

DAWN INFORMS

Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era

LINKAGES IN THE WTO: POSITIVE CONDITIONALITIES OR SOCIAL DUMPING?

By Gigi Francisco, DAWN Regional Coordinator for South East Asia

"Linking" is not a new word for feminists and in feminist analysis. Women have been linking women's issues to other concerns in our critique of development models, primarily to surface how the nexus of inequities affect women adversely and differentially. Single-focused analyses, such as those giving primacy to economics or to the public realm, have traditionally invisibilised the reproductive sphere where much of women's work and concerns is found. To link reproduction and production in an enlarged perspective on human and social development challenges the overwhelming import given to the market by gender-blind neo-liberalist thinking.

Nowhere has the idea of linking been more controversial than in the current NGO debates and advocacy on 'trade linkages' around the World Trade Organisation. It is an issue that has surfaced strong tensions among NGOs in general, causing a division between (largely male-led) Northern NGOs and Southern NGOs.

The controversy revolves around the question of whether WTO policies ought to encompass other social issues, such as environment, labor, gender, and human rights. And the positions and arguments of both states and civil society appear to strongly gravitate around two perceptible NGO objectives - Fair Trade and/or Equitable Trade.

Fair trade

Many Northern NGOs are passionately lobbying for the inclusion of trade-related concerns in discussions within the WTO. They argue that free trade needs to be checked or tempered by ethical and social considerations or that trade policies can be used as tools for social justice, by way of what has been termed 'positive conditionalities'. A fair, as opposed to an open, unregulated, multi-lateral trading system is desired.

Adding their voice to this position are highly influential organised labor groups in the North, particularly the AFL-CIO. Its interests are more limited and protectionist in nature. Its leaders fear that jobs in the North would be taken away by the South where there are less stringent labour and environmental standards permitting, amongst other things, female labour sweatshops and the use of child labour.

Within the WTO, the United States has been in the forefront of pushing for labour and environmental standards. Despite its rhetoric on ethics and human rights, it is widely known that the country is not only protecting its own labour market and trade sector but is also imposing its standards on the rest of the world. American (and other Northern) NGOs are caught in a bind with their government/s. On the one hand, they may identify with state rhetoric on fair trade yet there is recognition (and an accompanying critique) of the political intentions of protectionism and hegemony behind such lofty ideals.

Equitable trade

Equitable trade has been the call of governments and civil society groups from the South since trade was taken up by UNCTAD in the 70s. The South, wracked by huge external debts and staggering levels of poverty can barely cope with the stiff competition and vulnerabilities unleashed by liberalised trade in their national economies. After three years of removing tariffs and further opening their economies to free trade, Southern

To P2

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT WTO...for the Seattle Ministerial. A 12-page lift-out discussion paper inside written by Mariama Williams for DAWN



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TRADE RULES...in whose interests?

For the International Day Against the Millennium Round on 15 September 1999, DAWN Caribbean's Peggy Antrobus, founding member and former General Coordinator, gave a statement on why it is necessary to have women's perspectives on trade arrangements.

Men and women around the world have general concerns about trade agreements that place the interests of the Multinational Corporations (MNCs) before those of certain people and countries. Women also have specific concerns about the impact of these trade regimes on health, livelihood and human security — the effects on their lives and those of the people for whose welfare they are responsible.

Examples:

- In the mounting evidence of the environmental, ecological and health consequences of heavy use of lethal pesticides, women in Asia have been campaigning against their use.

- Women in Africa have expressed special concern about the patenting of life forms.

- Women in Latin America are especially fearful of the loss of their sources of traditional medicines and livelihoods as the corporations expand

operations into the farthest reaches of the Amazon.

- A network, Diverse Women for Diversity, is calling for an end to what it terms 'biopiracy' - the patenting of indigenous biodiversity-related knowledge such as the anti-diabetic properties of various herbs and plants.

- Women in the Caribbean are facing the erosion of the social, economic and political gains made since independence as they acknowledge the threats to small island developing states in a globalised marketplace in which the economies of scale place them at a disadvantage in relation to larger-scale enterprises.

The issue is not whether to have global trade rules, but rather what kind of rules, in whose interest they operate and how they should be balanced to ensure that they do not have adverse impacts on social, health and environmental spheres nor worsen existing inequities. ☀

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governments and NGOs have become acutely aware of the devastating impact of WTO agreements and commitments on their peoples and societies, particularly as regards food (in)security. Trade-related issues are of particular concern to the South whose endowments, capital and technology relations, labour and production systems are embedded in policy regimes and cultures vastly different from the technology-driven, capital-intensive industrialised production systems in the North. Environmental, labour, human and women's rights standards, whose determination is highly influenced if not imposed by Northern countries, have the effect of incapacitating Southern economies, denying them a level playing field in trade. Politically there is the question of whether these constitute 'social dumping' or proxies for abolished trade restrictions, or dictates from hegemonic countries.

Moreover, trade-related issues, if and when placed at the center of the debates in the forthcoming WTO Ministerial Meeting in Seattle, could cloud and cover up the real issues in trade, foremost of which are the unbalanced trade agreements. An example of these is the current state of agricultural agreements in which Northern countries are able to get away with heavy subsidies for their agricultural sectors while strapping Southern countries in a straitjacket as far as subsidies go.

Southern NGOs and people's movements share many of the arguments being raised by their governments against trade-related impositions. While significant sections of NGOs and people's movements would in fact expand their opposition beyond the current WTO agreements to condemn capitalism and free trade in general, southern states are more focused on achieving leverage with Northern countries within the WTO. For instance, while Southern states will condemn the lack of transparency and democracy in decision making within the multilateral organisation, many will manifest a

strong phobia toward integrating civil society organisations into the WTO processes.

The third position on linkages

There are other arguments against linking trade with other issues that have been advanced from both the North and South. One is the view of economists like Jagdish Bhagwati of Columbia University, US, who claim that free trade in and of itself must be the centre of discussion within the WTO. His view is that liberal economic reform or globalisation does work to reduce poverty and boost the economic performance of poor nations. Banking on economic analysis, he has argued in various fora against mistaken notions and fears about the social impacts of free trade. In particular he has demonstrated the fallacy of the fear that labour-intensive goods from developing countries would jeopardise jobs and trade in the North. He extends his arguments in support of the WTO claiming that the multilateral organisation is already by and of itself a counterbalance to the asymmetric institutions of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund that have been intervening in trade and economic development.

The anti-MAI network, the leading force of which is the North, is also against trade linking but for entirely different reasons. In a statement highly critical of the WTO that was presented to the European Union, the group noted strongly that human rights law and multilateral environmental agreements "stand above WTO rulings." Its advocacy is to stop the WTO from extending its agreement on trade-related concerns and more importantly to begin the process of reviewing the implications of existing trade agreements for human rights and environmental standards. Subjecting the WTO to the scrutiny of the United Nations is a strong appeal that emanates from this standpoint.

