganda's Institute of Public Health, David Serwadda, is a multiple approach prevention campaign in which condoms played a substantial role. We must not forget that abstinence is not always possible for people at risk, especially (African) women". Serwadda said in an interview, "Many women [and girls, he could have added] do not have the option to delay initiation of sex or limit their number of sexual partners,"³ pointing out "socio-economic factors" (such as poverty) and the tradition of marrying young girls to older men. He added that that "50% of new infections per year occur in a situation where one partner is positive and another one negative... In actual practice, on the ground [girls and] women cannot abstain from sex when they are in a marriage situation."⁴

Clearly, "Serwadda's remarks highlight the degree to which the simplification of HIV prevention to A, B and C advocacy ignores the reality of these women. The same is true for other segments of the African population who are sexually active but do not wish to be, or cannot be, celibate, monogamous or married" (Girard 2004). In addition, the concept of ABC completely ignores social, cultural and religious norms, taboo and practices that deny the positive expression of sexuality of girls and women. It ignores the violence and violation of women's rights in conflict situations that abound in many parts of Africa. It also ignores the choice of expression of one's sexuality, or sexual orientation.

Sexual, Gender and the Media

Different forms of media TV, movies, radio, print media and advertising portray stereotypical roles for females and males and human sexuality is usually limited to heterosexual expression, excluding or negating other sexual identity. Women's bodies are usually glorified as tools for the pleasure of men. Girls and women continue to be depicted as 'the weaker sex', creating a notion of vulnerability that promotes their

exploitation and violation. Women and girls are defined and described with reference to their physical appearance, while men and boys are cited for their intellectual achievements. Issues of human reproduction are presented as female responsibility with infertility being blamed on women.

Sexuality and Religion

Due to the link between culture and religion, women's sexuality has been the focus of religious injunction over the ages, even in relatively liberal religious institutions. Women's bodies are seen as the temples of sin. Most religious institutions are against women's rights to choose how they claim their bodily integrity, and how they express their sexuality.

Only women are called prostitutes, male clients are nameless. Men in whatever social, economical, political or religious status, can rape girls and women, but women are sinners if they abort the outcome of such sexual abuse. More women are stoned to death in Iran for expression of their sexuality than men are.

Sexuality and the Family

While leadership roles are taught to boys, girls learn to be submissive. Girls are socialized to be docile and asexual until marriage but boys are socialized to prove their manhood. Virginity is expected only of girls and boys learn to exploit female sexuality by witnessing what their fathers do to their mothers. Children grow up with ignorance about issues of sexuality and are thus made vulnerable to sexual exploitation and abuse.

Sexuality and Gender-based Violence

The majority of rapes and other forms of sexual abuse are perpetrated against women by their partners, bosses, and other acquaintances. Cultural practices of female genital mutilation (FGM), and cultural norms and

values relating to widowhood, female inheritance and son-preference are all gendered, and practised to subdue female sexuality.

In the African context, women's sexuality is infringed upon, denied and abused in many dimensions, from the family to economic, social and economic domains. The battle-ground for the assertion of male sexuality and sexual dominance is women's bodies, from direct control of their sexual expressions to sexual violence, prescription of dress codes and regulation of their fertility through to denial of their rights to information and services to address their sexual and reproductive needs.


In Conclusion

These forms of denials, norms, and practices clearly relegate women, even today, to the status of servant/slaves in society and hence raises serious questions in each of our African societies as to girls' and women's full citizenship. The experiences of girls and women in respect of their claims to citizenship may vary with age, social status, educational, economic and political positions, but none can claim equal citizenship with men, in reality.

Men have freedom to move beyond set geographical boundaries while women in a majority of cases require the permission in writing by a male partner to be considered for a visa. Thus, in spite of various forms of constitutions, conventions and treaties that recognise women's rights as human rights, women's citizenship remains restricted and controlled.

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Reference:

1. World Health Organisation, *Technical Consultation on Sexual Health*
2. Girard, F. *Global Indications of U.S. Domestic and International Policies on Sexuality* (2004) in IWGSSP Working Papers, N°1, June 2004.
3. Uganda's Health Chief Warns Against Abstinence-Only Approach, UN Wire, July 21, 2003
4. National Public Radio, "The ABC of AIDS in Africa" Transcript of To The Point, aired July 8, 2003. 

"ONE OF OUR OWN"

A TRIBUTE TO AMBASSADOR ANGELA KING, CD.

From DAWN Caribbean

The Caribbean family of Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN) wishes to place on record its deep sadness and sense of loss on the death of Ambassador Angela King. During her 40-year career as a diplomat, Ambassador King served Jamaica with distinction, and working within the UN system, as Assistant Secretary General and Special Adviser on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women, she demonstrated that it was possible to successfully leverage significant resources within the UN system to fight for women's rights, and the advancement of women.

As an activist, working strategically for several decades, she made seminal contribution to the UN Secretariat, and to international conferences and committees, which resulted in significant benefits to women and their families in countries across the globe.

In addition, Ambassador King was the first woman to head a UN mission on preventive diplomacy and peace-building. Undoubtedly, through her powerful leadership, the interconnectedness between gender equality and women's advancement, peace and security and sustainable development was re-affirmed.

In tribute to her quiet determination and perseverance, and to her commitment to women's advancement, it is incumbent on us to ensure that we honour and commemorate her work, and give voice, through our own efforts, to the principles of women's rights, gender equality, and global peace. We offer our deepest sympathies to all members of her family, and close friends. 🌅

Judith Wedderburn
DAWN Caribbean, February 16, 2007

RIGHTS, DEMOCRACY AND RETRIBUTION IN FIJI

Presentation by Yvonne Underhill-Sem, DAWN Pacific Regional Coordinator to the DAWN panel on Citizenship and Democracy: Retribution and Rights. People (World Social Forum 2007 Nairobi, Kenya, January 20-25, 2007)

On December 8, 2007 Fiji experienced its 4th military coup in 20 years. The overthrow of the democratically elected government appeared non-violent because there was no forced armed takeover, no shooting or physical harming of government leaders, and no accounts of mayhem among disaffected parts of the community.

And yet, there was violence and there surely were possibilities for avoiding this latest democratic tragedy in Fiji. In this brief presentation, I focus on the 'violence' that was committed through the concept of

'embodied citizenship' and I look at this in relation to the alleged failure of a feminist constitution holder in Fiji to uphold basic human rights.

I qualify the notion of citizenship as 'embodied' because citizenship entails more rights and freedoms than the obvious ones of being able to vote and to cross international borders. Citizenship is also about other rights, some of which are specific to some bodies because material bodies influence the positioning of political subjects.

The notion of embodied citizenship allows

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For political subjects to be understood as more than gender-neutral instrumental subjects. Instead the fleshiness of political subjects is also entitled to protection, especially when particular women's bodies, particular racialised bodies or particular politicised bodies, become objects of political violence. In Fiji in December 2006, it was the gendered politicised bodies of NGO, labour and women's leaders that stood up early to the military, exercising rights and defending democratic space that they had become accustomed to enjoying in Fiji.

Through the notion of embodied citizenship, we can name other forms by which citizens rights are violated and in doing this we can advance the political project of radical democracy (see <http://feministdialogues.isiswomen.org>).

Shortly after the military coup on December 5, 2006, various troubling but unsubstantiated accounts of military harassment and sexualised verbal abuse and threats, particularly of women democracy defenders, were circulating. However, it was the well-publicised abduction and physical harassment of several democracy activists on Christmas day that confirmed the existence of a different and more insidious sort of violence. The curtailment of freedom of speech was being physically enforced by a military government intent on righting all the wrongs of the democratically elected government. According to the military commander, it was about good governance not democracy. There is no doubt that it is difficult to negotiate through the complexity of state corruption, military dictatorship, and constitutional responsibility to uphold basic human rights like freedom of speech. Yet, negotiate we must. And in the process of negotiating, inevitably, different core values and principles will emerge and will need to be systematically dealt with.

Resisting the negotiation of these core values and principles will lead to an impasse where there is a good chance that the 'military' might easily take the upper hand.

The challenge then is to negotiate mutually acceptable core values in a time-sensitive manner but fully aware that any resulting agreements are always only temporary.

