



## ICPD+5: Back to the Future?

By Sonia Corrêa

**M**onths ago DAWN predicted that negotiations at the special session of the Commission on Population and Development (CPD), acting as the prepcom for ICPD+5, could prove difficult. "Given the prevailing global political and economic circumstances," we said, "It can easily turn into a 'back to the future' event." (*DAWN Informs* 2/98). However, after attending The Hague Forum (February 6-12 1999), the "final rehearsal" for the CPD, we were hopeful of seeing a radically different scenario. Tensions would be unavoidable, we surmised, but perhaps the New York debates would be an opportunity to deepen the analysis of the obstacles to ICPD implementation and to chart more precisely the essential future actions advanced by The Hague Forum Report. Specifically, from DAWN's perspective, CPD could provide the space for further expanding the critical development dimensions identified and addressed at The Hague—the sexual and reproductive health nexus, debt cancellation, proposals for regulating and taxing global financial transactions, greater clarity concerning reproductive health and environmental linkages.

With these possibilities in mind, women's networks from all around the globe—including DAWN—invested their political and intellectual energy into taking the process forward. Researchers and activists were mobilized to be present in New York. At the country level, efforts were made to disseminate up-to-date information among CPD delegations to ensure awareness of implementation progress and bottlenecks and to shore up commitment to Cairo principles. The Women's Coalition for ICPD, comprising

more than 70 organizations, was formed to review the Secretary General's Draft Report to be negotiated at the UN General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) starting June 30. The Coalition proposed several amendments to the text and began distributing these among delegations as soon as the CPD negotiation started.

### TO OUR DISMAY...

The process and its outcome were far more difficult than we could have predicted. In spite of inspiring opening speeches by Dr. Nafis Sadik, the executive director of UNFPA and Dr. Kerstein Trone, the organization's deputy executive director who transmitted to the plenary a message from Ambassador Nicholas Biegan, president of The Hague Forum, the negotiations stalled right from the beginning. The activities of the Working Group could not start immediately as the G77 requested time to read and amend the document. The request was legitimate, but whereas G77 confined itself to consensus on development and international cooperation in prepcom III for ICPD (May 1994) and in Cairo itself, at CPD the aim was to reach agreement on all aspects.

This was immediately interpreted as a bad sign by women's organizations, and with good reason. Since 1993, there has been no agreement amongst G77 countries with respect to gender, women's empowerment and sexual and reproductive health and rights in the ICPD Programme of Action. Apart from the Holy See, all the countries that raised reservations in 1994 are G77 members. It was also clear that if G77 was to speak as a block in all matters, those countries strongly committed to ICPD—those of

the Caribbean Region as well as Brazil, South Africa and India—would be unable to speak up in the Working Group. Moreover, the effort required to reach an "impossible consensus" within G77 would undoubtedly stall the negotiations and bring about the same sort of deadlock experienced in the March 1995 Beijing prepcom and the 1999 Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, where the Health content of the Beijing platform was reviewed.

### GAZING AT POTENTIAL DISASTER...

At first, this assessment was viewed by some as being excessively negative. But unfortunately as CPD progressed it proved to be right on target and the "chronicle of an announced disaster" unfolded painfully before our eyes. The Working Group Session on March 26 took place with practically no G77 presence. In a titanic effort to unlock the process, the Commission Chair, Bangladesh Ambassador to the UN Anwarul Karim Chowdhury, drafted a new text based on the deliberations of the Working Group for debate on March 30 and 31. But the March 30 morning session was cancelled because G77 was not ready. When negotiations finally started in the afternoon, the scenario had not improved. Brazil and Singapore supported by Chile, Ghana and South Africa, proposed that G77 build consensus exclusively for the poverty and resources sessions and that members should speak freely on other matters, but this was not accepted. In the Working Group debates, G77 amendments on gender and sexual and reproductive health and rights generally repeated or watered down the language of Cairo.

## DAWN INFORMS #1/99

*DAWN Informis* is published three times a year 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 emphasize the basic survival needs of the majority of the world's people, particularly Third World women and their children. Subscriptions: Free to DAWN members based in the South. Members and friends based in the North are asked to make an annual minimum contribution of US\$20.00.

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## CEDAW Optional Protocol Adopted

**Friday, March 12, 1999, New York City:** The Commission on the Status of Women, adopted an Optional Protocol to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). This protocol will strengthen the possibility to use CEDAW to end discrimination, including violence against women.

The Optional Protocol contains two procedures — a communications procedure allowing individual women, or groups of women, to submit claims of rights violations to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women; and an inquiry procedure enabling the Committee to initiate inquiries into situations of grave or systematic violations of women's rights. In either case, states must be party to the Protocol. The Optional Protocol will be submitted to the General Assembly of the United Nations for adoption later this year, and should be open for signature, ratification and accession in 2000.

"The adoption of the Optional Protocol is particularly significant as 1999 is the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women," said Angela King, the special adviser to the secretary-general on gender issues and advancement of women. "Together with the achievement of the goal of universal ratification of the Convention by the year 2000, the Optional Protocol is a major step forward in Governments' commitment to the realization of women's human rights," she added.

In a press release Amnesty International gave a "cautious welcome" to the adoption of the Protocol, claiming that it has not gone far enough in addressing the situation of women who suffer human rights violations. In a statement the human rights organization said, "Despite the flaws, the Optional Protocol is an important tool and Amnesty International will work together with other non-governmental organizations to promote a clear and grassroots understanding of how it can be used to protect women's human rights."