Positioning gender issues in trade

A consensus among Northern and Southern NGOs has developed around the call to

'review, repair and transform' the WTO and a concerted resistance to expanding the scope of the deliberations and agreements in the WTO at Seattle. Within this overarching advocacy, debates on trade linkages exist and continue to reverberate in NGO circles.

It is within the continuing debates on trade links with social concerns among civil society groups that women's groups from both the North and South have been able to find venues for surfacing gender issues in trade. Up to the countdown to Seattle, efforts at feminist analysis of trade have been pretty much sidelined in the passionate debates and whitewater environment stirred by the contest of views on trade and the WTO. Or poor women's issues in the South, such as in food security and employment, while very real on the ground, have been tacked on and ideologised within the confines of various 'parent' perspectives and advocacy on trade. In an article that was put on the web by a progressive Southern NGO that works for equitable trade, a denigrating reference was made to "gender activists and animal welfarists" "baying for space within the multilateral trading system."

Southern women's issues in international trade and multilateral trading systems are complex and often not direct. They are mediated not just by meso-economic forces and dynamics but also by socio-cultural factors that do not have labels and meanings in conventional and neo-liberalist economic and trade analyses. While the interrogation of other aspects of trade has advanced, there remains the need for women to continue articulating gender-specific complexities, ambiguities and dilemmas.

As DAWN has made clear since its inception, we can begin this interrogation from our experiences of how previous multilateral institutions have made life more miserable for poor Southern women, not just because economic options have been minimised but because our empowerment needs as women and as citizens of the South have been disregarded. ☀

GENDER ISSUES IN INTERNATIONAL TRADE

By Marina Fe B. Durano, Visiting International Economist at the Center of Concern, Washington, D.C., and a member of the newly-formed DAWN Trade Team. Peggy Antrobus, Maria Riley, and Alexandra Spieldoch and comments from Mariama Williams, Lourdes Beneria, and Silke Stein were most helpful in preparing a paper on gender issues in international trade for the COC, which is briefly summarised here.

For many people, finding the link between gender issues and international trade policy is a long stretch, almost laughable. But such links are present and strong and any adverse consequences from these links must be immediately addressed.

Trade policies have different consequences for women and men because women and men differ in their economic and social status. Women and men respond differently to economic and trade policies because they have different sets of private resources and levels of access to public ones. Status and control over resources are intricately woven into the sexual division of labor - the assignment of productive and reproductive roles. Thus, the economic impact of trade policy on the genders must look at price and quantity effects as they relate to the differential status of men and women and their different resources. Meanwhile, the social and human development impacts of trade policy must look at how choices for sustenance, self-esteem and freedom have been altered and how these alterations have affected women and men. Both kinds of impact analysis, in turn, help determine the changes in the welfare of both genders.

As the behavior of household members is governed by institutions, both formal and informal, that determine each person's available choices (with some choice sets larger than others), so the economy - at the macro and meso level - through the price-quantity mechanism also determines behavioral choices by supplying the relative prices that households face as each member interacts (or not) with the market, fulfilling his or her productive and reproductive roles.

Thus, gender issues in international trade require an investigation of the transmission mechanisms from policy formulation to implementation and from macroeconomic and meso-economic indicators to microeconomic and social development indicators. The transmission mechanisms must take into account that trade policy is not simply a matter formulated within national borders, rather that it is as much the outcome of negotiations in different kinds of trading arrangements - whether bilateral trade agreements, regional trade agreements or multilateral agreements such as the World Trade Organization.

The Household and the Economy

The household and the macroeconomy are linked through the employment sector. As employment opportunities have increased with the opening of economies to trade, women have been increasing their amount of involvement in the labour market. A number of studies have already been done on trade policy impact and female employment and further sex-disaggregated data are necessary.

Much of the discussion on employment and consumption effects misses out on the decision-making processes inside a household that would be more descriptive of gender relations. The most substantial response involves changes in the household's

internal dynamics, particularly the relationship among members with respect to their productive and reproductive roles.

Beatrice Lorge Rogers' (1990) framework for bringing out factors affecting intra-household dynamics and understanding the gender differences considers: (1) the amount of time available to different household members for participation in the project; (2) the allocation of household tasks to different members and the degree to which these tasks are transferable among members; (3) differential access to goods, both for production and consumption; and (4) differential control over income.

The combination of the four depends on how culture structures the role expectations between the two sexes and between child and adult. As such, policy makers stand to benefit from an understanding of the dynamic relations among these factors and role expectations. While there have been several studies separately discussing these four factors, the discussions are not clearly linked to trade policy. The challenge then is to find the theoretical links and empirical tests to see how the original results change with changes in trade policy.


Institutions

The macroeconomy, the household, and the individuals that comprise the household cannot be taken in

isolation of institutions - both formal and informal - that govern the behavior of members of an economy and society.

Even though there are formal legal structures and international commitments (such as the Beijing Declaration) that prohibit discrimination based on sex, informal mechanisms remain strong in placing limits on women's and men's work. Trade policies should not reinforce these biased informal structures and the challenge is finding out how to prevent such reinforcement.

Gains from trade accrue to those who possess the sources of comparative advantage. The results depend on the initial distribution of endowments, which has in many developing countries been determined by colonial history and class conflict. Thus, the market, wittingly or unwittingly, only perpetuates and reinforces the unequal distribution of political and economic power. Between the genders, ownership and control of resources are usually more concentrated in men than in women. Even the sexual division of labour is perpetuated as discriminatory labor markets determine the kinds of occupations and specify the industries that men and women work in as well as the relative wage rates that men and women receive.

The challenge that is presented to policymakers is unraveling the nature of the relationships between globalisation, macroeconomic policy, development and poverty with a gendered lens. The usefulness of this framework will be proven when policy prescriptions can be derived from it and advocacy strategies begin to incorporate alternative arrangements that give women a chance to determine their future in international trade. 

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SHIFTING THE DEVELOPMENT PARADIGM

For the NGO forum on "The Women's Movement in the Future", which was part of the Asia-Pacific "Women 2000" Regional NGO Symposium held at the Kasetsart University, Kamphaengsan, Thailand, 31 August-4 September, Gigi Francisco prepared a paper on "Shifting the Development Paradigm" which was presented by Vanessa Griffen of the Asian and Pacific Development Centre. It gave a picture of the foundations of DAWN, and strategies for "spreading our wings".

