

## Cracks in the Neo-Liberal Consensus

By Gita Sen, DAWN Political Economy Research Coordinator

A year ago no one could have foreseen the magnitude of the earthquake set off by the Asian financial crisis. Not only was there little expectation that the financial upheaval would spread so rapidly and extensively into other regions, including the heart of the global financial system itself, but no one (other than the "usual suspects"—environmentalists, women's organizations, trade unionists, left-liberal development organizations, academics, et al) seriously thought that the ideological consensus that has ruled the world economy for the last two decades would begin showing cracks. Today some of the strongest supporters and beneficiaries of the "globalized" economy are on the defensive, pulling back from unbridled globalism, calling for better management of the world economy and greater inclusion of those who have been marginalized.

They include Peter D. Sutherland, Chairman of the Overseas Development Council, Chairman and Managing Director of Goldman Sachs International, and Chairman of British Petroleum. "For all its benefits, globalization now threatens political support for an open world economy," Sutherland warned in *VIEWPOINT* magazine ("Answering Globalization Challenges," Oct. 20, 1998). Sutherland proposed bolstering political support by "helping governments and international institutions respond more effectively to the challenges."

The spectacular growth miracle of Southeast Asia has been succeeded by an equally spectacular collapse which has threatened the entire global system. In the process cherished neoliberal beliefs of the last two decades are being challenged from the very heart of

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the system. Not only have the normally pliant governments of Malaysia and Hong Kong imposed some version of capital controls, not only has Russia unilaterally rescheduled its debt, but doubt has even crept into the Bretton Woods organizations themselves. A

number of mainstream economists—Jagdish Bhagwati, Jeffrey Sachs, Paul Krugman—and influential public figures, including key figures in former Republican administrations such as Henry Kissinger and George Schultz, have taken the IMF to task for refusing to alter the recession-inducing advice it has been giving to the beleaguered economies of Southeast Asia and for throwing billions of dollars into the ever-widening breaches of a collapsing dyke with very little effect.

Perhaps the single most significant criticism of the Washington consensus has come from the World Bank's chief economist and vice-president, Joe Stiglitz. In a WIDER lecture at Helsinki last February and in a series of other talks and papers since, Stiglitz

*Malaysia and Hong Kong imposed capital controls, Russia unilaterally rescheduled its debt and doubt even crept into the Bretton Woods organizations.*

has criticized the IMF for its stodgy approach, and argued for a post-Washington consensus. He proposes stronger controls on capital movements, an end to using national recession as an instrument to bring countries into line with the global order, and more focus on human development needs. It is ironic that the World Bank, which enforced structural adjustment programs throughout the world during the 1980s and much of the 1990s, should now be attacking the very premises of its own previous actions, but this split in thinking between the highest levels of the Bank and the Fund is probably the most significant sign that the days of pure neo-liberalism are over.

This climate of uncertainty has also created space for a range of civil society initiatives that are bringing greater transparency and accountability to the global political economy. Major criticisms and debate over the IMF arose in the context of the Clinton administration's recent efforts to obtain the approval of the U.S. Congress for an \$18 billion appropriation to replenish the IMF's reserves. It was

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## STEERING COMMITTEE NOTES

• The Secretariat has finally moved into its new office spaces at the University of the South Pacific. Please note change of address: **School of Social & Economic Development, University of the South Pacific, GPO Box 1168, Suva, FIJI ISLANDS.** Tel: (679) 313-900 Ext 2183/2184; Fax: (679) 314-770; Email: dawn@is.com.fj; Website: www.dawn.org.fj

• **Kushma Ram** has been appointed to the position of **Administrator/Assistant Coordinator**. Kushma has several years experience working with women's and developmental organizations. She holds an M.A. in Development Studies from the Institute of Social Studies in The Hague, Netherlands.

• **The DAWN Brochure** has been updated to reflect current research themes and activities. Contact the Secretariat for copies.

• DAWN was represented at various regional and global meetings and conferences. In September **Claire Slatter** took part in the **International Group on Grassroots Initiatives** meeting, "Expanding Peoples' Spaces in the Globalizing Economy" in Finland and **Gigi Francisco** was at AAWORD's African Women's Think Tank on "Globalization and Economic Reform" in Senegal. Gigi also attended the **People to People Alliance** meeting in Hong Kong and in November with **Gita Sen** and **Sonia Correa** took part in the **DAWN/HERA** meeting on Cairo +5 in Mexico.

• The focus at the **DAWN Pacific** regional meeting in November was on extending capacity and developing a regional two year programme. Some 20 participants from Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Samoa, and the Cook Islands took part. The meeting received logistical support from the **University of South Pacific Continuing Education Programme** through **Dr. Peggy Fairbain-Dunlop**. Largely financed by DAWN, financial contributions also came from the **South Pacific Community/Pacific Women's Resource Bureau** and **Pacific YWCA**. □

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# Implementing Cairo: Good News, Recurrent Bottlenecks, Challenges Ahead

By Sonia Corrêa, DAWN Social Reproduction Research Coordinator

In moving towards the five year review of the Programme of Action adopted at the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo, Egypt in 1994, DAWN has designed a strategy that involves policy research on reproductive health and rights implementation across the South and action oriented initiatives to influence the various events leading up to the UN General Assembly Special Session in June 1999. In addition to the Reproductive Health and Rights policy research initiative DAWN is the Focal Point for Population, Development, Environment and Reproductive Health Linkages, one of the five issues to be debated at the upcoming NGO Forum in The Hague (February 6-7, 1999). This article draws on preliminary findings that have been presented and debated in an inter-regional meeting that took place in Cocoyoc (Mexico) right before the November 1998 HERA Conference (November 13-14th).