The text of the Optional Protocol and the resolution can be found at the website: [www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/protocol/adopted.htm](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/protocol/adopted.htm)

## Africa: Preparing for Cairo + 5

**B**ene Madunagu and Dina Nfon Priso, representatives of the DAWN network in Africa, hosted a regional conference in Douala, Cameroon, from January 5-7, 1999. Along with resource persons from six countries — Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Ghana, Nigeria, São Tomé and Príncipe, Cameroon — they assessed the policies adopted after the Programme of Action was adopted at the International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, 1994).

Most of the policies on reproductive health and rights and on population had started changing before Cairo. What ICPD did was galvanize several countries into adopting new policies, or reviewing existing policies on reproductive health, along the lines of the Programme of Action. These included the 1996 national policy on services and standards in reproductive health in Ghana, a law on public health and social welfare in Gabon and a law

countries to take into account gender discrimination. Côte d'Ivoire appointed women at decision-making level; São Tomé created a Direction for Women's Promotion, and Cameroon adopted its National Plan of Action for the Integration of Women in Development (1997).

These forward-looking actions were carried out within political contexts that make advocacy action on reproductive health and reproductive rights particularly difficult. These countries, most recently including Nigeria, have been in a period of democratic transition and are new to the experience of a dynamic associative culture. For example, NGOs have only been operating since 1990 in Cameroon and Gabon.

The socio-cultural environment represents a major constraint with the persistence of sexist cultures and traditions, some of them harmful to women's health. Female genital mutilation (FGM) is practiced in four out of

Catholic Church, remain active in the field of reproductive health. The Catholic Health Service promotes only natural contraceptive methods and fights against abortion.

All six countries are constrained by a difficult economic environment. Gabon, Cameroon and Nigeria are suffering the classic consequences of structural adjustment programs, including drastic cuts in the social sector, especially in education and health.

In Cameroon, the health budget dropped from 5.14 percent in 1984/85 to 3.09 percent in 1998/99. Cost recovery and cost sharing in the public systems keep the poorest — rural populations, women, and elders — away from hospitals and health centers.

In Nigeria, the government is pushing privatization of the health sector. The effects of the financial crisis in Asia have had a particularly negative effect in Nigeria, Cameroon and Gabon. For these countries, the continuous fall in the price of oil is another handicap.

In all six countries, more than one third of the population lives below the poverty line, with severe health consequences for women and children including poor maternal mortality rates. HIV/AIDS is on the rise and STDs are responsible for high infertility rates in Cameroon and Gabon. In Cameroon, the level of awareness on female genital cancers is low in spite of the introduction of detection campaigns.

Efforts by some governments to integrate reproductive health services throughout the health system have been hampered by lack of resources. In addition, the different components of the POA/ICPD are not always taken

### *The Cairo process enabled the creation and strengthening of reproductive health NGOs*

against sexual child abuse in Côte d'Ivoire 1998. In some cases, this new governmental awareness was concretized with the creation of institutional mechanisms or structures, for example, a Direction for Community Health within the Ministry of Public Health in Cameroon. The monitoring of the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995) helped some

the six countries represented — Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Nigeria. Activities range from information dissemination and advocacy aimed at concerned leaders and communities (Cameroon, Nigeria), to the adoption of laws criminalizing such practices (Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire). In all cases, the level of awareness has been raised. Religious groups, especially the Roman

into account. Very few actions are taken for teenagers, although there are some government and NGO operated programs on family life education in São Tomé and Côte d'Ivoire in the school system. Reproductive health programs still emphasize the years 15-49 instead of the whole life cycle of women. Male responsibility is neglected in all the countries represented.

The reproductive rights concept is not well known or understood. In Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire abortion is now legal if a woman has the consent of two medical doctors. In Cameroon and São Tomé, abortion is still prohibited by law.

Contraception is allowed or tolerated everywhere, but in many cases only with the consent of the husband. Several countries have marketing programs for contraceptives but they are not very efficient. The sexual rights agenda is completely overlooked.

The Cairo process enabled the creation and strengthening of reproductive health NGOs. In Nigeria a coalition, NGOs for Health, Population and Development, was formed and NGOs are involved in the formulation of policies. In Ghana, some NGOs are members of the National Council on Population. The Ivoirian Association for Family Welfare receives an annual subvention from the government.

The quality of NGO/government collaboration differs from one country to another. Actions are more successful when there is a clearly defined legal environment for NGOs and their partnerships with government, as in Ghana and Gabon. In general, NGOs are weak on coordinating activities among themselves.

The influence of donors is crucial in the funding of reproductive health services. All governments depend on donor funds and many NGOs establish strong partnerships with foreign donors, especially UNFPA, WHO, UNDP and USAID. Some NGOs are

also members of the IPPF network. Few countries have set up monitoring committees for the implementation of the POA/CPD.

**RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE MEETING**  
For Governments • Ratify all the relevant international instruments • Create an enabling environment for the accreditation of NGOs and for their direct access to donor funding • Involve women's organizations in the formulation of policies and in implementation and monitoring of programs.

For NGOs • Increase training in advocacy and fund raising • Obtain gender-disaggregated data • Strengthen local and international networks.

### **Caribbean: New Agenda, New Steering Committee, New Coordinator**

**T**hirty Caribbean women from predominantly anglophone territories, with a modest representation from Spanish and Dutch language islands, met in Barbados March 17-19, 1999, with the aim of redefining the work of DAWN Caribbean.

