

# DAWN INFORMS

Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era



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## What's Inside

WSSD+5 Prepcom.....P3

**Gender Justice and Economic Justice**  
Gita Sen and Sonia Correa.....P5

**Political Restructuring and Social Transformation : the process continues.....P8**

**Global Dialogue Update**  
Yvonne Underhill-Sem..P13

**Gender Dimensions & Dynamics in Lobbying**  
by Gigi Francisco.....P13

**UNCTAD X NGO Caucus**  
Gigi Francisco.....P16

**Globalisation and Patriarchy in Symbiosis**  
by Gita Sen and Gigi Francisco..... P18

**News from the Regions.....P21**

*From the conference room and the corridors*

## BEIJING+5 NEGOTIATIONS: Serious Risks and Disturbing Repetitions

The meeting of the Preparatory Committee for Beijing+5 ended on March 17, 2000 with its agenda still unfinished. The negotiations during the preceding two weeks were painfully slow and subject to endless delays and delaying tactics. While a small minority within the Group of 77 dragged their heels on women's rights, some Northern delegations were, as usual, hard on the economic issues. The tendency of some governments, during the conferences of the 1990s, to hold progress towards women's rights and gender equality hostage to traditional South - North battles over resources was evident yet again. This time around, this problem was compounded by inexperienced chairing of many key sessions, and apparently inadequate technical support from the Conference Secretariat for the negotiations. Having participated in a decade of UN negotiations of difficult and contentious issues, the inability to move the negotiations forward was painfully obvious.

In the meantime on the NGO side, the subterranean corridors of the UN suddenly saw an influx of Franciscan and Dominican priests in full robes, nuns, and large numbers of other (mostly) North Americans wearing blue buttons that said only "The Family". Rumor had it that most of them (over 350) had been registered by only a handful (less than 10) of North American conservative organisations. Their sudden interest in the Beijing+5 negotiations would have been touching if some of them had shown any concern for or interest in women's rights.

This was hardly to be expected, however, since many seemed to be quite ignorant of what had happened at Beijing. One of DAWN's team, for instance, was startled when she was asked naively by one of the 'Family button people' what the PFA stood for on her badge which said "I support the PFA"! When asked if she had ever heard of the Beijing Platform for Action, she said she hadn't! These bumbling conservative storm-troopers would have been amusing if they had not also resorted to more intimidating tactics.

What was going on?

### Condemned to Sisyphusian Action?

In some ways, the slowness of the negotiations at this stage is nothing new. For those of us who have been participating in the conferences of the 1990s, there are at least two precedents for the current situation.

In March 1995, the final Prepcom before Beijing was in disarray. By its end, the conference rooms were empty and women activists were roaming the corridors in distress. Meanwhile the draft text being negotiated - what was finally completed as the Beijing Platform for Action - was bristling with square brackets, including on the term [gender]! Nevertheless, the negotiations were resumed and the text of the PFA negotiated. However, differently from March 1995, we do not have five months until September to restore sanity to the current process. Between now and the UN General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) in early June, there are less than 70 days.

*Despite the obstacles we currently face, we know we can succeed. Women's rights and gender equality can no longer be suppressed or made pawns in other games. We have prevailed before and we will prevail again. The main documents negotiated at the +5 reviews of the 1990s conferences include an assessment of achievements in and obstacles to implementation, and a critical section on future actions to be taken. Delays in the assessment of achievements and obstacles drastically cut the time for discussion of future actions to be taken - something that obviously suits those who were opposed to the original documents in the first place.*

Even fresher in our memories is the Cairo+5 Prepcom at about the same time last year, when the same disturbing pattern emerged: deliberate and constant delays within G77; the ongoing insensitivity of the North to the right to development and the inequalities within the global economic order; a blatant alliance between the Vatican (and its 'satellites' such as Nicaragua) and some Islamic countries; a deadlock on the "obstacles and achievements" section of the text under negotiation; and a document loaded with square brackets after two weeks of painful efforts.

In both these cases the overwhelming majority of governments that support gender equality and women's rights activists prevailed in the end over the small conservative minority. But in the UN system of building consensus, this took a lot of effort. Sen and Correa in "Gender Justice and Economic Justice: Reflections on the 5 year reviews of the UN conferences of the 1990s" (P5 and [www.dawn.org.fj](http://www.dawn.org.fj)) identified a major factor behind the difficulties of the Cairo+5 negotiations a year ago: "Women's organisations were also faced with the problem of the mindset of New York-based diplomats whose daily negotiations are heavily influenced by South-North conflicts and global, regional, or national geopolitical agendas. Gender equality tends to fall relatively low on their priorities... Implementation can and ought to be discussed and evaluated by implementers... it should not be handled by those who have had little to do with implementation."

Sadly, despite this warning, the same picture has materialised yet again, if anything more blatantly. In negotiations among the G77 countries during the Prepcom, gender equality issues and women's rights are apparently being more openly subordinated to traditional South-North issues. This is happening partly because there appears to be an imbalance between the negotiating experience of conservative delegations (mainly composed of skilled diplomats) and progressive ones (mainly composed of envoys from national capitals, implementers from national machineries for the promotion of women's rights, empowerment and gender equality). The latter are often strongly committed to women's rights but have insufficient experience with UN-level negotiating

procedures and complexities. Thankfully, by the end of the two weeks, many of the progressive delegations proved themselves fast learners and the scenario may be different in late May and June. But we have to be concerned about the informal inter-sessional negotiations in April and May when the New York UN mission staff may be heavily present.

There are also some crucial differences between the Cairo+5 negotiations and what is going on now for Beijing+5. The original draft that was debated in the Cairo+5 process was much better structured than the so-called second Outcomes document that is being struggled over now. Although short, it is so poorly structured that it is very difficult (especially for small and inexperienced delegations) to keep track of issues. Cairo+5 also appeared to have much greater technical and political capacity at the level of the conference Secretariat and the Bureau. A third and rather appalling difference has been the almost complete absence of other UN agencies (including the World Bank) with the exception of UNIFEM to provide technical support during the negotiations. Where are UNDP, WHO, UNFPA, ILO, etc? Where is the UN system's vaunted support for gender equality?

**Forgetting the Key Lesson of Beijing?**

Another disturbing element in these negotiations is the relative timidity of the JUSCANZ (Japan, US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand) and EU negotiating positions which can usually be counted upon for strong stances on gender equality and women's human rights (at least the social and political ones). Somehow, they appear to have believed that by self-censorship on

issues such as women's health, abortion, reproductive and sexual health and rights, they could buy peace and speedy negotiations. In doing so, they may have forgotten possibly one of the most important lessons of the Beijing negotiations (and of Vienna in 1993 and the struggles during the negotiations for the International Criminal Court last year).

While the conservatives are certainly most virulent (and the Vatican nearly hysterical) on abortion or sexual orientation, this is only symptomatic of their core objection to gender equality itself and to women's right to be full and self-affirming agents as men have always been. They are therefore equally adamant in their refusal to recognise the brutality of domestic violence against

**DAWN's Beijing+5 Agenda**

Economic issues are the main focus of DAWN's Beijing+5 efforts. DAWN is also continuing to work, through HERA, to preserve the language and spirit of reproductive health and rights achieved at the ICPD. Apart from the lobbying efforts and work on documents that DAWN is engaged in through the Prepcoms and UNGASS (5-9 June 2000 in New York), DAWN's main activities at Women 2000 NGO Working Session (2-3 June), will be:

- as part of the Economic Justice Caucus (see P 5 and DAWN website for details on this initiative);
- co-organising with UNRISD a panel on Needs, Rights and New Conceptions of Welfare, 3 June;
- organising a DAWN panel at the CWGL Human Rights symposium; and
- launching a book of DAWN's ICPD+5 case studies.

# WSSD+5 PrepCom: SEEKING LANGUAGE COHERENCE AMID COMPLEX POLITICS

*DAWN S E Asia Regional Coordinator, Gigi Francisco, was amongst DAWN representatives at the WSSD+5 Second Prepcom that opened in New York 3 April, 2000. This gives an insight into the issues and politics that surfaced.*

The general feeling in the first few days was that it might be difficult to move governments further beyond their existing commitments to women's equality and gender equity in the framework of the WSSD. Two important reasons could account for this. The first is that official delegations may tend to shove women's equality and gender equity concerns to the ongoing Beijing+5 review, and to reduce to the barest essentials or vague and general terms women's/gender concerns that have a direct link to poverty. The second is that developing countries seem to have started taking a political stand to bar the inclusion of any further commitments that may be perceived as another imposition from the developed (donor) countries.

Developing countries represented by G-77 are apparently wary of being led by developed countries into binding their governments to commitments that will prove complex and/or difficult to implement in their specific contexts. Developed countries have not only failed to comply with pledges they had made but are resistant to committing to meaningful assistance in support of poverty alleviation, preferring not to go beyond the HIPC initiative.

In the context of complicated political undercurrents, there is real danger of compromising meaningful commitments to both poverty alleviation and gender equality and equity goals. Unless governments rise above realpolitik considerations and place themselves on some higher moral ground, the socially disadvantaged, women included, will lose out.

A number of caucuses were formed or planned during the first days of negotiations. These include: Development Caucus, Caucus on the Rights of the Child, European Caucus, Social Watch Caucus, Poverty Caucus, African Caucus, Caucus on Taxation and Women's Caucus.

About 30 women from different organisations were present for the first session of the Women's Caucus, including DAWN, WEDO, CWGL, Third World Network and GERA, REPEM, and the Women's Committee of the Ecumenical Team. The most important decision taken was the formation of a

Gender Integration Team led by Rosalind Petchezky and joined by women of the different networks. The team was set the task of reviewing the various documents under negotiation in the formal sessions and strategising on how to secure language that promotes women's rights and gender equality and equity. Coherence in the language of Beijing and ICPD is a specific objective under this. Meanwhile, caucus members identified country delegations sympathetic to women's concerns that could be approached for sponsorship of the caucus' preferred language.

## Address to PrepCom

The Women's Caucus was given five minutes to make a presentation at the PrepCom, and the time was divided between WEDO and DAWN. Jocelyn Dow of WEDO gave the overall political framework while Gigi Francisco gave DAWN's

presentation focussing on specific recommendations.

The statement said that a significant demonstration of support for women's political leadership would be for male negotiators, particularly of South governments, to exercise flexibility as regards the interventions of their female colleagues, particularly when the women make editorial suggestions for ensuring gender-sensitive language in already agreed-upon statements.

The presentation stressed the feminisation of poverty and the gross inadequacy and ineffectiveness of over-emphasising micro-credit as the single strategy in addressing the poverty of women. There was a need for governments to commit to a gender-sensitive multi-sectoral approach to poverty alleviation that establishes a coherence between the micro-interventions and macro environment and complementary market and

non-market actions. Labour rights had to be upheld and access to technology and skills training guaranteed even as countries seek to protect their national economies. The poorest families and women have to be able to gain equitable access to basic social services.

Other points in the statement not read for lack of time included, in reference to the WTO, a wish for a stronger global commitment to ensuring South governments are parties to decision-making, and more transparent and democratic governance at all levels, with concrete action to support women's participation. Finally, governments were called upon to comply with the 7% ODA requirement for social development.

An 11-point list of recommendations from DAWN has been submitted to the Chair of the UN Commission on Social Development, Dr Zola Skweyiya, for inclusion in the Outcome of WSSD+5. The recommendations pointed out the "appalling lack of recognition" of the fact that women are the majority of the world's poor, and that actions to address the feminisation of poverty cannot be limited to microcredit for women.

There is a call to halt structural adjustment programmes that lead to the micro-management of national economies by multilateral institutions, and support for regulation of financial flows, including the Tobin Tax. Governments are strongly encouraged to recognise the meaningful contributions and independence of civil society organisations, including women's organisations.

Four recommendations concern gender sensitive language and the need to include human rights in all references to human dignity. Others concern the need to include lifelong learning in all references to education and training because of its centrality to women's development; and the need for including maternal, reproductive health services and sexual education in all references to primary health care.

The final recommendation concerns the "blatant absence" of special references to violence against women within the enabling environment section.

women in all societies (hence their sanctification of the myth of the happy nuclear family as a norm); in their vehement assertion of the sanctity of 'cultural' and 'religious' beliefs and practices however harmful to women; and in the insidious attempt by the Vatican in many recent negotiations to substitute 'human dignity' (a term empty of substantive content in international agreements and national laws) for women's human rights.