## SCOPE OF CASE STUDIES

DAWN has conducted country case studies in Bolivia, Brazil, Nicaragua, Peru, Puerto Rico, and Uruguay in Latin America and in Asia and the Pacific nine countries have been subject to analysis—India, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam, Laos Cambodia, the Philippines and Fiji. For the Africa region DAWN is co-organizing a meeting in January 1999 to assess policy development in several countries. The Caribbean case is still being developed and efforts are being made to include other countries in South Asia besides India.

The analyses addressed three interrelated dimensions: the pre-Cairo policy scenario, the identification of ICPD recommendations that are more relevant in each country, and the post-ICPD policy scenario. This latter included the political, economic and social environment in which implementation is taking place, the

presence and role of advocates and adversaries, the evolution of reproductive health services and the debates and legal changes affecting sexual and reproductive rights on the clear definition of abortion as public health problem.

## THE SEMANTIC REVOLUTION

Initial findings indicate that policy shifts started before ICPD, although the intensity and consistency varies across countries. In Brazil, India, and the Philippines the Cairo agenda was anticipated years before. In other contexts the preparations for Cairo galvanized initial changes and reproductive rights developed in that context. In South East Asian countries other than the Philippines, governmental officials also hold that policies were already moving in the directions agreed to in Cairo prior to 1994.

These official statements may be controversial, particularly in the case of Indonesia, but they also denote a formal acceptance of the Cairo agenda. It must also be noted that in most countries a strong synergy with respect to reproductive health and rights issues resulted from pre- and post-Beijing processes. More important, however, is the verification of a positive evolution after 1994.

Clearly a semantic revolution is underway. In many countries, such as Bolivia, Thailand, Philippines, Fiji, "family planning" programmes have been renamed "reproductive health" programmes. In India a more radical change occurred in 1996 when targets in terms of contraceptive acceptors were removed. Even in the case of Brazil, where a national and comprehensive women's health policy has been on place since 1984, Cairo and Beijing were a boost particularly with respect to abortion. Additionally, in all countries, the term "gender" is now commonplace language among policy makers, NGOs and the media. In Latin America in particular,

affirmative action in the form of political quotas has gained leverage since Beijing.

This language transformation should not be underestimated—Cairo and Beijing were basically semantic battles. However much remains to be done particularly with respect to the use and dissemination of the Cairo consensus core concepts to ground the understanding of what they really mean.

## THE BOTTLENECKS: CONCEPTUAL CLARITY & SERVICES PROVISION

From DAWN's perspective the main challenge is to deepen and expand the stream of change in terms of conceptual clarity. There is still lot of confusion regarding the ICPD concepts of "gender", "women's empowerment", and "male responsibility". A clearer illustration of this is to be found in the Caribbean where after 1995, although gender mainstreaming and reproductive health related male responsibility initiatives rapidly took off, there was still no clear understanding of what exactly was meant by "gender." Men are being involved in gender training and are accessing reproductive health services, but linkages between sexual and reproductive rights and male responsibility still have not been clearly and consistently established. Similarly with respect to the premises governing sexual health and sexual and reproductive rights: where sexual health is being adopted as a concept it is basically translated to mean sexually transmitted diseases and HIV prevention. In most settings, reproductive rights are interpreted narrowly as the right to or accessibility of reproductive health services leaving aside other critical dimensions such as informed choice and reproductive self-determination. Similar confusion is evident in the area of adolescent sexual and reproductive health. Nowhere are consistent initiatives being developed to address sexual rights.

In the case of abortion, of the fourteen countries examined, in only four is progress suggested. Brazil is the only place where there have been clear breakthroughs recorded in terms of the public debate but also the expansion of abortion services that respond to women's needs in the two cases permitted by law: rape and women's health risks.

In Bolivia, reproductive health and rights advocates have managed to secure some meagre progress in the form of reimbursement of post-abortion treatment costs from public funds. In India, where abortion is legal, the new reproductive and child health programme includes a guideline aimed at ensuring safety and quality of care in the procedure.

A similar initiative is being adopted in Vietnam. At the other extreme, although the law in Fiji allows abortion in the cases of rape and physical or mental risks, there have been no new initiatives in the aftermath of ICPD. In Central America and the Philippines, the situation has regressed.

A second and more complex challenge is the translation of the "new semantics" in terms of service improvement and expansion. The studies indicate positive development in some areas. In Thailand, India and Brazil there have been efforts to reduce the separation of reproductive health programmes (MCH, contraceptive assistance, STD and HIV-AIDS prevention). Everywhere greater attention is being given to maternal mortality, but the scale and depth of this transformation is insufficient.

Governmental ability to move forward is structurally conditioned by prevailing macro-economic conditions and state reform constraints, including reduction of investment to social sectors, privatization of services, and macro-economic instability. In Brazil, Malaysia and Thailand for instance, the level of domestic public investment in health was relatively high before the 1997/98 crisis. In some settings, for example Nicaragua, the reaction of conservative forces against reproductive health policy guidelines operates as an additional factor curtailing the betterment of services.

