

DAWN South Asia, South East Asia, & Pacific Workshop Report
Chiang Mai, Thailand, 8-11 October 1999

Signposts to the Summit: Towards WSSD + 5

DAWN Regional Debates
on Political Restructuring and
Social Transformation



DAWN
Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era



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Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era
School of Social and Economic Development
The University of the South Pacific
Suva, Fiji Islands
Tel: (679) 313 900, Ext.2183/2184
Direct dial (679) 212 183, 212 184
FAX: (679) 314 770
Email: dawn@is.com.fj
Internet: www.dawn.org.fj

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DAWN

Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era





Transcription:
Concept & Preliminary Editing:
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Editorial Guidance:

Ainjani F. Abella
Gigi Francisco
Seona Smiles
Claire Slatter,
Gigi Francisco,
Vanita Mukherjee,
Vivienne Taylor

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Summary

The DAWN South Asia, South East Asia and Pacific Regional Workshop on Political Restructuring and Social Transformation was held at the Amari Rincome Hotel, Chiang Mai, Thailand, 8-11 October, 1999. The Heinrich-Boell Foundation provided funding for the PR&ST project, particularly for the process of meetings and research papers which contribute to a collective analysis from women of the South.


The objectives of the meeting were to gain a sense of what feminists and women in the region wanted to identify as the essential and fundamental concerns in political restructuring and social transformation; and also to identify analytical tools to take them forward. The process itself was a focus. Issues discussed and information contributed at the workshop became incorporated in the papers and reports.

DAWN PR&ST Research Coordinator, Vivienne Taylor, outlined DAWN's emerging global framework on PR&ST for consideration at the national/regional level. Research papers were presented from each sub-region - SAsia, SEAsia and the Pacific - on four themes: The State and Globalisation; Institutionalisation of Women's Politics; Social Movements, Women's Movement and the State; and Power and Politics. There were plenary and sub-regional sessions to discuss the feminist debates on PR&ST and the issues raised in the papers, and how to link research with advocacy at national, regional and global level.

From the insights gained at the workshop and from the thematic papers contributed, other researchers were engaged to produce sub-regional syntheses. These analyses contribute, with the analyses from the Africa, Latin America and Caribbean regions, to the DAWN platform document prepared for the Copenhagen+5 meeting, the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on the five-year review of the World Summit on Social Development (WSSD), in Geneva 26-30 June 2000.

As with earlier DAWN platform documents, the PR&ST synthesis challenges the impact of the dominant development model on the lives of women of the South, particularly the poorest and most vulnerable, and promotes alter-





native policies and actions that take into account their perspectives and realities. While DAWN takes the analyses and alternatives into the global advocacy arena, the analyses and discussion at the regional workshops assist the participants, and other feminists in their organisations and areas to engage in the debate in their own sphere.

The SAsia/SEAsia/Pacific workshop was attended by members of the DAWN Secretariat, DAWN South Asia and South East Asia Regional Coordinators, the DAWN PR&ST Research Coordinator, and representatives from the Heinrich-Boell Foundation. There were 40 participants from the three sub-regions.

This book captures what was said at that meeting by bringing together excerpts from presentations made by researchers engaged in DAWN's PR&ST process, and the flavour of the debate. The full research papers will be published later.

1. Welcome and Introduction

1.1 Welcome Remarks by DAWN General Coordinator, Claire Slatter

When DAWN first adopted the PR&ST theme as a focus for research, analysis and advocacy back in 1996, our concern was simply to address the impacts of the global economy and the changing economic order on the role of the state and its capacity to deliver gender justice. The theme was therefore closely connected to our ongoing analysis of the global economy which has long been the mainstay of DAWN's work. It was felt also that a stronger focus on the political dimensions of global economic restructuring was needed to complement DAWN's analysis of economic globalisation. The collapse of socialist regimes, the discrediting of state-led development, post cold war geopolitical re-configurations, and the global ascendancy of neo-liberal economics have all impacted significantly on the institution and the very concept of the state. Other forces such as fundamentalism, militarism, colonialism (which remains in some regions including the Pacific), continuing forms of ethno-nationalism and various related forces have also impacted upon the state and society in very fundamental ways. Usually with dire and sometimes horrendous consequences for women.

The World Bank's promotion of a market-friendly state as a mid-wife in the passage to private sector-led economic growth created economic policies designed to downsize the state, divest it of its economic assets and revenue-earning parts, and erode its capacity to deliver social needs. The dominant discourse on governance and accountability that arose in 1993 and 1994 largely came to focus on the financial excesses of political leaders: in other words, on matters such as corruption and the virtues of financial accountability. Systematic economic deregulation and the advance towards a global regime of free trade have been achieved with the complicity of national political leaders who have been converted to free market ideas. Often these do not have any mandate to commit their countries to international trade agreements by which



subsequent governments will be inescapably bound. Most of us have had the experience of seeing our governments enter into international treaties which have long term consequences for our societies and by which subsequent governments are hamstrung. Given the immense power of the World Trade Organisation, WTO, and the continuing push for a multi-lateral agreement on investment to effectively give supreme rights to transnational corporations and make states accountable to them, there is much theorising today about the end of state sovereignty and of the nation-state, as well as about the diminishing role of the United Nations.

The DAWN PR&ST project seeks, among other things, to critique or challenge mainstream governance and political reform ideas which have arisen in the context of economic globalisation, and to expose the political dimensions of economic globalisation. We hope to offer a path-breaking feminist analysis, drawn from the experience, insights and wisdom of feminists from the South, of the fundamental problems of 'reformed' political systems and practices. We want to interrogate the meaning of terms or concepts, or realities, if you like, such as democracy, citizenship, nationality, rights, accountability, political participation and representation and state responsibility, among many others. We also seek to articulate a vision of genuine political re-structuring to achieve the social transformation that is necessary for realising equitable, environmentally sustainable and gender-just development.

The DAWN process in this research and analysis will be reliant on contributions from feminists and activists like yourselves through regional meetings such as this. This is the first of a series of regional meetings that will be followed by an inter-regional meeting next year to complete what will be a global analysis on PR&ST.

Vivienne Taylor is DAWN's research coordinator for the PR&ST theme. She has been working on a broad framework for the PR&ST analysis and will be the main facilitator at this meeting. We have had three regional meetings so far that have begun to look at this framework. The first took place in Manila in April 1998; a second in India in August the same year; and a third in Latin America in April 1999.

A lot has happened since the first meeting which discussed in a preliminary way PR&ST issues in South East Asia. The Manila meeting, which DAWN co-sponsored with APDC-GAD, actually focused on the financial crisis and its political and other implications. There was a lot of interest amongst the participants in the political implications of the crisis. Just two months later there was a tumultuous political upheaval and a regime change in Indonesia. Barely a year after that, the shockingly violent response to the East Timor referendum results brought sharply home the enormous problem with which those engaged in the struggle for democratisation within Indonesia are faced.

The reality is that the power and pervasiveness of military regimes remains a major problem and an obstacle to political restructuring and social transformation in many countries of the Asia-Pacific region. At the same time, we do have some instances where there is cause for encouragement and hope. Take the case of Fiji, where we have seen over the past two years tremendous changes taking place in just that one island nation state: a successful constitutional review process in which citizens participated quite strongly and centrally,

resulting in a changed constitution. This was a shift from a racist, undemocratic constitution to a constitution based on the fundamental principles of democracy, an entirely new electoral system, a strengthened bill of rights and provisions for a human rights commission, a freedom of information act and a leadership code. The constitution is in its early days but it has already survived a major test: the national elections which took place in May 1999 brought to power a new government which people have accepted.

We want to facilitate a sharing of experience, insights and analysis of states politics and governance at this meeting. We hope that what emerges after the series of regional meetings, and what is endorsed at the inter-regional meeting at the end of January or February 2000, will reflect the collective wisdom of women in this region, and more generally women from the South. We hope that it will be owned by everyone who has been a participant in the process. Your participation and your contributions will be duly acknowledged by DAWN in the final platform.