The consultation was organized by Eudine Barriteau, outgoing regional coordinator, assisted by Yvonne Bobb Smith of Trinidad and Tobago and Peggy Antrobus, former DAWN general coordinator. Participants defined a research agenda within the DAWN framework and based on their examination of the current global context and challenges facing the region's economically vulnerable island and continental states.

The three-day process of study and discussion ended with a new research agenda, a new Steering Committee, and a new Regional Coordinator — Dominican born Keturah Cecelia Babb, Senior Programme Officer at the Barbados-based Caribbean Policy Development Centre (CPCD). Cecilia, a former

National Representative of the Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action (CAFRA), is also currently the coordinator of The Women's Forum of Barbados. A committed Caribbeanist and feminist, she has conducted research for CAFRA's Women In Agriculture Project and has a wealth of experience in community outreach. Cecilia is a Rastafarian and mother of three.

Research activities will be undertaken by multi ethnic, multi lingual research teams coordinated by Research Focal Points. The Focal Points and research themes are: Mariama Williams (Jamaica), Trade Liberalization; Hazel Brown (Trinidad & Tobago), Women's Budgets; Dinys Luciano (Dominican Republic), Privatization of Social Services; Carol Narcisse (Jamaica) and Elizabeth Solomon (Trinidad and Tobago), Communication Strategies; Lynette Vassell (Jamaica) and Dessima Williams (Grenada), Political Restructuring and Social Transformation. Two ex-officio members, Peggy Antrobus and Eudine Barriteau, sit on the Steering Committee.

The meeting's packed agenda began with a presentation by Mariama Williams, an economist. Mariama's presentation began with an historic account of the origins of globalization and the distinctive features of current trends, specifically finance, investment and intellectual property rights. In this context, she looked at the impact of the global architecture for finance and trade on Caribbean economies and its implications for women's groups and other civil society organizations proposing development alternatives.

The reactivation of this "alternative think tank," as DAWN is sometimes described, signals the launch of another regional effort to strengthen women's leadership in work on defining alternatives to secure and sustain the livelihoods of Caribbean people in this age of globalization.

*cont. on p. 10*

# Researchers or Guinea Pigs?

By Teresia Teaiwa

**A**re NGOs going to be researchers or guinea pigs? This was the challenge raised by members of the DAWN network at the recent NGO Forum on Cairo+5 in The Hague, February 6-7, 1999.

DAWN's session at the NGO Forum focused on the linkages between population, development, reproductive health and the environment. It aimed to set the tone for the whole conference. The high powered panel included DAWN's Gita Sen, Sonia Correa and Gigi Francisco; Ewa Charkiewicz of the Hague Institute for Social Studies; Thandika Mkandiwere of the UN Research Institute for Social Development; and Eduardo Viola of the University of Brasilia.

Sen spoke on reproductive health in the context of the health and population sectors and social development; Charkiewicz spoke on population and sustainable development in the transition economies of Eastern Europe; Francisco spoke on international and internal migration; Mkandiwere spoke on the role of national governance in creating an enabling environment for ICPD; and Viola spoke on global governance, debt and South-North relations. Disappointingly, the kind of contextual analysis that DAWN provided was not kept at the forefront of The Hague discussions.

Instead, as Hillary Clinton's high profile appearance and speech made clear, while lip service would be paid to women's empowerment, the agenda

was clearly shifting back to family planning. Clinton's continual reference to images of the mother and child left little room for addressing male responsibility; her insistence on giving women the choice to limit the number of children they have, left little room for discussing broader aspects of women's reproductive health and rights.

DAWN member, Dina Nfon Priso expressed frustration at the way female genital mutilation was still dominating the discourse on reproductive health and rights in Africa. Indian parliamentarian and former Bollywood actress, Shabana Azmi made a point of attending the DAWN session, and called

*While lip-service was paid to women's empowerment, the agenda was clearly shifting back to family planning.*

attention to the importance of social justice in women's empowerment. Earlier in the week, at the Hague Parliamentary Assembly, Azmi had made her moving call for "a patch of sunlight." In India, menstruation was still considered so shameful and dirty that women were embarrassed to hang their recyclable sanitary napkins in the sun to dry.

Other sessions which followed DAWN's at the conference focussed on assessing partnership and funding, but evidently, what was needed were more explicit linkages between micro-level testimonies like Azmi's and grand

macro-visions like Clinton's. The linkages on which DAWN focussed, while undoubtedly important, were not connecting with other NGOs at the forum.

At their assessment meeting, DAWN members expressed disappointment in the muddling of agendas at the forum. The forum had an overwhelming sense of experimentation, DAWN members concluded, especially in light of the prominence given to the Youth Forum, and the strange dynamics of the NGO Forum.

In such a situation, it was incumbent on NGOs to decide whether to be researchers or guinea pigs. As guinea

pigs, NGOs would simply be pacified and maneuvered by UNFPA and the agendas of the larger donors and nations. As researchers, they would pay more attention to dynamics, share information, and strategically prepare to grasp the bulls by their horns at the upcoming meetings in New York.

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Teresia Teaiwa teaches in the Department of History and Politics at the University of the South Pacific. She co-chaired, with Sonia Correa, the DAWN panel on Linkages between Population, Development, Environment and Reproductive Health at the NGO Forum in The Hague.