#### **MONITORING & ACCOUNTABILITY: CORNERSTONE OF IMPLEMENTATION**

In DAWN's evaluation the clarification of concepts and effective implementation of services is tied to the way in which it is structured and to the relationship between governments, international donor agencies and the reproductive health and rights advocate community. Policies have moved more swiftly and in the right direction where structured and permanent accountability mechanisms exist.

In Brazil, monitoring mechanisms are built into the structure of the health system and a National Commission on Population and Development was created in 1995 to monitor ICPD related policies. Reproductive health and rights advocates are involved in these initiatives and since 1995 they have been critical in sustaining the abortion agenda. In Peru, the Ministry of Health, feminist organizations and donor agencies are working together on implementation of the Programme of Action. One positive result has been documentation and public education on sterilization abuse from a reproductive rights perspective. In Bolivia monitoring and accountability efforts take place at the level of the Maternal Mortality Commission.

In other settings, institutional mechanisms do not exist, or the advocacy community may not be strong. In still others, the advocacy community is strong, but there is resistance to dialogue and negotiation on the part of governments. The findings indicate that at least two dialoguing partners are required to push forward the ICPD agenda. Where governments are moving slowly or in the wrong direction or women's groups are not yet so vocal and articulate, the advocacy community needs strong support. International agencies, particularly the UNFPA, have a critical role to play in contexts where governments are resistant to dialogue and accountability.

#### **HEALTH REFORM & VERTICAL PROGRAMMING**

From country to country, the urgent need is for permanent, well funded and sustained accountability mechanisms in which reproductive health and rights

advocates participate on an equal footing to meet the challenges.

One of the big challenges ahead is to devise strategies to expand good quality reproductive health services in the context of health reform since agencies, managers and advocates involved with reproductive health programming are rarely given the opportunity to interact at the level of policy-making, design and implementation.

A related challenge is the inadequacy of vertical approaches. The problem is that the new programmes do not always establish linkages with other strategic areas—for example, HIV-AIDS prevention or cervical cancer screening—so that in many contexts, vertical family planning programmes are merely being re-framed into vertical reproductive health packages. Another clear challenge with respect to implementation of services lies in changing the mindset and attitude of health managers and providers through sensitively designed training programs.

#### **FINANCIAL RESOURCES**

Information collected on financial resources is relatively scarce. Only the Brazilian and India case studies examined this critical area deeply. However, it is possible to extract a few preliminary lessons from the scant information gleaned.

In some countries such as Bolivia, Philippines and Peru, the bulk of resources is still going to family planning despite national programs having been renamed as Reproductive Health programs. In other settings such as India, resources are channeled in ways that do not favor efforts to overcome major epidemiological problems. For example, the reduction of maternal mortality requires investments in primary health programs combined with the improvement of referral systems and obstetric assistance. The same applies to cervical cancer programs that must articulate screening and treatment procedures. But in the post-Cairo scenario international agencies have been phasing down the investments in infrastructure.

The most relevant lesson learned from the case studies is that the quality of expendi-

tures is as critical as the amount of resources invested. This applies as much to Brazil where federal per capita expenditures in reproductive health reached US\$10 in 1996 as much as to India where investments are less the US\$1 per capita. Additional international and domestic resources are necessary but the potentially positive impact of "more money" is clearly conditioned by other crucial factors such as greater conceptual clarity, sensitization of health managers and changes in the attitude of health providers. As it has been said before what really makes the difference is the creation and sustainability of accountability mechanism at all levels—including local communities—in which women's voices can be heard and taken into account.

#### THE POLITICAL CLIMATE

If the Cairo+5 agenda is therefore crucial and complex, the political climate surrounding the negotiations is not likely to go smoothly. Across Latin America religious forces, especially the Catholic hierarchy, have been openly attacking the Cairo and Beijing agendas, the outstanding illustration being Central America, where the prevailing political environment is clearly unfavorable to the reproductive health and rights agenda. But even in the case of Brazil, conservative forces have been openly and systematically attacking the expansion of abortion services. In Asia and the Pacific, with the exception of the Philippines, strong religious opposition is not so evident. But it is difficult to determine if this reflects the pressure of organized conservative forces, or if it is simply because governments are afraid of a fundamentalist backlash.

Besides the political risks detected at country and regional level, the global political climate does not favor facilitation of implementation. In 1994 the Cairo Consensus resulted, to a great extent, from the careful crafting of North-South bridges and strong agreements around the reproductive health and rights agenda. But in 1999 the global economic crisis tends to re-create the 1992 UNCED atmosphere in which the North-South breach deter-

mined the tone and limits of negotiations.

Additionally, assessments of resources invested in reproductive health since 1994 indicate that governments in developing countries are significantly closer to fulfilling their ICPD commitments than donor countries. This will certainly raise complaints on the part of G-77 countries so its worth reminding ourselves that in the various UN Conferences of the decade, fundamentalist forces have systematically taken advantage of the political circumstances resulting from the breaking down of North-South dialogues.

From DAWN's perspective, Cairo+5 should be viewed as a critical marker on the road to the future. Unfortunately, given the prevailing global political and economic circumstances it can easily turn into a "back to the future" event. Thus the need to be sharply aware and prepared. □

*Ed's Note: this article has been reprinted in Spanish in La Red Va (REPEM)*

### Acknowledgements

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Big thanks also to ARROW that so graciously shared its regional findings with us.