From the much-vaunted promise of "economic growth and prosperity" we now have financial volatility and resurgent economic hardships. For the nth time since the world market was re-structured after World War II, the poor in general and women in particular are being asked by governments to be "patient, to work harder, to spend wisely, and to support their husbands and governments."

The call for the regulation of global finance

While some governments and individuals had their unquestioning loyalty to an open market economy and reliance on global capital shaken by the Asian economic crisis, nothing concrete has come of their acknowledgement of the need for immediate regulation of short-term portfolio investments. The market economy remains well entrenched in the mindsets of many major governments and technocrats. There are many words spoken on the need to regulate the market and write off debt for the poorest countries. But governments themselves are finding it difficult to act decisively for regulation of capital and debt relief.

Rising above the whitewater and spreading our wings

The mainstream itself is confused, disunited, and on the defensive. Governments and multilateral aid institutions that have appropriated the semantics of the social movements, including those of the women's movement, will now find it more difficult to turn the clock backward. Governments of the South are now beginning to realise how the GATT-UR has compromised their national sovereignty and control of economies.

For those of us who work within the mainstream, the present contestation of forces can be turned into a real opportunity for moving the debate on development further away from the market and on the alternative path. In doing so we can continue to use certain international agreements and conventions, such as the Beijing Platform for Action and CEDAW. But if we are to turn these into real instruments of accountability with which to challenge governments and multilateral agencies, we will need to come up with monitoring mechanisms that will plot in no uncertain ways their performance and political will in implementation. The monitoring should be activist oriented, not in techno-jargon only technocrats in government and multinationals understand. Making governments accountable to women is an expression of active citizenship.

Debate with the mainstream and monitoring governments, however, must be linked with women's and people's actions of resistance outside boardrooms and conference halls of the world's capitals. Every day the defence of the economy is being waged by poor women and men in local communities and at national level, where the real conflict between the people's survival and development and the forces of monopoly capital meet head-on. We have to reach out to the communities in which we live more actively, through economic literacy programmes that will link the micro experiences with the macro structural changes. We will have to understand together the greater risks spawned by economic globalisation and examine new modes of engagement and resistance in a changed geopolitical context.

The search for an alternative path to development is a women's struggle, but is also the struggle of all marginalised, excluded and exploited peoples. We need to bring to the centre of the people's and social movements' critical analyses and debates the issues of gender justice, parity and equity. Women must secure our place in male-led social movements even while we are critiquing their patriarchal ways. ☀

AFRICA ACTION ON WTO

NGO SUPPORT FOR TRIPS REVIEW PROPOSALS

DAWN is amongst more than 30 South NGOs who have made a joint statement in support of the Africa Group proposals on reviewing the WTO Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) agreement (Article 27.3b). The statement says that the review should clarify that plants and animals as well as microorganisms and all other living organisms and their parts cannot be patented, and that natural processes should also not be patentable. It points out that by stipulating compulsory patenting of micro-organisms and microbiological processes, Article 27.3b of TRIPS contravenes the basic tenets of patent laws: that substances and processes that exist in nature are a discovery and not an invention, and thus are not patentable. Moreover, by giving members the option of whether or not to exclude patentability of plants and animals, Article 27.3b allows life forms to be patented.

The Africa Group paper calls for a postponement of the 1 January 2000 date for implementing Article 27.3b, and for a new deadline to be set five years after completion of a review. The Africa Group has other reservations about TRIPS and called for a moratorium or review of several sections. It has also proposed that the work of the TRIPS Council be sequenced in a manner that would enable developing countries with meagre

resources to participate effectively, which would include delaying some of the reviews and speeding up on those nearing conclusion.

AFRICAN CAUCUS FOR WTO

An Africa trade network of trade unions, gender and other activists has formed a caucus for the Seattle ministerial. Delegation members will be available as speakers and the caucus will hold several public meetings, provide a daily African bulletin, and an African Space for debates and publications.

Many of the civil society organisations represented in the caucus were involved in a strategising workshop held in Harare 6-8 October at which they declared the WTO illegitimate because it served as an instrument for the acceleration of globalisation in the interests of capital and represented a new form of colonisation. They called on states to say no to the proposed Millennium Round, to block new issues coming on to the agenda, and ensure a review and transformation of the existing agreements.

DAWN/REPEM have just concluded a regional PR&ST meeting of researchers from Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. This is a brief report from the meeting, which outlines the focus of discussions and the direction of future work on the theme.

PR&ST work in Latin America is leading not only to Copenhagen+5, but also "with more depth" towards Beijing+5. Representatives at the Rio meeting centred discussion on two working guidelines. The first concerns state, gender, society and social movements, and arrangements for deeper analysis of gender policies and institutional mechanisms in the light of the reform of the state.

This involves mapping the state of reforms in different countries of the region, analysing the impacts on women and on gender equity. This analysis is taking into consideration the different dimensions of the reforms and their present development and covers education, health, constitutional reform, economic, judicial, apparatus and management, and mechanisms and gender policies.

"An examination of the nature of the state will enrich understanding of the relationships between state, women and gender, while focusing on how women reached their positions and what these positions are. Establishing differences and analogies with other regions is seen as important.

In the area of movement, the state and mechanisms, the women's movement is coming under scrutiny. A more explicit and deeper analysis is sought on the relationships between women's movements and the state, and also an analysis of the linkages and alliances between women's movements and other social sectors. Debate addressed a need for more fluent and updated reflection on the project of the feminist movement, and leadership (nature, training, intergenerational transmission). The meeting felt it was important to also define the frontiers and identities of women's movements and feminist movements. It is in this area that the meeting saw the possibility of products for Beijing+5.

The second working guideline covered development, macroeconomics and budgets. Participants concluded that the objectives of the first guideline could be accomplished only if work moved forward on the second guideline issues, and that knowledge in this area was still weak. They outlined future activities which

included regional seminars on budgets, macroeconomics and investment. Emphasis was placed on sharing and comparing information with other regions, and South-South round tables.

At an earlier PR&ST regional meeting in Montevideo in April, strong emphasis was put on regional commitment to networking on the theme.

Regional issues identified within the theme included tension between civil society and the state, democratisation of women's organisations and citizenship.

Existing tension between civil society and the state and the way in which it was assumed by women's organisations, mainly in reference to alliance strategies, was an element that had not yet been considered enough, participants said. It was important to promote further discussion among women's groups on how to articulate better these relationships and how to shape them, while improving women's autonomy. The relationship between women-civil society-state was still somewhat unclear and became problematic when significant changes took place within any of them.

A pending issue in Latin America is the democratisation of women's organisations, which the meeting said some women were resisting because of the conflicts this may provoke. The issue of power was a key factor in the relationship between the women's movement and feminist movement, and amongst feminists.