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## QUOTE TO NOTE

*"Assessing ICPD impacts requires also evaluating the policy effects of the Fourth World Conference on Women, particularly those aspects that relate to gender equality and equity, violence against women and reproductive health. Besides creating an enabling environment for the dissemination of ICPD premises, the health section of the Beijing Platform went beyond ICPD with respect to abortion and sexual rights, providing stronger arguments for advocacy work in controversial areas."*

*Sonia Corr ea, Implementing ICPD: Moving Forward in the Eye of the Storm*

# Gender in the Campaign for Tax Reform in the Philippines

By Josefa (Gigi) Francisco, DAWN-SEA

## THE TAX LINK TO FINANCIAL GLOBALIZATION

**T**he advocacy around the reform of the public finance system in debt-strapped countries of the South started over a decade ago as an intensive global campaign calling for the regulation of private financial flows. Since the 1980s citizen's watch groups, people's organizations, women's organizations and NGOs started to keep an eye on how their governments collected and spent taxes as part of their opposition to IMF conditionalities.

In the Philippines where there exists a law on automatic appropriation for debt repayment, government is under constant pressure to raise needed revenues and to tighten its spending. The share of debt repayment in the national budget is so embarrassingly large that it has been re-classified as an off-budget expense item since the mid-80s.

For indebted countries, the public finance system is made to work in concert with other instruments that are used to achieve IMF determined macroeconomic goals. One of these is capital and financial liberalization. It is now clear that the hasty liberalization of capital accounts and easing of bank regulations in Southeast Asia were a direct cause for the economic crisis in the region and elsewhere.

When governments borrow to plug the economic and social impact of their closed banks and overheated financial sector — as in Korea, Thailand and Indonesia — troubles in the private sector become part of public finance. For the citizens this means car-

rying the burden of repayment on loans used for cleaning up the mess in private banks. Such responses to financial crises had been experienced in the '70s and early '80s when the Marcos government guaranteed enormous World Bank loans to private corporations owned by political cronies. These loans were eventually re-classified as public debt under the Aquino government.

The expansion of private capital into government-owned businesses and public utilities, such as hospitals, water and electric companies, undertaken in the name of privatization and government cost-efficiency, can also affect tax collection. The Philippine government had pushed for the passage of the Expanded/Improved Value Added Tax and the Comprehensive Tax Reform Program (CTRP) in 1996 after it had already sold off most of its assets and corporations. The cash-strapped administration of President Ramos found itself turning to the classic formula of increasing revenue collection among its citizens.

Governments never inform their citizens how the tax system works within overall macroeconomic policy goals. Millions of individual taxpayers are aware only of what amount of income tax they have to pay annually. Most don't understand how the amount is calculated, much less the tax structure and system. For instance, most people in the South, Filipinos included, do not know that liberal tax concessions and benefits are being given by their governments to foreign equity financing, even while they are made to pay for taxes that are progressively adjusted

upward. Neither are they aware of the long list of deductions and tax shelters that corporations are able to utilize for their own benefit.

While citizens' groups, social movements and NGOs have become more familiar with the language — "capital flight", "foreign direct investments", "portfolio investments", "hedge funds", "global financial architecture" — we have yet to understand and make people more aware of national public finance systems and how these are ultimately linked to the current regime of financial globalization or capital-led free market economics.

## TAX REFORM AND A SOCIALLY ORIENTED ECONOMY

**T**he dominant focus of our discussion in this conference is on taxes as these are meant to control capital movements across borders, primarily from North to South. We know that dependence on foreign funds for capital investment occurs when domestic capital is left scot-free to move out of the national economies of southern countries, and when capital is left untaxed and used for the lavish consumption and lifestyles of the local elite.

We therefore need to address tax controls for trans-border capital inflows and outflows as well as link this system of capital control with a domestic tax system that will shift the burden of financing national development onto those that operate within, and profit from, the national economy.

It was primarily around the call for a progressive tax system that the Free-

dom from Debt Coalition (FDC) launched its national tax campaign in 1994. When the campaign started the financial and economic crisis that spurred worldwide discussion on a global taxation of capital and the control of capital movement, had not yet taken place. Hence taxes on new forms of financial mobility and transactions, such as short-term capital flows, were not part of the proposed package of reforms.

Gender is an aspect that has been difficult to fit into the debate on global taxation and controls schemes, even though FDC organizers have sought to put the issues at the center of discussion.

From a perspective of a national taxation, a progressive tax system is one way by which self-reliant development may be promoted hand in hand with equity. By taxing the rich more and the poor less, government not only maximizes revenue collection but also promotes "equity of the vertical kind, i.e. among persons of different levels of income." (Durano and San Jose, 1999)

The taxing of corporations, particularly in limiting their deductible expenses, is

by the rich and by corporations and a tax on idle lands and unproductive assets, are other features of the FDC package of tax reforms.

If the rich were to be taxed more then government could provide tax relief for poor households and low-end income earners. In addition, tax incentives could be allocated to socially oriented enterprises and corporations, since the needed revenue would have been covered by the increased collection from the rich.

The FDC's tax reform campaign sought tax exemptions for low income groups, such as service workers and non-professional overseas contract workers. It also called for tax incentives for small and medium enterprises as well as cooperatives and professionals working in rural areas and the agricultural sector.