Democracy was one core value that was obviously abandoned by the military leaders who overthrew government. Surprisingly, the Director of the Fiji Human Rights Commission, a "fervent human rights advocate" who had been appointed by the UN Commission on Human Rights as Special Rapporteur on the use of mercenaries, also quickly dismissed it.

According to media reports, immediately following the coup, a Fiji Human Rights Commissioner reminded all state institutions that the Bill of Rights chapter of the Constitution must be followed and that everyone has rights. Over the next week however, this clarity disappeared into wavering acceptance of military rule over human rights.

Although allegations of inhuman treatment by one citizen was investigated by the Fiji Human Rights Commission (FHRC), following which the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre (FWCC) publicly condemned 'acts of intimidation against activists by the military', and the FHRC responded unequivocally with a statement of assurance that the "Commission would adhere to its constitutional mandate to protect the rights of everyone", the Director of the FHRC later publicly suggested that some complaints may not be within the Commission's jurisdiction, and might be better dealt with by another authority. Further wavering was apparent when the Director of FHRC showed "apparent acceptance of a military appointed ombudsman", who was also appointed as chair of the commission.

Despite assurances to the nation by the Director of FHRC that all complaints against the violation of human rights would be investigated and that the 1997 Constitution remained valid, on Christmas day, six democracy activists were taken to the army barracks for questioning. In addition to this unlawful act, they suffered humiliation and

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REVISITING ICAE's ADVOCACY WORK WITHIN GLOBAL AND REGIONAL CONTEXTS

Presentation by Gigi Francisco, DAWN-Southeast Asia / GEO Philippines at the International Council on Adult Education (ICAE) Assembly which took place at the World Social Forum, 2007 in Nairobi, Kenya

It is significant and deliberate that this ICAE assembly is taking place within the space that is the World Social Forum. As ICAE Secretariat Coordinator Celita Eccher said in her speech at the 2006 DAWN Training Institute: "The spheres of social movements are processes of resistance and alternatives, but are also learning spaces and a collective exercise of global and regional citizenship... (In these spaces) it is necessary to look at the interior of cultures and of ourselves and to reflect about the limits of the symbolic, hegemonic worlds, and create new symbolic universes. As we

contest, so too must we simultaneously learn and re-create."

This says it all - clearly and explicitly. In the network that is the ICAE, it is unnecessary to belabor the point that cultural, educational and ideological work is as political as electoral contests and revolutions.

The new context

But while ICAE's 'reason for being,' remains relevant and necessary, the shifting context in which its work has proceeded in the last five years has forced many of us to deeply reflect on, and modify our way of 'doing and becoming.'

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demoralising physical mistreatment. The response from the Director of the FHRM by this time was total acquiescence to the military curtailment of rights and freedoms granted citizens under their Constitution. She issued a warning to people to be careful when expressing their views about the situation because Fiji was under a different kind of regime and political system, and 'like it or not, a military government is in place' so people should not say what they want about the military.

Legal opinion on this turn was unequivocally concerned about the director's view that rights under the Constitution were now limited and, therefore, people needed to realise they would face the consequences if they expressed opinions on the current situation. Further, she claimed that situations such as the unlawful detention of people by the military constituted a humanitarian issue which should be dealt with by the Red Cross.

Within three weeks, the constitutional agent responsible for upholding fundamental human rights appeared to have capitulated to an idea that human dignity was being

offended, and this was not within her mandate. Further, different from early investigations which proceeded on the basis of undocumented allegations, the director now said she could only investigate properly documented claims of human rights abuse. Here we see quite starkly the problem with notions of human dignity. But upon what normative framework do we measure transgressions of human dignity? For all its flaws human rights has proved an internationally recognised normative framework that during times of constitutional confusion, like apparently non-violent military coups, serves as a critical reference.

This is the complex terrain that feminist human rights defenders are now working. More than anything it highlights the critical importance of being vigilant and unequivocal about the defence of hard-won human rights. All citizens will benefit from this vigilance, but more importantly, those citizens whose bodies are marked as being in some way 'deviant' (or out-spoken, or physically more visible or weaker). By keeping in mind the notion of embodied citizenship we can more easily track the particularities of human rights abuse and thereby more effectively understand the power plays at work in militaristic political ambitions. 

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These shifts are rooted in the dynamic arising out of resistances, radical actions and utopian hopes of plural civics where lives are assaulted by the intertwined processes of neo-liberal globalization, militarism and war, and all forms of neo-conservatism and intolerance. The penetration of capitalism- with its logic of over-accumulation and violence -into the depths of our social relations and its integration of new frontiers and social classes, creates in simultaneous fashion, a web of market relations and a web of resistance; it fragments as well as consolidates; and consumes subjects in a total sense but also radicalizes them.

Internal Diversity and Democracy

How has ICAE responded to this shifting terrain? For me the ICAE's main response in this historical point of its organizational existence has been the integration of new subjects through its diversity projects whether these are in the form of tackling issues of exclusion based on gender, race, caste, sexual orientation and class, or in the form of bringing into the realm of the ICAE new actors and linkages. This is, to say the least, seriously destabilizing of traditional perspectives and approaches to adult education as emancipatory projects, as well as particularly disturbing of our historically accumulated set of social expectations and obligations.

Familiar political categories and performance scripts are being re-assessed, renegotiated and re-constructed. New linkages across the ICAE global network in the form of inter-country, inter-continental, trans-continental, global, inter-societal, inter-ideological, and inter-movement relations, have been established cutting through and enhancing but at the same time creating tensions for organizational structures and mechanisms. Within the microcosm that is the ICAE, convergences are explored and nurtured among interacting 'spheres of authorities' that are reflective of more horizontal and dynamic global networks

The ensuing demands for creativity, flexibility and continuing democratic

negotiations and debates have created a positive pressure on the network's organizational structures and leadership. Old and new issues and processes stand side by side and their inter-linkages are constantly re-visited in the context of our mass politics and organizational development. Many of us simultaneously relate with, but also resist state-led popular education projects and civic undertakings. However, while I valorize these diverse processes I also acknowledge that these may create tensions and difficult moments among those who actively engage in the praxis of the network. Emancipation is after all, about change and about leaving behind our comfort zones!

Revitalizing Our Mass Politics: Inter-scalar Identities

The shifting terrain has not just raised questions about the internal organization of the ICAE but also about its external linkages. Through the years, the network has created and nurtured both a transnational but also an inter-scalar labyrinth of relations at global, regional, national and local spheres.

The subjects that we encounter at the micro level of our work, just like us, are people whose identities have been shaped by this scalar labyrinth of relations, who have multi-dimensional identities, and often express contradictory behavior of conforming on the one side but also of innovating and resisting on the other. This includes the poorest of the poor, a large majority of whom are women, who are locally situated yet systematically targeted by neo-liberal globalization, intolerance and violence and are the most exploited in global market relations. Just like us, they are caught in the context of states that are transforming and also contradicted on the one hand, becoming more efficient managerialist states for global capitalism and the transnational capitalists but on the other hand, fragmenting into sub-national spheres of influence that present opportunities for innovation, resistances and alternatives. Just like us, they are exploited by global capitalism but also transformed as one of its engines through the

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WOMEN'S AGENCY IN PEACE MAKING WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF DEMOCRACY AND CITIZENSHIP: THE CASE OF SRI LANKA

Presentation by Kumudini Samuel, DAWN Regional Coordinator for South Asia at the DAWN panel, held at the World Social Forum, January, 2007 in Kenya.

Sri Lanka's protracted ethno-political and armed conflict now spans a period of nearly thirty years. This ongoing conflict is fundamentally rooted in the failure of post-independence nation building to accommodate the interests and needs of the country's multi-ethnic society within a framework of pluralist democracy. Instead, democracy as experienced by post-colonial Sri Lanka has re-affirmed majority rule and entrenched ethnic, language and religious marginalisation. It has also strengthened existing social inequalities, including those of class and gender.

Women's activism in Sri Lanka to bring about a sustainable and just peace, based on a politically negotiated solution to its ethnic conflict has therefore to be understood within this context of vested interest and political

advantage wielded by the Sinhala majoritarian and patriarchal state.