## CAIRO+5 RESOURCES

Check out reports from the following regional meetings held in 1998 in the preparatory phase of the Cairo+5 Review to be undertaken at a United Nations General Assembly Special Session scheduled for June 30-July 2 in New York City.

#### TECHNICAL MEETINGS

##### ♦Population and Aging

(6-9 October, Brussels, Belgium)  
[www.unfpa.org/icpd/icpd.htm](http://www.unfpa.org/icpd/icpd.htm)

##### ♦International Migration and Development

(29 June-3 July, 1998, The Hague)  
[www.unfpa.org/news/releases/migraissu.htm](http://www.unfpa.org/news/releases/migraissu.htm)

#### ROUNDTABLES

##### ♦Participation with Civil Society

(27-30 July, 1998 Dhaka, Bangladesh)  
[www.unfpa.org/icpd/meetings.htm](http://www.unfpa.org/icpd/meetings.htm)

##### ♦Reproductive Rights and Implementation of Reproductive Health Programmes, Women's Empowerment, Male Involvement and Human Rights

(22-25 June, 1998 Kampala, Uganda)  
[www.unfpa.org/icpd.htm](http://www.unfpa.org/icpd.htm)

##### ♦Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

(14-17 April, 1998, New York)  
Contact: Delia Barcelona, Roundtable Focal Point.  
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(23-25 September, 1998, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia)  
ECA, P.O. Box 3001, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia  
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##### ♦Western Asia

(22-25 September, 1998 Beirut, Lebanon)  
ESCWA, P.O. Box No. 11-8575, Riad El-Solh Square, Beirut, Lebanon.  
Tel: (961)-1-981301; Fax: (961)-1-981310  
[www.undp.org/popin/regional/escwa/index.htm](http://www.undp.org/popin/regional/escwa/index.htm)

##### ♦Latin America and Caribbean

(13-14 May, 1998, Aruba)  
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[www.eclac.org/celade-Esp](http://www.eclac.org/celade-Esp)

[www.undp.org/popin/eclac](http://www.undp.org/popin/eclac)

##### WAsia and the Pacific

(24-27 March, Bangkok, Thailand)  
ESCAP: [www.unescap.org/pop/icpd/icpd.htm](http://www.unescap.org/pop/icpd/icpd.htm)

# SHAPING A THEME

## Political Restructuring and Social Transformation

By Vivienne Taylor, DAWN Research Coordinator

*The following is an edited version of a presentation made at the South Asia Regional Workshop on Political Restructuring and Social Transformation last April (see DAWN Informs 1/98). The theme political restructuring and social transformation includes four key assumptions: that political restructuring and social transformation are linked; that it is no longer necessary to debate the need for political restructuring; that women and feminist thinking are central to all notions and processes of political restructuring; and that the nature of political changes underway could lead to social transformation.*

It is evident from much of the mainstream debate on the nature of political changes and processes of governance at the global and national levels that the dominant discourse does not include feminist perspectives and concerns. It is just as clear that social transformation is not an objective of political change. Indeed what is happening on the political agenda is highly questionable. It is therefore necessary to understand issues of governance within a changing global context and the increasing interdependence of national economies.

A central issue is the capacity of states to develop and manage policies and programs to promote human development through bureaucratic and rigid institutions and structures that no longer serve the needs and interests of the majority and that are particularly anti-women. A related issue is how fundamental concerns on gender inequalities and the use of different forms of power become integrated into political restructuring at national, regional, and global levels.

Another concern is how to use the process of political restructuring to create a deeper understanding of both the nature of the state and its instruments. Critical to this is the transformation of relations and processes within and between governments, business, and community sectors to promote public interests.

Societies today are said to operate in a post-modern context in which the dynamic nature of changes taking place demand alternatives beyond conventional orthodox models of development. Within this changing context the form of governance that would best serve the interests of those who have been excluded both economically and politically, particularly women, is a central

concern. Any analysis of political restructuring must also recognise that economic and political processes are interrelated and that economic power and political power are mutually reinforcing.

While the sites of struggle and the actors may differ, the compacts, negotiations, and confrontations that take place at various moments contribute to women's multiple experiences of gender oppression at the household, community, regional, national, and international levels.

### DEVELOPMENT & DEMOCRACY

Forms of democracy have been built on the pillars of economic, political cultural, and institutional behaviour, although the role and significance given to each of these varies.

Countries in the global South—most notably in Africa and Latin America—have experienced democratic changes at a speed not seen in other parts of the world. The whole area of democratic governance is still contested and the nature of pluralism has to be understood in relation to historical and contemporary forms of politics. Social activity is no longer oriented to whether pluralist democracy is desirable but rather how quickly and in what form it can be attained.

Economic development may sometimes be a spur to democracy but economic stagnation or collapse can undermine the basis of authoritarian or illegitimate governments and pave the way for democracy. However, in some cases it has strengthened anti-democratic elites who use material resources to reward friends and punish foes, giving rise to what is termed the "Patriotic Bourgeoisie."

Political institutions have changed over

time and have been shaped by a multiplicity of forces including historical, external, and internal factors. Weak and ineffective institutions make the relationships between the governed and the government problematic, but often institutions that are powerful in societies where there are few or no autonomous centres of power (civil society) can leave those in control of the state machinery unchecked.