Administrative capability of the tax bureaucracy is a critical ingredient in the successful implementation of any tax system, since tax evasion that occurs with the connivance of tax collectors, worsens income distribution. (Durano and San Jose; FDC) According to FDC estimates, the rate of tax

"Government spending affects the distribution of the effective levels of household incomes. Subsidies for services such as education and health reduces the pressure on households to spend their incomes on these necessities, thus effectively raising family incomes. To the extent that government-financed social service programs are directed at poorer households, income disparities between the rich and the poor may be mitigated."

#### **A GENDER RESPONSIVE, EQUITY ORIENTED TAX SYSTEM**

**T**wo specific proposals in the FDC tax reform program are aimed at correcting gender-based distribution loopholes in the current Philippine taxation system. The first concerns the valuation of women's unpaid reproductive work. In this regard the specific proposal was for households with working but non-income-earning spouses to be credited with the same amount of income tax exemption as that of households with both spouses earning income.

Women's groups in both the North and South have argued for women's unpaid work in the family and its contribution to the economic system to be recognized. The FDC proposal not only prompts a shift in the government's perspective on unpaid family work but it also has a direct and positive impact on incomes of women and their families.

The second element in the FDC tax reform package that addresses gender equity concerns, is the proposal to provide single-headed households with the same income tax-exemptions as two-headed households. In the Philippines, and in many parts of the world where the majority of single household heads are women, this proposal would directly alleviate women's financial burdens. The FDC publicly admits that this proposal was only added to the list of tax

## *When governments borrow to plug the economic and social impact of an overheated financial sector, private sector troubles become part of public finance.*

an essential part of the campaign. So too is the reduction in the regressive nature of the indirect tax system — the VAT, for instance, may be slapped on luxury items but zero-rating imposed on basic foodstuff and commodities (FDC, 1998). Upward adjustment of real property taxes that are widely held

evasion and avoidance in the Philippines is at 50 percent of potential revenue collection.

Finally, we should concern ourselves not only with decisions about how government raises money but also with how it is going to spend it. (Briones, 1997) As Durano and San Jose explain:

reform measures two years after the campaign was launched — even though FDC has a very strong and dedicated women's committee. This reflects the reality of bringing forward gender issues in economics, so effectively have they been submerged by systemic patriarchy.

There are other aspects of the FDC's tax reform package that are not specifically highlighted in the campaign as gender-responsive measures but which do manifest positive implications on current gender differentials in economic behavior. For instance, the demand for increased taxes on items such as liquor and cigarettes will have a direct impact on the spending behavior of more men than women.

Micro-level studies in the Philippines have shown that cigarettes and liquor eat up a significant proportion of men's incomes while women's incomes tend to go on basic necessities for home maintenance and childcare. Similarly, the selective application of VAT, in particular the zero-rating on food, while aimed at ultimately benefiting the family, will also have a direct impact on women's incomes because it is women's incomes and purchasing that largely determine the contents of a poor family's food basket.

Another example is the FDC's call for exemption in income tax payments by Filipino service workers and non-professional overseas contract workers. A large number of women will benefit from this proposal, particularly the many domestic helpers working for middle class families inside and outside the country.

The FDC has been active since the 1980s, along with other groups, in lobbying government to allocate more resources to social services on the basis that cutbacks in these sectors merely transfer the cost of public services to the unpaid reproductive realm of women's work. Campaigns around employment and pay-cuts in the public sector — where a large majority of the rank and file are women — have

revealed the extent to which such measures disproportionately affect women.

In brief, the FDC tax reform package is more than a "re-distributive tool for expanding economic opportunities and social services for the marginalized sectors [read: "classes"] of the economy." (FDC, P.15) It is also a tool for correcting gender distortions and biases by expanding economic opportunities and providing services to women.

#### INSIGHTS FOR CAMPAIGNS ON GLOBAL TAXATION AND CONTROLS

Three important insights may inform ongoing actions and alliances for global capital taxation and controls. One is the need for a package of reforms and specific measures. In the FDC reform program, taxes were used not only as controls but also as incentives.

Increased taxes were demanded from those at the high-income end while tax relief and incentives were sought for sectors in need of support. So far the debates on global capital taxation have focused on controls — for instance, very little has been said about incentives for more socially and environmentally responsible fund transfers and investments. While there is a critical need to halt the destabilizing entry and exit of capital to and from national economies, I argue that such could be implemented along with a package of tax incentives for the more "desirable" types of capital flows.

Secondly, the FDC campaign was aimed at correcting class, sector and gender-based distortions and biases in the taxation system. Discussions on global capital controls have so far focused on equity between the rich north and the poor south. For women, the issues of vertical hierarchies and economic inequality cut through the local up to the global. Therefore a comprehensive reform of the financial system must incorporate the intercon-

nections at national, regional and international levels and the convergence of national, class and gender considerations.

Last but not least is the need for political will and transparency on the part of the monitoring and enforcing institutions, working in concert, to effectively institute controls and achieve the goal of redistribution at all levels.

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#### Campaign Challenges the Vatican's UN Status

An international campaign challenging the Vatican's status as a Non-Member State Permanent Observer at the United Nations was launched at the CPD in March by a coalition of women's, religious, and reproductive rights NGOs spearheaded by Catholics for a Free Choice (CFFC). "If the Vatican has the right to the status of a state then Euro Disney has a right to a seat in the Security Council," said Francis Kissling, CFFC president.