In the context of the conflict, women's activism for a political solution was first articulated via their agitations against the Prevention of Terrorism Act, which came into effect in Sri Lanka in 1979. Anti terrorism legislation in the country was thus a reality long before September 11th and the resulting spate of similar legislation by a number of countries. Women joined or took the lead in forming human rights organisations in the 1970s and early 1980s, evolving into some of the strongest human rights defenders in the country. These early organisations included the Civil Rights Movement, the Movement for Inter-Racial Justice and Equality and the Movement for the Defence of Democratic

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Hegemonizing force of a consumer culture.

Just like us, they negotiate through a contest of competing claims on utopian alternatives to globalization and war among social movements some progressive, some retrogressive, some new, some representing mere historical artefacts but all contradicted.

As adult educators whose highest expression of commitment is our solidarity with the poor, the ordinary citizens, the discriminated against and excluded, the times call on us to become learners in our own work. The way to another possible world is to catalyze, nurture and defend democratic processes within spaces of plural content.

Empowerment of the marginalized, poor and excluded is not just about enabling them to access political, economic and social resources and capacities but is also very much about us contesting in a direct way and radicalizing democracy, of moving this away

from the limits of western liberal notions, and struggling to enlarge the scope, diversity and plurality of democratic expressions and visions. We need to socialize democratic ways and popularize notions of diversity, plurality, debates and convergences, even if these be of temporal character, to be constructed and re-constructed as we move on in our resistance against the hegemonic forces of neo-liberal globalization, war and fundamentalisms.

In short, we need to persevere within this new context; to keep on experimenting with democratic ideas and methodologies that had been gained from the last five years when the ICAE went through a distinctive period of organizational innovation and revitalization. We cannot stop from re-learning, resisting and re-constructing both within ourselves and together with others toward the world around us - because the possibilities of what ICAE could become in the future are embedded in this process. In the years to come, we cannot be fully and completely as we are now. Something has got to give; something always changes. 

Rights.

By 1982, feminists and progressive women's organisations had come together as the Women's Action Committee to advocate for women's rights, human rights protection and a negotiated settlement to the ethnic conflict.

In 1984, a broader coalition of women formed Women for Peace which called on all political parties as well as the political representation of the Tamil militant groups fighting for self-determination in the north east of the country, to meet at an all-party conference. This coalition was also the first to highlight war related internal displacement as a situation which gives rise to the violation of a range of socio-economic and political rights with specific gender-based repercussions.

By 1984, Tamil women in the Northern Province, where the armed conflict between the state and Tamil militants was intensifying, had banded into a Mothers Front to protest against arbitrary arrests and disappearances of young persons. In 1989, a similar Mothers Front was formed in the south of the country demanding information on the disappeared, filing habeas corpus petitions, fighting against illegal detentions, involuntary disappearances, arbitrary arrests and extra judicial executions.

Both Fronts operated under conditions of severe threat and gross human rights violations by both state and non-state entities. In a situation where traditional forms of struggle were either ineffective or not possible due to political violence and terror, women employed the cultural and gendered construct of motherhood in response to increased militarization. Motherhood was used as protection against reprisals, an expression of anger and outrage as well as a moral duty and obligation to safeguard life.

The years of war also transformed the

gendered roles of non-combatant women. Often marginalised and rarely acknowledged, these women used a multitude of other strategies to survive the many ravages of war. Commonly perceived merely as victims, untold numbers of Tamil, Muslims and Sinhala women affected by the conflict were forced to defy or overcome traditional norms and barriers to ensure the survival of their families and communities. They assumed de-facto and de-jure responsibility for the emotional as well as

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economic survival of their families; dealt with multiple displacements; engaged with political and military institutions on behalf of detained, tortured, raped, disappeared or executed loved ones; led movements demanding the protection of human rights; negotiated mutual co-existence with hostile neighbours, and campaigned for an end to the fighting.

By the 1990s women's rights work was linked to the discussion around the contours of a political solution to the ethnic conflict that ranged from constitutional reform to political decision making and citizenship, with particular reference to gender concerns and women. Following a number of failed efforts at peace-making by the state during this period, women's political activism determinedly transformed to deal with the tenuous 'peace process' and sustain the 'ceasefire' of 2002. Building on past experiences, the women's movement used a number of strategies to influence the peace process.

Women were the first to rally publicly in support of the cessation of hostilities between the government and the LTTE and the positive atmosphere created in which it was hoped peace negotiations could commence. At the same time, women also made a constructive critique of the CFA and called for its strengthening. They reminded both sides that transparency and inclusiveness should be important features of agreements made during process seeking to establish peace. Women

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emphasized that new agreements must be committed to democracy and pluralism, respect the rights of women and all minority groups and enshrine the principles of equality. Women reiterated that the burden of peacemaking must be shared by all those affected by the conflict, including minority communities and women. They also called for the inclusion of women and gender concerns in the formal peace process that was unfolding.

Petitions to the state and the LTTE were followed by memorandums and representations. However although the Prime Minister promised to consider a more inclusive and gender sensitive framework and include a mechanism to engage women in the peace process this was not reflected at the peace talks. As the plenary talks progressed and gender concerns continued to be marginalized from the formal process, women decided to carry out a fact-finding mission in the conflict-affected districts bringing feminists/women activists from the international peace movement to join local women. This report was used strategically to lobby the international donor community, the UN and bi-lateral governments.

Ten months after the ceasefire agreement, the government and the LTTE agreed to establish a women's committee to 'explore the effective inclusion of gender concerns in the peace process'. The committee subsequently known as the Sub Committee on Gender Issues (SGI), which was mandated to report directly to the plenary sessions of the peace talks and work closely with other sub-committees to the peace process was facilitated by a Norwegian woman minister and comprised ten nominees, five each from the government and the LTTE. It sought to identify issues of concern to women and bring those into the agenda of the peace process.

This mechanism is possibly the first of its kind established within a formal peace process at a pre-substantive stage of negotiations. It is also the first effort by the

Sri Lankan government and the LTTE to recognize the involvement of women in peace building and peace making.

By its second meeting the SGI was able to agree on terms of reference that focused broadly on: sustaining the peace process; resettlement; personal security and safety; infrastructure and services; livelihood and employment; political representation and decision-making and reconciliation.

However, when the LTTE withdrew from the formal peace process by mid 2003 all the joint sub-committees were also effectively made redundant. Though many attempts were made by women's groups, bi-laterals and others to keep the Gender Sub-Committee going, the LTTE was reluctant to resume partial engagement. It is also doubtful if the new government, which is now pursuing a more militaristic strategy to deal with the conflict, will revive the SGI, if negotiations resume.

The SGI was without doubt an important first step in the process of including gender issues in the formal negotiation process. Whatever its future fate, this initial ground work together with the precedent-setting agreement at the peace talks that gender concerns must be effectively included in the peace process will be both a standard and a strong foundation for future negotiations and the women's movement to build on.

As positive as the mechanism was, the SGI can be subjected to a fair degree of criticism. The manner in which it was set up, its composition, its links to the formal peace process, its autonomy or the limits to its autonomy, its links with gender concerns on the ground, its links to the broader women's movement, its accessibility, its communication strategies, the perception of its role by the peace constituency, policy makers, implementers and the media, must be interrogated critically. The need for such a mechanism or mechanisms that may be created in the future to maintain some independence from the official process and negotiating parties is crucial. This is only possible if constant interaction and a free

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flow of information between such a mechanism and women directly affected by the conflict and those working on gender and conflict related issues and concerns can be established and maintained. Such concerns must also be incorporated into terms of reference and policy formulation and implementation processes and must also be open to constant evaluation and monitoring.

A further concern was that the SGI could be perceived as a supplementary mechanism that was expendable which ignored the fact that if women are to be represented in the peace process they must be directly present at the negotiation table. Analogous with this criticism however is that nominal representation of women at the negotiation table will not in itself resolve the gendered nature of the talks and the peace process and that gender concerns should be included through an inclusive and interactive mechanism that is an intrinsic component at the talks. This is the only guarantee to women's political security and the only route to enabling economic and social security for women in the interim and post-agreement period.

The success of any such mechanism will be a vital factor in ensuring this political security and achieving a sustainable peace. The fact the SGI had no definite link to the other sub-committees in the peace process, such as that dealing with immediate humanitarian and relief needs (SIHRN), and had no mechanism to access independent funding was also reflective of its marginalization from fundamental decision-making processes that addressed economic concerns. It is therefore, imperative that any mechanism dealing with gender concerns must also be linked to all other mechanisms dealing with political, economic, social and cultural issues in the course of peace processes. The interdependency of such concerns has to be recognised and a holistic approach to dealing with the range of securities in all these spheres must be developed.