Development tends to be tied through aid to western style democracy/pluralism. In the post cold war, post modern period this has led to a greater acceptance of political and economic liberalization—the objectives of which are competition between parties in place of single-party hegemony and competition in the market in place of state planning.

The impacts have varied but there are complementary and contradictory pressures such as internal and external pressure to have open competition for power and civil liberties and then there is economic liberalization—one dollar one vote in place of one-person one vote—where decision making is removed from the majority. This disjuncture creates continuous sites of struggle. The issue here is how to ensure that market-led strategy and state-led development processes are able to secure the interests and meet the needs of the majority. Economic liberalization poses limits to the state's power but the counterweight to this lies not only in the hands of the masses but also in changing the rules that determine transnational decisions and agreements.

From the debates among women in the South it is clear that there is a crisis of distribution in terms of economic and political power, and that the position of women in all spheres of life has worsened. The objectives of restructuring and change seem to be directed towards a political system that would best serve the needs of capitalism rather than the needs of the poorest people. Recent trends in development in regions of the south indicate that liberal democracy and capitalism are completely compatible.

Questioning the nation state and its objectives in relation to human development and gender justice is therefore important and the questions raised critical. Key among some

of the critical questions is the extent to which processes of institutional transformation include women as a representative constituency; and whether such restructuring is geared towards an improvement in the overall quality of life of the poorest citizens.

Mainstream debates on the issues involved in the process of reinventing and restructuring the nation state generally tend to ignore women's experiences and perceptions of governance. This has resulted in a lack of understanding of the links between forms of cultural politics, the search for narrow identities, the promotion of racism and fundamentalism, and the persistent and increasing incidence of violence against women.

Across the development decades the need for social and economic development of people who have been excluded from mainstream society has been identified as a basis for their active, democratic participation in political processes at all levels of society. Economic development has also been seen by some theorists to have the potential to increase social mobilization and the demand for political participation.

Political liberalization on the back of economic liberalization may be an outcome of both left and right critiques on the nature of states, markets and civil society. On the right, neo-liberal proponents see the market as the only way for allocating goods and services, while the left sees the state as corrupt, alienated from people and engaged in promoting a new elite with vested interests in maintaining the status quo. Both critiques emphasize the need for institutional reform of the state albeit for very different reasons. But whatever the critique, the state is seen as the arbiter of democracy and therefore its role in public policy and action can neither be abolished nor left to the NGO sector—or to what is sometimes glibly seen as a unified homogenous civil society sector.

But in the context of the globalization of the 1990s, what has been even more significant than concern with growth through the market is the increasing erosion of the capacity of states to govern. Even as development directions are being discussed in terms of governance the debate has shifted from issues of distribution to those of efficiency and management.

#### THE STATE & GLOBALIZATION

The state, the way it operates in contemporary society and whose interests it serves, are outcomes of history. Colonialism, post-

colonial and neo-colonial forces have determined the development and nature of states. In many countries, local capitalist forces have been consolidated through the penetration and expansion of international capitalism often mediated through local elites. Evidence and women's experiences suggests that globalization is not only about the organization of the economy but is also about the diffused use and manifestation of power through transnational arrangements.

A major critique of the current debates on the state and governance is that the discourse lacks a historical analysis and therefore does not reflect patterns of powerlessness nor the manner in which traditional cultures and colonial cultures combine through state and economic institutions to exploit women. Even when a historical context is used by theorists on the left the state is examined from the perspective of class and race and the position of women is ignored.

**G**lobal restructuring of economic, political, social, and cultural processes has changed the geopolitical landscape. It now reflects a realignment

*"A central issue is the capacity of states to develop and manage policies and programs to promote human development through institutions and structures that are so bureaucratic and rigid that they no longer serve the needs and interests of the majority and that are particularly anti-women."*

of forces, shifts and consolidation of power. This phase of globalization is unlike previous ones in the rapidity and scale at which changes are occurring. The state has been hit by the new information technologies that have restructured production, distribution, and communication processes making possible the exchange of goods, services, and labour across the globe at breath-taking speed. Borders have become permeable; the traditional division of North and South is being questioned.

The flow of information and finance capital is unstoppable and comes at greater costs to individual countries. Without the capacity to manage these changes or influence the direction of change to benefit the poorest, the state finds itself under threat. This situation has given rise to, or is accompa-

nied by, the formation of quasi-government structures through multinational financial institutions such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization.

The weakening of nation states affects women's position in respect of access to resources. This is accompanied by the erosion of the power of the state in relation to the promotion of public interest or the public good. While cutbacks in the social sector also place increased burdens on women they are characteristic of the erosion of the "public interest or responsive state." There are contradictory and differential impacts of globalization for the gender division of labour. More women migrate in search of work and more become commodities and experience unrestrained violence in the field of sex tourism.

Another contradictory impact is the easy links and connections between the local and the global through information flows that create and expand the space for rights-based work. But while strengthening civil society, this has also given rise to fundamentalism. The gains won during the 1995 World Summit on Social Development (Copenhagen 1995) and the Fourth World Conference on

Women (Beijing 1995) are being eroded by a right-wing backlash. Women's experiences indicate that this has created conditions for "national" citizenship within patriarchal forms of government on the one hand and an opportunity for universal, internationalist citizenship on the other.