The campaign, which asserts that the Holy See is a religious institution that would better serve the public as an NGO, has already been endorsed by more than 70 international organizations. To find out more, contact: CFFC, 1436 U Street, NW, Suite 301, Washington, DC 20009, U.S.A. Tel: (202) 986-6093; Fax: (202) 332-7995; E-mail: cffc@igc.apc.org



# REVIEW: New DAWN Study Finds ICPD Weathering the Storm

By Claire Ince

*Implementing ICPD:  
Moving Forward in the Eye of the Storm,*  
Compiled by Sonia Correa  
DAWN Research Coordinator  
Sexual and Reproductive Rights

**F**ive years after the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo, population policy remains just as contentious. At ICPD, the clash materialized on a global scale, and when the dust settled the population policy debate had shifted its emphasis from demographically driven approaches to gender equality, social well being and reproductive health and rights. DAWN's new study, *Implementing ICPD*, looks at what has happened since, providing a summary of the major initiatives and trends in reproductive health, and insightful analysis of the reasons why the program has had such difficulty fulfilling its promise.

This 48-page overview of the muted success of the Cairo program certainly won't get lost in the crowd — despite the proliferation of ICPD studies in the Cairo+5 process. It covers Latin America, Southeast Asia, South Asia, Africa and the Caribbean. Within these regions, specific country studies provide illustrations of trends. *Implementing ICPD* uses a common framework to drive this analysis. The pre-Cairo state of reproductive health in the country is first examined, then ICPD recommendations most relevant to the country are pinpointed. Finally, the post-Cairo situation of reproductive health is analyzed and assessed based on five elements: ICPD's impact at a national level; progress made on reproductive health services; debates and legislation affecting sexual and reproductive rights, especially abortion; the political, economic and social environment in which implementation is taking place and the presence and role of ICPD advocates and adversaries.

*Implementing ICPD* finds that the reproductive health landscape is very mixed indeed. On the one hand, governmental institutions have embraced ICPD language — in words at least, ICPD is at work. Violence against women has gained visibility, and comprehensive gender planning is beginning to take root in the Caribbean region and in the Philippines. Latin America and India are also debating

health agenda has been poorly executed. Adolescent health has been on the back burner in most countries, and sexuality education in public schools is under attack. Male responsibility in reproductive health has been largely ignored and access to safe abortion has proved too controversial to make headway, especially in Latin American countries.

*Implementing ICPD* highlights precisely why progress has been so patchy, dividing the obstacles into five inter-linked concerns: cultural and religious resistance; lack of conceptual clarity; institutional inertia; policy design and resource allocation in health reform; and the political, economic and social environment. One of the major stumbling blocks is clearly health reform, especially the privatization schemes particularly evident in West Africa. Cost-recovery and cost-sharing public health programs have meant that the poorer populations have decreased access to hospitals and health centers.

But the DAWN study finds the main block to be the global financial collapse; countries just don't have the cash to spend on health. This "financial hurricane" has also led to social and political instability further contaminating the climate for ICPD implementation. However, *Implementing ICPD* argues that there is a space for civil society to bring greater transparency and accountability to the global political economy because of a readiness to try something other than the Bretton Woods Institutions and the decline of neo-liberalist free trade fallacies. Whether this space will prove sufficient to make the cultural changes ICPD demanded remains to be seen.

\*The complete case studies will be published later this year.

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gender approaches to health that go beyond reproductive health. Countries in West Africa are emphasizing legal reform and gender and poverty programs. In the South, the blinkers are coming off.

The study's examination of the influence of monitoring and accountability mechanisms reveals great imbalances. Although NGOs in many countries have been an integral part of holding governments to their Cairo promises, in Asia and the Pacific, governments have treated partnerships with NGOs as an opportunity to pass the buck. Sexual health policies have not lived up to ICPD recommendations and integration of HIV-prevention programs with the reproductive

## Regions (cont. from page 4)

### Pacific: Research Network Meeting

Women researchers from Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, Palau, Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Tonga, Fiji, and Samoa met in Samoa in November 1998 with two aims: to strengthen networks among Pacific women working on development issues from feminist perspectives and to consider the nature of support for a Pacific DAWN research network. Although it was a small group and research interests and involvement were wide, these two aims were met and a Pacific DAWN work plan was developed.

The new Regional Co-ordinator for the Pacific, Yvonne Underhill-Sem, opened the meeting by emphasizing that working within a DAWN framework provided another way of influencing decision-making in the region. But she also noted that there was far more at stake than just undertaking 'sound' research. Understanding historical and contemporary political relationships was also vital to affective research and advocacy, Yvonne pointed out. Claire Slatter, DAWN General Coordinator outlined the importance of feminist research, analysis and advocacy from a DAWN perspective. She also showed how DAWN had effectively worked at the global level by providing critical research, analysis and advocacy that contributed to social transformation and gender justice.

After sharing their research work, involvement and practices in the Pacific, participants focussed on DAWN's four

main research themes and considered the ways in which they were evident in the Pacific. Although there was a sense of "do I know enough to ask the right questions of our governments," participants also acknowledged they did have access to information through various networks as well as through the phenomenal growth of opinion and advocacy on the Internet.