Though the SGI was affiliated to the

formal peace process as an advisory body there was no clear direction of how this affiliation could be operationalised. The terms of reference of the SGI, drafted independently by the committee itself, and therefore an extremely positive first step, had to be formally agreed upon at the plenary. Since the plenary talks stalled before the SGI terms of reference could be placed before it, the SGI was left in a state of limbo, unable to access any financial or material resources and unable to meet officially.

The unanticipated postponement of the peace talks was followed by a LTTE decision to unilaterally pull out of all other sub-committees to the plenary. Consequently, there was no opportunity for the SGI to negotiate its continuity, independent of the stops and starts to the peace process. For both the LTTE and the government, gender issues were subsidiary to the main agenda of political power sharing. The agenda of the peace process was framed around issues of power, territory and resource-sharing so that the consideration of gender issues was possible only while consistent with them. While bringing a keen understanding of gender concerns to their work, the LTTE women in particular gave primacy to the politics of the Tamil liberation struggle. The government delegation too was constrained by the government's political agenda. There was thus no real democratic and independent inclusion of women in the peace process.

As last week's discussions at the Feminist Dialogues proposed, we as women need to develop a deep and profound critique of democracy that will enable its transformation and radicalisation. Feminists noted that "the radicalization of democracy calls for the re-construction of the notion of citizenship as well. Taking into consideration the various exclusions and marginalizations that are an integral part of democracy as we know it, we must re-cast the identity of the citizen within a political mould".

They also noted that among the challenges posed for activists "within the hegemonic democratic frameworks now in place is that of overcoming the systems of

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FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES ON REGULATED MOVEMENTS: WITH VIEWS FROM THE PACIFIC

Presentation by Yvonne Underhill-Sem, DAWN Pacific Regional Coordinator, to Panel on Regulated Movement, Forced Movement and the Traffic of People (World Social Forum, 2007 Nairobi, Kenya, January 20-25, 2007)

Thank you for considering my contribution useful for this panel that focuses on Africa-Asia connections. My presentation connects with this theme conceptually in two ways.

First, my own location in the Pacific suggests that thinking from the largest terrestrial continent to the largest oceanic continent, forces one to articulate obvious differences. In doing so, some similarities make the regions appear less distant, while some internal differences are made more stark. For instance, the difference in patterns of population movement between English and Portuguese speaking Africa and the difference in population flows between the Western and Eastern Pacific.

Clearly although there are similar historical patterns, one needs to understand the nature of the different geopolitical contexts in which historical movements occurred, and significantly how different actors respond to changing contexts. In today's context, it is not just a neo-liberal global context that we need to pay attention to, but also the neo-conservative ideologies that are at work. This has a different impact on women and men.

The second conceptual contribution I

want to make concerns the potency of a critical feminist analysis and what it can bring to these debates on the movement of people. I mention two particular contributions. The first arises from the recent Feminist Dialogues. The second arises from current work in progress from DAWN (Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era).


First, a critical feminist analysis forces us to consider that there are many different kinds of bodies but in terms of power relations, there are those bodies that control and those whose bodies are considered to need to be controlled. These bodies are gendered in the sense that mostly the bodies that control are gendered male and those that are considered needing to be controlled are gendered women and somehow deviant like GLTB bodies.

However, the critical point for analysis is to understand that the nature of, and reasons for controlling bodies relates to power relations and the new forms of relationships between people with their bodies and sexualities. This creates new social subjectivities and new ways of living together in the world where it is widely understood that lived bodies have social, cultural and political expression. This form of body Politics for

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exclusion of women from the public/political space, incorporating the recognition of the urgent processes of democracy in the private". In the process of radicalizing democracy, women's movements and feminist movements therefore proposed "to take the struggle into a variety of terrains: Among these are struggles against material and symbolic exclusions; struggles for redistributive justice and the justice of recognition; struggles for local, global and inter-societal justice and peace; struggles for recognition of body politics; struggles for the recognition and dialogue between diversities".

As the Feminist Dialogues noted, "Some of us have been retrieving and radicalizing the most progressive aspects of liberal democracy liberty, equality, self-determination, autonomy - and combining these with socialist conceptions of the common good. This opens up possibilities for contestation and convergence at the ideological and cultural levels, around the ethical meaning of radical democracy: That is, the transformation of power relations from a framework of domination and subordination to one of "shared authority", within our movements, in the society, and in relation to states". 

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feminists is an essential dimension to bring into the analysis of the movement of people. (see *Fundamentalisms and Body Politics* at www.feministdialogue.isiswomen.org).

Second, a critical feminist analysis of population mobility asks questions about the nature of social contracts made and, more importantly, how to negotiate gender-just social contracts. By social contracts, DAWN is referring to the processes of generating social values, norms, institutions, structures, behaviours and dimensions of human rights in all its forms.

From a DAWN perspective, struggle is central to the reinvention of social contracts, but so too are the times of periodic collective agreement. The 'agreements' that emerge during these times however are not set in stone but are fluid engagements whereby core values, norms and practices are able to be clearly articulated and defended.

In the area of population mobility, a critical feminist analysis would focus on the ways in which specific human rights were being upheld, overlooked, or undermined in the social contracts being negotiated, promulgated and challenged.

Finally, I cannot overestimate that in this particular geopolitical era, population movements are both more complex and more contradictory. This means that it is imperative to protect the fundamental human rights of those people whose bodies constitute the growing legal and illegal flows of migrants, displaced persons and refugees.

Views from the Pacific

Within the Pacific with less than 1 million square km of land and about 8 million people, compared to Africa's 30 million square km of land and a population of over 870 million people - people have always moved. The historical settlement of the Pacific based on people moving is still evident with enduring forms of population

mobility. Although there are no longer any bona fide journeys where sea-going canoes travelled huge distances, there are still many canoe journeys along low-lying coastal land and up rivers and large streams. And still many people in the Pacific walk regularly over densely forested mountains and river valleys.

Over the last century, new modes of transport, especially air travel, has facilitated other sorts of population movement with Pacific people venturing further from their home islands and importantly, non-Pacific people venturing into the Pacific.

It is important to locate these forms of mobility within the geopolitical context of their times. In the early historical period, population mobility in the Pacific owed little to wider geopolitical advances in for instance, the establishment of slave-based plantation economies, although there were 'blackbirders' at work.

In the colonial period, paternalistic and religious ideologies emerging from other cultural and economic contexts became increasingly apparent. In the immediate newly independent years, young countries were determined to make their way in the clearly demarcated East-West world, with greater influence from the West. In the more recent period of neo-liberal economic globalisation, the political lines are more confused ideologically which requires countries to refine their political and economic allegiances more strategically.

All the different forms of population mobility that can be identified were gendered in one way or another. In the earlier historical period, it was mostly men moving first, returning home after finding or forcibly taking 'new' lands and then travelling again with their families. More adventurous or forced journeys saw both men and women travelling without any plans to return. Still other longstanding journeys were related to trading, in which women were critical as potential wives to secure closer connections with trading partners. Some of these forms of movement persist in the Western Pacific today.

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During the colonial period, there was also gender movement with, for instance, colonial officers facilitating the move of young girls to work as housekeepers on rural farms in NZ, and selecting talented young men for education in Australian schools and universities.

In the immediate post-colonial years in the Pacific, in the euphoria of independence, many national airlines proliferated and in the Eastern Pacific especially, many Pacific peoples choose to move independently away from their homelands and into the labour-seeking economies of New Zealand and Australia.

The modern air travel of the 1960s symbolised the transformation of longstanding population movements and with this came the transformation of the places and peoples. These more independent moves were also gendered: men moving as head of young households, often leaving first and then later joined by a young wife and children.

However, by the turn of the century, in a new geopolitical environment, entirely new forms of movements are evident in the Pacific.

Climate change refugees. With sea levels rising, various small island states like Tuvalu are negotiating new settlement areas in neighbouring countries. In larger island countries, islands and coastal areas threatened with inundation of gardening and residential areas are also seeking other lands to settle on, which is a problem when land has such high social and economic value. In the negotiation of new land tenures, to what extent are women given equal rights to own land in their own name?