This core opposition of a small minority of governments to women's human rights as such became very obvious in Beijing. In the current negotiations these same forces have insisted on full respect for religious beliefs and cultural diversity while contesting respect for the diversity among women. They have also orchestrated efforts to pepper the document with 'prostitution' and 'pornography' wherever gender-based violence and human rights abuse are mentioned as if these were equivalents. It is clearly not possible to buy peace with this minority through ill-considered self-censorship on women's health and rights - too much will have to be given up before they are ever satisfied. And going by past experience, a number of them will not join the Consensus anyway, after doing their best to water down the document.

### Political Declaration: A TrojanHorse?

Of some concern is a key event that occurred near the end of the Prepcom. Suddenly on the very last day, a contact group (EU, JUSCANZ, Egypt, Algeria, Chile) whose negotiations (existence?) had been almost invisible up to that point emerged with an agreed text for a two-page Political Declaration. This text, which is supposed to provide some kind of overarching reaffirmation of commitment to the Beijing PFA without any details regarding obstacles, achievements or future actions, had been heavily bracketed from the beginning. Practically all the substance including women's human rights and CEDAW were in brackets, as were financial resources and development assistance. These brackets are now gone.

This outcome is being evaluated in some quarters as a breakthrough. Our assessment is more mixed. While a Political Declaration is both needed and useful, the substance of the text that has been agreed to largely reaffirms the Nairobi and Beijing recommendations without particularly moving forward. On women's human rights, the Declaration simply reaffirms "commitment to accelerate the achievement of universal ratification of CEDAW". CEDAW, as we all know, has been with us since 1979 (and should by now have achieved maturity having reached the age of 21!). But the Political Declaration makes no mention, however weak, of the CEDAW Optional Protocol that only a few countries have ratified to date. On financial resources, the text is rather vague in its "reaffirmation to strive to fulfill the yet to be attained internationally agreed target of 0.7% of the GNP of developed countries for overall ODA as soon as possible". This is more or less like saying: one day we may be able to think about doing what we have not been able to do until now. A positive achievement can be identified in paragraph 5 that calls for gender mainstreaming and coordinated follow-up of the outcomes of other major UN conferences and

summits. Behind this vague language we may read that, in spite of all, Vienna and Cairo are not to be thrown away.

But regardless of its content, the Political Declaration was never intended to provide implementers or activists with the substantive contents on which to draw for actions from here on. It should be clear, therefore, that the Political Declaration cannot be a substitute for the Outcomes document, which is where the substance and details are. And that document, as we have seen, is still covered with brackets. Only the preamble paragraphs of the critical section IV (Future Actions section) have been somewhat cleared. The Group of 77 has not even completed its own internal first reading of this section! The need of the hour, therefore, is for all those concerned to advance women's rights and gender equality to work towards timely completion of the Outcomes document.

### WHICH WAY FORWARD?

#### Our assessment of what needs to happen now.

#### 1. G77 countries that overwhelmingly joined the Beijing consensus should:

- insist on timely completion of the Outcomes document; in Beijing, those who opposed and delayed made reservations in the end anyway - a small minority should not be allowed to block progress;
- strengthen their delegations for the Prepcom's resumption so that they include both those from capitals with knowledge about Beijing implementation, and diplomats with expertise in negotiations;
- provide committed negotiators from national capitals, or at least give clear directives to UN mission staff for the intersessional negotiations;
- include in their delegations knowledgeable members of the non-governmental community as full members or as technical experts for the continuation of the Prepcom in May/June.

#### 2. The EU and JUSCANZ:

- should be more bold in their support for women's health and rights and particularly the important agreements reached at Cairo, Beijing and Cairo+5;
- add experts on human rights and reproductive and sexual health and rights to their delegations.

#### 3. Women's activists and NGOs:

- should lobby their governments to push hard for timely completion of the Outcomes document in such a way that we have clear directions for moving forward, and where the priority actions to be taken for the fulfillment of women's human rights (including reproductive and sexual rights commitments made in Cairo, Cairo+5 and Beijing) are clearly spelled out;
- provide political and substantive analysis of the negotiations to date to each other and to governments;
- make a commitment to be present during the official negotiations in May/June.

#### 4. The UN system:

- The technical capacity of the secretariat for the conference needs to be strengthened;
- Technical and other agencies should be present in strength during both the inter-sessionals and the Prepcom.

# GENDER JUSTICE AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE

## Reflections on the Five Year Reviews of the UN Conferences of the 1990s

A paper produced for UNIFEM in preparation for the five-year review of the Beijing Platform for Action

by Gita Sen and Sonia Onufer Corrêa

On the verge of a new millennium, the challenges facing feminist attempts to link gender justice with economic justice at the global, national, and local levels come from two directions. On the one hand, complex, yet poorly understood and even more poorly regulated processes of globalisation appear as the new form of a free-market juggernaut. This juggernaut obscures all possible alternatives to a global capitalist order that is driven by deep and growing inequalities of wealth and income<sup>1</sup>, and in which rising numbers of impoverished people are being marginalised from access to secure livelihoods. On the other hand, at least one set of reactions to these processes of globalisation includes the strengthening of national, religion-based, ethnic or other identities through the assertion of "traditional"<sup>2</sup> gender roles and systems of authority and control.

Women's relationship to these processes is mixed and often contradictory. The 1980s and 1990s have seen women enter labour markets and become income earners in large numbers, sometimes under the pressure of family economic needs, and sometimes in response to new opportunities thrown up by labour market and other changes. The results in terms of women's control over income and personal autonomy can be contradictory. Entering the labour market for a woman does not automatically mean that she will have greater control over income; it may mean, instead, increased work burdens, greater drudgery and multiple responsibilities as she is caught up in a global assembly line over which she has little control. Earning more income almost always raises a woman's value in her family,

*DAWN is involved in an Economic Justice Caucus, established to bring women's analyses and advocacy about global financial and trade institutions into the Beijing+5 process. A planning meeting attended by representatives of 21 women's organisations was held at Stony Point, Washington, at the time of the Beijing+5 Precom in March. Former General Coordinator, Peggy Antrobus, was one of the main drafters of a declaration from the Caucus. Other drafters included Dzodzi Tsikata of DAWN Africa and Linda Christiansen-Ruffman of the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIA).*

Amongst the points made in the Declaration is that UN member states have consistently resisted the critique of the multiplicity of systems that oppress women.

"The current Outcome Document is weak on macro-economic analysis and on economic justice. Follow-up has tended to focus on the 12 critical areas of concern without necessarily exploring the larger macro-economic policy framework within which nations should implement the Platform for Action. The proposed actions do not address the clear evidence of devastation in women's lives in the past five years as described in the document itself. The current economic policies assume that expanding 'free' markets will solve all human problems. This kind of economic fundamentalism does not work."

but ironically this can sometimes result in even tighter controls over her life and being. However, it can also sometimes mean greater physical mobility, increased personal autonomy, and the possibility of breaking through gendered barriers and patriarchal or other mechanisms of male control.

These contradictions mean that women's struggles for greater personal autonomy (including among other things control over and access to familial or community resources, a fairer share in inheritance, rights in decision-making, and sexual and reproductive rights) may not mesh simply or easily with their concerns and demands for a more just and equal economic order.

The irony for women is that, on the one hand, the supporters and promoters of a globalised world economy are often also the ones who support the breaking of traditional patriarchal orders. On the other hand, some of those who oppose globalisation do so in the name of values and control systems that strongly oppress women. The challenge for women, therefore, is how to assert the need for both economic justice and gender justice in an increasingly globalised world in which at the same time we witness the proliferation of diverse forms of moral conservatism that target women's self-determination.

### Sowing the Wind

The global UN conferences of the 1990s proved to be fertile ground for the blooming of these tensions and conflicts. These include the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED, Rio 1992), the World Conference on Human Rights (Vienna 1993), the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD, Cairo 1994), the World Summit on Social Development (WSSD, Copenhagen 1995), the Fourth World Conference on Women (FWCW, Beijing 1995), and Habitat II (Istanbul, 1996). The South-North divide surfaced as expected in all these meetings, but the power and clout of Northern governments in global negotiations had clearly become significantly greater in the 1990s as compared to the 1970s. The intervening decade of debt crises, structural adjustment programs, uneven economic growth rates, and growing disparities among Southern countries themselves appeared to have eroded the capacity and political will of the South to negotiate effectively together against the North on economic issues such as debt relief, development aid, global environmental controls, or a level playing field in international trade.

In this climate moral conservative groups that oppose an agenda for women's rights have systematically attempted to emerge as champions of the South. Around the time of UNCED in Rio, in 1992, the Vatican began making statements against growing poverty and South-North economic inequalities and in favour of debt relief. On the other side, the positions taken by Northern negotiators on every economic issue from the right to development, to debt, to trade, to structural adjustment provided fertile soil for a growing closeness between the Vatican and at least some Southern negotiators.

To P6

During the 90's the moral conservative forces have systematically used their political influence to oppose the women's rights agenda in international fora. UNCED was the first site of major mobilization by women's organizations, albeit largely in the NGO Forum rather than in the official conference. By the time of the Vienna conference on human rights in 1993, the Vatican had begun to mobilise its forces against the recognition of women's rights as human rights. In Cairo in 1994, the Vatican allied itself with a number of countries to strongly resist the adoption of a reproductive health and rights agenda in the ICPD Programme of Action. At the Social Summit in Copenhagen six months later, this alliance worked to oppose every innovative aspect related to gender and reproductive health. This opposition continued through Beijing and the Habitat conference. But while the principal text of these negotiations appeared to be women's rights, the critical sub-text was the continuing South-North divide and the growing frustration of the South.

Three further points need to be made about the conferences of the 1990s. First, where women delegates (official and unofficial) were not present in significant numbers, issues relating to gender equality and women's rights tended to almost disappear in the negotiations, or to be compromised. There appeared to be tacit understandings among many delegates from both South and North not to raise "controversial" issues. (Read "controversial" as code for "women's rights", since there were plenty of other equally controversial issues such as poverty, debt and development assistance that remained.) The few feminist delegates present during the Social Summit in Copenhagen had their work cut out in terms of protecting the gains women had made through Vienna and Cairo.

Second, and importantly, despite efforts to the contrary, only a few Southern governments actually bought into an alliance in which women's rights were traded away.<sup>3</sup> The advances in recognition of women's rights in Vienna, and the Cairo consensus on the centrality of reproductive and sexual health, reproductive rights, and women's empowerment in development policy, and their further elaboration and affirmation in Beijing were possible because the large majority of Southern and Northern governments supported them. In Cairo and also in Beijing, consensus became possible because the G-77 agreed to speak as a group on economic issues, but as individual countries on matters relating to gender equality, women's rights, reproductive and sexual health, adolescents' health and rights etc. It became clear to delegates at Cairo (and later at Beijing) that differences on these latter issues within G-77 between the minority that opposed and the majority that supported them were far too serious to patch over.

Third, feminist coalitions from the North and South who were present both as official and as NGO delegates at the conferences attempted to bridge the divide that opposing countries and groups were trying to create between economic justice and gender justice. The Cairo Programme of Action contains some of the most progressive language regarding development more generally, structural adjustment, and the

importance of the North's taking a lead with respect to sustainable consumption and effective waste management. Much of this language was either initiated or strongly supported by women delegates and a few Southern governments who opposed the North's intransigence on economic issues as much as they opposed the attack of moral conservative forces on gender justice and women's human rights. In this way women attempted to combine economic justice with gender justice in both Cairo and Beijing.

### Reaping the Whirlwind

Between March and July, 1999, three of the "plus five" reviews of the conferences of the 1990s were in progress. In March, the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) met to discuss the implementation of the health section of the Beijing Platform for Action. This was followed by the Prepcom for ICPD+5 which was unable to complete its work in the allotted days in March. Intersessional meetings and internal group meetings continued until the Prepcom was formally resumed at the end of June just before the scheduled [ICPD] Special Session of the UN General Assembly. In May the first Prepcom for Copenhagen+5 was also held. Again progress was slow, and negotiations were slated to resume as Intersessionals at the end of August.