The last day and a half was spent developing research projects which dovetailed with the four DAWN themes. Some were projects at advanced stages of conceptualisation, others developed directly from insights gained at the meeting. Caroline Fusimalohi (Tonga) and Julie Tellei (Palau) will explore the role of external agencies in transforming gender relations in the public sector; Grace Molisa will monitor the constitutional reform process in Vanuatu, and Frances Soon Schuster will examine issues of individual and family rights and law in Samoa, with a focus on child abuse. Other projects include: an exploration of the culture of hitting and abuse in Samoa, Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop; the development of a checklist to assess the extent to which Palau is being absorbed by global economic forces, Julita Tellei; a domestic violence knowledge, attitude, and practice survey for the Federated States of Micronesia, Tina Takashy, and a gender audit of a sample of NGOs in Papua New Guinea by Elizabeth Cox. Regional research projects will also be conducted by Elizabeth, who will monitor Cairo on the ground and document the lifestyles of those who still have an adequate subsistence base and conduct, and by Yvonne who will

examine engendering intellectual property rights issues in the Pacific.

While most of the research projects focus on one country, they will be cast within a broader context informed by DAWN's global analysis. With a shared and evolving analytical framework, other country case studies are expected to develop. It is hoped that this process will ensure that individual countries benefit from DAWN Pacific research efforts at the same time as making possible for multi-country and regional syntheses. In turn, the process will inform DAWN's global analysis.

The concluding sentiments of the meeting were positive. "Although all of us have competing work and family commitments, the gathering encouraged us to remain informed about the political economy of globalisation," said Yvonne. "It has given us the determination to keep asking those difficult questions about changes in our communities and country, to seek support for clarifying and addressing these issues and then ultimately to provide credible alternatives in our communities that promote social transformation and gender justice."

Generous support for the meeting came from DAWN, Pacific Women's Resource Bureau/Secretariat of the Pacific Community, UNESCO, UNIFEM, Pacific YWCA, and the University of the South Pacific Continuing Education Programme. This support indicates the high level of interest in exploring the substantive issues raised in the DAWN analysis as well as a broad recognition of the need to develop research skills and analysis from feminist perspectives in the region.

### QUOTE TO NOTE

*"DAWN Pacific connects interdependent researchers networking for alternative political strategies using a methodology that looks at all factors — social, economic, political and historic — in an inclusive holistic way, linking the macro with the micro, urban with rural, male with female, old with the young, rich with the poor, the powerful with the powerless, and looking through the eyes of the poorest in our society, to promote gender justice and social transformation."*

**Grace Mera Molisa, DAWN Pacific, November 1998**

The so called group consensus in these particular areas clearly reflected the political hegemony of those countries that expressed reservations in 1994—Argentina, Libya, Morocco, Nicaragua and Sudan in collaboration with a few others including surprisingly enough, Egypt—over the majority. On the floor, only three developing countries were able to speak in defense of Cairo premises—Korea, Mexico and Turkey. The content and tone of the G77 amendments were often in open contradiction to the reports on ICPD implementation given in the plenary by the majority of countries.

As expected, the G77 by positioning itself as a block on gender and sexual and reproductive health and rights issues, pushed Canada, the E.U, Japan, Norway and the U.S to “play hard” on the same issues as well as on such development matters as international migration. By March 31 at 11 PM, the negotiations had arrived at the usual South-North breach that, since 1992, has provided the Vatican and its allies with the necessary political space to stall progress on the gender equality agenda, most particularly sexual and reproductive health and rights. The political climate was entirely different from the North-South bridge building that made the Cairo consensus possible. As a consequence, negotiations were not completed. Ten paragraphs from the Revised Working Paper proposed by Chairman Chowdhury remain bracketed (“set aside”), and many of the paragraphs between 53 and 79 were debated. The paragraphs set aside are those related to sexual and reproductive health and rights, most particularly those on adolescent sex and abortion. Negotiations are to resume before UNGASS although the exact date has not yet been set.

#### **MOREOVER...**

Much could be said about access of and treatment of NGOs, but suffice to say the atmosphere of the CPD was radically different from the increasing openness NGOs have experienced in the various UN conferences following Cairo and most particularly at The Hague, when even the bureau meetings were open to non-governmental observers. When NGOs without a red badge—even those that were advising delegations—were evicted from the G77 room

it was instant *déjà vu*. In a flash we were back to April 1993 at prepcom II for ICPD, when it became clear that G77, while showing reluctance to dialogue with NGOs, was in constant consultations with the Holy See. Unfortunately not many people circulating the UN basement that particular night had this memory fresh in their minds. Additionally, many of those who should not have forgotten it behaved as if no connections should be made between these two moments in time.

#### **IN SPITE OF...**

Oftentimes during the week, the prevailing mood among many representatives of women's organizations was to abandon the boat and go back home to implement Cairo. But in spite of the tide of outrage and disappointment, somehow the energy was retained. On Tuesday March 30, a silent protest took place in the UN corridors with women's and youth NGO representatives carrying posters that called on delegations to move forward. The next day at a press conference, their message was loud and clear—countries that reserved in Cairo should not have the right to silence or obstruct other countries from making effective progress on implementation.

#### **THE OUTCOME COULD BE WORSE...**

The resulting document is not exactly a visionary text. What we have is much more of a new policy document that to a large extent repeats Cairo premises. The areas which have been watered down or compromised by the political climate of the negotiations have, in fact, been “set aside.” The approved text is good and progressive in many aspects—particularly with respect to the development content and HIV/Aids. But here and there new problems have arisen. For instance, the notion of dignity is now associated with human rights across the text.