On behalf of DAWN I would like to thank you very much for joining us in this important project of researching, analysing and envisioning political restructuring and social transformation from a South feminist perspective. I would like to thank the Heinrich-Boell Foundation, especially Roshan Dhunjibhoy, Anna Katherine Lindt, Gregor Enste and Heike Loeschmann. We are extremely grateful to HBF for funding this project on PR&ST, and especially its process - that is the meetings and the research papers that will go into producing what we hope to be a collective analysis from women of the South of the issues of political restructuring and social transformation.

1.2 Address by HBF Representative in South East Asia, Helke Loeschmann

It is extremely important for the small city of Chiang Mai to host an international conference like this one because in Thailand, everyone is speaking about decentralisation but many big meetings are still being held in Bangkok. This also applies to the decision of HBF to set up the Southeast Asia Regional Office in Chiang Mai and not in Bangkok. I want to say just a few words about the HBF and why we support this global project.

We do not consider ourselves as funders of conferences. But this is a process in which all the things that are going to be debated are issues related to both the South and the North, and we want to be part of that process. The HBF is affiliated with the Alliance Ninety Green Party of Germany and gets public funding from the German Government through the Green Party, which has seats in the Parliament. But we are pretty independent. Our main foci are environment, state/community development, gender justice or gender democracy, human rights, and cultural heritage and development. Our Brussels and North American offices have recently been opened and they offer what we call a South/North visitor programme. There is special funding for people coming from the South who want to do lobby work either in Brussels or Washington. It might be a possible follow-up of the PR&ST project for some of you to work either in the European or US context, getting closer to either the NGOs or government institutions in the North.





I am especially happy that some of our old project partners, for example the Women's Development Collective, the Aurat Foundation, and Women's Study Centre in Chiang Mai, are here. And I am also very happy to see representatives from Cambodia.

2. The DAWN Political Restructuring and Social Transformation Project

Vivienne Taylor,
DAWN PR&ST Research Coordinator

DAWN arrived at this point of regional and global engagement on PR&ST after intense and rigorous debates leading up to and after the World Conference on Women in Beijing and the World Summit on Social Development in Copenhagen. As DAWN we were challenged to examine how we engaged at a global level within the UN and other global systems of governance and how we took forward both our critical perspectives of these systems and our search for alternatives to the dominant development paradigm – alternatives that will centre in a very fundamental way the perspectives and needs of women from the South. DAWN was mindful of the “dual nature of our engagement” as we tried to locate ourselves as a relevant force in the different fora and spaces at global, regional and national levels.

DAWN realised that it would be straddling a difficult path; that of entering contested space (within some global institutions) to ensure that feminist perspectives on global governance, globalisation, reproductive health and gender justice were heard and considered in these fora. While new spaces were opening up for critical engagement we had to ensure also that our engagement did not diffuse our objectives as a feminist network from the South or lead to co-option.

Vivienne Taylor heads the South African Development Education and Policy Research Unit, SADEP, at the University of Cape Town. SADEP and Vivienne Taylor have strong links with the African National Congress, ANC, and she spent lengthy periods in exile during the apartheid years. Subsequently she has been centrally involved in rebuilding and restructuring South Africa. She is a member of the constitutionally established gender commission in South Africa and is currently an assistant to the Minister of Social Welfare and Development, a very new post. She is also writer of the Human Development Report on South Africa for the second time.



So we began to interrogate our approach and our own strategic objectives within DAWN. Were we really looking at how to engage within a global space that expanded the framework for the attainment of rights of those people who were previously excluded? To what extent were we legitimating existing inequalities and power relations and giving credence to new forms of management that perpetuate the status quo of marginalising women, particularly poor women?

Our analysis on these and other related issues pointed to the gains that had been achieved through engagement and strategic advocacy, especially gains made through women's movements at Beijing and at Copenhagen. DAWN's analysis also showed that these gains were being lost because they were not being translated into real change at the local level. Attempts to review how national processes of political restructuring and social transformation were taking place and the extent to which national governments, regional and global institutions of governance were responding to the commitments made to advance women's equality were essential. How can these gains, these paper guarantees, be translated into real change, a change at the level of social relations?

Unlike attempts to deal with economic inequality, racism and discrimination in the workplace and society at large by going home and closing our doors on these forces, women's oppression, exploitation and discrimination occurs within the household. You cannot go home and close your door on it, it is there all the time. So we asked ourselves whether changes at the global level actually resulted in fundamental social transformation at the level where it counts, in terms of social relations, in terms of relations between men and women, rich and poor and in terms of relations at other levels of society?

We felt that not only did we have to ask these questions but we also had to interrogate them in a way that would change the discourse on governance -- that in our analysis we would actually present a view of governance and of political and social transformation that was very different from the mainstream debates. Mainstream debates on these aspects are male-dominated and conventional in their approach and thinking and serve to reinforce women's subordination in structures of power. These reasons informed DAWN's thinking on how to deepen the analysis and debates from a critical feminist perspective.

As a feminist network of the South we engage in the research process to strengthen our capacity to engage at national, regional and global levels by recasting the analytical frameworks that influence political restructuring. In doing this DAWN seeks also to constantly reflect on and review its own strategic objectives for engaging at different levels in debates and for pushing the social change agenda at these levels.

The discussions leading up to and after the World Summit on Social Development prompted the need for an understanding of governance within a global context that predetermines international relations alongside the increasing interdependence of national economies. In this research programme we look at what issues such as democracy, development, governance, the nature of the state, globalisation and the feminist movement mean and how these constructs shape the lived experiences of poor women. We also begin to reframe traditional constructs such as states, issues of sovereignty, of political identity, of security through feminist lenses. We ask ourselves what these terms mean and

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

Beliefs and Experiences

Allow me to share with you some of my own experiences when we began to engage in preliminary discussions on these issues, questions, and themes. At times I felt that I was committing intellectual and ideological suicide. I felt like a kamikaze pilot, free-falling into an arena that I really didn't begin to understand in all its variations and complexities. The adage that the "more things change the more they remain the same" seemed to apply everywhere I looked for examples of the politics of change and transformation. At other times I had to consciously put aside my own values and beliefs to actually frame the debates in ways that would provoke and stimulate debate and different positions. In this process I also had to review some of my own die-hard beliefs that come from a very strong left tradition.

We are, (as I am) constantly challenged to review very critically the issue of the links between national liberation struggles, the feminist movement and the state. The state, not as we thought of it in the past, as a protagonist, but also as a force that we have to deconstruct and disaggregate and understand from a historical and contemporary perspective of political economy. What I also had to grapple with from a very personal point of view was that engaging within a national liberation struggle is substantially different from engaging within party political processes, because one is mediating very different forces within both arenas. In coordinating this research programme I have also been deeply conscious of the complex issues that shape our frame of reference and our search for alternatives.

The research process is designed to bring together the perspectives of women researchers/activists and feminists from Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, the Pacific Island states, South and South East Asia in a process of critical debate and collective analysis. We have had preliminary debates and discussions on PR&ST in some regions: Latin America, South Asia, Southeast Asia and the Caribbean. These preliminary engagements point to recurrent crises of a political and economic nature; also to the strong links between systems of economic governance, economic fundamentalism and political processes. There is a convergence of complex forces at play that result in fine nuances at macro and micro levels.

Objectives

Our first objective as DAWN is to bring together critical perspectives of feminists from the South to examine both state and non-state processes that shape political and social processes in the arena of governance. Now what we would like to do is to move from the position of having (as all of us do) a critical consciousness to critical analysis and then to critical action at a global, regional and national level -- critical action that can be pegged both at a policy



level, at a level of debates, and at a level of actually challenging people to change (systems and institutions).

The second specific objective that we have within this theme is to identify, through a collective process, the key issues that affect the nature of political and social transformation. One might say that we know what the issues are, but what we found in the recent shifts that are taking place at the global level is that there are cracks emerging in the edifices of global decision-making. How we use these spaces that are being created is going to be very important in determining the alternative paths that we develop to promote the type of transformation that all of us are working towards.

The third specific objective that we saw ourselves working towards is to strengthen our capacity, individually and collectively, through the sharing of common and unique experiences. To analyse, formulate and track political and governance processes from a gender perspective.

