

CONFRONTING THE CRISIS IN LATIN  
AMERICA:  
WOMEN ORGANIZING  
FOR CHANGE



Isis  
international



Development Alternatives With  
Women for a New Era (DAWN)

## Isis International Staff

**Rome:** Charito Basa, Gabriela Charnes, Lucia Di Censi, Gabriela Fabiani, Christine Georgeff, Marilee Karl, Marisa Del Monte.

**Santiago:** María Teresa Chadwick, Ximena Charnes, Amparo Claro, Ana María Gómez, Catalina Ruiz, María Antonieta Saa, Angélica Torrealba, Soledad Weinstein.

We would like to thank Loreto Bravo, Vicky Browning, Carmen Gloria Dunnage, Isabel Duque, Patricia Gallardo, Clara Hemsted, Rachael Kamel, Eliana Largo, Gloria Molina, Judith Nelson; Lila Palma, Teresa Rodríguez, Joni Rau, Rosa Varas, Rebeca Yanez, who also collaborate with us.

### Founders of ISIS:

Jane Cottingham & Marilee Karl.

### Isis International Associates

Isis International has a group of Associates, women from different parts of the world, who support our aims, give advice and collaborate in our programs. Our current Associates are:

Anita Anand, India; Peggy Antrobus, Barbados; Marie Assaad, Egypt; Judith Astelarra, Spain; Suzanne Aurelius, Chile; Brigaliá Bam, South Africa; Nita Barrow, Barbados; Jessie Bernard, USA; Rekha Bezboraiah, India; Kamla Bhasin, India; Adelia Borges, Brazil; Boston Women's Health Book Collective, USA; Elise Boulding, USA; Charlotte Bunch, USA; Ximena Bunster, Chile; Ah Fong Chung, Mauritius; Giuseppina Dante, Italy; Miranda Davies, UK; Corinne Kumar D'Souza, India; Elizabeth Eie, Norway; Akke van Eijden, Netherlands; Foo Gaik Sim, Malaysia; Maria Girardet, Italy; Saralee Hamilton, USA; Karin Himmelstrand, Sweden; Devaki Jain, India; Kumari Jayawardena, Sri Lanka; Annette Kaiser, Switzerland; Nighat Khan, Pakistan; Geertje Lycklama, Netherlands; Mary John Manzanan, Philippines; Giovanna Mérola, Venezuela; Robin Morgan, USA; Vivian Mota, Dominican Republic; Magaly Pineda, Dominican Republic; Ana María Portugal, Perú; Rhoda Reddock, Trinidad and Tobago; Luz Helena Sánchez, Colombia; Olga Amparo Sánchez, Colombia; Adriana Santa Cruz, Chile; Marie-Angélique Savané, Senegal; Else Skönsberg, Norway; Cecilia Torres, Ecuador; Moema Viezzer, Brazil; Maria Villariba, Philippines.



### Book Series 1988/2

We would like to thank CIDA (Canadá), Commission on Interchurch Aid of the Netherlands Reformed Church, DANIDA (Denmark), the Dutch Foreign Ministry, Evangelisches Missionswerk (Germany), Gereformeerde Kerken (Netherlands), NORAD (Norway), SIDA (Sweden) for the support they have given us. We are especially grateful to the United Methodist Church for their grant towards this publication.

The articles in this publication do not necessarily represent the opinion of Isis International. Non-profit women's groups may reproduce this material giving the proper credit.

This issue of the Women's Book Series was prepared in Santiago, Chile jointly Isis International and representatives of DAWN.

### Isis International addresses:

**Italia:** Via San Saba 5,  
00153 Roma, Italia  
Tel. 5746479

**Chile:** Casila 2067  
Correo Central, Santiago, Chile.  
Tel.: 490271

Book Series 1988/2

CONFRONTING THE CRISIS IN LATIN  
AMERICA:

WOMEN ORGANIZING FOR  
CHANGE



Isis International

and

Development Alternatives With Women for a New Era (DAWN)

# table of contents

development alternatives with women for a new era - DAWN	7
the crisis in Latin America and its impact on women a summary of research by members of the DAWN network in Latin America <i>Neuma Aguiar</i>	11
women confront the economic crisis and demand participation <i>Socorro Ramirez</i>	25
women in labor unions: organization, practices, and demands <i>Monica Gogna</i>	33
the impact of the crisis on women of the mining region <i>Gloria Ardaya S.</i>	41
sex and crisis <i>Carmen Barroso</i>	47
Latin American women and the crisis <i>Irma Arriagada</i>	53
women's economic projects: reflections from experience <i>Patricia de Rivas</i>	61
poor women in Santiago: something more than the crisis <i>Claudia Serrano Madrid</i>	67
the women's movement in Latin America: a challenge for analysis and action <i>Virginia Vargas Valente</i>	75
women in transition: from the separate to the whole <i>Ana Criquillón and Olga María Espinosa</i>	81
the struggle for social security for the domestic worker <i>Magdalena León</i>	87
for an Afro-Latin American feminism <i>Lélia González</i>	95
resources	103

# Table of contents

Translated and edited by: Barbara Stob and Nena Terrell

Design: Vesna Sekulovic

Typesetting: Texpress and Nena Terrell

Cover photo: Paz Errázuriz

Printed by: Andrómeda S.A.