*The mood and tone of the negotiations were certainly harsher from women's and NGO perspectives than one would have expected. One would not have anticipated reopening of language that had already been agreed to at Cairo and Beijing given the fact that, at least in the case of the ICPD Programme of Action, the overwhelming majority of countries have been positively implementing Cairo in the intervening years since 1994.*

Certain common features emerged in all these processes. Progress in negotiation was painfully slow and often stalemated. There were two apparent reasons for stalemates - the wide gap between South and North on economic issues, and the difficulty of reaching consensus on gender issues. Most striking was the fact that, starting with the CSW

meeting and continuing through much of the ICPD+5 negotiations until near the end, the G-77 insisted on speaking with one voice on all issues, unlike what they had done in Cairo or Beijing. At the same time and not surprisingly, the Vatican appeared to have been working closely with conservative delegations to try to roll back the Cairo, Beijing and Vienna agreements if possible, or to impede serious discussion about barriers to implementation or future actions to be taken. Additionally, a vocal backlash against the participation of NGOs was registered during both the Cairo+5 and the Copenhagen+5 Prepcoms with a number of (largely conservative) government delegations objecting to NGO presence and participation.

At one level, none of the above seems to be new, if we refer back to our earlier analysis.<sup>4</sup> Yet, the mood and tone of the negotiations were certainly harsher from women's and NGO perspectives than one would have expected. One would not have anticipated reopening of language that had already been agreed to at Cairo and Beijing given the fact that, at least in the case of the ICPD Programme of Action, the overwhelming majority of countries have been positively implementing Cairo in the intervening years since 1994.

One reason for this could be that the G-77 felt more strongly the need to speak with one voice in light of the upcoming World Trade Organisation (WTO) ministerial meeting in Seattle as well as at the ongoing UN debate on

financing development. The financial and economic crisis of the recent past must also be taken into account as it has considerably leveled the growth experience among its members. On the other hand, the global political pendulum has also swung back a bit from the hard years of conservative governments in North America and Europe, possibly creating a bit more space for negotiation on economic issues.<sup>5</sup> The neoliberal orthodoxy is itself in considerable disarray in the wake of the financial crisis with the IMF and the World Bank publicly taking different stances.<sup>6</sup> All this might explain the G-77 feeling the pressure and taking the opportunity to show a united front against the North [on economic issues]. But it does not explain why the more liberal Southern delegations had such a difficult time asserting the modus operandi of Cairo and Beijing, viz., one voice on economic issues, and separate voices on gender issues. To understand this, we need to turn to other factors.

*A major problem at Beijing was the distance, both physical and psychological, between the NGO Forum and the official conference. While the majority of women concentrated on the NGO Forum, the few at the official conference had to work hard to prevent backsliding from Cairo and Vienna. Conservative forces tend to lie low in the NGO events and to save their energy for the official conference - the exact opposite of what women's NGOs tend to do. There should therefore be more systematic planning to link the non-governmental and official events, so that the energy and ethos of the former can be brought to bear on the latter.*

### Lessons from the Cairo+5 Negotiations

One important reason for this could have been the fact that many, and especially Southern official delegations, to the ICPD +5 Precom were drawn from the staff of country missions to UN Headquarters in New York. A very large number of delegates therefore were diplomats responsible to foreign ministries rather than bureaucrats drawn from ministries of health or family planning. This meant that they often lacked the experience that those who had been through the whole process leading up to and during Cairo had. Few were knowledgeable about the subtle balances in some of the agreements that had been reached at Cairo. Thus, even with the best will in the world, many delegations were not always clear about what exactly was being proposed by the forces opposing women's rights or what it implied.

Women's NGOs and the few feminists on official delegations who had been through the protracted negotiations of Cairo and Beijing worked diligently to provide background briefings to delegations. We were also faced with the problem of the mindset of New York-based diplomats whose daily negotiations are heavily influenced by South-North conflicts and global, regional, or national geopolitical agendas. Gender equality tends to fall relatively low in their priorities and at least some of them clearly expressed that it was not worth struggling over in this forum.

A deeper question this raises has to do with the premises on the basis of which the UN is conducting these +5 reviews. Implementation can and ought to be discussed and evaluated by implementors - it should not be handled by those who have had little to do with implementation. The first lesson therefore is that there is an urgent need for the UN at the highest level to rethink how the evaluation of implementation is being done. In fact NGOs gathered at the final stage of the Cairo+5 process have written a letter to the UN Secretary General requesting the immediate creation of a high level commission to fundamentally reconsider the premises and mechanisms of the +5 reviews.

Furthermore, the review of implementation should certainly not be open to those who opposed the primary agreement or sections of the agreement. Thus, given the Vatican's fundamental reservations to the ICPD Programme of Action, it had no business participating in a review of implementation in which it played no role, and which it certainly opposed. Basic ethics would have required the Vatican to withdraw from the review. Thus, what ought to have been an assessment of gains and obstacles became once again a protracted negotiation over language - this could possibly have been minimised if the review had been structured to include only

those who had signed on to the ICPD consensus in the first place. This is the second lesson of the ICPD +5 review process.

Women's organisations from the South and North can draw other lessons as well. Unless they work hard to ensure the quality of delegations, they run the risk of having gender justice traded off against

South-North issues. This is particularly problematic in the context of the on-going Copenhagen+5 Review whose working text is very weak on gender issues. The Vatican appears to be working hard to emerge as the champion of the South on economic issues, and to weaken human rights language by references to "human dignity", its preferred substitute for human rights. But it can also be a problem for Beijing+5 if official delegations are not adequately briefed in advance. This is the third critical lesson.

- 1 Human Development Report, 1999
- 2 "Traditional" customs and beliefs are often not traditional at all but are customs of recent vintage created for the specific purpose of controlling women or other groups.
- 3 Closer analysis of the nature of the conservative alliance built by the Vatican suggests that what was negotiated among them was not really economic issues versus gender issues but mutual support for each one's pet conservative positions vis a vis women's rights. However, within the larger group of Southern countries, the Vatican's positions received a hearing that no other non-member of G 77 received.
- 4 For an early analysis of the risks inherent in the Cairo+5 review, see Sonia Correa and Gita Sen, "Cairo+5: moving forward in the eye of the storm," SOCIAL WATCH No 3, 1999
- 5 A reading of some of the texts for the ongoing Copenhagen+5 negotiation suggests at least some parting of the ways between the US, the EU, and Canada. On WTO issues certainly, there are major differences of opinion in the Northern consensus. Certainly the confidence of the North was shaken by the major defeat it suffered at the hands of global civil society in its attempt to force through a privately negotiated Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI).
- 6 Gita Sen, "Cracks in the neo-liberal consensus", DAWN INFORMS #2/1998

## ISSUES FROM THE INTER-REGIONAL MEETING

From Anne Mager's report of the DAWN Inter-Regional Meeting on Political Restructuring and Social Transformation held in Cape Town, South Africa, 21-23 February 2000, which began drawing together the discussion and research of the past two years. Syntheses of regional research papers were presented and discussed in plenary sessions. Among the points raised in the debate were the following:

### DAWN's WSSD+5 PROCESS

DAWN's plans for the WSSD+5 review (that will culminate in the United Nations General Assembly Special Session, UNGASS, on the Implementation of the Outcome of the World Summit on Social Development, 26-30 June 2000, Geneva,) are primarily focused on the production and launch of a critical feminist analysis of Political Restructuring and Social Transformation. The analysis addresses, among other areas, the enabling/disabling elements within the (national/regional/global) political environment for achieving social transformation and gender justice, in line with the social development commitments agreed to in Copenhagen in 1995.

- The process began with regional meetings: Manila and Bangalore in 1998; Montevideo in 1999.
- Four further meetings on PR&ST have been held since August 1999: in Chiang Mai and Rio de Janeiro in October 1999; Cape Town in November 1999; and an inter-regional meeting in Cape Town in February 2000.
- 30 research papers have been commissioned since August 1999.
- Reports on the meetings in Montevideo, Bangalore and Chiang Mai have been published.
- Publication of regional research papers are scheduled for March/April 2000.
- The global analysis by PR&ST Research Coordinator, Vivienne Taylor, will be released at the NGO Forum for Geneva 2000 that will run 25-30 June 2000.
- DAWN is organising a panel on "Marketisation of Governance" at Geneva 2000 NGO Forum.
- A documentary video on the DAWN PR&ST process by WAYANG, award-winning Malaysian film-makers, is also scheduled for launching at the Geneva 2000 Forum.
- DAWN will co-organise a panel on people's movements against globalisation with REPEM/ GEO.
- DAWN will also co-organise a panel with the International Association for Community Development, "Building Local Initiatives on Governance and Democracy".

Check our website, [www.dawn.org.fj](http://www.dawn.org.fj), for details closer to the date.

- Globalisation trends have resulted in the expansion of women's employment but also the cheapening of women's labour. The nature of work has changed in such a way that there may be more economic opportunities for women, but there are not enough work opportunities of the kind that support an equitable place for them.

- Trade liberalisation and dependence on

*"Women attempted to have equal participation in the new democracies that began appearing in the 1980s, but they achieved only 'a room of their own' in the state."*

Line Bareiro, Latin American and Caribbean Synthesis.

- direct investment work against encouraging domestic savings and diversification of the economy. As foreign exchange controls open up and trans-national corporations repatriate funds without reinvesting, national economies remain on a continuous downward path.

*"Strategies for addressing women's participation in politics includes the involvement of the wives of men in power in public roles and as promoters of women. The shortcomings of 'first ladyism' is that it is unrepresentative, unconstitutional and can fall prey to opportunistic use by dictators."*

N'Dri Therese Assie-Lumumba, DAWN Africa Synthesis.

*"There are numerous subtle ways that activist men make women dependent. Gender conflict is suppressed in politics as it is in the family."*  
Gigi Francisco, South East Asia Synthesis.

- Intellectual women and women in organisations move relatively well into the arena of globalisation. The issues of globalisation connect like-minded researchers and activists together and this has enabled women to have greater political impact than ever before at the international level. But for more than one billion women without education, employment is cheap and insecure. International institutions try to prevent national states from investing in higher education although education is crucial in the drive for development.

*"Attempts to incorporate traditional power structures into the constitutional system has been a selective process. The role of women and their participation in the traditional political and social institutions was on the whole entirely omitted from consideration. Pacific women were not the helpless victims of patriarchal societies, but had control over resources and direction of their lives."*

Ana Taufeulungaki, Pacific Synthesis.



- In examining social movements, women's movements and the state there is concern about demobilisation of organisations that came after independence and with the establishment of gender machinery. While some organisations, such as trade unions, are in decline, there are many new social organisations emerging, some reactionary and others contradictory. Others, such as citizen initiatives, are dynamic. Women's movement relationships with civil movements are often ambivalent.

*"The view of civil society as an alternative for bad government and failings of the state is questionable."*  
 N'Dri Therese Assie-Lumumba, DAWN Africa Synthesis.

- Differences within the feminist movement need handling in order to share knowledge

*"The direct investment of multinational corporations in agriculture is particularly harmful to women. The right to employment and livelihood has been substantially eroded by agribusiness."* Vanita Nayak Mukherjee, South Asia Synthesis.

and link with women at different levels. There is a need to avoid false universality and false sisterhood, at the same time avoiding confinement in narrow spaces.

*"The present fragmentation and distortion of Latin American feminism is identified with the cycles of social movements and the fragmenting dynamics in a time of globalisation and neoliberalism."*  
 Line Bareiro, Latin American and Caribbean Synthesis.

- Concerning institutionalisation and power, there are laws for gender equality and national gender machinery for making demands at state level. The problem is that equality remains at the level of machinery and

offices, whereas it needs to permeate society as a whole.

- There is a distinction between the institutionalisation of gender and gender mainstreaming. Mainstreaming is an approach to the positioning of women's interests in government while institutionalisation could include institutions in other parts of society; it encompasses policies and laws. It is not a question of having a room of one's own, but of having rooms in other spaces and spaces in other rooms. Institutionalisation of gender is broader than mainstreaming, but does not include constellations of power.

*Women are made hostages through the essentialising of women in nationalist and democracy discourses.*  
 Gigi Francisco, South East Asia Synthesis.

- Two different positions emerge on the question of

alliance building. One stresses social justice, the other stresses inclusivity in alliances for democratisation.

- The women's movement often needs to piggy-back on wider campaigns because of a shortage of resources. The strength in this approach is that it opens spaces for women at all points in the wider tapestry of life.

### THE PR&ST BACKGROUND

DAWN adopted the theme Political Restructuring and Social Transformation (PR&ST) in 1996 in the context of the redefinition and restructuring of the state taking place in the 1990s. DAWN was concerned that this restructuring was impacting negatively on the goals of gender equality and poverty eradication. The focus on political and economic restructuring complements DAWN's research on globalisation.