This raises another issue in analyzing the state—the manner in which patterns of patriarchy are imbedded in state institutions and derive from traditional cultural forms but are not exclusive to these. The result is an explicit or implicit compact of male power that permeates every sphere of women's lives and has given rise to what some feminists call the "masculinity of the state."

The construction of a masculine society and state has a significant impact on the

type of space available for women's engagement in political processes. It has, on the one hand, resulted in the push for liberal democracy and protection of individual rights within the whole notion of citizenship and nationhood but on the other hand countries continue to deny rights to women within the public and private sphere.

Opening up global political space has created new opportunities for the feminist movement to mobilize around issues such as human rights, democracy, internal democracy, accountability and diversity, but it also has the potential to co-opt and contain feminist action aimed at social transformation.

Given these trends a new consensus is emerging among feminists in the global South. This emerging consensus is based on the view that an enabling state is one that promotes the active participation of women and civil society in socio-political processes. A state that is responsive to human well being and does not abdicate its public responsibility towards its citizens is desirable. Further, the degree to which new political spaces and an enabling political environment are established is dependent on the extent to which new relationships of a diverse and pluralistic nature between the governed and the government can emerge.

Key to the debates on the nature and role of state institutions in relation to dominant market forces and their impacts on women, are the objectives of state restructuring and reorganizing. Current trends indicate that states are being reorganized to serve the interests of market forces and that these do not coincide with the interests of the dispossessed. The experiences of women in many countries reveal that the type of reorganizing of states now underway bears little relation to processes of social transformation. This is particularly evident in respect to economic structural adjustment programmes and gender relations.

Generally, in both the North and the South, structural adjustment measures have been introduced in different ways. In the North state spending relative to the economy has continued to grow averaging 50 percent of GDP, while in the South government spending has been cut back to an average of just over 25 percent of GDP. Government spending has also been redirected towards increased policing in many countries of the South.

While there is a withdrawal from the social sector the state continues to play a significant role in such tasks as framing taxation and monetary policy, directing subsidi-

dies to the various sectors of industry, outsourcing government contracts and awarding franchises for privatized industries. In sectors such as health, social services and education the emphasis is on the establishment of new state mechanisms to ensure market efficiency and discipline. At the same time there is a marked increase in initiatives within and outside of the State to train, retrain and re-orient civil servants towards business plans and efficiency models. Redirecting the state towards market efficiency has in some cases led to the enforcement or reinforcement of repressive legislation and policing to contain and stamp out resistance to the economic violence inherent in the market. The expansion of state policing and security measures to enforce compliance and deal with the other fall outs of social and economic marginalization—such as crime, violence and other forms of anomie—has been a concrete outcome of such redirection of the state's resources.

In India security forces have been increased to contain internal dissent and to facilitate domestic capital or foreign exchange-bearing entrepreneurs. Special units of Indian police are being trained by western security experts to "protect the life and property of foreign investors."

Similar trends have emerged in Africa with a finely nuanced relationship developing between some African governments and private security firms or groups of mercenaries. The Southern Africa-based Executive Outcomes, a privatized, militarized security force, is being used by both governments and multinational firms. This has led to new relationships based on economic and political interests that promote practices for which there is no accountability.

Evidence suggests that the state may be complicit in the privatization of security, forming compacts with those that have no public interest and are available to any side. What does this mean for women at a micro and macro level? Counter insurgency is used to enforce control and compliance and as a result democratic processes are subverted. Compacts are negotiated without due regard to political processes, accountability and transparency. The state can seemingly abrogate its responsibility for the security of its people and the consequences of using privatized security firms.

Evidence indicates that the role of the state and its power has been redirected through deregulation and re-regulation, the reallocation of subsidies and the pooling of

national sovereignty to form new trading blocks that promote economic liberalization rather than social transformation and gender justice.

## THE FEMINIST MOVEMENT & THE STATE

Spaces are opening up for the women's movement to develop new strategic alliances in its push for political empowerment and transformation. But to become a coherent force for change, the women's movement has to undertake a critical review of its own diverse relationships with the state and its institutions. Women from the global South reinforced the need for the women's movement to strengthen its feminist consciousness, to engage in electoral processes and to fight for full social citizenship of women. If the women's movement is to play a significant role in political restructuring and social transformation feminist organizations need to examine positions of reactivism and find ways to use the available spaces for critical engagement with the state. However these spaces are in themselves contested terrain and require strategic alliances.

In order to engage with the state from a new position of strength the women's movement needs to form strategic alliances with other progressive networks. Global spaces provide opportunities to express new ideas, to reshape the democratic practices of women's movements and to push the advocacy agenda on all fronts. Possibilities arise for forming new strategic alliances at a global level to push gender equality to the core of political restructuring and for consolidating a global system of guarantees for people's rights against which movements can hold national states accountable.

Feminist movements are using existing institutions to push for increased representation and mainstreaming of gender. However the increased participation of women in government bureaucracy has also given rise to a new category of civil servant called "femocrats" who are seeking opportunities for change from within but at the same time becoming isolated from the women's movement. Tensions have also arisen due to the internal dynamics and dissension within feminist movements, which has prevented the strategic use of new spaces.