The fourth objective that we see as important within DAWN is to examine the nature of the relationships between the women's movement, national liberation movements, and other political formations and identify what alternative political strategies are being or could be used to promote political restructuring and social transformation.

Outcomes

We believe that we are all participants in a process and that we can come up with an analysis that identifies both the "lived" experiences of women in the political and social arena, and translate those lived experiences into an analysis that helps us make sense of the macro context. So what we plan to do is to draw on the research papers and the debates that result from these, promote a critical analysis, and with your permission document it, put it into reports/publications and use it with you as tools to recast the debates through feminist lenses.

The other concrete outcome that we expect to achieve is the promotion of a gender perspective on the process and nature of political restructuring and social transformation, globally and specifically in all our national and regional contexts.

The third outcome is the development of a critical framework which can be used to monitor processes of governance and the promotion of ongoing debates on the impacts of these processes on gender relations.

Because of the support of HBF and the skills of WAYANG we will be able to have an additional outcome, and that is a video that can actually be used as a tool to promote active dissemination of the debates and critical thinking that come out of this meeting. We would like to utilise the information and the video to further expand the debate and to put options to decision-makers on how we can begin to advance the boundaries that we already engaged within.

The last outcome is a platform document to be launched at Copenhagen+5 and a book to be published by the end of 2000. The platform document is going to incorporate all the regional perspectives within a global framework. But more than that, what we hope to do within the platform document is to promote an analysis that is substantially different from the analysis that we see coming out of the mainstream debates on development and governance. We don't only want to promote an alternative, we want to expose the

contradictions within the existing systems and the hypocrisy that exists within the institutions of governance that operate at different levels. In exposing the hypocrisy, we want to then present, at this global level, some options that feminists can begin to grapple with in a deeper way and share on many fronts.

We realise that the whole terrain is shifting. But as we engage in this process we need to ensure that the objectives of our collective struggles are not diffused and weakened. The state is not a monolithic structure and governance systems can be changed so that the dream of attaining personal liberation as well as national and international liberation can be achieved.



3. The Emerging DAWN-PR&ST Framework

Viviene Taylor

“Although political independence is a noble achievement in the struggle against colonialism, neo-colonialism and imperialism, its effectiveness is superficial unless economic and cultural independence is also achieved.” Since Kwame Nkrumah wrote this statement, much has changed in the continent of Africa and globally. It may be argued that the struggle for independence in Africa and elsewhere was indeed a struggle for democratic citizenship and renewal. In many countries in the world, we are talking about the whole notion of democracy and what it means in different regions. We also pose questions about what people talk of as Western-style liberal democracy and what that has meant in the Southern countries of the world.

Today in South Africa, we also talk of what you see as the African renaissance, the African continent coming together and asserting itself in the global system. However, given the re-casting of the political landscape globally, the break-up of the Eastern block and the push for multi-party democracies across Africa and elsewhere, we are today challenged to interrogate whether the objectives of the many struggles for liberation are being attained. We need to ask ourselves to what extent has political liberation from repressive regimes led to an improvement in the over-all quality of life of the poorest. There is a new urgency to understand and interrogate changes underway in national, regional and global contexts from a critical perspective of democracy and development.

It is evident from much of the mainstream debate on the nature of political changes and processes of governance that the dominant discourse does not include perspectives and concerns of poor people, nor of women. The debates tend to focus on the nature of the state, the crisis of the state or the capacity of states to manage within a global context of accelerated change. Public interest perspectives of the state have dominated contemporary discourse, creating a false sense of homogeneity in relation to the state as characterised by what we call patriarchy and neo-colonial factors. Further, it is just as clear that social transformation, as much as it has become the mantra of governments

and perspectives on the left, is not understood in the same way and is not necessarily an objective of political change or democratic renewal.

It is therefore necessary to understand what issues of governance and state restructuring within a changing global context mean for the disenfranchised, the socially and economically excluded.

Pluralist democracy and democratic renewal

Societies today are said to operate in a post-modern context in which the dynamic culture within which the changes are taking place demand alternatives beyond conventional, orthodox models of development. Within this changing context, the form of governance that would best serve the interests of those who have been excluded both economically and politically is an essential concern. Any strategies for democratic renewal must therefore recognise that economic and political processes are interrelated and that economic power and political power are mutually reinforcing. While the sites of struggle and the actors may differ over time, the complex negotiations and confrontations that take place at various moments contribute to the multiple experiences of people's exclusion at the household, community, national, regional and international levels.

Looking at concepts of democracy and development in relation to these issues of governance: What does democracy mean for the poorest people? How do experiences of democracy and democratic structures lead to a significant shift in power relations beyond individual mobility, particularly in countries in the South?

Sometimes it is very easy for us to conflate our individual movement upward into the perception that we have had social class movement, but we haven't. We have seen indeed that globally, and especially in countries of the South, there are growing inequalities both at the level of social relations and at the level of income. So we find that democracy has not led to poverty eradication. The extent to which democracy has actually brought about a shift in power relations has become conflated in the search for alternatives.

What DAWN has found in our preliminary debates is that forms of democracy have been built on the pillars of economic, political, cultural and institutional behavior, although the role or significance given to each of these varies according to the context. Democracy for some has often meant \$1 = 1 vote or competition in the market instead of active citizen participation in the sphere of governance.

Countries in the South, most notably in Africa and Latin America, have experienced democratic changes at a speed not seen in other parts of the world. This has a determining influence on the potential social transformation and renewal. Indeed, the whole area of democratic governance is still being contested in these parts of the world.

It is also necessary for us as feminists and as people concerned with gender equality to understand the nature of pluralism in relation to historical and contemporary forms of politics, so that development practitioners or development activists can engage in the process from a critical perspective. Pluralist democracy is not the ultimate in terms of people's participation; it is usually just the beginning. Yet the reality is that development professionals and movements for change within national contexts and at global levels are not



really engaging in what democracy means. They are not engaging in the debates, neither are they engaging in the practice of trying to transform liberal democracy as it exists and as it is promoted. To what extent this is an outcome of learning how to engage in new political and social spaces and not a reluctance to challenge the new alignments and power blocs still remains to be seen, particularly within the women's movement.

Are we learning to adapt to what we see as a democratic culture that is antagonistic to a people-centered development? Or are we afraid to challenge the new alignments and new coalitions?

Another issue that clouds the debates is that the proponents of mainly western-style democracy and their agents are often not nationals. Rather, they are external institutions involved in determining and defining development directions in terms of economic liberalisation. Events in some countries have indicated that while social development may sometimes be a spur to democracy, economic stagnation or collapse can also undermine the basis of authoritarian or illegitimate governments and pave the way for democracy.

However, in some cases economic growth has also strengthened anti-democratic elites who use material resources to reward friends and punish opponents, giving rise to what is termed in South Africa the patriotic bourgeoisie, or what we have seen in South East Asia as crony capitalism. Weakened, ineffective institutions make the relationships between the governed and the government problematic. But often institutions that are powerful in societies where there are few or no autonomous civil society organisation centres of power, can allow those in control of state machineries to remain unchecked. We have seen that when the state machineries are unchecked that women and children are on the receiving end. The question then is to what extent has institutional transformation accompanied the push for democracy and development and how has transformation led to the participation of citizens? When we talk about institutional transformation, we are also talking about it in the context of national machinery that has been introduced to promote gender equality in many countries, post-Beijing and post-World Summit on Social Development.

Moreover, while reasons for state restructuring may vary, how have movements used existing leverage to ensure that institutional transformation leads to the re-casting of the political arena and democratic renewal? Did the introduction of new structures, new institutions, new policies and new procedures really re-cast the political sphere? Have they made a qualitative difference to how we as women, and how the poorest have actually engaged in the process? This is, I think, key to the issue of political transformation and of social change impact. Then we must ask to what extent our participation in the political arena has transformed politics and how much it leads to qualitative difference in the lives of the poorest people. In the process of engagement within new political spaces, how do women's movements and gender activists respond to the challenges without becoming contained and co-opted into the main stream agenda?

In the context of globalisation in the 1990s, what DAWN found and what you have all shared has been a significant shift in the debate on democracy, on development and on governance. The debate has shifted from issues of distribution and re-distribution to how to manage governments more efficiently.