Although the outcome may seem surprising in light of the political scenario previously described, it is not difficult to identify the factors that made it possible. Any detailed review of the approved text will show that the greatest proportion of the progressive language was proposed by the Women's Coalition, despite rumors that

political pressure exerted on delegations by women was detrimental to the process. The truth is that women's interventions were crucial to keep negotiations on track. Another critical factor was the commitment to the Cairo agenda by a few of the delegations. Mexico and Turkey played key roles at critical moments by strongly defending their national policies and programs, and Canada, Norway and the U.S. were vigilant in their efforts to counteract the conservative backlash. It must also be said that the process within G77 itself would have gone completely awry if not for the presence, voice and tenacity of such delegations as Brazil and Ghana.

#### **BUT YET...**

Despite the exhaustion and frustration during the CPD, efforts were made to identify why things were going wrong. The list is long. It includes political conditions as well as other agendas that prevail in the context of the New York City-based UN Secretariat. There was the lack of preparation and general weakness of many delegations, including the predominance of mission people in the negotiations. Another aspect was the lack of commitment on the part of countries regarding the Cairo agenda—ICPD is not exactly a priority at high level UN negotiation levels. Even the Kosovo War proved to be a factor, capturing media attention and rendering CPD invisible and further contaminating the political climate.

An observer of UN negotiations reminded us that all processes of review and appraisal, since Rio+5, have been “failures” and suggested that maybe the methodology is wrong. “Reviews should be made by implementers and not by diplomats. Diplomats expertise is to negotiate policy documents, not to evaluate how the recommendations contained in such documents are or are not being implemented.”

This is an important clue to help us to analyze in depth what went wrong with CPD and how to position ourselves for the rest of the process. And, as for the political aspects of the situation regarding the preparation and conduct of the CPD+5 prepcom, a great deal remains to be done if we really want to understand how and why the feminist agenda has been at risk of being entirely sold out. ♦

## Cairo+5 Resources

### Reports

**CAIRO+5: REPORT ON BRAZIL** • UNFPA-commissioned report by Brazil's National Population and Development Commission (CNPd) includes input from a range of government ministries and representatives of NGOs and civil society, including DAWN's Sônia Corrêa. Contact: SBS Qd. 1, Ed. BNDES, 15° andar, Sala 1524, 700076-900, Brasília/DF. Tel: (061) 315-5120; Fax: (061) 315-5183; E-mail: [cnpd@ipea.gov.br](mailto:cnpd@ipea.gov.br)

**VOICES FROM JAPAN NGO REPORT** • Compiled by Japan's Network for Women and Health 99, an umbrella group of NGOs established after ICPD to monitor implementation. Contact: Keiko Higuchi, Hiroko Hara, 5-29-13 Apt. 407, Hongo, Bunkyo-ku, Tokyo 113-0033, Japan. Fax: 81-3-3818-5511

**CAIRO AND PEKIN, ADVOCACY FOR CIVIC WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS: MEXICO, 1999** • Preliminary report by Lucero González and Laura Elisa Castillo for Sociedad Mexicana, Pro-Derechos de la Mujer, A.C. Contact: Callejón Corregidora #6 Col. Tlacopac San Angel, México, D.F.

**RISKS, RIGHTS AND REFORMS: A 50-COUNTRY SURVEY ASSESSING GOVERNMENT ACTIONS FIVE YEARS AFTER THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT** •

This latest monitoring report from the Women's Environment and Development Organization finds that post-Cairo women's health and rights are under siege as a result of economically driven health sector reforms and poor environmental conditions, but also that there are bright spots too as women hold governments to their commitments.

Cost: \$19.95. English, French and Spanish. Contact: WEDO, 355 Lexington Avenue, New York, NY 10017, U.S.A. Tel: (212) 973-0325; Fax: (212) 973-0335; E-mail: [wedo@igc.org](mailto:wedo@igc.org)

**TAKING UP THE CAIRO CHALLENGES, COUNTRY STUDIES IN ASIA-PACIFIC** • Studies of Fiji, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam, assess the extent of government's action and commitment towards Cairo implementation. Contact: Rashidah Abdullah, Director, Asian-Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women (ARROW), 2nd Floor, Block F, Anjung FELDA, Jalan Maktab, 54000 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Tel: 60-3-2929913; Fax: 60-3-2929958; E-mail: [arrow@po.jaring.my](mailto:arrow@po.jaring.my)

### Information Packages

**WOMEN'S SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS AND HEALTH ACTION SHEETS** • Prepared by HERA (Health, Empowerment, Rights & Accountability), an international group of health advocates, the package contains eight action sheets that define the central concepts of the agreements reached at Cairo and Beijing. Contact: HERA Secretariat, c/o International Women's Health Coalition, 24 East 21st Street, 5th Floor, New York, NY 10010, U.S.A. Tel: 212-979-8500; Fax: 212-979-9009; E-mail: [Hera@iwhc.org](mailto:Hera@iwhc.org)

**CATHOLIC VOICES AT ONE WITH THE CAIRO CONSENSUS** • Dossier prepared by Catholics for a Free Choice includes an unabridged version of the booklet, *Catholics and Cairo*, and a chronology of efforts by Roman Catholic officials to block implementation of the Cairo agreements. Contact: Francis Kissling, President, 1436 U Street, NW, Suite 301, Washington, DC 20009-3997. Tel: (202) 968-6093; Fax: (202) 332-7995; E-mail: [cffc@igc.org](mailto:cffc@igc.org)

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