Refugees, especially 'boatpeople: Australia's inhumane refugee policy transfers asylum seekers to debt ridden Pacific countries in return for development aid. Here Australia's racist immigration policy explicitly marks the refugee body as being unfit for her shores but somehow well-suited to reside in Pacific countries whose aid budget is increased for their willingness to accept Australia's problem.

Military men. Fiji has established a solid reputation within the UN. Well trained for global security work and able to draw on


experience in protecting those who uphold the UN mandate of human rights. On return to their country they have recently deemed themselves to be the legitimate force to overturn a democratically elected government in the 4th military coup in Fiji a case the new military leader claims to be one of good governance being more important than democracy. The rise of militarism globally has empowered a new kind of rationale that allows for the demise of democratic systems of representational government.

Nurturing women. Fiji is joining the ranks of developing countries exporting women care workers to the demographically aging countries of the economic north. The training of women for what is often privately contracted export care work reinforces the privatisation of women's care work, which is notorious for difficulties associated with the protection of the economic and sexual rights of women.

Temporary labourers. The Melanesian Spearhead Group is negotiating the entry of temporary Pacific workers into Europe as a way to leverage similar access to Australian and New Zealand labour markets which remain more strictly regulated than the small Polynesian countries in the eastern Pacific, and less open to Melanesians than Polynesians.

Concluding thoughts

For each of these new forms of movement, we must look closely at how the bodies involved are gendered and who is controlling what bodies and for what complex range of reasons. A closer examination of the social contracts that are negotiated for each form will also show gendered differences not unlike those identifiable in other parts of the world.

We must also take into consideration the historical trajectories that current movement patterns are built upon. Increasingly the humanities and the arts are doing justice to increasingly radical notions of the rights of the diasporas as they have successfully been able to tap into complex embodied senses of identity and citizenship. We need to supplement these expressions by critical scholarship that includes a critical feminist analysis. 

African Boat Peoples: Globalisation, gender and new patterns of migration in West Africa

By Fatou Sow, DAWN Regional Coordinator for Francophone Africa

African migrations are currently at the centre of various debates on the continent and in immigration countries. They had been a major issue in the campaigns for France's presidential elections in April 2007. They came to the forefront with the dramas surrounding illegal immigrations, because of the tight barriers created all over the European Union, which are becoming increasingly difficult to cross: complication of visa procedures, closing of borders, deportations, precarious living conditions, etc.

What most struck the international opinion were the 'sagas' towards Europe of a new kind of *Boat Peoples*. They are Africans. They ceased crossing the Sahara Desert, which separates Sub-Saharan Africa from Northern Africa. It's by sea that thousands of them are trying to reach the closest Northern Eldorado.

Expatriation, and the dream of a job for a better life, are yet the quest of tens of thousands of migrants, washed up on the beaches of the Canary Islands, Spain or Italy. They embark on true odysseys at sea aboard fragile boats or across the deserts of Mauritania, Morocco, Algeria or Libya, only to mention those who undertake their journey through those routes. Some are women and children.

We have in mind the events of the Ceuta and Melilla Spanish enclaves in North Africa, reported by the world press between September and October 2005. Thousands of refugees of African origin took the risk of climbing over metal fences separating these enclaves from Morocco, to reach Europe. Moroccan authorities deported those who failed, sending them towards the Sahara, without food or water. Jose Antonio Alonso, the Spanish Minister of the Interior, legitimated his country's 'toughening' by explaining that "Undocumented immigrants must know from now on that they will have to leave our country as soon after they enter it".

Closing the borders of a Western world wishing to preserve its spaces of wealth and

its national identities, though well mixed, lies at the base of the tragedies at sea. Immigration candidates are caught in a vice between the repressive policies of African regions they cross and those of host countries.

These migrations raise new important issues. While there is a larger scale of migrations taking place in Africa itself, there has been a gradual shift of migrations towards the rest of the world, in particular Europe in the 1970s, the United States in the 1990s, and today Asia. Moreover, there are an increasing number of women among migrants. These women are not anymore just spouses settling outside the continent as part of family reunification, but they also are single, married, and/or heads of household, workers. Two major elements will be analysed here : the internationalisation of migrations and its increasing feminisation.

1. The internationalisation of African migrations

New trends in urban migration emerged in the late 1980s and the 1990s, emphasizing the reinforcement of migration flows and the increasing difficulties of living in rural, as well as urban areas. Capital cities became 'sold out tickets cities' (Antoine & Diop 1995). Indeed, Bruzzone, Fall *et al* remind us concerning Senegal that "The failure of national development policies and the depth of the economic crisis in urban as well as in rural areas have led to the adoption of SAPs whose detrimental effects on daily living conditions of the Senegalese have been widely recognized.

The brutality of the implementation of measures recommended by international institutions and the absence of a 'social dimension' have propelled households into a frantic search for new scenarios for a way of out of the crisis, of which the most visible are urban centres becoming 'informalised' and the migration towards countries of the North, (2006: 17).

What has thus radically changed today,

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are the spaces and the context in which African migrations are occurring. Between the 1970s and the 1990s, flows of African workers were solicited by Europe which, depleted after the second world war, needed cheap labour to rebuild itself. Flows of populations from former French colonies to France were significant. Although these immigrants from the Maghreb and Sub-Saharan Africa were encountering enormous difficulties in adapting and integrating into the social, cultural and political life of the host country, they were still maintained. Between the 1970s and the 1980s, family reunification immigration was even legislated to stabilize migrants.

While migration flows are escalating throughout the continent for economic and political reasons, migrants are increasingly crossing new frontiers, and heading not towards old colonial Europe anymore, but also towards the rest of the world. Today doors are closing in front of growing numbers of migrants. The context has changed from a Europe in search of cheap labour on its grounds. With globalisation, the main objective is capital flows and not free movement of a workforce that countries with outsourcing policies wish to keep in their countries of origin. This workforce is invited to 'circulate' only if its specific qualification meets the economic needs of host countries. Thus Germany was ready to recruit several thousand Indian computer specialists needed for its economy while, in France, the French Ministry of the Interior Sarkozy developed a 'selected' immigration (*immigration choisie*) scheme (2006). Great Britain easily delivers work permits to *highly skilled* personnel, as does Quebec, the large French-speaking province of Canada, which very readily requests competencies in that language.

Sub-Saharan emigration towards Italy, Spain or the United States gained momentum between the 1980s and 1990s, with the measures taken by many Northern European states to limit entry into their countries. France which had welcomed migrants from their former colonies without visas, began requiring them in 1986, hence the detour through Southern Europe (Italy and Spain).

These destinations which were just transit zones at first, proved to be more accessible since visa requirements were only established towards the mid 1990s. These countries offered new opportunities (agricultural workers, craftsmen, workmen, street vendors, traders) to working class communities.

The United States, perceived as another Eldorado, experienced important migration flows. The 'Africanisation' of the city of New York was a widely described phenomenon (Stroller, 2002). Senegal introduced a very specific pattern of migration, as many of the traders belong to the *Muridiya*, a Muslim brotherhood in the central peanut basin. In that case, trade and religion do 'good business'.

Today, migration, mainly of a business nature, towards Asian countries (China and Thailand) has opened new prospects, the consequences of which deserve particular attention. China is a particular case, with its quest for natural resources (oil and minerals).

More and more Chinese enterprises are settling on the continent, with the support of the Chinese government. 'Without a colonial past in Africa and after fierce struggles to organize its self-determination, China is scoring at all levels on the continent: international cooperation, trade, access to raw materials, exchanges between local governments, powerful investments in African banks, financial and economic assistance, cooperation in education, science, culture, health, peace and security, the follow-up of the China-Africa Forum launched in 2000, agricultural cooperation, tourism and space control, special relationships with African leaders. This major economic and diplomatic offensive of China on Africa is not an option anymore but a necessity for China, which wishes to promote a different policy officially centred on a "win-win" approach'. (Amaïzo 2006).

2. The feminisation of migrations

Women's emigration has rapidly increased in the last two decades. Besides economic and political issues, it raises new problematics in gender issues. Beyond family reunification immigration, which first brought African

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women on the roads to departure, the majority of women of the South generally migrate for essentially personal and economic reasons. Other circumstances might have contributed, such as multiple levels of environmental degradation or insecurity in areas of armed or political conflicts. From the 1960s to 1970s, attention to female migrations was diluted by the focus on family migrations (husbands with wives and children), even though those flows did not affect them in the same manner.