Citizenship was widely identified as an issue, and the need for it to include women's diversity and different, specific identities. Giving priority to this issue gives a point of departure that allows analysis of the other issues, such as globalisation, and how it affects women's citizenship. In Latin America the vision of citizenship is becoming extremely important, and there is a need to work at the theoretical level in order to clarify concepts.

Participants recognised that in many countries now the issue of women as citizens was being discussed in relation to gender and democracy issues. Struggles for democracy had been fundamental and had allowed women to visualise transformation from subjugation and from exclusion from the political process of democracy building. The question was how much women had been able to influence the current notions of democracy and citizenship, and to what extent articulated struggles with the global democratic dynamics of our societies? 🌸



REPORT ON THE INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR ON POLITICAL RESTRUCTURING AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

Edited by Double Clic, Montevideo, Uruguay, and published by REPEM/DAWN.

This 173-page booklet in Spanish contains material from the DAWN South America regional meeting on Political Restructuring and Social Transformation held in April 1999. It includes the PR&ST base document prepared by Research Coordinator Vivienne Taylor, panel presentations, and recommendations.

Chapter 1: Response from a regional perspective, with presentations by the panellists Virginia Vargas, Irma Arriagada, Line Bareiro.

Chapter 2: Women and Power, some Tensions and Creativity, with panel presentations from Rosa Maria Alfaro, Rosalba Carrasco, Mariella Mazzotti, Elisa Carca.

Chapter 3: Institutionalisation and Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women, panel presentations from Ligia Martin, Isabel Martinez, Guacira de Oliveira.

Chapter 4: Gender and Social Aspects of Integration, panel presentations from Alma Espino, Sara Roman.

Available from REPEM, repem@chasque.apc.org.

CRACKS IN THE EDIFICE: USING THE SPACES

"I felt at times that I was committing intellectual and ideological suicide, like a kamikaze pilot, free-falling into an arena that I really didn't begin to understand in all its variations and complexities...often I had to consciously put aside my own values and beliefs to actually frame the debates in ways that would stimulate discussion and different positions, and in the process I had to review some of my own die-hard beliefs." Vivienne Taylor, DAWN PR&ST Research Coordinator at the DAWN South Asia/South East Asia/Pacific PR&ST regional meeting at Chiang Mai, 8-11 October 1999.

A summary of her address is outlined here.

DAWN arrived at the point of regional and global engagement on PR&ST after intense and rigorous debates leading up to and after the World Conference on Women in Beijing and the World Summit on Social Development in Copenhagen. The debates prompted the need for an understanding of governance within a global context that pre-determines international relations, alongside the increasing interdependence of national economies. In this research programme we look at what issues such as democracy, development, governance, the nature of the state, globalisation and the feminist movements mean and how these constructs shape the lived experiences of poor women. We also begin to reframe traditional constructs such as states, issues of sovereignty, of political identity, of security through feminist lenses.

We ask ourselves what these terms mean and how they emerge in everyday processes of decision-making? And how we engage in the shifting, contested terrain of governance and political power that we are a part of? Does this shifting terrain with diverse actors actually lead to us changing our strategic objectives? Or do we use that terrain to consolidate what we want to achieve? How do we mobilise different forms of power on multiple fronts to expand the space for and attainment of gender justice?

DAWN analysis pointed to the gains that had been achieved through engagement and strategic advocacy, especially gains made through women's movements at Beijing and at Copenhagen. But it showed also that these gains were being lost because they were not being translated into real change at the local level. How can these paper guarantees be translated into real change at the level of social relations? We had to interrogate such questions in a way that would change the discourse on governance.

THE CHALLENGES Democratisation

We are challenged to interrogate whether the objectives of the many struggles for liberation are being attained. To what extent has political liberation from repressive regimes led to an improvement in the overall quality of life of the poorest people? It is evident that the dominant discourse does not include perspectives and concerns of poor people, nor of women. It is just as clear that social transformation, as much as it has become the mantra of governments is not always understood in the same way and is not necessarily an objective of political change or democratic renewal.

Any strategies for democratic renewal must therefore recognise that economic and politi-

cal processes are inter-related and mutually reinforcing. While the sites of struggle and the actors may differ over time, the compacts, negotiations and confrontations that take place at various moments contribute to the multiple experiences of people's exclusion at the household, community, national, regional and international levels. Experiences show that globally, and especially in the South, there are growing inequalities, and that democracy has not led to poverty eradication. But recent shifts and struggles have created cracks in the edifice of some global and regional decision making structures. How we use these emerging spaces is going to be very important in determining alternative strategies.

Countries in the South, most notably in Africa and Latin America, have experienced so-called democratic changes at a speed not seen in other parts of the world. This has had a determining influence on the potential for social transformation and renewal. Yet development professionals, women's organisations and movements for change are not really engaging in what democracy means, as it exists or as it is promoted. To what extent this is an outcome of learning how to engage in new political and social spaces, and not a reluctance to challenge the new alignments and power blocs, still remains to be seen, particularly in the women's movement.

The question is to what extent institutional transformation has accompanied the push for democracy and development? And how transformation, including national machinery introduced to promote gender equality, has led to the participation of citizens. Have new structures, new institutions new policies and new procedures really recast the political sphere? Have they made a qualitative difference to how women and the poorest have actually engaged in the process? These questions are key to the issue of political transformation and social change impact.

In the context of the globalisation of the 1990s, the development debate has shifted from issues of distribution and re-distribution to how to manage governments more efficiently; a significant shift because attention is now focused on how we engage in the management of processes that are without the strategic objectives of liberation. National development goals and processes are being replaced by new forms of managerialism and "marketisation".

State Power

State power and the dynamics through which power plays itself out are difficult to define and understand, but there is a new urgency for us to reframe and interrogate traditional constructs such as states, sovereignty, political identity and security through feminist lenses. Our preliminary

analysis indicates that "the state" is not withering away. As an institution it is an actor that chooses its relationships with diverse forces. But while the state may act independently, its unity or coherence should not be exaggerated. States experience and represent the same social forces as other social organisations. States may attempt to appear unified, but political power in itself is not a unified homogenous power that cannot be dismantled.

What is relevant in this period, as nation states begin to engage within a globalised system, is that states have a two-faced, a Janus, nature. They stand at the intersection between domestic, socio-political orders and transnational relations. In the past states looked at their comparative advantage in relation to their internal strengths and how these could be used to maximise opportunities in the global trading system. Today the issues in the globalised system have moved beyond that to how to carve out markets using a competitive edge: competitive edge - simply put - usually relates to the ability of industry to produce goods and services at the lowest labour and other costs thereby undercutting goods produced at higher costs. There is a real compact of power, explicit or implied between economic and political elites. Instead of governments acting in the interests of all its citizens, the interests of private enterprise and transnational corporations have been prioritised on the assumption that this would be in the interests of national development. The shifts from democratic engagement on what is in the interest of the public to how to secure faster gains for the private sector and capital to promote investment and foreign exchange earnings have often resulted in few or no internal checks and balances to safeguard the interests of the poorest.