The initiative for the DAWN PR&ST project came from the South African experience and particularly the concern of DAWN's PR&ST co-ordinator, Vivienne Taylor, to explore some of the complexities of bringing together the politics of national liberation and development activism with the politics of social transformation. She observed that the process of reconciliation comes at a certain cost for those in the national liberation movement. There are five aspects to the emerging PR&ST framework:

1. The context of globalisation accompanied by neoliberal economics and the erosion of state autonomy.
2. Interrogation of what it means to conceptualise feminist notions of the state, development, democracy and the feminist movement.
3. Examining how these notions actually shape the lived experience of poor women.
4. Analysing the dilemmas experienced by women in the South.
5. How strategies for real improvement in women's lives can be developed when the transition to democracy across the South has been "the narrative of the exclusion of women", as one of the participants in the African regional meeting put it.

Two approaches have emerged. Following the 1993 UN Human Rights conference, women began appropriating the international discourse of rights to advance the cause of women. The next approach centred on how women enter new spaces to subvert the paradigm of exclusion.

The DAWN Inter-regional meeting held in Cape Town 21-23 February 2000 was the seventh in a series of meetings begun in Manila in April 1998. DAWN will launch its PR&ST platform document at the WSSD+5 conference in Geneva in June 2000. DAWN's global analysis will provide critical input to WSSD+5.

## POLITICAL RESTRUCTURING AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

Vivienne Taylor, DAWN Research Coordinator for Political Restructuring and Social Transformation, outlined some of the focus points in the emerging PR&ST platform at the Inter-Regional Meeting in Cape Town in February. The following points give a flavour of the process.

- Each region in the South is experiencing crises rooted in history and manifested as a contemporary crisis of governance. These crises encompass the Asian economic crisis, internal conflicts, 'ethnic', race-based and religious conflicts. They impact on the lives of women with devastating consequences.
- In all regions of the South, political and economic compacts of power are made through international institutions at the global, regional and national level. These compacts are mediated both through forces of power and communication technology.
- In the new emerging political economy of change there are overt and covert objectives. At the overt level it is dominated by mainstream institutions and fostered around the monopoly of the industrial North. The subversion of this process is taking place through active civil society movements globally, involving women and labour organisations across all societies as seen in Seattle during the Third Ministerial meeting of the World Trade Organisation.
- Global governance and efficient management are the new mantras of international agencies and institutions.
- At the same time as countries of the South are asked to engage in liberalising our economies we also find that institutions that set the terms are not transparent, democratised or open, nor do they open themselves up to the participation of the majority of the poor.
- Women across the regions of the South are beginning to ask questions about the meaning of democracy and citizenship.
- Change takes place so fast it creates a dynamic that

"WTO agreements, rules, regulations and methods of operation are complex combinations of competing and conflicting interests, compromises and trade-offs, inconciseness and contradictions, imbalances and inequities. They cannot be regarded as immutable. Above all, they are totally gender-blind." *Dot Keet, Inter-Regional PR&ST Meeting.*

leaves behind whole communities, areas and regions.

- The reassertion of neoliberalism is accompanied by an increase in fundamentalism.
- There is collective amnesia about the impacts of colonialism, racism, sexism, fundamentalism and narrow nationalism.
- In the contested and shifting sites of struggle, there has

been homogenisation of debates on governance and political transformation.



*Wambui Karanja, Gita Honwana-Welch, Yvonne Underhill-Sem.*

- DAWN's regional meetings have noted that male standpoints dominate civil society in terms of supposedly objective standards that are set for what constitutes legislative and constitutional rights. The state's incorporation of global institutional instructions and analyses of social power in the law produces a gendered state dominated by male power. This gendering of the state results in how the law is legitimised, and how the social domination of men becomes invisible.
- Work role dilemma: The inability of all societies in the South and the North to supply an adequate number of work roles for people.
- The growth dilemma: There is a need for economic growth but an inability to live with the economic consequences of exploitation and dependency created through international and national market forces.
- The control dilemma: On the one hand global forces guide and control technological innovations and information, and on the other their rhetoric implies that they are against centralised control. There is no adequate value base within the market system for redistribution of resources.
- Political restructuring and social transformation should be seen as interconnected rather than separate processes. Social transformation is seldom an objective of political change and indeed, whether what is happening on the political agenda is restructuring is highly questionable. Social policies that promote human development and people's development are necessary and are central to economic processes.

At the Latin America and Caribbean Regional Meeting, Celita Eccher, left; Marcia Rivera, centre: "It is through education that development can be achieved. The issue should be part of the agenda of all governments, since given the current public expenditure, it will be impossible to achieve basic educational levels, and most countries are badly prepared in science and technology"; and Sonia Correa, right: "Women have focused on health and reproductive rights, but have not included demographic changes in the feminist agenda."



## VOICES FROM REGIONAL PR&ST MEETINGS

"In reality, government institutions equate gender equity with providing access and opportunities for women to participate in the production of goods and services that can contribute to the economy's GNP, trade and dollar reserves." Maloy Tiongson, S Asia, SE Asia and Pacific Regional Meeting.

"The discourse on power and politics is far too dominated by the discourse on the state. All other discourses could be included to break down that dominance." Maureen Pagaduan, S Asia, SE Asia and Pacific Regional Meeting.

"Women in politics in Asia are often male politicians' mothers, wives and daughters." Carol Anonuevo, S Asia, SE Asia & Pacific Regional Meeting.

"We cannot regard ourselves as experts who analyse data for other people, we must give voice to those who do not have one." Linette Vassell, Latin American Regional Meeting.

"We cannot rely on sweet words and nice documents. We have to fight for our budgets and claim the public policies to be implemented." Sonia Miguel, Latin American and Caribbean Regional Meeting.

"Major barriers to women's participation in political processes in the regions include patriarchy, illiteracy, fundamentalism and violence. Poverty is perhaps the most pervasive." Farah Kabir, S Asia, SE Asia and Pacific Regional Meeting.

"We need to protect and promote heterogeneity and diversity. Often these very idiosyncrasies form the basis of women's subordination and oppression." Kushma Ram, S Asia, SE Asia & Pacific Regional Meeting.

"Despite a fundamental conservatism and lack of feminist framework and outlook, the mass rural women's movements have been a constant and often countervailing force." Elizabeth Cox, S Asia, SE Asia and Pacific Regional Meeting.

"It is of utmost importance that states incorporate proposals from the feminist agenda. Feminist agendas are 'navigation charts' which serve as a guide to keep ethics and negotiation balanced."

Gina Vargas, Latin American Regional Meeting

The aim is that governments change their priorities and policies of distribution, considering the domestic sector, which includes women's non-paid work. If health policies say that periods of hospitalisation are shortened, who will be taking care of the sick people? Liliana de Pauli, Latin American and Caribbean Regional Meeting.

"How can we begin to deconstruct the concept of equality and move away from a formulation of it meaning 'being the same' to 'a state of mind that is tolerant of difference and diversity'." Sunila Abeysekera, S Asia, SE Asia and Pacific Regional Meeting.

"What stands out in the region is the tremendous fortitude and courage with which women have stood up to the challenges and been active in the forefront of movements for democratic change." Indu Agnihotri, S Asia, SE Asia and Pacific Regional Meeting.

"If women stick to caste and ethnic divisions it will contribute to depressing the feminist consciousness." Anita Gurumurthy, S Asia, SE Asia and Pacific meeting.

"Underlying diversity, heterogeneity and difference is a collective feminist consciousness that is non-hierarchical and non-power-seeking. People can still operate on the principle of equality within the fundamentals of feminism, despite differences." Selvy Thiruchandran, S Asia, SE Asia and Pacific Regional Meeting.

"Rural women in particular are likely to be left out because they are religiously, socially, culturally and politically tied down. Often, what burdens them most is superstitious beliefs." Angela Gomez, S Asia, SE Asia and Pacific Regional Meeting.

The view of the African state as corrupt, parasitic, bloated and authoritarian, which is part of a dominant anti-statist discourse on Africa, has colonial origins and casts Africans in the image of passive victims of oppressive states which they are unable to do anything about.

Amina Mama, Africa Regional Meeting.....P12

*Highlights of the DAWN Africa research meeting on Political Restructuring and Social Transformation at the Gender Institute, University of Cape Town, 29-30 November 1999, by DAWN East Africa Regional Focal Point, Fatma Alloo.*

In the first paper, Politics and Power, by Amina Mama, she said social science studies of politics and power has fallen into the trap of looking at the African State as the main pillar of society. Little attention is given in such studies to organisational analysis, institutional cultures, formal and informal structures of power, gender, race etc. Given this analysis, there has been a worrying clamour for the demise of the state.

*"Western academics seem agreed on the cause of 'the problem', and on the solution - that is, rolling back the state, with the result that throughout Africa there are currently 100,000 experts on the ground costing over \$4 billion a year in technical assistance fees."*

The fact is that we cannot afford to ditch the state, as the few gains that women have had in Africa have come via the state; also because of the severe consequences for women where the state has been destroyed - such as in Rwanda, Liberia and Sierra Leone - where women are living in conflict and post-conflict situations or have become stateless.

Aminata Diaw went on to further show how "democratic" processes had co-opted women's voices at the expense of building a culture of justice. Drawing on the ideas of Samir Amin, she said Africa's economic integration into a global economy is not modernising Africa, but rather making Africa perform better for global capitalism.

Women's economic marginalisation today and their precarious survival with fewer and fewer resources illustrate the failure of modernisation, she said. Women had been part of movements which had given birth to democracies in Africa and the fundamental reason for their exclusion from the political realm lay in the persistence of an impenetrable androcentric and masculine world.

The second theme "Institutionalisation of Gender" was introduced by Charmaine Pereira who went through the historical path of WID-GAD approaches, pointing out the danger of equating equity and efficiency arguments and valuing what WID or GAD can do to improve development outcomes, not for advancing women. In those structures or institutions which had arisen for women via military regimes, the political will was not so much to improve the situation for women but to remain in political power. These institutions (e.g. National Councils established by First Ladies) were incorporated bodies that had outlasted military regimes, but national women's organisations that had been so formed had managed to marginalise women's equality agenda.

*"Political struggles in Africa presently assume the form of social conflicts based on ethnic and religious differences, but not yet gender."*

Presentations on a third theme of "Social Movements, the Feminist Movement and the State" challenged the assumption that Africa started with a modern state and suggested that the African state was established to serve colonial/imperialist interests and handed on to African men, without women featuring in its agenda. N'Dri Assie-Lumumba talked of the need for Africans to re-discover their cultural heritage, not because she romanticised the past but out of interest in finding empowering elements for women within African society.

She gave examples of women's past activism and bravery, and from Ghana a contextual explanation for the First Lady syndrome.

*"One-party states excluded women politically, yet ruling parties had women's wings, the leaders of which were typically President's wives. In the transitions from illegitimate political orders to legitimate governments, male leaders sought to re-invent themselves and forget how they came to power. But women's NGOs created by the First Lady were named by the date of the military coups, thereby immortalising the event which the husband was trying to erase from public memory."*

Shireen Hassim addressed the reconstruction of the South African state, saying this made it both more permeable to access and influence by women's organisations and also encouraged less radical forms of engagement. She suggested the value of networking and linking with social movements outside the state. She said Parliament provided a permeable avenue for women, the civil service less so as women had to contend with transforming the internal cultures of government. She warned against the dangers of gender issues becoming the domain of academics and femocrats.

Sheila Meintjes elaborated on the NGOisation of the women's movement in the 1990s, which in the context of South Africa located feminism within the realm of material needs of women.

In a final session on "Globalisation and the State", Lindsay Collen discussed the global institutions and initiatives of GATT, WTO and the MAI, their links and implications, for example that what was in GATT is now included in the WTO, with new difficulties of trade agreements that threaten agriculture. She described how systematically subsidies on food are being phased out; seeds are being patented; and education systems, free health care and universal old age pension systems being undermined. It is a global process in which trade and aid comes with conditionality, she said.

*The beauty of the event in Cape Town was the calibre of the papers presented, fired with a commitment to social transformation.* ✨

## GLOBAL DIALOGUE 2/EXPO 2000 UPDATE



*From DAWN Pacific Regional Coordinator, Yvonne Underhill-Sem, DAWN's representative in the planning process for Global Dialogue 2.*

The Global Dialogues are discussions on issues of global importance to be held during the forthcoming EXPO2000 in Hanover this year. The topics are science and technology for a sustainable development, making health central to human development, and responsible governance in a global society. There are 10 Global Dialogues spread over a number of months. Each is organised by different groups, but all conform to a similar format which includes a Science in Dialogue session (SD) to analyse the debate, and Workshop 21 session (WS) to develop practical approaches to problems raised in the SD sessions.