The central questions in the debates are: What leverage can the women's movement get from the participation and representation of greater numbers of women in government



and political processes? And, how can the increased numbers of women lead to a qualitative difference in the position of women in society. While the nature of states is changing, so too are the dynamics within the feminist movement. What are these dynamics? (Some say "feminist tourism" and "feminist activism" characterize them.) How can feminist movements that aspire to democratic forms of governance work with authoritarian systems of government? What are the conditions under which the women's movement can retain its autonomy from the state while using political spaces to make new gains? While there are no glib answers to any of these questions, women from the South are beginning to look for alternatives to the development impasse that has constrained the struggle for gender justice.

### BEYOND POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT TO SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

Women working individually or collectively are beginning to determine ways of engaging with the state in order to transform policies, programmes, and structures while guarding against co-optation. One concern is how to ensure accountability, transparency, and representation within both the women's movement and the state/governments at the same time. The exercise of power in the feminist movement is shaped by specific cultural, patriarchal, political, economic, environmental and racial factors. These include intergenerational issues such as inclusion of young leadership and willingness on the part of experienced activists to give up space and positions.

Understanding how power and influence are used within the feminist movement is as critical as understanding how these elements promote political restructuring and transformation. Debates within the women's movements have highlighted an uneasy relationship with power and its uses.

Issues that challenge the women's movement in dealing with its internal relations whilst simultaneously pushing the state to restructure include identifying and dealing with or accepting power in all its forms; examining organizational practices being used to attain and share power, and mobilizing resources towards strategic objectives.

At different moments in the process of political restructuring there are points of historical conjuncture and disjuncture. These points provide strategic challenges in the restructuring and empowerment process which can build women's capabilities and

secure their rights to full social citizenship. Women's political empowerment is being seen as central to the process of attaining social transformation. Political empowerment is understood as a process through which women are able to secure the right to participate in the exercise of political power through formal institutions such as local government structures, parliamentary processes, and organizations to promote a movement for social transformation.

Political empowerment helps to increase women's control over their own lives. It gives them the right to address structural inequalities and systemic issues, and influence wider decision making as a collective force in society. There are various ways through which women are engaging in political restructuring and social transformation:

#### Empowerment Through Direct Action:

Women's organizations and public policy processes and projects move through certain stages in the empowerment process as they interact with forces of domination. These stages may be reflected in a progression from sensitization to consciousness and then critical analyses and action leading to social transformation. There are many practical examples of this, including situations in South Africa, Latin America, and India.

#### Empowerment Through the Building of

**Grassroots Democracy:** An approach based on the development of reciprocal relations between the power of the state and the power of civil society through the building of grassroots democracy, as opposed to a formal democracy which protects the interests of those with economic power. How the state articulates with civil society and movements for change—including women's movements—can reflect new modes of democratization. Organizations seek to overcome the contradictions inherent in relationships of oppression by working in dialogue with women—especially poor women—to help them analyze their own oppressive conditions.

#### Empowerment Through the Building of a

**Human Rights Culture:** In some countries the constitutional and legal framework has changed and provides institutional mechanisms through which women are able to secure their rights. However accessing rights, understanding what they imply and ensuring that they are administered in a way that is sensitive to race, class, gender, age and other issues is critical.

The flip-side is that the legal framework legitimates certain rights but it also makes others invisible. Linked to this is the concern that when women understand their rights and are able to assert these, they are exposed to negative reactions from the powers that be. These reactions include an increase in institutional violence whereby women are subjected to forms of fundamentalism that pervade all areas of their lives and limit their freedom to voice their views or to engage in activity that will advance issues of gender justice.

### CONCLUSION

Two major challenges confront development advocates within the gender field. One is finding ways to ensure that the complex, differentiated and varied relationships women and organizations have with the state and civil society promote a recasting of the political sphere—public and private—and a realignment of movements and organizations. Another is the restructuring of systems that are oppressive and that perpetuate national domination, discrimination, and economic exploitation. □

From a presentation by Vivienne Taylor, DAWN Research Coordinator, Political Restructuring and Social Transformation.

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## SOUTH ASIAN WOMEN EXAMINE POLITICAL RESTRUCTURING AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION AT DAWN REGIONAL MEETING

The DAWN South Asia regional workshop was held in Bangalore, India, August 29-31 and brought together 40 women—14 from Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Pakistan—to debate feminist perspectives on Political Restructuring and Social Transformation in South Asia. Those taking part included activists, researchers, journalists and heads of key women's groups and mass organizations, including political parties.

The workshop was designed to facilitate intensive and extensive discussions from the floor. It included the presentation of country papers followed by the DAWN PR&ST concept paper being developed by Research Coordinator, Vivienne Taylor (see page 6). It was a format that worked well, grounding empirical issues, exam-

and which have to be negotiated fiercely at every level. In such a context the issue of quotas for women in formal political structures and processes becomes vital as does the presence of a vibrant, vigilant and committed women's movement and a strong civil society.

There was a rich debate on the politics of representation vs. genuine participation. The countries in the region present different stages of engagement and experimentation in this area and there was much discussion around the Indian experience, its pros and cons plus the larger issue of merits of a quota system per se. The blocking of the bill for 33 percent reservations for women in the parliament and legislatures, when seen against the failure to produce a feminist critique of governance, politics or politicization,

Bangladesh, NGOs have been active in service provision but with the virtual disappearance of a left ideology; religious political parties had taken the lead in mobilizing youth through educational institutions. In India, the Bajrang Dal, an ultra-right group, had been at the forefront of mobilizing women by co-opting the language of the women's movement. In Sri Lanka the long-standing war between the Tamil militants and the state had left women to bear the trauma of being sole breadwinners in an embattled economy. The challenges for South Asian women were clearly quite daunting and complex starting with the need for consolidating resources and skills for analysis and action on these issues in the region.