This is a significant shift because what it has meant is that the attention is now focused on how we engage in the management of processes that are without the strategic objectives of liberation, whether it is women's liberation or liberation from oppressive regimes. It is this aspect that we need to take on board in a more significant way.

State & state power

Having raised some of these issues, I'd like us now to go into the notion of what the state means in our discourse and in our debates on the issue of political re-structuring and social transformation. We use democracy, governance, and the state as a notion and as a construct without actually interrogating how these constructs come out from both historical interpretations and experiences as well as from a very male-dominated and patriarchal interpretation of what state-led development processes have meant. I'd like us to spend a little time on just going over the concept of the state.

States have been considered the most important kind of political organisation in the global system. The power of states is an important feature in political restructuring and social transformation. By engaging in the debates of your sub-regional and regional groupings on three common definitions of state power, you may be able to pick up common strands of how state power is constituted and how we can actually interface within this concept.

The first common definition that is used by many political scientists is that state power is seen as control over resources, control over actors and control over outcomes. Distinctions are made between what the state possesses and what the state is able to do. Mainstream debate on politics are located within a masculine construct of the state and the state's power: "When we speak of power, we mean man's control over the minds and actions of other men." (Morgenthau, *Politics and Nation*).

Other political scientists also see power as embodied in resources that a state possesses, such as population size, geographic size and location, size of gross national product, size and sophistication of the military. Put simply, the state holds the key to economic development, social security, individual liberty, and life and death over people. The complex relationship between state control over resources and its ability to shift the behavior of others or to control outcomes in international disputes is not easy to understand because there are other dynamics that influence a state. There are other internal factors that are not explicit but that emerge at certain points in the history of development within the nation state.

However what we do need to do is to re-frame these traditional constructs, such as state, sovereignty, political identity and security, through feminist lenses. We also need, as women who are engaging in the search for political alternatives and for real alternatives, to challenge notions that competing interest groups as proponents of liberal pluralism would like us to believe. Neither should we view the state as the withering instrument of the ruling class, as orthodox Marxists would like us to believe. The state is neither. It is an actor in its own right. While the state may act independently, its unity or coherence should not be exaggerated. This is what we need to actually grapple with as feminists.



We have tended to see the state as a monolithic organisation that cannot be pressurised to change from within. But I believe that we have not engaged with the state in a substantive way. We have allowed ourselves to differ from the state and its power rather than to challenge the state in any meaningful way. It is important now, when we talk about political restructuring and social transformation, to begin to see the state as a contested terrain and not leave the state and the state machinery unchecked.

The state experiences and represents the same social forces as other social organisations. States and state elites, in attempting to appear united for whatever reason, mask the actual disunity of political power. Political power in itself is not a unified homogeneous power that cannot be dismantled and grappled with. Unified political power is usually brought about through control and coercion: in very militarised states, through the power of force; in authoritarian systems, through a lack of democracy and of civil liberties, etc.

What is relevant for us today in this period of our history, as national states begin to engage within a globalised system, is that states have what is called a Janus-faced nature. States stand at the intersection between domestic, social-political borders and transnational relations, within which many states manoeuvre through gaining advantage and surviving in relation to other states. During the post-World War II era, many states used to begin transnational relations through the international trade system. They attempted to look to what their comparative advantage was in relation to trading systems. The issues in a globalised system have moved beyond comparative advantage to what is one's competitive edge in relation to how quickly states can amass power and control -- not necessarily through state-led processes but through transnational corporations. There is a compact of power, whether explicit or applied. A very real compact of power exists between state-led institutions and transnational corporations. It is not imagined. In fact, what we have found in our debates and our discussions within DAWN and elsewhere, is that instead of states acting in the interests of its representatives that have put them into power, states are actually acting in the interests of private enterprise. The shift from democracy and looking at what is in the interest of the public, through to the shifts in how to secure faster gains for the private sector for capital, are real. The up-side of what is happening is that now states are not fixed ideological entities. Rather, they embody an on-going dynamic, a changing set of aims, as they engage with and disengage from other social forces. I have looked at the state and globalisation, in particular at how the World Trade Organisation, WTO, the European Union, EU, and other instruments of other inter-governmental systems have played a role in determining world development directions and the extent to which women have been able to engage in the system.

Critical and feminist views of the state

What we have found is that the need for institutional reform of the state is emerging from both a neo-liberal and a left critique for different reasons. Both sides of the critiques focus on the state's role in the market. The market and the NGO sectors, or civil society organisations, are seen as alternatives to lead economic development. Development direction is driven by the emphasis on market efficiency while both critiques focus on the unresponsiveness of bureaucracy to people's views and needs and the growing inequalities within and between countries.

There is a convergence of critiques, though the objectives of the right and the left differ. The right may be said to be co-opting left critique toward its own agenda. Neo-liberal proponents see the market as the best allocator of goods and services, while the left perceives the state to be alienated from people, corrupt, promoting a new elite with vested interests in maintaining the status quo.

Emerging critiques of current state and governance debates from the feminist perspective see the discourse as lacking an historical analysis. It therefore does not reflect powerlessness, patterns of powerlessness, nor does it reflect the manner in which traditional cultures and colonial cultures have combined through state and economic institutions to exploit women.

Even when an historical context is used by theorists of the left, the state is examined from the perspective of class and race and the position of women is ignored. This raises further issues in our feminist analysis of the state, i.e. how to examine how patterns of patriarchy are embedded in institutions and how they are derived from traditional cultural forms but are not exclusive to these. The result is an explicit or implicit compact of male power that permeates every sphere of women's lives and has given rise to what the feminists call the masculinity of the state.

The construction of a masculine society and state has a significant impact on the type of space for women's engagement and there are stark contradictions emerging. On the one hand it has resulted in the push for democracy and protection of individual rights within the notions of citizenship and nationhood. On the other hand it has given rise to a fundamentalist backlash with all the violence that brings with it. Whatever the critique, the state is seen as the arbiter of democracy and therefore its role in public policy and action cannot be abolished. It cannot be left to the NGO sector as if this is an independent sector. Nor can it be left to what we very glibly talk of as a unified, homogeneous civil society sector.

State de-regulation of services

The rolling back of the state in the form of deregulation from public interests to regulation of private interest should be a major cause for concern for many of us. How does the rolling back of the state in the form of de-regulation impact on women and poor people? Free market policies have re-organised the state, according to some development proponents. But the privatisation of state assets and industries appears to enlist direct involvement of states in the production and distribution of goods and services. Alongside this has been the rise of new state regulations, subsidies and institutions, which are designed with the intention of promoting and enabling an environment for newly privatised industries. In many countries in the South, we have accepted as a norm the inevitability of privatisation of universities and of what used to be public services, such as the provision of electricity, transport and transport systems, and roads. We have accepted as a given the fact that we pay for water. Those who do not have access to water can no longer demand it in the same way that many years ago people were able to push for households to have access to water. Access to basic needs are no longer a given because their distribution is now in the hands of the private sector. We need to engage with this in a very substantive way.



Emergence of new elites

Changes such as these have actually resulted in a new class structure and shifts in internal social relations within countries in the South. In South Africa, for example, a complex arrangement of interests is evolving with new elites joining forces with the traditional multi-national corporations, so that white and black elites can begin to engage in economic development processes. In reality, these new elites are obtaining a share in companies, thereby buying into a system. This is being talked about as the democratisation of the economy. But putting in a few black people as shareholders in national or multi-national companies is not democratisation of the economy. What it has led to is the movement of a few individuals into positions of power. Individuals who, even though they come from within the national liberation struggle, are unable to check the way these companies engage in the market place or to mediate between labour and private sector interests.

In addition we have found emerging tensions in social movements and in the progressive alliances in South Africa. We need to engage with this in a much more substantive way. Is there a reversed class structure emerging out of the old class formations, where instead of having a racist capitalist system, we now have a non-racial capitalist system without democracy playing a role at all? In a recent workshop on the Human Development Report that I attended, we raised the question of whether democratisation of a capitalist economy was actually attainable? Is it not a contradiction in terms? Can one actually have democratisation of the economy within a capitalist system? If so, how can we then look at economic power, economic development and control of resources if these resources are already in the hands of privatised and transnational forces?