MAINSTREAM CRITIQUES OF THE STATE

The need for institutional reform of the state is emerging from neo-liberals and the left for different reasons. The neo-liberal critique asserts that development directions must be driven by the emphasis on free market processes and efficiency. However, while both the left and right focus on the unresponsiveness of bureaucracy to people's views and needs, and the growing inequalities within and between countries, their reasons for this differ. Neo-liberal proponents see the market as the best allocator of goods and services and the left perceives the state to be alienated from people, corrupt, promoting a new elite with vested interests and maintaining the status quo. A major critique of the mainstream/malestream debate from a feminist perspective is that the discourse lacks his-

torical analysis. It therefore does not reflect patterns of powerlessness, the manner in which traditional cultures combined through state and economic institutions to further exploit women and poor people. The outcome of the convergence of interests between transnational, national and traditional forces is that patriarchy is reinforced and indeed legitimated under the aegis of democratic development and modernisation.

The masculinity and culture of exclusion that permeates the state has a significant impact on the type of space for women's engagement and results in stark contradictions. It has resulted in the push for democracy and protection of individual rights within the notion of citizenship and nationhood as epitomised in emancipatory struggles, but has also given rise to a fundamentalist backlash with attendant violence as previously excluded people begin to assert their claims to social citizenship and fundamental human rights.

Whatever the critique, the state is seen as the arbiter of democracy and its role in public policy and action cannot be abolished; nor can it be left to the NGO sector as if it is an independent sector; nor to what is glibly spoken of as a unified homogenous civil sector.

New Class Structures

The rolling back of the state in the form of deregulation from public interests to regulation and re-regulation in terms of private interests should be a major cause for concern. With privatisation there appears less direct involvement of the state in reproduction and distribution of goods and services. But alongside this has been the rise of new state regulations, subsidies and institutions that are designed with the intention of promoting an enabling environment for newly privatised industries. We have accepted as the norm privatisation of universities and public services such as electricity, transport and water. Access to basic needs is no longer a given.

This has resulted in changes in existing class formations and the emergence of a new/perverse class structure and changes in internal social relations in some countries. Because of new information technologies and who has access and control over knowledge and information, the gaps between the rich and the poor are increasing, the bottom is falling out of what used to be termed the professional service class (teachers, nurses and other professions in which women predominate) and a new class of technologically oriented professionals is emerging. In South Africa, for instance, transnational and multinational corporations are joining forces with a few black elites (previously seen as cadres in the liberation movement) who engage in economic development and talk of the democratisation of the economy. But all it has led to is a movement of a few individuals to positions of power where they are then unable to check the way these companies engage in the marketplace.

Instead of a racist capitalist system, do we now have a non-racial capitalist system without democracy actually playing a role at all? Is democratisation of a capitalist economy attainable?

DAWN INFORMS

Markets respond to need backed by cash. The emerging state/market relationships perpetuate the exclusion of poor women from mainstream economic and social activity. Current trends indicate that states are being reorganised to serve the interests of market forces and these do not coincide with the interests of the dispossessed. Contradictory trends are also emerging: In the North (OECD) countries, state spending relative to the economy has continued to grow and averages 50% of GDP; South governments' spending has been cut back to an average of just over 25% of GDP. This has had severe implications for social services and employment in the public sector.

Militarisation

South governments' spending has been redirected to increased militarisation, especially in India and Pakistan. Within government, civil servants no longer talk of development planning and issues of equality, but business plans and engagement with the private sector. Where there are growing inequalities there are increases in crime and violence. And instead of dealing with issues of poverty, the state's response is to increase police and military forces to protect entrepreneurs and businesses. Governments also use private security firms and mercenaries, so violence against citizens and even cross-border incursions can be engaged in without states accepting responsibility. Democratic processes, accountability and transparency become expendable.

Women and Power

Feminists and the women's movement have a contradictory relationship with the state. We want to capture power to bring about transformation as feminists, but we are uneasy with the way power plays itself out. The role models of women in positions of power have sometimes been white liberal males. Women, entering positions of power without a feminist consciousness, have learnt from men how to capture, use and maintain power thereby becoming a part of the culture that led to their exclusion in the first place. While women have seen and experienced the abusive use of power in their relationships within households and at other levels many have not yet been able to assert democratic or different forms of power. Even in the feminist movement, it is necessary to understand how to use power for collective advancement.

Women's Engagement with the State

Women need to examine:

- what does it mean when we talk of the construction of gendered citizenship; are we talking about the promotion of gender justice?
- what does globalisation mean in terms of the gender division of labour and exploitation of women?
- what political spaces are opening up for women and how do we use these strategically to expand the agenda in the interests of poor women and people?
- what does engendering macro-economic policies mean: gender sensitisation of macro-economic policies is not the same as having an alternative economic framework. We cannot add gender or women to frameworks that have led to the exclusion of women in the first place and to marginalisation of the majority of poor people - these are not transformative in content.
- gender and state-based violence, both the violent nature of the economy and the economic nature of violence need to be examined as an integral part of the political process.

The PR&ST Research Process

Preliminary engagements in Latin America, in South Asia, Southeast Asia and the Caribbean point to recurrent crises of a political and economic nature and strong links between systems of economic governance, economic fundamentalism and political processes. There is a convergence of complex forces at play that result in finely nuanced relationships at macro and micro levels. Given this context DAWN took as its objectives the following:

- To bring together the critical perspectives of feminists from the South on both state and non-state processes that shape political and social processes in the arena of governance, and move to critical action at a global, regional and national level.
 - To identify through a collective process the key issues that affect the nature of political and social transformation; strengthen individual and collective capacities, through the sharing of common and unique experiences; analyse, formulate, and track political and governance processes from a gender perspective.
 - To examine the nature of the relationships between the women's movement, national liberation movements, and other political formations and identify what alternative political strategies are being or could be used to promote political restructuring and social transformation.
- Amongst Our Outcomes

- We believe that we should reclaim our place as active and full participants in the development process and that we can come up with an analysis that identifies both the "lived" experiences of women in the political and social arena and translate those lived experiences into an analysis that helps us make sense of the macro context. We plan to draw on the papers and debates resulting from regional research workshops, promote a critical analysis and with permission document it, and through reports and publications use this analysis to recast the debates on governance through feminist lenses.
- Promote a gender perspective in the processes and nature of PR&ST, globally and specifically in all our national and regional contexts.