The DAWN regional planning meeting, held on the third day of the workshop focused on issues in the region the women wish to address, the activities they want to take up and the concrete results they would like to see. Criteria for selection of issues included willingness on the part of participants to commit their skills, time and energy, plus the relevance of the issues taken up for all the countries in the region, and practicality. At the end of the day the issues identified for action were Fundamentalism, Militarization, Globalization/Economic Rights and Political Empowerment/Political Movements. For each of these issues commitments were made and focal points selected.

The South Asia workshop was marked by an immense sense of solidarity and camaraderie, and by genuine efforts to forge alliances and learn from one another about each other's countries. It was also humbling to realize how little we know about each other despite the close socio-cultural and geographical affinities. Most women felt strongly about the relevance and meaning of a network such as DAWN for the region in terms of intellectual leadership on the theme and critical inputs at critical moments.

The task now is to sustain the surge of enthusiasm generated by the workshop and to take it forward in a meaningful way.

**Vanita Nayak Mukerjee**

*Relevance, solidarity, camaraderie and genuine efforts to forge alliances and learn from one another were the hallmarks of a meaningful exchange on the DAWN theme.*

ples and case studies from the five countries in the conceptual framework.

Key issues around governance, transparency, citizenship, enfranchisement, the nature of politics and accountability were discussed in great detail over the two days. The concept and meanings of political restructuring and social transformation were picked apart in small buzz groups (an exercise that emerged as a spontaneous demand from the floor). What is the feminist meaning of "politics?" How would feminists define "politics" as opposed to non-feminists?

What emerged was a clearer understanding of the nature of the public and political space within which women in South Asia function. This space is strongly mediated by religious fanaticism and identity-politics on the one hand and by a socio-cultural milieu with repressive patriarchal values on the other. The women painted a picture of varying types of democracy and authoritarianism that constrict the spaces available to women

served to demonstrate an underestimation of the realpolitik of power. Some Indian participants were also skeptical about the concept of representation and its translation on the ground although this varies from state to state.

Bangladesh and Nepal discussed the ways that global instruments—particularly the Beijing Platform for Action and CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women)—had been used to create spaces for negotiating women's participation in the political arena. It was generally agreed that much of what the governments were doing was tokenism. Women from Pakistan spoke about fundamentalist groups taking up the role of service providers in the vacuum left by government. For example, Quranic education was being provided by fundamentalists in *madrassahs* (religious schools). This dangerous trend threatened efforts by the women's movement to challenge regressive and patriarchal socio-cultural norms. In

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a debate rich with irony as traditional left critics of the IMF were joined by conservative, isolationist Republicans in calling for greater accountability and transparency from the Fund, albeit from different perspectives—the left coalition meaning accountability to citizens and civil society and the conservatives meaning greater accountability to U.S. interests. By the time the appropriation was finally passed, the IMF had been opened to the broadest public criticism it has ever had to face. The impact on the fund was quite evident when it announced the appointment of a major public relations firm to help improve its image!

**A**nother and thus far successful initiative has been the international effort to block OECD negotiations for a Multilateral Agreement on Investment (or “global bill of rights for multi-national corporations” as some have called it). Continued pressure and campaigning by NGOs, labour unions and others has led to France pulling out of the talks and a number of other major parties arguing that the negotiations should be brought under the aegis of the World Trade Organization (WTO), while the voices of those arguing against any form of multilateral agreement are growing stronger. (A similar campaign, still in its early stages, aims for greater transparency in the WTO by gaining greater space for NGOs and increased access to information.) A third important effort is SAPRI (Structural Adjustment Programme Review Initiative), the tripartite effort between civil society organizations, the World Bank and governments to review the impact of structural adjustment through more participatory methodologies. The process to date has more effectively opened up the debate around SAPs within countries than previously.

In all these efforts civil society has used the power of global technology to the hilt. The lessons learned during the global conferences of the 1990s have made possible a sophisticated form of global networking through which NGOs and others have become more adept, flexible and speedy in their responses and their strategizing. The torpedoing of the MAI agreement last May was described by *Time* magazine as the first sign of the power of Internet-based organizing. The corollary to that argument is that this emerging force favours the more technologically privileged organizations in the North which begs the question: Will their agendas always be congruent with those of southern civil society?

Despite the euphoria of the moment, however, mainstream critics still don't question the inherent inequalities, environmental crises, and ethical dilemmas of the global order; they merely seek to retain the status quo with a few more controls and a little more inclusion of the marginalized. Meanwhile the arguments from women advocates in favour of recognising the care of human beings in economic analysis are almost completely absent in the current debates, and the environmental challenges—posed so sharply in the heyday of Southeast Asian growth—are still being sidelined or ignored. Great caution should also be applied in tactical alliances with non-mainstream critics of the global economic order many of whom are Northern protectionists and conservative isolationists who oppose labor migration to the North and have little concern or empathy for the concerns of the South, of environmentalists or of women. Given that women's organizations and our concerns are still not at the core of the debates about the needed changes in the global order, critical analysis and self-examination along with thoughtful strategizing are urgently needed. □

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