The Society for International Development (SID) has taken responsibility for organising Global Dialogue 2 (GD2) on the theme Responsible Governance in a Global Society. In association with a number of other partners, DAWN accepted SID's invitation to join this GD2 and, along with UNIFEM, has taken particular responsibility for organising a session on Responsible Governance for Gender Justice (SD2). This fits into the DAWN global research project on Political Restructuring and Social Transformation. Other Science and Dialogue sessions include SD1 Recognition and Citizenship in a Global Society; SD3 The Impact and Potential of ICT's; and SD4 Responsible Governance through Global Public Policy Networks.

The proposed programme is aimed at fully examining the issue of gender justice through two main themes: political transformation and economic justice; and human rights and institutionalisation. There will be an introductory analysis of the wider scope of political transformation and how women are involved before the focus of each theme. The introductory session on Saturday 1 July will be chaired by Gita Sen, and the speaker is Vivienne Taylor. On Sunday 2 July the session on political transformation and economic justice will be chaired by Gigi Francisco, with Patricia McFadden and Diane Elson as the main speakers and comments from a panel whose members are Sonia Correa, Sunila Abeyeskhara and Diane Elson. The final session on engendering governance issues on human rights and institutionalisation will be chaired by Sonia Correa, with Gina Vargas and Dzodzi Tsikata as main speakers, and comments from a panel of Rounaq Jahan, Gigi Francisco and Gita Sen.

In addition to the contribution to SD2 on Gender Justice, the participants of SD2 will also be expected to participate in one of four Workshop sessions. These are W1 Enlarging People's Space in National Governance; W2 Towards a Responsible EU in Global Society; W3 Responsible Governance of Natural Resources; and W4 Responsible Governance of Global Finance. Each Global Dialogue takes place over three days only. In the case of GD2, it has been timed to follow directly from the World Summit on Social Development+5. It is hoped that some reflection on this process will inform GD2. For more information on the Global Dialogues follow the links from [www.expo2000.de](http://www.expo2000.de)

## Gender Dimensions and Dynamics in International Lobbying on Trade and Development

*by Josefa (Gigi) Francisco, DAWN-Southeast Asia Regional Coordinator, and published on the Trade page of DAWN's web site, [www.dawn.org.fj](http://www.dawn.org.fj)*

In the Asia, and particularly South East Asia region, both progressive and socialist-inclined movements and capitalist authoritarian states are bedfellows in their unified accommodation of the women's movement, and in their extreme caution (sometimes outright rejection) of feminism. To proclaim oneself a feminist is to invite almost immediate not-so-subtle, but also sometimes unarticulated, condemnation that one is a middle-class and westernised creature who does not have much to share with the reality of the masses of ordinary Asian women.

There is another side to the coin. Asian feminists who have come from political activism, social movements and liberation struggles continue to carry a sense of political pride and commitment vis a vis these movements that, however, continue to symbolically define and promote Asian women's identities and roles around "motherhood" and 'virtuous womanhood'. Feminists from earlier struggles have tried to carry out internal feminist projects challenging this masculinist leadership and worldview within their parent movements, but the results have been disheartening. It is

no wonder that many older, and younger, feminists are giving up on the male-led movements and are retreating into the safety and conviviality of their small feminist collectives and women's organisations.

For feminists like those in the DAWN network, engaging, challenging and transforming the perspective of progressive movements such as that of the Greens, can be a very difficult tight-rope act. These feminists often find themselves treated at best as token symbols of rhetorical or vague commitment to gender sensitivity, but more often marginalised and criticised from all sides - by progressive men and women who do not have a feminist perspective but who are steeped in other aspects of critical analysis and activist politics; by feminists who find it futile to engage with males in male-dominated spaces and are critical of feminists who do so; and even by some grassroots women leaders of social movements who have been politicised and mobilised around motherhood and virtuous women political projects against, for instance, globalisation and western hegemony.

To P14

## From P13....Gender Dimensions in International Trade Lobbying

These dynamics exist not only in various national contexts in Asia or in Asian regional activism, but are also articulated in the realm of international activism. Moreover, at the global level, their articulation combines with the articulation of yet other critical dynamics in international advocacy work, that of the current tensions and divide between South and North perspectives that have emerged around issues of debt, trade and development.

Although we now speak of a global women's movement, there are divisions and tensions among different feminisms and an ever-present debate between feminists in the South and in the North that underpin the visible celebration of a global feminism and of an international women's movement. Women's interests and demands do not 'naturally' emerge as the same everywhere. Just like men's or people's interests, women's interests are interlinked with and mediated by categories of class, race, ethnicity, creed, age and abilities. Just like when various social movements and advocacy groups conduct joint actions in the global sphere, women's organisations and networks that cooperate at the international/global level need to debate, negotiate and reach compromises when consensus is not possible. Often I have seen and heard male activists chuckle or express amused bewilderment when known feminists and women's organisations disagree or debate in international NGO forums.

### Women's Tensions and Discontent in Seattle

I will now try to demonstrate how the 'gender' and the 'North-South' dimensions and considerations in international advocacy played out in the women's caucus (working inside the Ministerial Meeting) and the womenseattle committee (working outside and in tandem with other activist organisers) at Seattle.

Without doubt, Seattle was a milestone because the social movements' diverse, even conflicting, interests and actions coalesced into a formidable victory when the WTO 3rd Ministerial Meeting was abruptly ended before any agreement could be reached. Activist women's group from both the North and South, I am proud to say, actively participated in the struggles on the streets and parallel sessions held mostly in the churches that surrounded the conference site. A womenseattle organising committee made up of women's groups from both the North and the South led in the planning and staging of a series of events on December 1, which was dubbed as Women's Day. The women's march and vigil in front of the riot police was the first mass action that defied the ban on rallies and marches declared by the Mayor of Seattle only the night before (as a reaction to the massive November 30 demonstration). We had public lectures running all that day from 9am to 6pm.

Yet the women's events did not get any decent space in the daily newspaper that was produced in Seattle by a group of NGOs. I even heard talk to the effect that some of the white male leaders were unhappy that the women's march that morning did not "push hard enough" - that it was too tame given the rising militancy already in the air. The only space given was a small article on the Raging Grannies who performed at the opening event on women's day.

When establishment news magazines, Time and Newsweek, ran their features on the Battle of Seattle, the only representation of women came in two forms. One was a picture of two bare-breasted white women who had the sign "Lesbians Against the WTO". The other was a one-liner in the thousand-world text that said something like "women with tape on their mouths walked quietly in single file and faced the riot police."

A media conference for women activists got only one journalist from a small newspaper - a Japanese - who was interested in interviewing an Asian. So among the five southern women who were there, I was the only one that

*Given the gross invisibilisation and sexualisation of women's activism that we suffered in Seattle at the hands of both the alternative and mainstream media and chroniclers, one would easily think that all of the women who were in Seattle were in fact mobilised as women's brigades of male-led social movements from both North and South.*

got interviewed. We also went to the media centre where the NGOs were giving out on a daily basis quotes from different activities. Three of us from the South gave our women-centred quotes but

we never knew if any of these were ever circulated.

As far as we know, the only dispatch about women's activities that went out on a daily basis to a limited number of groups in Asia were those I was sending to the DAWN Steering Committee members, the DAWN-SEA ListServe, and a Philippine listserv on trade.

Within the Women's Caucus that worked inside the Ministerial Meeting, another set of dynamics was taking place. This time it had to do with the questioning by a group of women from the South, led by DAWN and the women from the Africa Trade Network, on the position of women's groups on linking trade with labour standards, environmental standards, and human rights including women's rights standards. As women from the South we were united with the male-led progressive movements on our concern about the danger that more developed countries would use such linkages as proxies for deliberate trade sanctions against developing countries.

We were also very aware that the mighty AFL-CIO was seeking the adoption of labour standards to protect their jobs from competition by labour in the Third World. We knew that the United States was going to push for an agreement on labour standards as a Clinton election-related manoeuvre. On a more fundamental level, southern NGOs had begun to raise the alarm about the growing powers of the WTO and although labour standards are justified by human rights, lodging them within the WTO was politically dangerous, for very obvious reasons to the South. **To P17**

# SEATTLE: A new twist in consensual decision-making at the WTO, or REVENGE OF THE SOUTHERN COUNTRIES

*Read at the Women's Strategic Planning Seminar on Gender and Trade by Gigi Francisco, DAWN South East Asia Regional Coordinator. The WSPSGT was organised by the Centre of Concern, Washington, and DAWN Caribbean in Grenada in December 1999. It was preceded by a nine-months-long electronic seminar, with virtual seminar rooms on service, agriculture, intellectual property rights, investment and electronic commerce. These activities have resulted in a Women & Trade Network.*

The politics of negotiation and consensus-building in the World Trade Organisation became a confusing, almost anarchic, marketplace of haggling and bargaining in Seattle. Perhaps for the first time in recent history, Northern countries with negotiators backed by computer-aided analysts and trade lawyers unexpectedly found themselves facing a tough and stubborn coterie of Southern countries.

Informal trade groupings such as the CAIRNS group were not as united as hoped for and the Quadrilaterals were speaking from all sides of their mouths, in some cases contradicting one another. The Africans came to flag their identity and demand visibility while India was particularly intent on resurrecting its old stature as the voice of the truly independent and non-aligned.

If only for a moment, the South used its numbers and its collective voice to block negotiations, except on those items they believed promoted their interests. It wasn't important that the Southern negotiators didn't have any real proposals to facilitate consensus building. They had only one objective in mind: to block any negotiation on new agreements unless the WTO reconsidered or reviewed some of its earlier rules.

Foremost among these were the patenting of life organisms and a more liberal interpretation of a flexible schedule of commitments on tariff reduction.

In Seattle the Southern countries showed the QUAD what the real marketplace was about - throngs of people personally interacting - haggling, shoving, and bargaining on all sides at the same time. For those who patterned the rules of the game along the impersonal and automated market logic of the North, it was indeed anarchy.

A great deal of finger pointing occurred during and after the event. The most simplistic of these is the pointing at United States President Clinton, whom some secretly blamed for having played along with the AFL-CIO demands on labour standards, that further isolated the US from Southern countries. European countries publicly displayed their own disunity when 12 ministers challenged the EU Chair in a media/NGO briefing when he announced that he had agreed to the US-backed proposal for a Working Group on Phyto-Sanitary Standards. Canada was peddling the idea of technical assistance to developing countries in exchange for their agreement to certain environmental and labour standards. Japan was totally lost. Japanese negotiators came with a position for new agreements, but were apparently threatened by developing countries with the loss of support from the G77 in the Security Council.

The drafting process on agriculture reflects this anarchy. In Geneva, a draft had been started and negotiators were expecting it to be discussed in Seattle. No such draft appeared on the first day. On the second day, a draft on agriculture appeared but it was not the one agreed on in Geneva. It was later found out that this draft had come out of

the green room consultation convened by the US. Unlike in Singapore, where people knew who were members of a particular bloc or green room consultation, in Seattle no one knew whom the US consulted. Then even before some countries could review the first draft, a second draft had come out in the evening. It contained exhortations on flexibility of implementation for developing countries, but none of the points referred to how such flexibility was to be implemented. This could not have been a simple case of oversight. Nor was there reference at all to the dumping of agricultural products that the South had lobbied to be included.

Also obvious was the low profile played by the US-based transnational corporations, in steep contrast to their high profile participation in preparations for the meeting. A reception hosted by Bill Gates on 29 November for delegates and accredited NGO representatives was half empty as thousands of marchers mobilised by Jubilee 2000 formed a human chain around the Seattle stadium. This mass mobilisation was just a fraction of the 50,000 protestors who descended on the streets of Seattle the next day. If the MNCs and their CEOs can be cited for anything, it was having the nose for smelling danger as

well as opportunities. If it is going to damage their business, they are not going to get involved in any political brouhaha!

The WTO, however,

remains a formidable global institution and one in which countries are framed in a highly unbalanced relationship. The complex issues that united as well as divided countries and NGOs in Seattle remain. Difficult negotiations will continue in Geneva, this time in an atmosphere that is expected to be less transparent and less accessible to NGOs and the media. The negotiators will be wiser and tougher and this will perhaps lead to the use of new forms of threats, methods of haggling, and more sophisticated use of language and technicalities. Will the NGOs and social movements be there?