Strong South Position on Economic Issues Needed

Anita Nayar, of SAGE, represented DAWN at the 30 August-3 September 1999 intersessional meetings of the preparatory committee (PrepCom) for the five-year review of the World Summit for Social Development (WSSD), to be held in June 2000.

The meetings were intended to jump-start discussions after the first PrepCom meeting (17-28 May) at which delegates failed to reach an agreement on a draft text after protracted negotiations. The informal consultations therefore focused on the chairman's draft including a review of implementation of the commitments made at the Summit and proposals for further actions. Delegates also discussed procedures for the participation of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) at the Special Session next year.

At the end of the meeting, the chair, Cristian Maquieira (Chile) was pleased that delegates had demonstrated a commitment to the process unlike at the May PrepCom. However, the quality of the draft that emerged from this meeting was weak and much remains to be done to strengthen it. This was partly due to the dynamics within and between the various government groupings. For example, the Group of 77 (G-77) was ill prepared for the negotiations, as most of the delegates were from the UN's Third Committee that deals with social rather than economic issues. The European Union (EU) on the other hand tended to emphasise narrow social welfare issues rather than broad macro-economic issues. And the United States (US) delegation called for the deletion of issues around the impact of rapid economic globalisation on the widening gap between the poor and the wealthy within and among countries.

There is an urgent need for an infusion of strong Southern government delegates who have the expertise and experience in international economic issues and negotiations. There is also a dire need to sensitise these and other delegates to women's issues and women's NGOs should play a more active role in doing so.

The chairman's draft text will be further discussed next year at the Commission on Social Development (Feb. 7-18, '00) and at another intersessional meeting (Feb. 21-25, '00). The text will then be

Decision on NGO Access to UNGASS

A draft decision was adopted on NGO accreditation to UNGASS, similar to the arrangement for ICPD+5. UNGASS will be open to ECOSOC NGOs and those who were accredited to the Summit or to the Preparatory Committee for the review. "Other interested NGOs" can apply to participate in UNGASS by submitting information, outlined in a Non-paper, before March 2000. The Bureau will review applications by April 7, 2000 and make recommendations to the PrepCom for approval.

NGOs will be able to speak to the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole where negotiations on the draft outcome will be ongoing, but only ECOSOC NGOs will be allowed to speak to the Plenary of the Special Session. The Bureau and the President of the GA will select a short list of NGO speakers.

negotiated at length during the Second Preparatory Committee meeting (Apr. 3-14, '00).

Yet another intersessional is expected to take place in May to finalise the draft prior to the Special Session. The draft is composed of three parts:

Part I, Reaffirmation of Copenhagen, will eventually become a political declaration to be adopted at UNGASS. In its current form it lacks vision and needs to underscore the fundamental Social Summit commitment to eradicate poverty. This was a landmark agreement that should form the basis of the declaration rather than the vague goal of social development.

Part II, Review and assessment of implementation, will be strengthened by country reports on implementation reviewed at the April Commission on Social Development. A contentious issue will be the acknowledgment of negative aspects of economic globalisation and their effect on achieving the Summit goals.

Part III, Further initiatives for inclusion in the outcome of the special session, is structured along the lines of the 10 Social

Preparations for Geneva 2000

A parallel "Geneva 2000 Forum: The Next Step in Social Development" will take place at the Geneva International Conference Center (CICG) to foster dialogue between governments, international organisations, parliamentarians, NGOs, the private sector and trade unions. The center is walking distance to the Palais des Nations, where the official conference will be held. An advisory group of academics and specialists in social development is advising the Swiss government on the organisation of the Forum.

Summit commitments. The World Bank, IMF, UNCTAD, ILO and other UN agencies are expected to propose further initiatives in their reports on the impact of macro economic issues on poverty, employment and social integration to be submitted to the April PrepCom. Outcomes from the World Trade Organisation Ministerial meeting in Seattle will also influence this section. Following is a brief overview of the strengths and weaknesses of the existing draft that will be negoti-

ated at length next year.

Commitment 1, 'An enabling environment for social development', lacks strong language on the hindering effects of the international environment on national efforts to eradicate poverty.

Commitment 2, 'Poverty eradication', needs a strong reaffirmation of the social summit commitment to "eradicate poverty in the world ... as an ethical, social, political and economic imperative of humankind." The section contains a few weak references to the feminisation of poverty and the need for a gender analysis in assessing poverty. Stronger language is needed to link the increased poverty of women and macro-economic policies, including those related to macro-economic stability, structural adjustment, external debt problems, taxation, private investments, employment and markets. It is also notable that the current draft does not contain any references to poverty in the North.

Commitment 3, 'Full employment', lacks any reference to the important Social Summit commitment to measure and value unremunerated work. The section does not address women's access to employment, protection under labor legislation, provision of childcare and other support. Although it does include weak language on extending social protection to informal sector workers, it needs to address the structural causes of the in-

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ACTIVITIES IN THE REGIONS

IN THE CARIBBEAN REGION

Activities in this region include UNIFEM research on the impact of trade on women begun in 1994 and culminating in a regional meeting in December; research on women in the banana industry under the auspices of the Caribbean Association for Feminist Research (CAFRA) and Women in Development Europe (WIDE); the development of a regional project as part of DAWN Caribbean's programme of work for the next three years; and an international Women's Strategic Planning Seminar on Gender and Trade (WSPSGT) organised by the Centre of Concern, Washington, in association with DAWN Caribbean, to be held in Grenada in December.

In order to link the work of UNIFEM to that of DAWN Caribbean and the WSPSGT, UNIFEM's regional meeting will take place immediately before the WSPSGT. In this way DAWN Caribbean's project will build on and extend the research already undertaken by UNIFEM as well as link with the global projects expected to emerge from the WSPSGT.

Electronic lead-up

In preparation for the WSPSGT Grenada Seminar, electronic seminar rooms have been running since February to focus the discussion and connect people working on trade from a feminist gender perspective in different regions. The current electronic seminar topics are Services, Agriculture, Investment, Textiles, Intellectual Property Rights, and Networking and Campaigns. Marina Durano, the Visiting Research Economist with the Centre of Concern whose speciality is services, is moderator for the Services room, and also for the Electronic Commerce room. Mariama Williams, a member of the DAWN trade team, is moderator of the Investment room, Maria Riley is the Textiles room moderator, and DAWN Former Coordinator Peggy Antrobus moderates the Intellectual Property Rights room. Alexandra Spielloch moderates the Networking and Campaigns room, which was launched most recently. The activity in the rooms has fluctuated, with the most active being Textiles and Investment.