With progress in women's studies, women's migrations are progressively being incorporated into global studies on population movements in the 1970s and 1980s. At this level, the main issue has been whether 'migration modernized women, emancipating them from assumed traditional values and behaviours' (Grieco & Boyd 2003).

Another focus has been on their family constraints as wives and mothers, which forced them to migrate less than men or to join them as family members. But never did critical inquiry raise questions about the underlying models which determined migration flows. Families were criticised, as centres of power struggle between its different members: 'Families and households, as units where production and reproduction take place, represent centres of struggle where peoples with different activities and interests can come into conflict with one another. When placed within ongoing power relations that operate in families and households, such diverse interests and activities strongly suggest that the interests of men and women in families do not always coincide and may affect decisions about who manages to migrate, for how long and to what countries' (Grieco & Boyd 2003).

The integration of gender into migration theories brought the understanding that economic development did not necessarily have the same impact on men and women, in the decision to migrate. Also, in host countries, the demand for labour could vary according to gender, as shown by the hiring of Asian household workers in North America, Europe, or Arabic Gulf countries,

or the prostitution or trade of women of all origins. Finally, today, as a result of their growing migration, women have, just as men, built networks to promote other women's movements.

To consider the gender dimension of migrations raises two major issues. The first one concerns the patriarchal system, namely the power of men over women: 'How does patriarchy, which gives men preferential access to the resources available in society, affect women's ability to migrate, the timing of that migration, and the final destination?' (Boyd *et* Greico 2003: 3).

The second, which derives from the first questioning, asks if power relations instituted by patriarchy change or reconstruct themselves during and after migration. 'Some studies ask if participating in the workforce in host countries affects women's authority in the family and their sense of control, and forces men to take more responsibilities in domestic chores and the care of children. Others question if women's migration influences power and decision making relations between men and women' (2003:3).

Finally, it is important to emphasize the extent to which policies and international conventions concerning migrations can be 'gendered'. Measures can be taken differently, depending on whether immigration candidates are male or female, just as consequences can be different, depending on their gender. Female migrants are generally considered as 'dependents'. Many consulates are still demanding a marital authorization or an affidavit of support from the husband, before delivering visas, even for tourism purposes. It is increasingly difficult for single African women between the ages of 20 and 40 to obtain a visa to Europe or the United States without providing 'serious' reasons for travelling.

Gender discrimination in employment, salaries, at the workplace (inequalities, sexual harassment) are largely perpetuated against migrants in host countries. Certainly increasing numbers of African women migrants are part of a highly qualified workforce. They often hold diplomas from universities in the host countries. Yet, women are still confined to their 'traditional' domestic skills, relegated more to their role in social reproduction (*family role*) than to activities related to the work market (*market role*).

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Children and senior citizen care and nursing are valued skills. Confined in this family ideology and violence, they are subjected to within this institution, and are not taken into account when they seek refugee status, whereas political violence can grant men refugee status.

Finally, when voluntary return measures are taken in favour of migrants, they concern mostly men invited to return home with a lump sum, without taking into account the aspirations of their spouses whose ambitions are often different. The latter are usually much younger and are not always ready to return to their village or city of origin, or to their in-laws' home. They could lose a certain autonomy they acquired during their stay in Europe: some went to school, to adult education training, earned their own money with their paid work and business...

While women are considered as 'vectors' of the cultures of origin, local authorities manipulate their condition, as during the protests which agitated the French suburbs in late 2005. As expressed by H el ene Carr ere d'Encausse, a well-known specialist of Russian history and the perpetual secretary of the French Academy, 'These people, they come directly from their African villages. But the city of Paris and other cities of Europe are not African villages. For example, everybody wonders why African children are in the streets and not in school? Why their parents cannot buy apartments? It's clear why. A lot of those Africans, I am telling you, are polygamous. Three or four wives and 25 children live in one flat. They are so crowded that they are not flats anymore, but God only knows what! We understand why these kids are hanging around the streets'.

Legislations on the abolition of polygamy, female genital mutilation, and the banning of the veil in schools and in the public services are more the reflection of an attitude of scorn towards the cultures of the


'Other', than a concern to take measures in 'favour of women's human rights', just as the US administration pretends to be concerned about liberating Afghan women. Culture and religion are used in different ways by both sides.

The emergence of communities of different cultures feeds a type of 'clash of civilisations' driven by ideological conflicts which are all the more difficult to manage because they exhibit, on both sides, exclusivisms of superiority or reaction, with a

background of conflicts between Abrahmique, Judeo-Christian and Islamic traditions, amplified by the events of the Middle East (Palestine, Israel, Iraq, Lebanon, Iran ...) and the issues of terrorism and security. The question of cultural identity, beyond integration, has become a political issue of violence. This is not anymore polemics between tradition and

modernity, because many young female victims were born or have been resident in France most of their lives, but a political demand for an 'identity of citizen' (identit e citoyenne).

Debates undertaken at this level often put women in an awkward situation with their communities of origin; they are caught in a stranglehold between their identity concerns and the no-less identity decisions of host countries. Their body endures the weight of contradictions through various ways, from the most subtle to the most violent, as regularly reported in the press.

Policies of host countries, as European Union, the United States or Canada, must be all the more taken into account because they concern religious, social, economic and cultural traditions of the family and affect the status of women: gender relations, parents-children relations, personal status, polygamy, early or forced marriage, female genital mutilation, high birth rates, etc. These states, in fact, far from recognizing the citizenship rights of immigrant women, stigmatise them as victims of all these cultural prejudices. 

Yet, women are still confined to their 'traditional' domestic skills, relegated more to their role in social reproduction (family role) than to activities related to the work market (market role). Children and senior citizen care and nursing are valued skills.

DAWN AT THE WORLD SOCIAL FORUM 2007, NAIROBI, KENYA

The 7th edition of the World Social Forum brought the world to Africa as activists, social movements, networks, coalitions and other progressive forces from Asia-Pacific, Latin America, the Caribbean, North America, Europe and all corners of the Africa came together in Nairobi, Kenya from January, 21 to 25, 2007.

The International Feminist Dialogues was held prior to the WSF on January, 17 to 19, 2007, under the theme, "Transforming Democracy: Feminist Visions and Strategies". Over 250 women from different parts of the world attended to expand the intensive dialogues on feminist perspectives and strategies in addressing fundamentalisms, militarism and neo-liberal globalisation.

One of the highpoints of the Feminist Dialogues was the report back of the African Feminist Forum, held in November, 2007, combined with the launch of the African Charter of Feminist Principles on January 18. Later in the evening there was video streaming in which the DAWN video on Social Contract featured.



Figure 1 From L-R: Ayesha Imam, Muthoni Wanyeki, Bene Madunagu, Bisi Adeleye-Fayemi and Jessica Horn, giving a report back of the African Feminist Forum at the International Feminist Dialogues, 2007.



Figure 2 - The launching of the African Charter of Feminist Principles

DAWN Panel

The DAWN Panel under the theme, "Citizenship: Democracy; Retribution and Rights," held on January, 22 at Amilcar Cabral in the Moi International Sports Complex, Kasarani, Nairobi, Kenya. Moderating the panel was Josefa Gigi Francisco, (DAWN South east Asia Regional Coordinator); panelists were Bene Madunagu, (DAWN General Coordinator), Gloria Archibong (member, DAWN of Board of Trustees), Yvonne Underhill-Sem (DAWN Regional Coordinator for Pacific), Kumudini Samuel, (DAWN Regional Coordinator for South Asia) and Soheila Vahdati. Soheila Vahdati is an Iranian American human rights activist who has written many articles about women's human rights and gender issues in Iranian journals. She is a coordinator of the Stop Stoning Forever campaign and is based in California.



Figure 3 Panelists @ the DAWN Panel on Citizenship: Democracy, Retribution and Rights: from L-R: Yvonne Underhill-Sem, Gloria Archibong, Bene Madunagu, Soheila Vahdati, Kumudini Samuel and Josefa Francisco

The panel began at 11:25 am and ended 2:00pm. Flyers were produced and distributed both at the Feminist Dialogues and the WSF grounds. The flyers were also posted at strategic point in the Moi International Sports Complex, Kasarani, Nairobi, to give directions to the venue of the panel. The DAWN panel had a good audience turnout with regard to the large number of activities which took place daily.