We would like to thank the various women's groups and organizations which have generously lent us photographs for this book

© 1988 by Isis International. All rights reserved.

Inscription No. 72099

Santiago, Chile

---

## introduction

*Confronting the crisis in Latin America: women organizing for change* seeks to examine the effects on that continent of the profound economic, social and political crisis of the past several years, particularly its effects on the lives of women in the region.

A series of articles prepared by women researchers organized by DAWN explores how the crisis and the policies enacted by governments to confront it have changed the living conditions of women. In particular, the authors show how women's fulfillment of their traditional role as provider of basic family needs has left them overworked and poor. They also examine how women's subordination has aggravated the effects of the crisis in their lives. These issues are analyzed as they occur in different facets of women's lives, in distinct countries and among women of different social classes.

The analysis presented here, however, shows not only the effects of the crisis and government policies on women, but also reveals how women have responded by creating new forms of participation in many types of organizations, among them subsistence organizations and the feminist movement.

This publication was coordinated by Development Alternatives With Women for a New Era (DAWN) whom we thank for the opportunity to disseminate their thoughts through our Women's Book Series. We also thank Virginia Vargas, Director of the Centro de la Mujer Peruana, Flora Tristán and coordinator of the "Women's Movements and Visions of the Future" Program of DAWN, who compiled this publication.

We hope that "Confronting the Crisis", Women's Book Series 1988/2, contributes to a greater understanding of these issues and encourages new ways of achieving development in Latin America which take into account women's needs for justice and equality.

Isis International Team, December 1988



Helen Hughes

# development alternatives with women for a new era - DAWN

**D**evelopment Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN) was formed by a group of researchers and feminists in Bangalore, India in 1984. The women, meeting for the first time, prepared a platform analyzing the impact of the world crisis on poverty in the Third World as well as the central role women played in the crisis, as providers of basic necessities for their families. The platform, now in the form of a book, is in its second edition, and is published in English by the Monthly Review Press. It is entitled *Development Crisis and Alternative Visions: Third World Women's Perspectives*. A Portuguese edition has just been issued by the editorial "Espaco e Tempo" in Rio de Janeiro.

The support DAWN received in Nairobi encouraged the group to seek continuity and expand their contacts by forming a network, establishing a rotating secretariat and electing a council made up of members from various regions of the world.

DAWN, as a network, opted for a system of participation in which individuals could contribute according to their potential and interests. Although the network is not made up of institutions, DAWN participants generally use their institutional affiliations to support the network. For example, the Secretariat resides for a period until November, 1989, in the Instituto Universitario de Pesquisas de Rio de Janeiro (IUPERJ) (Rua Paulino Fernandes 32, Rio de Janeiro RJ, Brazil).

DAWN made the decision to create regional research groups with coordinators in charge of identifying and gathering together researchers who are working on DAWN's priority themes. In addition, sub-networks are being formed in the various regions. The first regional group to organize a meeting was the Latin American network, which was aided by the fact that the DAWN Secretariat is located in the region. Similar meetings are being organized in Africa, Asia (South and Southeast) and the Caribbean. Because resources are insufficient to organize large meetings, DAWN is also maintaining connections with other national and regional research networks which are already in existence and which work in similar ways. This avoids duplication of efforts and gives DAWN the opportunity to take advantage of existing resources.

In its analysis of poverty, DAWN's founding group established two priorities for research: "The Impact of the Crisis and the External Debt on Women and Food and Energy Production" and

"Women's Movements and Visions for the Future". These two themes are not being undertaken as a separate research project by the network; rather, the network hopes to identify individuals working on these issues and promote communication and interaction among them.

DAWN not only encourages women to carry out research in these areas, it seeks to make this information available to women's movements and to call the attention of governments and organizations in charge of formulating public policies to these issues. DAWN is aware of the need to design development policies which meet peoples' needs, rather than policies which promote "cumulative" growth that accentuates social inequalities. DAWN tries also to highlight the struggle of women in meeting the basic needs of their families and communities. Thus, the researchers offer a context in which to interpret women's everyday lives and the ways in which they can obtain better living conditions. While many social movements have formed alternative visions of development, DAWN seeks to identify these movements and critique them from a feminist perspective.

In order to disseminate the results of this research DAWN is implementing other projects. One of these provides training for researchers. To do this DAWN is establishing contacts for exchanges with various programs which offer classes in Latin America, such as the programs of CEPAL (Economic Commission for Latin America) and CLACSO (Latin American Council for the Social Sciences), the Interdisciplinary Program in Women's Studies of the University of Buenos Aires, and the program being developed in IUPERJ, the site of the DAWN Secretariat, for DAWN participants from Latin American and African countries who speak Portuguese.

One of DAWN's priorities is to establish contact with organizations dedicated to the education of women who participate in social movements and who would be interested in the research being carried out by the network. One initiative of this type which took place recently was a training program for women offered by CEAAL (Latin American Council for Adult Education). Members of the feminist movement with experience in training participated in the discussion of the results of this program.