Equally important is the question of whether the tactical relationship that was built between some NGOs and Southern governments in the run-up to Seattle will persist. Some are already wondering if, in the cacophony of voices in the marketplace that was Seattle, governments and NGOs alike did not lose a valuable opportunity for real strides to take place.

I do not think so. Sometimes we need to remind our governments and ourselves that this world is, after all, not the neat and hegemonised reality that powerful global institutions and the people who work in them believe. As has been said, globalisation and the global rules that accompany it are neither inevitable nor certain. There are complexities and dilemmas that need to be articulated and negotiated. Since the process is itself embedded in these complexities and dilemmas, it is one that will entail interrogation and a contest of ideas and political viewpoints that hopefully will lead to new language and meanings.

*Seattle was a moment that NGOs, public citizens' groups and Southern governments can claim was theirs. For three days, the representatives of the countries of the world quivered under the scrutiny of civil society groups and social movements.*

## At UNCTAD X NGO Caucus

# STRONG PRESENCE OF WOMEN GROSSLY UNDER-REPRESENTED

There was a strong presence of women - almost half those present - amongst the 100 NGOs and people's organisations represented at the NGO Plenary Caucus for UNCTAD X that opened in Bangkok on 7 February 2000. But when it came to the two important plenary sessions to launch the meeting, sadly and not unexpectedly, women were grossly under-represented. Except for one, the speakers were all male leaders of civil society organisations.

On the second day UNCTAD Secretary General Recupeiro made a scheduled visit for a plenary dialogue. Reflecting the gender pattern in governance and much of current high level talks, the discussion panel was completely male.

The overall tone of the pre-final draft NGO statement was conciliatory and friendly. NGOs were wooing UNCTAD as a possible counter site and ally in its international movement aimed at clipping the powers of WTO and IMF. However, this call was left unheeded by UNCTAD X, which officially recognised the WTO as the appropriate mechanism for addressing all issues of trade and development. Officials frequently reiterated the role of UNCTAD as simply a knowledge and training arm of the UN system whose mandate was to assist nations in capacity building for trade negotiations inside the WTO.

Women's rights and gender equity were prominently reflected in the pre-final draft document. An explicit recognition of both social reproduction and gender equity in an alternative paradigm on trade and development was reflected. Moreover, new categories of women workers that included home workers, migrant workers, informal sector workers and commercial sex workers were acknowledged as lacking adequate protection within the existing ILO tripartite system. A gender impact assessment was included in the proposed set of "independent monitoring and disaggregated assessments of the impacts of trade/investment liberalisation and globalisation". Other UN obligations and agreements relating to women's rights that could be used as a measure for monitoring trade agreements were included as well.

Women's advocacy and lobbying in both the official and unofficial events of UNCTAD X remains weak, unless more women's organisations decide to participate at the last minute. In the NGO events, only one workshop on women workers organised by the Global Alliance of Women against Trafficking in Women, Foundation for Women and Centre for Asian Women (all Bangkok-based) was included. Representatives from this organisation were joined by two women from DAWN-South East Asia and a lone representative from the Tamil Nadu Women's collective as soon as their NGO Plenary meeting concluded. The handful of representatives from women's groups ensured that specific references to women and gender were present in the debates and in the pre-final document.

It was also DAWN-SEA that spearheaded the media release on the barring of local grassroots women from entering the ESCAP premises where the meeting was held. This was in stark contrast to the women's cyber organising that took place prior to the WTO Seattle meeting. There are no plans discussed within the informal network on gender and trade about a concerted effort at advocacy in this event.



*In the meeting, but not out front.*

While there will be a handful of women advocates that are part of the official delegation, no prominent effort on lobbying for gender inside the official meeting could be seen.

UNIFEM-SEARO displayed and gave away its materials at a dinner hosted by the Thailand Foreign Ministry because it was told there was no possibility to do so in the other formal events. It was not even sure whether two information packets on women and trade that UNIFEM wanted to distribute would finally be allowed for inclusion in the official delegates' kits.

*From DAWN South East Asia Regional Coordinator,  
Gigi Francisco.*



## From P14....Gender Dimensions in Trade Lobbying

When issues about trade linkages were raised, the immediate impact was to shake the very foundation upon which the Women's Caucus had firmly grounded its advocacy: that is, on the call for "engendering trade agreements" by pushing governments to honour earlier international commitments made on women's equality, foremost of which is the Beijing Platform of Action. The Women's Caucus, at least until Seattle, existed more as a watchdog whose main responsibility is reminding governments "not to forget the women."

Until Seattle, the women's organisations and networks did not have a broader perspective and critique of the role of WTO in international affairs. This limited "house-cleaning role" worked perfectly fine with some women's groups from the North, whose governments (some of which enjoyed high credibility in the eyes of northern feminists) were pushing for pragmatic ways of fitting their concerns for human rights within their trade agenda and in a way that would not hurt them or their citizens. But it created much discomfort for women in the South, whose perspective of the WTO had been enriched by their participation in male-led social movements, especially in Asia and Africa, and whose governments had been held hostage and left confused and compromised by WTO processes and commitments.

From my perspective, Seattle was doubly significant not only because women's groups were in the frontline action that achieved "victory", but also because it was a moment that left many imprints on southern women's networks such as my own. On the one hand North-South women's activities were generally marginalised by the male-commanded NGO and social movement resistance in Seattle. On this count, women activists from North and South found a unified experience. On the other hand, within the section of the women's movement that was present in Seattle, North-South differences in political positions and demands emerged, with southern women's perspectives having a closer proximity with those of their male colleagues than with those of feminists in the North.

*I would like to end here by reiterating that feminists find ourselves continually united and struggling with both men and women in different sites and locations, particularly in the complex and multidimensional reality and dynamics of global struggles, where divisions and categories cause tensions and sometimes irreconcilable differences. A real challenge for feminists is to engage in meaningful debates with each other. It is also critical to create and secure spaces for feminist encounters and debates within the social movements and NGO streams as a means by which to weld more closely the agenda of feminists and social movements that are confronting global sites of power and wealth, and whose political agenda includes, as a basic, the "equity and democracy imperatives" in development and social transformation.*

## WORKING ON GENDER IN THE WORLD BANK

*The External Gender Consultative Group, EGCG, of the World Bank held its fourth annual meeting in Washington 14-17 November 1999.*

Since the EGCG was first set up by World Bank president, James Wolfensohn shortly after the Beijing conference, some progress has been made in mainstreaming gender in the World Bank. But the task is still very far from being accomplished. In the interim period the EGCG has had to deal with organisational restructuring at the Bank that left gender work in limbo for a long period, as well as continuing reluctance, with few exceptions, on the part of the Bank's operations staff (i.e. the guys and gals who actually decide how the money will be spent on different programmes and projects) to take gender seriously. Gender has fared a bit better at HQ in Washington, where a new Gender Sector Board has been created. This now puts Gender on par there with health, education etc. at least formally. However, these sector boards which are supposed to support the operational programmes have little money themselves, and weaker staffing.

In this situation, the EGCG (which meets once a year in Washington and has practically no resources) has focussed on targeted intervention. A major attempt was to input systematically in the shaping of the Policy Research Report on Gender and Development which is being produced by the Bank. The major issue here was to get the report to honestly assess the impact of macroeconomic policies on women instead of focusing (as is generally the habit at the Bank) on 'traditional' barriers to gender equality at the level of family and community. How far we have been able to go in this direction remains to be seen - the draft report is awaited. A Director for Gender and Development (head of the Gender Sector Board) is now in place. How effective she will be in managing the complex politics of gender at the Bank, how open she will be to learning from women who are nearer the ground where Bank operations actually impact, and how savvy she will be in recognising the EGCG as an ally to work with rather than a group to be controlled-bureaucratically all still remain to be seen. One additional thing that is currently going on is that the Operations Evaluation Department (the bank's internal review mechanism) has launched a major review of the mainstreaming of gender in the Bank.

In the past year, the EGCG has also focussed on the working of the private sector lending entity in the World Bank Group, the International Finance Corporation. The IFC has now developed gender guidelines and increased the number of staff doing social and environmental impact assessments. **To P18**

# The Asian Crisis: Globalisation and Patriarchy in Symbiosis



By Josefa (Gigi) Francisco, left, and Gita Sen, right, written for Social Watch 2000, and available with full reference list on DAWN website, [www.dawn.org.fj](http://www.dawn.org.fj)



The 'East Asian Miracle' was widely trumpeted by international institutions in the early 1990's as demonstrating the soundness of economic globalisation based on the "free market" model. That myth was exposed and forever shattered by the Asian financial crisis that began in 1997.

With the rise and demise of the East Asian Miracle, globalisation's dependence on cheap and unpaid work by women in both good times and bad was highlighted once again. The interplay between the use (and abuse) of women's work, the resurgence of patriarchal state ideologies in the form of so-called 'Asian values', and the horrendous rise of violence against women as a weapon used systematically by groups fighting for control over state power, were never more blatant. The Asian crisis revealed that the forces of economic globalisation and resurgent gender-based controls and violence have a symbiotic, though contradictory, relationship.

The crisis now seems to be contained in many places and modest positive reversals of economic performance have been achieved. But hard lessons have been learned and many of the affected economies are left to deal with the adverse impacts of the

crisis and the painful recovery programmes. The optimistic scenario of economic boom years has been replaced by the grim realisation that a combination of asymmetry, volatility, and opportunism operating in an open and unregulated global free market can lead to a sudden and spectacular collapse of economies and hurt whole national societies. Worldwide concern about "fast growth" and accompanying criticism of international institutions has led to increasing calls for a global assessment, for differential treatment, standards, and regulation, and even for abandoning altogether the current "wrong model of development" and the bitter pill of the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) structural adjustment programmes.

The Asian financial crisis officially began in April 1997 when the depreciation of the Thai baht triggered a contagious effect on the currencies of Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines and then South Korea. This soon led to a region-wide economic contraction in which GDP crashed in one country after another from the average high of 8-10% of the previous growth period. Inflation put pressure on consumer price indexes and reduced real incomes, unemployment rates went up, poverty incidence increased, and income inequality widened (Knowles, Pernia & Racelis 1999).

To P19

## From P17..Gender in the World Bank

Three years ago when the EGCG requested a meeting with the IFC, gender was not on their agenda. As the IFC provides a framework for regulating social and environmental impacts of investment projects, the steps they begin to take may have wider ramifications, particularly as private investment is increasing and public expenditures for development declining.

The biggest gaps appear in integrating gender and macro-economic policies. For instance, while in 1998, 63% of the Bank's lending was disbursed for structural adjustment and half of it was counted as funding for social safety nets, the analysis of the gender impacts of structural adjustment to inform policy interventions has not been developed within the Bank. The prospects for the integration of gender in economic policies may also be in jeopardy as the Bank is increasingly committing its resources and institutionalising its cooperation with the World Trade Organisation. At the WTO ministerial in Seattle, the Bank, the IMF and the WTO had a joint press release calling for greater 'coherence' (division of labour? consistency?) among them. While this appears on the surface a move in the direction of greater efficiency, the result of consistency among the big three (not that the UN does not appear anywhere in this picture) could reduce potential points of flexibility and negotiation, and may well presage a race to the bottom in terms of social and gender accountability.

Many obstacles to mainstreaming gender still appear at the level of policy. Since 1994 no social and environmental impacts assessment has been done. Among the obstacles are the lack of conceptual clarity and the lack of consensus and commitment across the bank. The level of compliance with

gender policy is not high. There is a lack of trained staff, and hence a tendency within the Bank to refer gender issues to designated structures and processes, such as the gender unit, which has had its funds cut. Only 6% of 1998 research funds were committed to gender-related research. Several decision-making groups within the Bank are unhappy with this lack of progress and called for strengthening the role of the EGCG.

Several women have been recently nominated to senior positions in the bank, including Mamphela Ramphele of South Africa, the first African and the second woman to be appointed a Managing Director of the Bank.

The EGCG work plan and the priorities for raising with the Bank include commentary on the Policy Research Report on Gender and Development, feedback and monitoring of participatory process for development of Gender Sector Strategy, and feedback on gender in the World Development Report 2000/01 on Attacking Poverty. It is crucial to integrate gender analysis in the Poverty Reduction Framework paper being prepared for the Report.