Analysts from the left argue that the state has played, and continues to play, a role in promoting and implementing free-market policies. Indeed, the free market is said to need the protection of the state to maintain its interests and in short, its power. Given that poor women operate largely outside the mainstream markets, and that markets respond to needs by cash, the emerging state market relationships perpetuate the exclusion of poor women from mainstream economic and social activities. The key to these debates is the nature and role of state institutions in relation to dominant market forces. What are the objectives of state restructuring or re-organising? Current trends indicate that states are being re-organised to serve the interests of market forces, and these do not coincide with the interests of the dispossessed. Generally, in the North and the South, structural adjustment measures have been introduced in different ways. We also note the emergence of contradictory trends. While in the North, the proportionate share of state spending relative to the economy has continued to grow, averaging 50% of the GDP. In the South, government spending has been cut down to just over 25% of GDP on average. Government spending has also been redirected in the South toward increased militarisation, especially when you look at the budgets of India and Pakistan.

The state is not withering away. It continues to play a significant role in framing taxation and monetary policy, and in directing subsidies, no longer to public goods but to sectors of industry. The state is actually subsidising the development of roads for private toll companies and is underwriting loans to private industries in many countries in the South. In health, social development

and education, the emphasis is on the establishment of new state mechanisms to ensure market efficiency and discipline. At the same time, there is an increase in initiatives within governments and outside to train, re-train and re-orient civil servants toward business plans and efficiency models. If we examine not just the objectives of the state, but the processes of governance, we find that vis a vis national development plans and visions of national development, we now have business plans and civil servants talking of strategic planning. The debates are shifting from priorities in national development to how governments can engage with the private sector in a strategic incremental process that is no longer going to look at issues of equality, income, and others.

Another disturbing trend is arising from pressures created from increasing inequalities. Efforts to facilitate increasing domestic and foreign direct investments have led states to deal with the outcomes of crime and violence in new ways. Instead of dealing with issues of poverty and poverty eradication, the state's response is to increase military forces to protect entrepreneurs and businesses. So there is yet greater repression at greater cost. In India, for example, there are special police units being trained by Western security experts to protect the life and property of foreign investors. Similar trends emerge in South Africa, with what are finely nuanced relationships developing between some African governments and private security firms or groups of mercenaries. South African-based Executive Outcomes maintain private military or para-military forces that are being used by governments and others to engage in cross-border incursions and in violations of rights without the responsibility of accepting that there is state action. So states can abdicate their responsibility and incur violence against citizens within their own countries, and even across their borders, without being accountable because it involves exchange of money rather than political accountability. Counter-insurgency is used to enforce, control, and impose compliance. As a result, democratic processes, accountability, and transparency become expendable. The state can, under many instances, abdicate its responsibility towards the security of its people.

We talk within the feminist movement on how we engage with the state, but we need to understand that these are the dynamics that exist. We need to actually engage with these dynamics wherever we are located, not just at a global level because many of these dynamics have a ripple effect. They do exist at global level, but they have different form and shapes in the regional processes, in the national processes, and also at a very local level. Our discussion about the increase of unreported incidences of rape and violence against women is just one manifestation of the violence inherent in the economic system that we are a part of, and which we need to engage with in a more substantive way.

What we have found thus far also, however, is that feminists have a contradictory relationship with the state. We want to capture power to bring about transformation as feminists, but we are uneasy with the way power plays itself out and with the forms of power which dominate political processes.

Within the feminist movement, and even as progressives in emerging democracies or in decision-making structures, we have an uneasy relationship with power. What the abuse of power has done in our own households, in our relationships, at a very intimate level and at other levels in society, make us not want to capture power. We need to engage with this dilemma in a most sub-



stantive way. We also need to understand how we use power within the movement itself— whether we use power to engage in processes of collective advancement; or whether we are using power for individual advancement.

Concluding remarks

There are indeed many issues that we should engage with. We need to look at how we construct what we talk of as a gendered state and gendered citizenship. We need to substantively engage in what globalisation has meant in terms of the gendered division of labor and the exploitation of women. We need to look at gender and political space: there is political space and we can use it.

We need to look at gender and macro-economic policies and whether sensitising existing macro-economic policies is the same as transforming and providing alternative economic frameworks. I would argue strongly that having gender sensitisation or engendering some of the macro-economic policies in our countries is not the same as having an alternative economic framework. The reason is that we cannot add gender to frameworks that have already led to the exclusion of women and to the marginalisation of the majority of poor people. We really do need to engage in these aspects because they are being promoted as if they are transformative in content, but they are not.

We also have to look at gender and state-based violence. One of the important aspects of this is embodied in this quote from Bertolt Brecht: *"In democratic countries the violent nature of the economy is not perceived. In authoritarian countries, it is the economic nature of violence which is not perceived."*

Inter-regional Panel:
4. The State and Globalisation

4.1 South East Asia

Chanida Chanyapate Bamford

I tried to look at positive sides of globalisation. Faster communications and transportation can be considered part of the positive side, but these things are not accessible to everybody. How many people have access to e-mail and communications technology? Even the positive side is creating more inequities. So I don't see any positive signs except during the financial crisis when economies plummeted and motivated us to find the cracks that contributed to the debacle. The neo-liberal proponents, the International Monetary Fund, IMF, and the World Bank, WB, were left scratching their heads because they did not know what contributed to the crash. The Asian financial crisis proved that the market economy is not the most efficient distributor of resources and that it is irrational and greedy after all.

If the IMF and WB were off in their assessment of the market that controls production, how much more with the non-market reproductive side of life? Since last year, the WB has opened a website on social capital and begun to examine more systematically the link between market and non-market factors, such as culture, social fabric, and governance. Mainstream authorities are looking into how the social structure of Thailand survived the crisis and why the crisis did not lead to social break-down. They think what they call social capital may be the key to achieving economic growth and surviving through the vagaries of the market.

We need to challenge this notion of social capital and situate our alternatives in this area, amongst others. In Thailand resources are made easily accessible to poor women for their livelihood through community rights over natural resources, not through enterprises or micro-credit programmes that link poor women to the capitalist market. This is one area we can actually wrench control from globalising forces and that means building up from the bottom. Alternatives will have to come from the bottom. What Vivienne Taylor said about cultural factors, traditions and survival strategies have been going on at grassroots level all the time. Recognising it and strengthening it is one of the best strategies against globalisation.



There was also talk about whether these alternatives can be applied everywhere. One of the things we have to be careful about is that alternatives will have to touch the majority. For it to be so, alternatives will have to primarily focus on the livelihoods of the people, the family and community. What we are actually doing is working around alternative economics based on localised concerns central to the household and women.

When queried about social capital, Chanida Bamford responded by saying that it was a language of the proponents of neo-liberalism. Human capital had been quantified, gearing it for education and training. Using the notion of rate of return on human capital, it was justified for women to get paid less because they had very low human capital. She said we should not engage in that kind of discourse at all.

4.2 South Asia

Indu Agnihotri

This presentation tries to capture some of the key indicators determining the quality of social and political life in the region. Recent developments posit supranational structures that seek to circumscribe the powers of the nation-state from above and outside. Further, they do so with immunity and impunity vis-à-vis any democratic controls or commitments to the accountability of institutions. The South Asia reports, even more so than the UNDP's Human Development Reports, endorse fully the globalisation model as the only model of development. At best they wish to mitigate the 'negative effects' of these processes. The question that continues to be evaded is whether the shift towards 'globalisation strategies' creates and allows for congenial socio-political structures to exist or evolve? Can democracy be built at the grassroots level even as it is destroyed from above?

At a time when the real objective of development is being defined as a widening of choices, the era of globalisation offers at best a very narrow range. For South Asia, which has emerged as the 'most deprived region in the world', the choices are even fewer. It is clear that the benefits of growth - whatever the rate - are recycled among small elites in the respective countries and do not trickle down to the masses. Women bear the greatest burden of human deprivation in South Asia.