The panel had in attendance besides the panelists, 75 women and 19 men. Celita Eccher, DAWN Latin America Regional Coordinator provided English to Spanish translation. There was no French translation.

The panel began with Gigi Francisco welcoming the participants to the DAWN panel. She started out by situating the context of the theme of the session, "Citizenship: Democracy; Retribution and Rights" after which she introduced the panelists.

Bene Madunagu spoke on "Sexuality in Africa, from the regional perspective." She said that there is a huge gendered spectrum when it comes to issues of citizenship weighted against the rights of women, and cited the examples of changes women face in terms of sexuality. She emphasised that the term or concept or word, sexuality is not restricted to any race or group.

Sexuality education is the fundamental human right of everyone. She also dealt with cases of violation of female sexuality in Africa, saying that these norms and practices relegate women to situations of servant/slaves in the society, therefore, raising some question with regard to girls and women as full citizens in each of our African societies.

Gloria Archibong spoke on "Sexual Reproductive and Human Rights in Africa: Family Planning, Contraceptives, Abortion and HIV/AIDS." She said that in Africa as a result

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of patriarchy, women are evaluated as inferior and, therefore, unable to contribute to the society. She also noted that women have played important roles side-by-side with men and gave some examples based on her experience as a medical practitioner. She observed that there has been a decline in the number of women who come for family planning services. This was as a result of women not given the right to make choices with regard to their bodies, the number of children they would like to have and the issue of son preference; especially in the case of a woman who may be giving birth to female children and keeps getting pregnant in attempt to have a son without any regard to her health.

Yvonne Underhill-Sem spoke on "Current Situation of the Complex Contestations of Rights and Democracy in Fiji". She said that citizenship is more than being able to vote and to cross international borders, but that it is also, about other rights. She said the military coup which took place on December 8, 2007 in Fiji; also came with violations of human rights such as lack of freedom of expression, military harassment, sexualised verbal abuse and threats, particularly of women's human rights defenders.

She noted that by keeping in mind the notion of embodied citizenship we can more easily track the particularities of human rights abuse and thereby more effectively understand the power plays at work in militaristic political ambitions.

Kumudini Samuel spoke on "Women Agency within Peace Processes in the Context of Citizenship and Democracy: A Case Study of Sri Lanka". According to her, the failure of post-independence nation building to accommodate the interests and needs of the country's multi-ethnic society within a framework of pluralist democracy resulted in the ethno-

political and armed conflict in Sri Lanka.

She also spoke on women's activism in the context of the conflict, noting how the war has transformed the gendered roles of non-combatant women. Often marginalised and rarely acknowledged these women she said, used a multitude of other strategies to survive the many ravages of war.

Solheila Vahdati addressed the issue of "Corporal Punishment for Sexual Crimes in Iran", explaining that the victim, usually a woman, is treated like a Muslim corpse, washed and wrapped in shrouds. She is buried in a ditch up to her shoulders and then stoned by a crowd surrounding her. The stones are neither too small nor too large, but just the right size to guarantee a gradual and agonizing death.

Although a man may be sentenced to stoning for adultery, she observed, the legitimacy of polygamy and extra-marital sex often allows men to escape punishment. In response to criticism of the practice by the European Union, Jamal Karimi-Rad, the Iranian minister of justice and spokesperson for the judiciary, publicly denied that stoning is practised in Iran. Stoning is the worst form of discrimination and violence against women in Iran. Though girls and women enjoy some equality in the public sphere this ends at the households door, where gender discrimination and violence is officially sanctioned by the Family Law and supported by the penal codes.

A girl in Iran is considered mature for marriage at age 13 and might be forced into an arranged marriage. Once married, she has no right to divorce and is obliged by the law to satisfy her husband's sexual demands. Rape is not recognized in a marital relationship. In case of divorce, the woman would have no custody rights. If a woman finds herself trapped in an unhappy marriage and commits adultery, she will be sentenced to death by stoning.

The U.S. military presence in the Middle East has also encouraged fundamentalist factions, both

Though girls and women enjoy some equality in the public sphere this ends at the households door, where gender discrimination and violence is officially sanctioned by the Family Law and supported by the penal codes

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within and outside governments in the region and fuelled opposition to women's rights. In the face of everyday violence in the region, the women's agenda has been pushed back far behind a long list of issues such as national sovereignty, inflation and unemployment that are considered higher priority.

She concluded by appealing to participants to inform their governments of the violation of the human rights of women in Iran and help put pressure on the Iranian government to stop stoning forever. There was a rich discussion after the presentation and comments and questions were entertained from participants to further enrich the various points raised.

Women's Rally

On January, 23, 2007 over 500 people took part in the women's rally around Kasarani Stadium which started at about 10:00 am. The rally was organised by the Feminist Dialogues Coordinating Group. The women's rally was characterised by chanting of different women rights themes and slogans, songs, mainly in English, as well as of music and dancing. Women chanted slogans like "Feminism - Women's Rights", etc. Many solidarity messages came in English, Spanish and French.



Figure 4 - From R-L:
Bene Madunagu,
Ximena Machicao
Barbery (holding the
balloon) and Celita
Eccher at the
Women's rally -
WSF 2007



FEMINISM IN AFRICA: FROM ARGUMENT TO AFFIRMATION

Fatou Sow, *DAWN Francophone Africa Regional Coordinator*

A presentation at the African Feminist Forum, Accra, Ghana, November 15 - 19, 20 2006

Feminism in Africa: from argument to affirmation

The thirty-year-old debate on feminism in Africa is far from over. Ideas and practices obviously change in Africa, as they do in other parts of the world, because of changes in the surrounding circumstances.

Women's struggles, however they may be described, change according to changes in needs, aims and methods, with varying successes and setbacks. It is clear that between Mexico in 1975 and Nairobi in 1985, and then Beijing in 2005, there have been considerable changes in the way African women have been involved in discussions and in the setting of priorities.

What a distance has been covered between the Platform for poor rural women, who were largely African, which was worked out in Mexico in 1975, (African participation in that discussion was, to say the least, feeble), and the Additional Protocol to the African Charter of Human and Peoples Rights on the Rights of Women, adopted in Maputo in 2003! What sustains this discussion, as I see it, is the use of the concept of feminism and our support for the various forms of criticism and of struggle that it provokes.

The concept itself still remains a subject of controversy, and the arguments about it become increasingly sophisticated, whether in support of or in opposition to the concept. A lot is at stake here, because the arguments challenge the identity and the sense of all our struggles, our hopes and our commitment as women and as citizens as militant women or as feminists. To live and work in Africa as a declared feminist is to face the permanent need to justify oneself, before one can embark on any reflections.

This has been my own experience for the past twenty years, ever since feminist studies literally changed the meaning of my career for the aims I had, and for the direction and

methodologies of my research. This has not made my career an easy one, even though I can state that my feminist label at least attracted the attention of everyone who participated in discussions. I despair of having to say that this has been even more difficult in Francophone Africa, for reasons that are both linguistic and historical, reasons which are hard to explain in a plenary session. It would, however, be interesting to discuss them in a workshop.

Being a feminist does not simply mean stating a claim to adhere to a particular epistemology. It also involves making a demand for something that provides all the sense and force that is behind the concept of altering the condition of women, of changing the power relationships between men and women, and of promoting their rights and promoting gender equality.

This particular approach, from both the intellectual and political points of view, is one that involves participation in a struggle and in several of the methods used to promote it. It is not easy to do this and to persevere in doing it. It cannot be done without having a deep knowledge of African cultures and their history, and without taking into consideration their involvement and confrontation with other systems of culture, religion and technology, both in the past and at the present time. It also means being able to take the measure of the changes in their ideological, moral and political values. These cultures are not homogeneous but possess a multiple character. This means that women must construct their social identity as citizens, while being aware of the need to be accepted, to make adjustments and re-adjustments and even definition/construction/deconstruction of the milieu, according to similarities, differences or even antagonisms in the areas of class, race, historical, political and cultural backgrounds.

In January, 2006, I took part in the

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Feminist Dialogues, which have been held for the past three years at the World Social Forum, on the initiative of women who felt they were being marginalised in the overall agenda of the WSF.