VOICES FROM CHIANG MAI

Globalisation - more a bane than a boon for South women, according to participants in the DAWN South Asia-South East Asia-Pacific regional PR&ST meeting held in Chiang Mai, Thailand, 8-11 October 1999.

Chanida Chanyapate Bamford of Bangkok-based Focus on the Global South: Alternatives to the current globalisation trend should be among women's priorities. To believe that there is no alternative to the corporatisation and commodification of every aspect of life is to condemn millions to inescapable poverty, to accept obscene levels of economic inequality and to tolerate the consequent blows to gender equity.

Cecilia Ng, Malaysia: The women's movement has to widen its community base to reach out to the different sectors and cultural groupings of women, in continuous alliance with the broader social movement. Only with a strong base can it seek autonomy from the state.

The meeting heard that globalisation has shrunk the formal employment market in the South, with women getting laid off first. But even in the absence of economic hardships, researchers say women still get shafted. Social scientist Indu Agnihotri: Women have entered the labour force with low skills and training at the formal levels, into low-paid jobs; have a lower reservation wage rate (than men) and are preferred because of their image of being subservient, disciplined, low on organising and more tractable.

Contd. from PB

creasing shift of work from the organised formal and agricultural sectors to unorganised informal home-based production.

Commitment 4, 'Promoting social integration,' needs to be strengthened as it includes only two brief references to violence against women and the exploitation of women and children. The call for protecting and supporting families also needs to reflect issues of gender inequality within families.

Commitment 5, 'Equality and equity between women and men,' contains four slim paragraphs reiterating the commitment to mainstream gender into all of the proposals for further initiatives. It appears that the "specific issues related to gender and the status of women" have been set aside for the five year review of the Beijing conference.

Commitment 6, 'Universal and equitable access to quality education and health services,' contains language "acknowledging the negative effects of economic reform and structural adjustment" on education and health in developing countries and economies in transition. It also includes sexual and reproductive health services within a time bound

target to achieve "universal and equitable access to quality education and primary health services by the year 2015."

Commitment 7, 'Acceleration of development in Africa and in the LDCs,' includes the development of structural adjustment policies that are "sensitive to the needs of these countries." The section also promotes the integration of LDCs into the multilateral trade system on a bilateral basis and through multilateral efforts of the WTO and UNCTAD.

Commitment 8, 'Inclusion of social development goals in structural adjustment programmes,' mentions the "high social costs" in implementing "programmes prescribed by international financial institutions (IFIs)." It includes a role for the UN, in cooperation with the IFIs, including the Bretton Woods institutions to further integrate social development concerns in their programmes. It further calls for participatory country evaluations on the social and gender impact of adjustment carried out with the participation of UN agencies, including the World Bank and IMF.

Commitment 9, 'Resources for social development,' includes calls for: Mechanisms to ensure that the benefits of debt reduction programmes are directed to social development; increasing flexibility of the HIPC Initiative with regard to eligibility criteria; and establishing guidelines and benchmarks for national policies to pay for social services and policies in the context of the challenges of globalisation.

Commitment 10, 'International cooperation for social development,' contains several paragraphs on developing and strengthening indicators including quantitative and qualitative methods for assessing the social and gender impact of policies. Other actions include: Establishing and strengthening channels of dialogue with the institutions and fora of finance and industry, in and out of government; reforming the international financial structure including re-examining the current voting rights of the IMF; and promoting a comprehensive approach to development that takes into consideration ODA as well as trade, financial flows, private investment, debt relief and technology transfer. 🌟

BACKLASH WITH A RIPPLE EFFECT

Women's organisations in Southern Africa have protested against recent court decisions against women reflective of a judicial-orchestrated backlash against the women's movement. The decisions demonstrate a real backslide on issues of gender justice, human rights of women and equality which is likely to have a ripple effect throughout the region.

A Supreme Court case in Zimbabwe in April involved a 58-year-old woman suing her half brother for ownership of her deceased father's property after her brother evicted her from the home. Under the Zimbabwe Constitution and human rights treaties she had a right to the land. But the court gave precedence to customary law, ruling that women cannot be considered equal to men because of African cultural norms. Under customary law, women should not be able to inherit because they are unable to look after their original family (of birth) because of their commitment to a new family (of marriage). Within these cultural norms, women cannot own land, inherit property, conduct their own wedding arrangements or have rights to their children in divorce cases, and are not considered adults within the family, but "junior males" or teenagers.

A number of national, regional and international women's organisations protested about the Zimbabwe court decision, claiming that it was deficient of justice and that the court had set a very retrogressive precedent, greatly undermining women's rights. There was great concern that the court felt obliged to safeguard so-called customary law at the expense of human rights. The Zimbabwe Supreme Court responded strongly, issuing a formal warning that those who indulged in "gratuitous and unfounded insults, and public demonstrations against the judiciary, would be dealt with under the laws of contempt of court."

In Zambia in May, a petition brought by two women who were refused permission to enter a hotel because they were unaccompanied by a man was thrown out of court. The women claimed their rights of association and freedom of movement were violated.

The judicial backlash is disturbing given the more progressive development policies of Southern Africa compared with other parts of the region. The Zimbabwe case will certainly impact seriously on advocacy work in the region, and the ripple effect of the court decision is likely to continue unless women continue to confront the situation.

In Nigeria and Malawi legislators have recently openly denigrated women. In July, rights groups criticised the Speaker of Nigeria's Bauchi State Assembly for insulting a female legislator by telling her that "you are still a woman and women are in the armpits of men." The lone woman legislator had asked to be addressed as an "Honourable" member like her male colleagues, and protested about her exclusion from leadership of any House Committees.

Women's and rights groups in Malawi in August objected to remarks made by a legislator that women abused freedom of dress to show off their

nakedness, "clearly showing their contours and valleys." Although Malawi's stringent dress code was changed under a new constitution in 1995, women in mini-skirts are still harassed.

But there may yet be something positive to come out of all this. Perhaps it could be a tool to mobilise women who were skeptical, or critical, of feminists. It may encourage them to acknowledge the efforts of feminists and activists in the region in acting to protect the rights of women. What those who rejected feminist activism are now getting is a serious backlash from the very male allies whose culture and tradition they seek to protect. It should be a sobering lesson, though an expensive one, that will take much energy from activists to undo. ✨

With thanks to the Regional Coordinator for Anglophone Africa, Bene Madunagu of Nigeria; and Patricia McFadden, pan-Africa feminist activist based in Zimbabwe.