The real test of democracy in this region lies in people's ability to pose security issues afresh; to emphasise that there can be no security in the region without human development. But is the context of globalisation at all a suitable backdrop to this debate? Can such a debate develop at all?

The debate around the Public Distribution System, PDS, is central to the discussion on globalisation because Structural Adjustment Policy, SAP, strategies are clearly linked to cuts in food subsidies and curtailing of the PDS is central to this. Both at the level of micro-studies and macro-policies in India, clear links can be established between these strategies and the declining health of the people. Studies have established that every cut in PDS affects those living in extreme poverty. The earlier 'food first policies' have now been replaced by 'export first policies'. Fewer than 10 transnational companies control virtually every aspect of the worldwide food chain. Clearly there is a promotion of global monopolies through international trade agreements as well as the invoking of multilateral agreements as bullying tactics. These corporations, hence, control

not only the food supply but also extend their domination to nations' economic and natural resources while omitting and erasing community rights. It is important to understand that while the state is actively withdrawing from its responsibility of positive pro-people and pro-poor interventions it is under constant pressure to directly intervene on behalf of multinational companies and transnational corporations' rights to exploit the vast markets and the cheap labour of these countries.

There is a trend towards feminisation of labour with 40% of households registering women as main contributors to family incomes. In some parts of South Asia there has been a large-scale entry of women in the manufacturing sector and particularly in the export-oriented industries e.g. Sri Lanka. Characteristically, however, state and social response to their status as workers remains by and large unchanged, continuing to view them as supplementary or subsidiary workers. While the worker status definitely places women at some advantage in terms of status within the household, the fact remains that the quality and conditions of work and terms offered for work have considerably declined.

From an official commitment to expanding women's economic participation in the formal sector, successive governments have, since the mid-70s, not only admitted failure but backtracked sufficiently to argue that the informal sector, particularly home-based production, is more suitable for women. The appalling conditions in which they struggle for a livelihood are amply recorded. Women continue to labour even while they are not recognised as workers, and families continue to survive only on the basis of their income even as state policy continues to see them as supplementary earners at best.

Although in many Asian countries women have now entered non-traditional sectors such as manufacturing and industry, the pattern of a sexual division of labour is re-enacted. The professional woman, entrepreneur, manageress, executive officer occupies public space as the New Woman. She stands to gain from the process of reforms, but it is no small matter that the choices offered to her are within the parameters of the free market ideology. It is important to further explore the grey areas between the uncritical acceptance of the process of reforms, free market ideology and its seeming overlap with modernity in many of the Asian countries. More so, since these go alongside not just fundamentalist mobilisation, including of women, but also an uncritical acceptance of a regressive social order, even while opening up more space for 'individual freedom'.

The stereotyping of women's roles within patriarchal constructs becomes even more stark when we look at the issue of 'population'. While at the global level the last decade has seen hectic activity and heated discussions on issues related to reproductive rights, the debate on the Indian population 'bomb' remains caught in skewed perceptions. Family welfare programmes are geared to somehow control women's fertility. Reproductive rights questions are posed at different levels in South Asian countries, but they emerge as important in all.

The retreat of the state from positive intervention has been visible in several domains. In India in the post-independence period there is a visible decline in social concern about what have now come to be seen as only 'women's issues'; public outrage is minimal and instead the question of equal rights for women is entrapped in the maze of identity politics, with fundamentalist reli-



gious groups seeing any positive intervention by the state as an onslaught on and interference with community rights. Other parts of South Asia have seen a similar tilt of the state towards fundamentalism.

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. At a time when the thrust of macro-processes is towards narrowing the scope of democratic intervention, experiments such as Reservations for Women and those involving the community in planning at district and panchayat level (in Kerala) assert the contrary.

The power of the macro-structures and mega-corporations is enormous. It cannot be wished away or presumed to be capable of withering away. While nation states buckle under these immense pressures it is only social movements, with more fundamentally transformative social agendas, that can intervene to shift the focus and direction of the ongoing process of political restructuring. The women's movement has emerged as one of the most powerful and sustained blocs within this segment in almost all countries. It is important that we enter into and strengthen coalitions/alliances with the forces of peace, progress and development so the new millennium can become a better place to live in.

4.3 Pacific

Tereapii Napa:

Pacific island economies are characterised as small, open-ended and dependent. As custodians of the largest ocean, Pacific Island countries have accentuated their uniqueness in terms of comparatively small land size, geographic isolation, extensive cultural and ethnic diversity, and vulnerability to the vagaries of climate and to global relations.

The economic characteristics of island countries vary largely according to their resources, consumption patterns and the institutional capacity to support development programmes. Many Pacific Island countries have dual economies, where a relatively large subsistence sector exists alongside a monetised sector, with many people involved in both forms of production.

Public sector and economic reform programmes are being pursued in the Pacific region, with island governments pursuing rigid reform policies to realign economic growth and development. It appears that the 'true test' of economic independence is for island governments to review and reform inherited and introduced structures of governance and economic policies that in the past years were heavily reliant on external aid, and also internal revenue mobilisation activities. Translating private sector growth strategies into action has become the challenge, as public services contract and conducive legislation is introduced. The question is whether these reforms are generally instigated from within nation borders, or whether indeed they are impositions of another economic or financial model from outside our island governing structures.

The dominant development model today is economic globalisation, a system which is based on a single global economy functioning according to universal rules set by global corporations and financial institutions and markets. Globalisation is the neo-liberalist view that the market should direct the destiny of human economies. In another way the economy dictates inhabitants behavior. Some critics of globalisation advise that island governments may find their national policies superseded by larger global forces over which they no

longer have control. Others say that globalisation in the islands creates a vibrant environment, where innovative national policies and incentives structures can remove the handicap of Pacific Island geographic-based economies of scale, particularly in the service sector.

Tereapii Napa gave the case of Cook Islands, which was already in economic decline as a result of fewer visitors, a currency crisis and low returns on government infrastructure loans. It agreed to economic reform under heavy pressure from the New Zealand Government. Economic reform programmes in the Pacific Islands are driven and supported by donors and facilitated by the Forum Secretariat, a regional organisation of island governments.

Visible impacts included raised unemployment; a high level of out-migration (especially of young and economically active people whose energy is needed to sustain the transition from a public sector economy to a private sector growth economy); and a noticeable impact on women who have had to make ends meet, for example by going back to outside cooking fires to save energy; as well as deterioration in health and education services. The reform activities exposed a fundamentally unsustainable economy that had evolved over the past 10 years in terms of a public sector dominated economy with low productivity and weak market signals.

The massive retrenchment or displacement of individuals globally contributes to the rise of unemployment, and in terms of gender, women are either left to produce for the family needs, or to migrate to low-paid, unskilled jobs.

4.4 Discussion

Carol Anonuevo noted the need to examine the shift from human capital to social capital and the way globalisation was riding not just on men and women's labour, but also women's bodies. This was reinforced by Sunila Abeysekera, who said that denigration of women's work was a critical part of globalisation. There had been a 'houswifisation' of the economy in which women were being pushed into the informal sector, or becoming domestic servants or prostitutes. Other comments explored further the increasingly gendered division of labour, more patriarchal social allocation of roles, the further exploitation of women's bodies, and decreasing state protection for women.

The point of alternative economics was to get rid of the dichotomy between paid and unpaid labour, and the whole monetisation of women's and men's activities had to be challenged, Chanida Chanyapate Bamford said. Forget about paid, unpaid, productive and reproductive. Think instead of how we want to organise our economy.

The need for analysis on the role of aid donors in pushing South countries towards globalisation and into acceding to the World Trade Organisation was brought up by Claire Slatter. The way in which private sector fora and agencies were increasingly becoming part of national planning processes; the creation of business round tables which interacted with agencies in other countries and how that reinforced agreement and consensus, needed to be brought into the analysis. Otherwise the impression was that globalisation was some kind of autonomous process with a momentum of its own.



Inter-regional Panel :
5. Institutionalisation of Women's Politics

5.1 South Asia
Farah Kabir

The framework for this paper is informal and formal politics in South Asia, the experience in South Asia since independence, and how politics viewed women's position, focussing on Bangladesh. We view politics not as power, but as a relationship and the ability to influence. Due to globalisation and democracy, there has been an emphasis on involving women in the process.