The EGCG also plans feedback on the Operations Evaluation Department study on mainstreaming gender and will propose several country case studies on lessons in operationalising gender, as well as proposing a review of the allocation of resources to gender and the Bank's gender unit. Issues for next meeting include how gender is addressed when the World Bank is operationalising participation, and issues related to how the EGCG works.

Out-going chairperson Gita Sen, and secretary Ewa Charkiewicz, who have been with the EGCG since its inception in 1996, remain as members for a further year.

## From P18....Globalisation and Patriarchy

The economic impact of the Asian crisis on Indonesia was dramatic: a jump of 60% in the consumer price index; a fall of 24% in real per capita income; a 15.9% decline in employment in the construction sector and 9.8% decline in the manufacturing sector; and an increase in poverty incidence from 11% in 1996-1997 to 14% in 1998-1999 (ibid).

The contagion later spread to the currencies of Hongkong, Brazil, Russia and Venezuela, where currency devaluation and - especially in the case of Russia - capital flight were experienced as well. For many, the Asian crisis was a global crisis of the current global trade and finance system in which unanticipated and uncontrolled volatility can trigger serious instability and widespread suffering.

### What went wrong?

There are several explanations on why the crisis occurred. The most widespread of these gravitate around three defined positions (Lim 1999, Khor 1998, Bello 1998). One set of proponents-which includes the International Monetary Fund (IMF)-believes that the Asian economies went haywire because of internal weaknesses and wrong decisions made by Asian economic players, including governments. This group's solution is tied to a package of adjustments and reforms comprising an end to state protection, increased transparency and accountability, stronger financial regulation, and adjustments in current accounts (Lim 1999).

Another set of economists (Stiglitz, Krugman, Singh, etc.) acknowledges the volatility of financial markets and recognises that lack of regulation enabled speculative investments to thrive and to trigger economic instability, particularly in the weak links of the global market. These economists favour a new global financial architecture that will protect economies from recurrent crises and financial runs. Monsod (1998) adds an important element to this analysis by claiming that the Asian financial crisis, wherein hedge funds played a major role, is in fact the latest expression of a longer-running global financial crisis linked to the IMF and World Bank generated debt crisis of the 1970s and the 1980s.

A third set of analyses takes off from the second but highlights the critical intersection of the goods sector with finance and capital accounts. This is seen as an important domestic factor that explains why Asian economies succumbed to a crisis and why they had great difficulty emerging from it. One of these economists asserts that Asian economies were already in the midst of a deceleration in export growth when the currency devaluation took place (Ghosh 1999). These economies could no longer bank on income from exports; nor could export-led industry (or whatever remained of it) stem spiralling unemployment. Moreover, Ghosh claims that investor confidence had by then been adversely affected, which would explain the "herd mentality" that led to massive capital flight.

Lim (1999) echoes a similar analysis. In his study on the Philippines, he noted that the agricultural sector had a long-running downward trend prior to the crisis, while the service sector showed a consistent and remarkable expansion. The service sector covers community, social and personal services that include low-waged employment (domestic helpers, school teachers, public servants, and the mass of informal workers). Lim noted that the crisis

*As if to compensate for the increased dependence of households throughout the region on the incomes earned by women in hard and often dangerous conditions, governments are exhorting women to be good mothers and citizens.*

had the effect of further increasing employment in the service sector, with female workers gaining more than the males but wages remaining depressed. He concluded that had government policies concentrated on rural development and rural-urban linkages, rather than on urban-based zones of growth that were export-driven, the impact of the crisis on the real economy could have been alleviated and quality of employment ensured.

Finally, using a framework that interrogates the dynamics of present-day capitalism at the global level, Bello (1996, 1999) traces the financial crisis essentially to the "trade war" between the



United States and Japan. He contends that Japan was able to acquire for itself a Japanese dominated regional trade and finance bloc in South East and East Asia, not via trade agreements, but by locating opportunities for Japanese investment and funds in state-assisted capitalism that thrived in the region. In order to break such

dominance, the United States engaged in aggressive unilateral moves to force further financial liberalisation of the otherwise highly protected markets in the region.

The ensuing finance and capital accounts liberalisation attracted new players such as portfolio investors that were seeking profits for mutual and pension funds raised in the midst of the current long-running economic boom in the United States. Bello concludes that the United States gained much from the Asian financial crisis: "the rollback of protectionism and activist state intervention was incorporated into stabilisation programs imposed by the IMF on the key crisis countries of Indonesia, Thailand and South Korea... By 1998, US financial firms and multinationals were buying up Asian assets from Seoul to Bangkok at fire-sale prices."

### The role of the IMF

From the onset of the Asian financial crisis, a global debate on the role and accountability of the IMF has engulfed governments, civil society groups and academia everywhere in the world. After all, the IMF has been leading the integration of developing country economies into the "open global market" through its macroeconomic policy prescriptions of liberalised trade, finance and capital accounts.

Well before the Asian financial crisis exploded, there was already strong criticism of the IMF's 'overlending syndrome' and its highly damaging structural adjustment programme (imposed on a total of 90 countries), which had exacerbated the global debt crisis. Its economic management of and short-term macroeconomic policy prescriptions for distressed countries hit by the Asian financial crisis further eroded whatever credibility it still enjoyed as critics were joined by no less than the World Bank's (now former) Chief Economist, Joseph Stiglitz.

A more fundamental criticism of the IMF concerns its role in global governance. Critics argue that the IMF has gone way beyond its original mandate of helping countries resolve balance of payments problems (Feldstein 1998). The IMF is said to have transmogrified into a "Jurassic" institution (Bello 1998) and arrogantly appropriated for itself the role of "playing god" (Monsod 1998). Its structural adjustment package of economic, financial

To P20

and social reforms has led it instead to micro-manage the economies of indebted countries who find no meaningful debt relief.

Equally strong were protests against the IMF's emergency and short-term reform package for beleaguered Asian economies (see Ghosh, Feldstein, Stiglitz, Sachs, Monsod, Khor, Bello). Contractionary and deflationary measures such as budget deficit reduction and tight monetary policies, rather than generate business and employment, resulted in lost investor confidence, absolute declines in economic activity, and social costs. What happened to Indonesia, Thailand and South Korea are cases in point. Moreover, the run-away siphoning of moneys from Russia leading to the country's most recent economic collapse, as Stiglitz critically concluded, resulted from IMF imposed policies and interventions.

### Impact of the crisis - the symbiosis of patriarchy and globalisation

The most immediate and felt impact of the crisis was in the area of social reproduction. A regional study found that, without exception, there was an increase in the prices of basic commodities that had import content (Knowles, Pernia and Racelis 1999; Ghosh 1998). Prices for food items went up faster than prices of non-food items. This made the impact harsher on the poor. Reduction in consumption (Kamoltrakul 1999), which was mentioned as one of several household coping mechanisms (Knowles, Pernia and Racelis 1999), was widespread. Since women are principally responsible for ensuring that there is food on the table, the burden invariably fell on their shoulders. Early in the crisis, poor Indonesian women were knocking on doors of middle class families to offer their labour in exchange for food for their children, or they were using inferior food substitutes (Wijaya 1998).

The cut in budgetary expenditures as part of the IMF package of recovery measures adversely affected the education and health budgets of all countries, except in the case of Malaysia where the health budget remained high (Knowles, Pernia and Racelis 1999). The budget cuts came by way of further reductions in the already under-budgeted items of materials, maintenance and facilities. Regional data from the same study indicates that hard-up families were readier to sacrifice the secondary education of older children than the primary education of younger ones. Moreover, the lack of household resources made for an increase in the utilisation of public health services, except in Indonesia where newly increased fees in public health facilities turned prospective users away.

Without exception, unemployment rates increased in all countries (Knowles, Pernia and Racelis 1999). Where data was available, under-employment, employment of children, and employment in the services and informal sectors were found to increase as well (Lim 1999, Kamoltrakul 1999). The expansion of Asian women's labour force participation in low-paying work in the services and informal sectors (including prostitution and domestic work) was noted (CAW 1998, 1999; DAWN-APDC 1998).

There is agreement that the increased paid employment of women in strongly female dominated sectors resulted from increased pressures of family survival and from limited opportunities provided by economic systems with visible sector-based gender preference. This pattern also indicates the resilience of certain types of work - mainly those characterised by low pay, casual employment and lack of benefits - during times of economic slowdown.

As if to compensate for the increased dependence of households throughout the region on the incomes earned by women in hard and often dangerous conditions, governments are exhorting women to be good mothers and citizens. Women are being asked to sacrifice more for their country and to be more responsible for the well-being of families. Poor women who are already stressed by childcare and earning responsibilities were invoked - by no less than the state in the case of Korea - to be "loyal and supportive of their husbands" (DAWN-APDC 1998). Implicit in this resurgent model of so-called 'Asian values' is the idea that, if things go wrong for the family or for the nation, it is somehow women's fault or at least their responsibility to set right.

Social ennui, suicides and crimes were visible throughout the region in the aftermath of the crisis. In Korea alone, 2,300 suicides caused by depression over financial hardships were reported in the first three months of 1998 (Kamoltrakul 1999).



Official crime rates increased everywhere (Knowles, Pernia and Racelis 1999) and long-standing ethnic tensions erupted into open violence and political instability in Indonesia. Increased abuse of foreign domestic helpers by their employers was noted by Malaysian newspapers and in Thailand, the prostitution and trafficking of young women from Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam and Burma, as well as the exploitation and abuse of unregistered economic migrants from these countries intensified (Kamoltrakul 1999). Most blatant has been the systematic and growing use of violence against women as a weapon. Groups vying for state power, especially in Indonesia, have in the last three years consistently used rape and murder of young girls and women as weapons in their struggles.

The crisis has also revealed another facet. Feminist scholars and historians of sexuality have long maintained that control over women and over sexuality often go hand in hand, and that these are linked in various ways to struggles over property and economic dominance. A bizarre replay of such linkage appears to be in progress in Malaysia where the struggle between the economic forces aligned to Mahathir (domestic capitalists?) and those represented by Anwar Ibrahim (global interests?) is being played out on the terrain of sexuality. Such displacements are not new. History is replete with examples in which economic struggles between powerful contenders for state control appear as struggles over 'culture', sexuality, and gender.

As stated at the outset of this article, the Asian crisis makes it clear that economic globalisation and the forces of gender power and sexual domination are not opposites but cohabit in a close if contradictory symbiosis.

## GENDER AND TRADE SEMINAR IN SUVA

Mariama Williams and Marina Durano took the opportunity to visit DAWN office in Suva after attending a roundtable meeting on gender and economic reform held by the South Pacific Forum Secretariat in Fiji. They presented a seminar on Gender and Trade organised by DAWN Secretariat at the University of the South



Pacific on 3 March 2000.


Mariama Williams, left, who prepared DAWN's discussion paper for the WTO Seattle Ministerial in November 1999, said inequality and disempowerment of the South under globalisation is nothing new - it used to be called colonialism. She said that extraction of wealth and mechanisms of control were now occurring

through trade, debt and capital flows. These were merely more subtle weapons than under colonialism.

Marina Durano, right, from Manila, who is also on the DAWN gender and trade team, spoke about some

of the adverse effects of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) on developing countries. She stressed the need for developing countries of the South to have access to information and to be prepared when they went into trade negotiations with developed countries.

They spoke about how ignoring the roles of women in trade policies not only affect the quality of women's lives and their access to resources, but also had implications for productivity, effects on macro-policies and on long term growth. Both emphasised the need for solidarity amongst developing countries when they negotiated in the WTO.

"We no longer have the luxury of debating this. The more we are able to consolidate, the more effective developing countries can be," Mariama Williams said. She gave the example of the ACP (African, Caribbean and Pacific countries), that were joined by India at the Ministerial meeting in Seattle in November last year to be "disobedient", and oppose negotiations they felt could disadvantage developing countries. 



**D**AWN is collaborating with the Latin American regional campaign for decriminalising abortion, known as the September 28th Campaign. DAWN-Latin America is a member of the Campaign, and DAWN will work closely with the Campaign in several areas. DAWN will be involved in the design of policy-oriented strategies aimed at influencing regional institutions and processes, and in the design of a research project aimed at mapping the operation of right-wing opposition in the region. It will make linkages with the Caribbean region, as efforts there in the past two years have consistently not worked. The DAWN regional Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights group has taken on responsibility to produce an analysis on what has happened on abortion in the post-Cairo process. The Campaign will provide information and analyses on its experience, which could inspire other regions.