A study program about the crisis has also been developed by Socorro Ramírez for women who participate in various social movements. This program arose out of a strategy designed to communicate and disseminate the results of DAWN research to a wider audience. It sought to stimulate the development of teaching materials for the discussion of research findings.

The international coordinator of DAWN is participating in a legal research project being carried out by the South Commission, an advisory organization for non-aligned countries. DAWN has also maintained contacts with United Nations organizations to obtain data on the regional level, from groups such as the Women's Division of CEPAL, or from other organizations, such as UNICEF and the ILO.

DAWN is also studying ways to broaden participation in the Network. You can collaborate by sending information about research, training and communication materials which have to do with DAWN's priority research themes to the Secretariat or to the research coordinators whose names follow. Another way for you to participate is to send DAWN your thoughts and opinions about ongoing research projects in Latin America, of which some information is provided in this issue of the Women's Book Series.

The Network does not have resources to finance research and thus functions only as a catalyst for research and for the development of training, communication and teaching materials and reviews. The Bulletin MUDAR Informa (DAWN Reports) includes a bibliography about the crisis and women's movements, as well as news about the Network. DAWN is also planning an interregional meeting which will hopefully enable many more women to participate in the work. Resources for the Secretariat and DAWN activities have been provided by the Ford Foundation, the governments of the Netherlands and Norway, FINIDA, the Rockefeller Foundation, the Government Fund of Nairobi for NGO activities, IDRC and anonymous donations.

**General Coordinator**  
Neuma Aguiar

**Information Consultant**  
Thais Corral

**Secretary**  
Rosangela A. Silva

**DAWN c/o IUPERJ**  
Rua Paulino Fernandes 32  
22270 Rio de Janeiro RJ, Brazil

**Board of Directors**

**Research Coordinator (Asia)**  
Hameeda Hossain  
Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies  
Dhaka, Bangladesh

**Communications Coordinator (Pacific)**  
Claire Slatter  
Department of Politics  
South Pacific University  
Suva, Fiji

**Issues Coordinator (Caribbean)**  
Lucille Mair  
ISER  
University of West Indies  
Mona, Kingston 6, Jamaica

**International Relations Coordinator (Asia)**  
Devaki Jain  
ISST  
Tharanga, Rajmahal Vilas Extension  
Bangalore 560006, India

**Publications Coordinator (Latin America)**  
Lourdes Arizpe  
El Colegio de México  
Camino al Ajusco 20  
México DF 01000 México

**Training Coordinator**  
Bolanle Awe  
Institute of African Studies  
University of Ibadan  
Ibadan, Nigeria

**Coordinators of Research Groups**

**1. The impact of the crisis and the external debt on women and food and energy production**

**Caribbean**  
Peggy Antrobus  
Extra Mural Department  
University of West Indies  
Pinelands, Barbados

**East Africa**  
Maria Nzomo  
Department of Government  
University of Nairobi  
P.O. Box 30197  
Nairobi, Kenya

**West Africa**  
Ayesha Imam  
Department of Sociology  
Ahmadu Bello University  
Zaria, Nigeria

**South Asia**  
Nirmala Banerjee  
CSSO  
10 Lake Terrace  
Cal 29, Calantha, India 700029

**Southeast Asia**  
Noellen Heyzer  
Asian and Pacific Development Centre  
Pesiaran Duta  
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

**Pacific**  
Claire Slatter

**Latin America**  
Cheyma Spindel  
IDESP  
Avda. Dr. Arnaldo, 1973  
01255, Sao Paulo SP Brazil

---

**2. Women's movements and visions of  
the future**

**Caribbean**

Rhoda Reddock  
Lot 22B Leotaud Lands  
Arima, Trinidad and Tobago

**Eastern Africa**

Maria Nzomo

**Western Africa**

Ayesha Imam

**South Asia**

Hameeda Hossain

**Southeast Asia**

Noelleen Heyzer

**Latin America**

Virginia Vargas  
Flora Tristán  
Parque Herman Vilarde 42  
Lima 1, Peru

---

*Confronting the crisis in Latin America: women organizing for change* seeks to examine the effects on that continent of the profound economic, social and political crisis of the past several years, particularly the effects of the crisis on the lives of women in the region.

A series of articles prepared by women researchers organized by DAWN explores how the crisis and the policies enacted by governments to confront it have changed the living conditions of women. In particular, the authors show how women's fulfillment of their traditional role as provider of basic family needs has left them overworked and poor. They also examine how women's subordination has aggravated the effects of the crisis in their lives. These issues are analyzed as they occur in different facets of women's lives, in distinct countries and among women of different social classes.

The analysis presented here, however, shows not only the effects of the crisis and government policies on women, but also reveals how Latin American women have responded by creating new forms of participation in many types of organizations, among them subsistence organizations and the feminist movement. Through these movements women are learning not only to survive, but to overcome discrimination and repression, and to better know and understand themselves and the possibilities for change in their lives.

---