South Asia is a region with a diverse mosaic of cultural heritages, challenged by problems of poverty, illiteracy, health concerns, gender imbalance, and fundamentalism. Women bear the greatest burden of poverty, deprivation and difficulty accessing opportunity, and in addition are victims of violence. Yet it is South Asia that paved the way for one of the first women leaders and there have been many women leaders in South Asia. The issues that engage women politically in South Asia are resistance to militarism, the desire to become equal partners in new democracies and frustration about women's lack of representation in economic and development programmes. Their voices are not being heard, their protests on violence against them unheard as well.

The philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi and the way he feminised national movements left an impact, particularly in India, but also in other parts of South Asia. His contribution to the national movement against British colonisers was instrumental in bringing women in large numbers into the public sphere. But he did not create an enabling environment for women, in respect of their concerns and how to engage in the on-going political process.

Major barriers to women's participation in political processes across regions include patriarchy, illiteracy, lack of access to resources, poverty, gender discrimination, religion and fundamentalism, negative practices, violence. Poverty is perhaps the most pervasive barrier. A woman carries primary responsibilities for her household and family maintenance, and their ascribed roles ob-

struct their participation. Violence is one of the major deterrents whenever women try to step into the public space, to raise their voices, challenge the authority of men or devote time and resources to political activism.

Over the past two decades, politics has come to women. The visibility of women in numbers and participation is increasing. There are certain issues that need attention: Is there any qualitative change in political dynamics on the national and local level? What does formal electoral democracy mean for women? Does representation in the real democracy provide women with greater opportunities to articulate their interests? What are the alternatives to reservation to ensure women's participation in politics? Is increased participation in politics the way forward for women?

In Bangladesh after independence in 1971, women started to organise around issues. The first was women's education, and later in the Pakistan period, language. Women were in the forefront of the language movement and contributed a lot, but were not given due recognition. Over the years, the Bangladeshi women's movement has become very strong. It started out with social awareness, then in the 1980s major issues developed and there were changes in the state and efforts to make Islam the state religion. It was the women's movement that questioned this.

In politics, women in what would later be Bangladesh gave their active all for the first time in the Calcutta elections where they had restricted rights. After 1947 women enjoyed a constitution that ensured their right to vote, and reservations were introduced to encourage women to come into politics. But it was tokenism, and still reflected the secondary status of women in society and their weak economic position. In political parties, women were just about invisible or didn't exist. During the 1970s there was not enough women's participation during the elections and women's issues did not feature in political manifestos, except one or two lines on women and development.

Lobbying and advocacy for women's participation went on and gained strength during the period of globalisation and international movements. The UN Decade for Women provided a strong momentum. Different religious organisations, donors and many others were trying to get women into politics, into the formal structures, but the leading parties did not nominate women to the general seats. From 1990, when democracy was restored, there was an increasing participation of women with five women being elected out of 36 contesting in 1991.

Reservation of political seats for women was introduced in 1972, first with 15 seats then 30. There was a period when it was removed, but it was later extended for another 10 years. Now governments that cannot muster a majority vote in parliament are using the reservation to form governments of the minority. There were also reforms at local government level which got women into the system, but when they got elected they faced a lot of problems. These electoral provisions, injected from outside, had come into a very entrenched, structured, patriarchal system. After a short while, however, women started coming up with coping strategies and demanding to be made a real part of government. They wanted to have a role in committee decision-making and they were able to make enough noise for government to review legislation and ensure that women are now part of all committees, project implementation committees and others.



Political re-structuring is taking place, but looking at the Bangladeshi experience in terms of social transformation, it is not enough because the social values and socialisation process remain the same. But we could not come up with an alternative. What is happening is already a part of the alternative – women being brought into positions of power. Things are going through some kind of slow and evolutionary process and we have to give it the time.

At the local level, this is true for India and Nepal as well. We should have looked at what has gone on in India in the past five years, looked at the lessons and maybe helped the women. At this stage we have to identify what the alternatives are, come up with strategies, and what we may be able to offer. We need to equip women, help train them, help them through an awareness and consultation process, and help them to think. We may not be happy with the situation but if we say to them that the system is flawed and we should change it, they may throw us out. This is the first time women are in this position, and they want their voices to be heard. We have to try and help them articulate.

5.2 South East Asia Maloy Tiogson

The trajectory of this paper is Women's National Machineries. Feminists have raised the problematic relationship of women to the state and changes that often pass as part of state-led development processes. Feminists have argued that the state should be viewed as an institution where male privileges are deeply embedded and cannot be addressed by the mere integration of women in state positions and development planning.

At the same time, there is caution against essentialist views that criticise state actions and all of its policy as being instrumental to perpetuating male and class privileges without looking at contradictions within the state and the spaces it has provided for feminist and other social equity goals. The strategy of relating with the state is made more complex and difficult in the context of globalisation.

For 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. As well, the state equates gender equity with welfare issues such as improved education and health that will enable women to perform better in the productive sphere and function well in their reproductive roles. Such ideology conflicts with the feminist view of gender equity as a matter of social justice and social transformation that is aimed at redistributing resources and social value more equally between men and women. This process necessitates undermining the gendered public-private divide that marginalises women in the world of politics and economic production.

Whether democracy can bring gender-equitable development depends on whether its institutions are not just responsive to women's participation, but to the representation of women's interests as a gender. This paper discusses how women in government spaces, particularly women's national machineries in South East Asia, have fared in institutionalising gender in the civilian bureaucracy, working from within the margins of hitherto patriarchal institutions.

After a long history of advocacy and lobbying by women all over the world, gender equality has been enshrined in many national constitutions in Asia. Intensive lobbying by women's groups has also led to enactment of codes and legislation that uphold women's interests, most significantly in the area of violence against women. Women have politicised issues that have been relegated to the private domain and have been able to slowly transform the conduct and concern of politics. However, even if the principle of gender equality is affirmed in quotas and legislation, it is still often thwarted in practice.

Since we know that the rhetoric will not automatically translate into affirmative action, women during the International Women's Year Conference in 1975 in Mexico City pushed governments to establish agencies dedicated to promoting equality and gender equity and improving the status and conditions of women. This became known as national machineries. All national machineries complain that they are perennially faced with innumerable functions, small staff, little bureaucratic support, lack of gender equity in all fields, and a very low budget. In Indochina, for example, the removal of state subsidies and reliance on foreign assistance have forced national machineries to look for non-government means to support the needs of its constituencies, consequently forcing a gradual move from being political organisations to doing social/economic development work.

By and large bureaucrats viewed Women in Development (WID) as an instrument rather than a goal itself. WID was a means for economic growth or more successful political mobilisation. Income generating activities for women are promoted but the re-definition of sex roles that result in double burdens for women are ignored, despite commitments to promoting the welfare of women workers. Given the narrow conceptualisation of women's work, issues such as prostitution and mail order brides have not been seen as legitimate concerns of the labour department and are usually left for NGOs to address.

It is obvious that the work of national machineries has also been hindered by isolation. They are generally perceived as marginal bodies charged with implementing a low priority government program. The staff of the women's bureau or ministry is susceptible to a 'women-for-women-by-women' syndrome. It comes as no surprise then that national machineries are beleaguered on all sides. Threats come from within the bureaucracy and from NGOs and women's groups who criticise these machineries for consistently under-performing and not getting the institutions right for women.

But some general trends are emerging. Current mainstreaming priorities in Thailand, Philippines and Malaysia revolve around violence against women, women's health, child labour, street children, trafficking, and prostitution. In Indochina, the national machineries for women have been mainly tasked with tackling welfare and income-generation. It is interesting to point out that the roots of national machineries in Indochina lie in the revolutionary party organs of which they were a part. But now they have been reduced to doing what women have been relegated to do, which is to take care of the reproductive functions. It is no coincidence that the thrust of mainstreaming efforts coincide with the thrusts of foreign development funding agencies which national machineries are forced to rely on heavily. For a region marked by diversity in history, socio-cultural and economic political conditions, the convergence in priorities becomes highly suspicious. The politics of funding is



evident in government as much as it is happening in non-government organisations. Meanwhile, the state reinforces welfare and social economic initiatives, which in no way addresses fundamental asymmetries in power relations, allocations of resources between men and women or promotion of more women into decision-making positions.