It brought together women from various rural and urban associations, agricultural workers, dyers, traders, secretaries, doctors, teachers and women without professions, mainly from Mali, but also from other African countries, with a few coming from Europe, the Americas and Asia. The organisers did their best to find a common platform for the discussion of questions of vital concern to women with a minimum of theoretical consensus. Could the women organise themselves in a common approach which would enable them to analyse their situation and to organise themselves together to promote their claims?

You can imagine the debates that took place even about the legitimacy of the idea itself for African culture, while taking into account the divergence between Western cultures that had "invented" their ideologies and African cultures charged with moral and religious values in every sense of the words. The discussions about religion, sexuality and motherhood were particularly animated. Even if they knew what to do about the economy and about politics, it seemed from these discussions that women did not have the same value systems about their own bodies and sexuality.

It looked as if we were heading for disaster, if the Dialogues had not been kept going for the rest of the day, and if the various workshops undertaken by other women's associations, that did not all claim to be feminist, had not been able to continue their discussions throughout the whole period of the Forum, discussing all the urgent problems with which women were faced, such as access to land, to the social habitat, to education, to economic power, to political decision-making, to protection during conflicts and access to better sexual and reproductive health, and to civic rights that were not mere words, which involved

overcoming all the difficult problems of our backgrounds.

Even though they did not use the expression of having control over their bodies and over their sexuality, they still denounced sexual violence and violence inside the family (forced marriage, early marriages, female genital mutilation, sexual harassment and trafficking, serial rapes during armed conflicts, the propagation of AIDS and prostitution in all of which women were the victims.

They did not point to religion as a cause of gender inequality, but they did deplore the inadequacy or the absence of family codes that respected their rights as women. They called for a greater share in taking decisions within the family or in parliament. They debated the alternatives that could lead to an equitable and sustained development, which would take their hopes and situation into account.

In most of the workshops on the world of women, as in the Women's Tribunal, the disastrous consequences of neo-liberal policies were discussed at length and denounced. Women had noted an increase in their own responsibilities within the family as a result of unemployment among men following Structural Adjustment Policies. The women from the region concerned complained about the degradation of the environment associated with the exploitation of oil resources, as in the Niger Delta, which particularly affected the quality of life of the Ogoni people.

One participant from Benin argued that "Africa should say 'No' to GM crops," which had been denounced by consumers in the North, and called for a fight against the use of Africa as a laboratory for experiments by multinational companies from the North. Even worse, multinationals extracted the active ingredient from typical African medicinal plants, which had been pointed out to them by practitioners of traditional healing (often women themselves), and then registered patents for them, from which they alone derived benefits.

We can join in using a definition of feminism to translate our shared ambitions for gender equality in societies that are

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dominated and controlled by men. My feminism can be regarded as an African version, but it is feminism because it aims at understanding and analysing situations that face us African women at local, national, regional and global levels. It aims at shaping the struggles for our human rights and breaking the frontiers of gender inequality.

What happens at the global level deeply affects what happens to women living in towns and in villages. When such resources as water are privatised, peasants in the Sahel continue to go to the well, and an increasing number of inhabitants of poor suburbs of towns have to queue up at public water fountains. When our governments cut the provisions they make for health, this increases the amount of work that we women have to do in nursing people.

Even if the Millennium Development Goals include improving primary education in Africa, our daughters will find it increasingly difficult to advance beyond this level, in spite of the acknowledged progress made by programmes for improving education for girls.

As far as I am concerned, programmes have the meaning that I give to them, so that I can explain what I see as reality. I argue for them, because they gain strength from the force that we put behind them. They all have an activist history, and this puts me face to face with male power, which enjoys its privileged position in unconcerned fashion and fails to understand any opposition to it. They also put me face to face with my society, which regards gender inequality as "cultural," and face to face with patriarchal religions, which become fundamentalist over this question, and with governments, which translate inequalities into law.

Feminism enables me to keep open a political space for disputing and resisting the

unequal nature of a patriarchal society. Certainly, I accept that patriarchy is not a universal fact. Several African societies, indeed, have been matrilineal (though not matriarchal) and have transmitted authority and possessions through the women's line others have shown a degree of dualism, with both matrilineal and patrilineal lineages existing in parallel. But the world we are seeking to change has a very solid patriarchal base. Certainly, I have not myself invented the concepts of feminism, of gender and of a sexual basis for social relations. I have only made use of their adaptations/ translations, which are more or less satisfactory, but are always complicated. No doubt, it may become necessary one day to take up the difficult but very necessary task of creating concepts in my own language, in order to explain how we are oppressed, in order to improve the way we communicate and discuss

with women in our

communities, and the ways we listen to and have a dialogue with them. Every African woman must initiate this dialogue in her own language, and exploit the strong conceptual force of language.

African women are trying to connect with their history, so that they can contest what is claimed to be a universal approach to the women's question, but is one that denies their own experiences; and in addition they must ensure their own legitimacy in the face of the criticisms of extraversion.

Belonging to an African culture, besides giving one the right to be able to speak, has the advantage of knowing things from the inside, and from this flows the indispensable need to research the historical background, in order to be more fully informed, to take account of, and to reconstruct changed identities. Work on the ensemble of languages, of both written and oral literature, of traditions, objects and other

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What happens at the global level deeply affects what happens to women living in towns and in villages. When such resources as water are privatised, peasants in the Sahel continue to go to the well, and an increasing number of inhabitants of poor suburbs of towns have to queue up at public water fountains.

STEERING COMMITTEE NEWS

DAWN is pleased to announce Kumudini Samuel as the new Regional Coordinator for South Asia, succeeding Vanita Mukherjee, and Judith Wedderburn as interim Regional Coordinator for the Caribbean, following the exit of Joan Grant-Cummings, due to the pressures of her new employment.

We are also very pleased to announce the appointment of Anita Nayar as DAWN's new Research Coordinator for the emerging theme of Political Ecology and Sustainability. DAWN's analysis has always included an understanding of the sustainable livelihood concerns of women in the global South.

More recently, with the margins of ecological survival shrinking, particularly for impoverished communities, and with nature in many places already 'answering back,' we recognize the need to pay greater attention to the health of the planet alongside our human rights. We believe that ecological issues cannot be dissociated from women's rights, including the adverse effects on their sexual and reproductive health, or from political and, economic concerns over the inequitable allocation of natural resources. Our intention therefore, is to develop DAWN's political ecology analysis from a Southern feminist perspective, conceptually linked to our continuing critique of global trends in the body politic, governance, and political economy arenas. 🌞

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cultural symbols is an urgent scientific task for understanding any society.

We cannot understand the present situation of women without making reference to their past, while at the same time, this past is being increasingly deciphered by using critical analytical tools that are being progressively elaborated in the present time.

We can reconsider polygamy, if we place the matrilineal relationships within the context of affective links with the other that are differently conceived. Polygamy is not just a matter of sharing wives with the same husband. Relationships with "the wife of my husband" are not simply institutional ones; they are also composed of emotions, jealousy, anger and aggression. And if women can achieve a higher status at menopause, as "ancestors" who have the right to be listened to and as people who can fulfil a political role, their sexual life then falls to pieces, since it is often at this time that their husband takes a new younger wife.

The same considerations apply to more delicate questions of sexuality, from contraception to abortion, and to the freedom of sexual orientation, over which women throughout the world have been strongly divided. One is aware that female genital mutilation is not a Lesbian debate over the clitoris; it is a matter concerning the expression of gender power relations.

The African feminist critique should concern itself with drawing on the historical cultures and experiences of the continent, as part of the human experience, in order to make a contribution to universal considerations. It should put forward our position in what we want to be in a dialogue with other women from the South, with whom we share many aspects of living reality, and with women from the North with whom we are sharing this beginning of the 21st century and the very fact of being women. 🌞

DAWN Informs is published by Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN) as a networking tool for its members. DAWN is an autonomous inter-regional organization of the South which acts as a network and catalyst advocating alternative development processes that emphasise the basic survival needs of the world's people, particularly women and children of the South countries.

Subscriptions for printed version: Free to women based in the South. Friends based in the North are asked to make an annual minimum contribution of US\$ 20.00. Please notify any change of address by contacting info@dawnnet.org

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