DAWN extends sympathy to our Africa network on the passing of Mwalimu Julius Kambarage Nyerere of Tanzania. DAWN Regional Focal Point for East Africa, Fatma Alloo, was in Seoul, South Korea, for a conference on the Role of NGOs in the New Millennium when she heard news of his death on 14 October 1999, at the age of 77. This is her tribute:

As the only delegate from Tanzania, I paid a tribute to Mwalimu which began with a path of reflection within myself on what he meant to us. When he took the flag of independence from the British in 1964 and lit a torch on top of Mount Kilimanjaro, he said his dream was that its light should shine throughout the continent of Africa. He stated that Tanganyika was not free until South Africa was free. I was just a schoolgirl then, and I remember asking my teacher why he was saying that? It was my first step in a journey to consciousness of an unjust system, one that guided me to a process of an awakening and let me follow a path of seeking justice.

Mwalimu brought us dignity as a nation through his policies of education and equality for all. He continually spoke against a global economic system based on injustice and demanded social justice to the South. Through his ideals, citizens benefited from and participated in a system of Ujamaa, basic community development which the developed world now propagates.

When he stepped down as President of Tanzania in 1985, he reprimanded women for having missed the boat under his leadership. Under his presidency he made sure there was space for women on an equal footing, based on merit, just as there was space for people from different tribes, races and religions. He was right, we did miss the boat, but he was the catalyst who awakened us to our rights.

The world may know him as an idealist, who led his country into intangible policies. We in Tanzania see him as a visionary, a pan Africanist who will be greatly missed. As I mourn my president I know that the integrity that he inculcated in us as a nation will surpass his death; the torch he lighted on Kilimanjaro will shine, giving hope where there is despair, and dignity where there is humility.

STEERING COMMITTEE NOTES

DAWN joined the international campaign to stop the violence against the people of East Timor following their ballot decision to become independent from Indonesia, and on 8 September sent a letter to the United Nations Secretary General, Kofi Annan, expressing our concern and dismay. The letter included the following statements:

"If the people of East Timor have chosen independence ahead of autonomy, their wish must be respected and the UN is obliged to assist in the peaceful realisation of their will. In a press release issued by yourself on 3 September 1999, you stated "after 24 years of conflict, East Timor now stands on the threshold of what we all hope will be a process of orderly and peaceful transition toward independence.....". In the same statement you "assure the people of East Timor that the United Nations will not fail them in guiding East Timor in its transition towards independence". DAWN now calls upon your office to honour these commitments.

DAWN received a response from the United Nations 19 October to say that a full scale United Nations operation was likely to be established in East Timor to assist the territory in coming months.

Patricia McFadden, former DAWN Anglophone Africa Regional Coordinator, has received a 1999 Hellman/Hammett Grant. These grants are awarded to writers throughout the world whose books have been banned or who have been exiled, jailed, tortured or harassed because of their work. The programme is administered by Human Rights Watch to assist writers who have been politically persecuted.

The citation said that Dr McFadden, a Swazi citizen living in Zimbabwe, was known for her work as a writer and a feminist activist focussing mainly on Southern Africa. A published interview about the award said that Dr McFadden had been deported by Zimbabwean authorities in 1997 after a battle for resources at the Feminist Studies Centre which she co-directed. By giving up her position she was able to retain her work permit to the end of this year. Dr McFadden said African women were for a long time the broken back of the global women's movement, but were now recognised as part of it.



OUT IN THE OPEN

When The University of the South Pacific in Fiji, which currently hosts the DAWN Secretariat, had an Open Day on 17 September, DAWN set up a small stall outside the office to tell people about our issues and activities. Communications Officer, Seona Smiles, left, talks with two women from local feminist organisations who were amongst those who showed interest in DAWN materials. WTO media releases, the statement by Peggy Antrobus on International Day Against the Millennium Round, items on Reproductive Rights and DAWN pamphlets, were distributed.



RESOURCES

New book from Shirkat Gah on laws shaping women's lives

Shaping Women's Lives: Laws, Practices and Strategies in Pakistan (eds Shaheed, Warraich, Balchin, Gazdar, 1998, Lahore, Pakistan, Publ Shirkat Gah) is the culmination of almost a decade's work by the intrepid Pakistani feminist NGO, Shirkat Gah and its associated networks. Shirkat Gah's Women and Law project is part of the Women Living Under Muslim Law (WLUML) global action research project. The project seeks to document the impact of so-called "Islamic law", written and unwritten, formal and customary, on women. The Fiji Islands is part of the global project.

The book demonstrates the extent to which the impact of law on the lives of Pakistani women depends more on the political and religious forces that shape the laws rather than the laws themselves. It discusses the consequences of the insidious misogynistic resurgence of essentialist politics (known as fundamentalism) on the interpretation of law. This challenges the cherished belief, taken for granted in most common law systems, that the Judiciary is independent of the Executive. The book powerfully illustrates how negative interpretations of written laws and unwritten customary norms are applied in the Courts to prevent female autonomy and to secure male power and privilege under the guise of religion. The articles challenge the myth that Islam is monolithic and intransigent and that there are no alternative realities for women, within a framework of Islam, which are equally valid. They recognise that Islam is shaped and influenced by local conditions and political forces unyielding to democratic processes, exemplified by intermittent years of military rule. They reinforce

the shibboleth that democracy is a pre-condition for the attainment of women's rights and equality.

Notwithstanding, *Shaping Women's Lives* does not leave us with a sense of hopelessness, but of hope. Feminism is not the domain of only the Western world. Feminist interventions have not been without influence in Pakistan. They have allowed some women to create powerful spaces for themselves.

The human rights defenders who bravely write and publish the articles in this book have much more to lose than those in the West. Western activists can freely express themselves, comfortable in the knowledge that legislative guarantees of free speech and the rule of law protect their writing - not so in Pakistan. Contained in the subtexts of the book are stories of women and men of enormous courage; of women prepared to challenge the might of the law and Government who have triumphed in spite of the system; and of the lawyers who represent them at great personal and financial cost.

Lawyers who remind me of the potential nobility of the legal profession, what it was capable of doing for society before it became obsessed with big business and the corporate culture. They remind me of the reason I became a lawyer - to try to fight the good fight, and, if one is privileged, to try to work for a cause that benefits others apart from oneself.

By P. Imrana Jalal, of the
Fiji Women's Rights Movement, and a
Human Rights Commissioner
Suva, Fiji Islands

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 organisation of the South which acts as a network and catalyst advocating alternative development processes that emphasise the basic survival needs of the world's people, particularly Third World women and their children.

Subscriptions: Free to women based in the South. Friends based in the North are asked to make an annual minimum contribution of US\$20.00.

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What's Inside:

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT WTO...
for the Seattle Ministerial. A 12-page lift-out
discussion paper written by Mariama Williams
for DAWN

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