### THE PR&ST NOW IN



### REPORTS PRINT

A report on the DAWN South Asia Regional Workshop on Political Restructuring and Social Transformation that was held in Bangalore 29-31 August 1998 has been published with the title *Beyond the Malestream: Feminist Perspectives on Political Restructuring and Social Transformation*. South Asia Regional Coordinator, Vanita Nayak Mukherjee, is the editor of the 75 page book.

Excerpt: "Increasingly, women's rights are being violated and violence justified by conservative and revivalist forces in the name of a community's 'identity' or reasserting the 'honour' of a landed caste. Violence also underlies the ideology of 'honour'."

The report of the DAWN South Asia, South East Asia and Pacific PR&ST Workshop, Chiang Mai, Thailand, 8-11 October 1999, has been published as a 55 page book titled *Signposts to the Summit: Towards WSSD+5*. The editorial team included South East Asia Regional Coordinator, Gigi Francisco, and Communications Officer Seona Smiles.

Excerpt: "Even though political economies are always a dimension of a culture, and culture always a dimension of political economy, each speaks to a different order of social life in a different register of oppression. Cultural control is more often exercised through consent, shaping of our hearts and minds, rather than direct force."

## IMPROVING MONITORING MECHANISMS

*From East Africa Regional Focal Point, Fatma Alloo, who represented DAWN at a workshop on monitoring mechanisms held in Copenhagen.*

An intensely technical three day workshop organised by the Danish organisation Kvindernes U-Landsudvalg, KULU, was held 31 January 1999 to 2 February 2000 to discuss and share mechanisms for monitoring the implementation of the programme of action of the International Conference on Population and Development that was held in Cairo in 1994. It addressed priority issues for monitoring ICPD; came up with a common framework on indicators; identified strategies and tools for local and grassroots monitoring; and tools for capacity building on advocacy.

An historical perspective of activities since the ICPD and how DAWN views the struggles of reproductive rights as part of gender justice was presented.

*"In many countries in Africa there is a political will to look into the issue of sexuality due to AIDS, but weak resources in several countries hamper the realisation of the ICPD Programme of Action to integrate reproductive health services at all levels of the health care system. The concept, sexual and reproductive rights, is poorly understood, and although contraception is tolerated everywhere, it is in the light of AIDS prevention and not as a sexual right. Abortion also continues to be prohibited. The socio-cultural environment with persistent sexist cultures and traditions as well as the economic environment are major constraints to the implementation of the Programme of Action. Few countries have monitoring instruments, including gender desegregated data, to back their commitments."*

A synthesis of the Africa national report on the progress made in the implementation of the Daka/Beijing Platform for Action (PFA) produced by the Sixth African Regional Conference on Women in Addis Ababa in November 1999, and discussed by Francophone Africa Regional Coordinator, Fatou Sow, at DAWN's November meeting in Cape Town, was an asset in terms of a data bank from Africa as a whole. Similarly, Asia and Latin America presented their work on monitoring gains. The Africa region identified participation of the women's movement in decision-making, women's health, reproductive rights and adolescent sexual and reproductive rights as priorities to be monitored and have indicator tools developed for them. Asia and Latin America made similar recommendations.

The workshop decided that all monitoring has to be research-based but coordinated by those who have developed monitoring methodologies. In Asia, the Malaysia-based ARROW that is already working in partnership with CHETNA of India and ISA of Philippines will continue. They have been funded by KULU. Latin America, which is coordinated by the Latin America and Caribbean Women's Health Network (LACWHN) and funded by KULU is to continue. Africa decided that the African Centre for Empowerment, Gender and Advocacy (AC-EGA), which has already developed monitoring tools and does capacity building training, is to coordinate women and decision making, while adolescent sexual health will be based with DAWN Anglophone Africa Regional Coordinator, Bene Madunagu, in Nigeria under her organisation Girl Power.

## Africa Regional Meeting

*By Fatma Alloo*

The DAWN Africa Regional Meeting in Cape Town 1-3 December 1999 identified the Beijing+5 process as crucial for Africa. A strong presence at the PrepComs was required, and promotion of African concerns.

Also on the global level agenda for Africa DAWN were poverty eradication, peace-building, trade, macroeconomic policies and women's empowerment. The meeting identified research topics under DAWN's main themes of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, Globalisation, and Political Restructuring and Social Transformation as: Types of Family, Abortion, Women in Trade, Poor Females in Urban Slums, Young Female Leadership, and Information Technology Use.

Meeting participants have been assigned to write proposals for DAWN Africa regional work for the three year period 2000-2002. Suggestions under consideration include a project on Young Women and Governance, to encourage young women as leaders in feminist networks. The scheme would involve focal points and coordinators identifying one or two young women to become co-focal points, to mobilise young women on issues of concern at country and regional level. Leadership development would be encouraged through established networks. The young women would be exposed to a history of feminism and to DAWN research themes. The scheme is intended to create a core group of about 16 young women to begin. The object is to create a long term capacity building of the feminist movement and create an alternative vision.

## WORDS AND INTERESTS ON THE WEB

The Draft of the Political Declaration for Beijing+5, disclosed by the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women on 7 January 2000, is another illustration of the semantic battles that characterised UN negotiations during the '90s, particularly when matters under discussion concerned women. DAWN has the draft declaration, and a commentary by the Research Coordinator for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, Sonia Correa, on the Beijing+5 web page, [www.dawn.org.fj/beijing](http://www.dawn.org.fj/beijing).

She warns that NGOs and official delegations need to arrive in New York informed and prepared for the first big battle of millennium in the United Nations.

## PUTTING PR&ST ON RECORD

Wayang, a video film crew from Malaysia, has been contracted by DAWN to do a visual presentation of the Political Restructuring and Social Transformation process. Wayang is the group that produced a 60-minute award-winning video "Dolls and Dust", about the impact of industrial restructuring, globalisation and mal(e)-development in Sri Lanka, Thailand and South Korea.

The PR&ST video will record the DAWN process and provide a tool for feminist organisations. The team has already captured images from the Chiang Mai regional meeting, and the inter-regional meeting in Africa. The video will be launched during the WSSD+5 activities in Geneva in June.

## IN PLACE

Viviene Taylor, DAWN Research Coordinator for Political Restructuring and Social Transformation, is Advisor to the South African Minister who has been appointed Chair of the United Nations Commission on Social Development from February 2000 to February 2001. He is Dr Zola Skweyiya, Minister for Welfare, Population and Development. Minister Skweyiya has asked Viviene to assist him in all aspects of this appointment. One of the chief tasks of the Commission is to work on the Review of the WSSD. The Minister's appointment is an honour for South Africa, a great deal of exciting work for Viviene — and very good news for the WSSD+5 process. DAWN extends Viviene and Minister Skweyiya best wishes for this project.

## SECURING A PLACE IN CYBERSPACE

From DAWN Communications Officer, Seona Smiles, who attended a conference on "Transformation of the Women's Movement: From Ground to Cyberspace" held by the Research Institute of Asian Women and Asian Pacific Women's Information Network Centre, at Sookmyung Women's University, Seoul, Korea, in November.

*"Internet...most of all has empowered us, by giving us the information, the analysis, the sense of solidarity; the experience of shared achievements, the encouragement and moral support that comes from being part of a network, a movement with common goals and visions. I have almost forgotten what it was like without it, I cannot imagine life without it."* DAWN Past General Coordinator, Peggy Antrobus.

DAWN came late to electronic communication. Until 1995, DAWN's work had much to do with influencing the international conferences - preparing analyses for them, advocacy at them. Electronic communication systems were not seen as appropriate because they were largely inaccessible to women in the South, although some individual women did have use of them from an early period. At the point where DAWN saw email and internet as a tool for its operations, it had become much more accessible to South women. Since 1997 DAWN has used email, and its web site comprises an important element in DAWN's ability to network with other organisations and provide information globally on its analyses, issues, positions and activities.

But it is the medium, and not only the message, which is of concern. By the time DAWN reached cyberspace, it was already a patriarchal construct. Far from being the neutral, unbiased, non-gendered space it was promoted as, cyberspace

does not stand outside dominant patriarchal conditions. It has even become a stalking ground, with on-line sexual violence and abuse, as well as providing an area for promoting pornography. As a technology originally male designed and still male dominated, the terminology of cyberspace is gendered, e.g. the person controlling a web site is known as a "webmaster". Search engines are structured to predominant male interests, e.g. a search for matters on women may lead to pornographic rather than feminist sites. Still far fewer women than men are broaching the male-dominated atmosphere of computer nerd territory to enter the fields of computer and information technology. Yet cyberspace offers unlimited potential for crossing boundaries.

*"Critical perspectives on cyberspace have an obvious potential to disrupt the degree to which women have historically been contained predominantly within masculinist (especially state and home) boundaries and thus withheld from each other. The seeking of collective spaces has been intrinsic to women's transformative practices and cyberspace provides real opportunities for extending the scope of those explorations."* Gillian Youngs, Professor of Mass Communication, University of Leicester, UK.

DAWN is supporting the "See Change" Campaign of Catholics for a Free Choice to change the Holy See's status at the UN. The Roman Catholic Church is the only religion which has the status of a Non-member State Permanent Observer. There is concern that difficulties with the Vatican experienced at the Cairo+5 meetings will disrupt preparations in the Beijing+5 process. Postcards to protest to the UN are available. Further information is available from Catholics for a Free Choice website [www.seechange.org](http://www.seechange.org) and email: [info@seechange.org](mailto:info@seechange.org)

*DAWN Informs* is published three times a year by Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN) as a network-ing 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. **Subscribers please notify us of any change of address by contacting the Communications Officer, Seona Smiles, email: smiles\_s@usp.ac.fj; or fax DAWN on (679) 314770.**

## STEERING COMMITTEE

**General Coordinator:** *Claire Slatter, Fiji*

Tel: (679) 313900 Ext 2183/2184

Fax (679) 314770

Email: Dawn@is.com.fj

**Former General Coordinator:** *Peggy Antrobus, Barbados*

Tel/Fax: (246) 4374235

Email: Pan@caribsurf.com

## RESEARCH COORDINATORS

**Political Economy of Globalisation:**

*Gita Sen, India*

Tel: (91) 80 658 2450;

Fax: (91) 80 664 4050

Email: Gita@iimb.emet.in

**Sexual and Reproductive Rights:**

*Sonia Correa, Brazil*

Tel: (55) 21 553 0676;

Fax: (55) 21 552 8796

Email: Scorrea@ax.apc.org

**Pol. Restructuring/ Soc. Transformation**

*Vivienne Taylor, South Africa*

Tel: (27) 21 6504221;

Fax: (27) 21 6854304

Email: Taylor94@iafrica.com

**Sustainable Livelihoods**

*Vivienne Wee, Singapore*

Tel: (65) 258 3022; Fax: (65) 258 3055

Email: Engender@pacific.net.sg

## REGIONAL COORDINATORS

**Caribbean:** *Keturah Cecelia Babb, Barbados*

Tel: (246) 437 6055; Fax: (246) 437 3381

Email: dawncaribbean@sunbeach.net

**Latin America:** *Cellita Eccher, Uruguay*

Tel/Fax: (598-2) 403-0599

Email: Repem@chasque.apc.org

**Africa: Francophone:** *Fatou Sow, Senegal*

Tel: (221) 825-0090; Fax: (221) 825-6533

Email: Fatousow@telecomplus.sn

**Anglophone:** *Bene Madunagu, Nigeria*

Tel: (234) 8723-0929; Fax: (234) 8723-6298

Email: Gpi@fordwa.linkserv.org

**Asia: South:** *Vanita Nayak Mukherjee, India*

Tel: (91) 471 441534

Email: Vanita@md2.vsnl.net.in

**Asia: South East:** *Gigi Francisco,*

*Philippines*

Tel: (63) 2 9272421; Fax: (63) 2 4260169

Email: gigifran@skynet.net & dawn-sea@mc.edu.ph

**Pacific:** *Yvonne Underhill-Sem, Samoa*

Tel: (685) 20008; Fax: (685) 20231

Email: Yju@samoa.ws

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**DAWN** (Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era)

School of Social and Economic Development

University of the South Pacific, Suva, FIJI

Tel: (679) 313900; Fax: (679) 314770

Email: dawn@is.com.fj

Website: [www.dawn.org.fj](http://www.dawn.org.fj)