The relationship of women with the state remains problematic. In the final analysis, state ideology remains fundamentally patriarchal and its attitude to women remains utilitarian, compounding the already difficult situation of having to deal with bureaucrats and their sexist attitudes on a day-to-day basis. Given this situation and context, the question is whether to work or not to work with the national machineries. I maintain that to abandon the project of institutionalising gender is counter-productive as the gains that have already been achieved are bound to be thwarted even more.

Has the introduction of institutional mechanisms recast the political sphere? The Southeast Asian group's response is yes and no. We must be cautious not to fall into the trap of helping the government become efficient in its own approach to women's issues and problems. Instead the women's movement ought to bring forward what we want and what we think should happen. Not just in relation to women and development, but in relation to gender equality.

5.3 Discussion

Rojee Kattel said that in Nepal some of the most eminent political female personalities who could really compete with the senior leaguers of the parties were dumped in the reservation basket. Their political standing diminished and they are forced to compete with the other women to keep their position. When the women reach higher levels, they are given low status positions. The root of these problems lies in the constitution, which is based on patriarchy, religion, social norms and values. Also, women who are in Nepalese politics are often given a post because their husbands were in those posts or something like that.

This point was supported by Carol Anonuevo, who said that women in politics in Asia are often male politicians' mothers, wives, and daughters. We should ask ourselves who are the women participating in politics? Other participants supported this view, and suggested many of those women did not have an influential voice, although their numbers were there.

Indu Agnihotri said that donor driven agendas could be democratising in the short term, but questioned where it led to in the long term. When the Indian Government, for instance, decided to involve the voluntary sector and NGOs in its programs for women, it was actually a retreat from its commitment to gender equality. The government was abdicating its responsibility.

Shireen Huq said that under the new democracies there is more visibility and participation of women. Whether it was effective or not, it was something we needed to monitor and help build. Vanita Mukherjee supported this view and said that in the whole institutionalisation of gender, there were certain positive outcomes.

Vanessa Griffen was interested in the successful mobilisation of women into politics, but said the question was what the women then stood for when they succeeded. It was difficult, in the face of successful political representation for women, to ask what it was really about for women.

Farah Kabir said that at national level women were questioning the kind of politics women leaders were upholding, but at the local level things had started, although it was too early to tell. Also, the increasing number of women entering politics was possibly pushing women already in politics to become more responsible to their constituencies.

Angela Gomez described her experience with a political party that instead of supporting her organisation, called the government's attention to it to cancel its registration because of the public outcry it had generated on rape cases. One case was about an 11-year-old girl, another about the rape and murder of a 14-year-old pregnant married girl, who was thrown into the jungle. By arranging a programme about these cases and videotaping it, the organisation was seen as having evidence which was not submitted to the courts. Angela Gomez said she then became the enemy, because she was seen as disrupting the government's system. She was called to Dhaka to face high officials in the government, whom she told would also yearn for justice if this had happened to their daughters.

A positive experience about institutionalisation of gender in India was described by Vanita Mukherjee. It concerned a recent court ruling in Delhi on sexual harassment in the work place. A woman secretary in the corporate sector was asked by her boss to go to a hotel for work, but he misbehaved. She went to court to seek justice, and fortunately there was a lawyer who was in the process of working with some feminist lawyers, and the boss was punished. Now in India the Government has issued a notification to all central and state government offices to institute a committee to investigate instances of sexual harassment in the workplace. This committee is constituted with 50 per cent representation from women's organisations and NGOs. Instead of going to court, a sexually harassed woman can go to the committee, which has the power to actually give any punishment it feels is right. It is not yet known how well this is going to work, but the fact that these formal mechanisms and processes happened in Delhi and have reached as far south as Trivandrum is an indication that something is happening.

She said in Kerala in the past two years, the women's commission had handled 17,000 cases that included complaints on desertion, dowry and property disposition, some affecting women in remote villages. There were also police cells in which many policewomen worked, and some of them had become counsellors, helping women in distress. These were some of the positive examples that should not be forgotten when we critique and monitor.



6. Inter-regional Panel
Social Movements, Women's Movements and the State

6.1 South Asia
Sunila Abeysekera

This critique is based on the fact that there are some good and positive things about the women's movement within South Asia, but there are some challenges that we need to take seriously.

Because of the political processes that led to independence, we can see two strands of social movements in South Asia. The more traditional was during the periods of national struggle for independence. Within that struggle there was involvement by women, but they were mostly representatives of elite class or caste groups. Once the struggle had been won, many of these women either retreated back into their domestic roles or became involved with the state in implementing welfare policies.

In the late 70s and 80s, there emerged what some people now call new social movements in South Asia. Among their shared characteristics are a focus on networking rather than on large institutionalised structures and a commitment to the fact that the process is as important as the result. There is also a focus on making constant connections between private practice and public commitment. Finally, there is no chasing after the big dream that was socialism, and there seems to be many more short term goals.

Up to about the mid-80s, there was a very broad moment in history all over South Asia of a process of state consolidation. It is still very much a welfare state that is generally seen by the public and by women, especially members of women's groups, as being a protector of rights, provider of services and a deliverer of justice. In this period international pressure was felt via the international conferences on women and the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women. All our states signed these conventions and all created various state machineries for women. There was a genuine conviction that achieving legal, structural and formal equality would really make a difference in the lives of women. There is no question that these attempts to

achieve some level of equality did play a large role in enabling at least some sectors of women to get education, employment and start moving up the ladder.

This struggle for formal equality was conducted in a way that underplayed the social and cultural factors that were really mitigating against any semblance of equal status for women. During the same period, the anti-state movements that were present in South Asia also failed to have any real awareness of women's role in the struggle. Within the women's movement, there was little relationship developed between women who became part of the anti-state movements nor any kind of coalition or collaboration on women's issues. Again, in the emergence of people's movements, for example the anti-price rise movement and movements against dam-building, large numbers of women and some charismatic individuals became involved, but there was no real coalition between them and the women's movement.

In the years 1985-95, from Nairobi to Beijing, there was a process at the state and international levels for some kind of commitment to gender equality, development and peace for women. But when we look at what is happening on the ground, in all the states in South Asia, there is a kind of withdrawal of the state from the provision of services, as well as a consolidation of its authoritarian powers. There is a moment in which a lot of the anti-terrorist national security legislation in all of our countries becomes a part of the legislative framework in a kind of an immutable way. This is the moment in which you see a growth of all forms of very authoritarian, nationalist, chauvinist, and religious fundamentalist power. These lead to marking women as cultural signifiers, bearers of the honour of the community and pushing women back into their homes in many different ways through the use of religion, culture, tradition and practice.

In this process, there are several tendencies developing. There seems to be a lot of specialisation emerging within the women's movement. Women's groups are doing work on health, poverty, structural adjustment and political participation, but often lack a kind of over-arching framework which takes into account the entire socio-political and economic context within which these specialised areas of interest are being focused. There is a drive to institutionalise and professionalise. Part of the drive comes from funder pressure, part from competition within the women's groups for funding, and involves a trend to get into offices, start employing full time staff, investing in equipment, buildings, vehicles, etc. There is a huge move to institutionalisation within the women's movement. There is also a replacement of the emancipated vocabulary of liberation, oppression and subordination with the word 'gender'. Lastly, there is a process in which the women's movement begins to understand the need to enter into alliances and coalition building, although often that coalition building is done on other people's terms.

In this scenario there are three critical challenges to women's movements in South Asia. One is the issue of gender mainstreaming and how to deal with this situation in which both state and international agencies push it and in the process we see 'women' disappearing and 'gender' emerging. We see all kinds of bizarre formulations. Are they going back to gender as being the biological difference between men and women? Or are we talking about the social construction of masculinity and femininity which we thought of when we said gender.



The second big issue is that of diversity and how within the South Asian women's movement we can 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." How this is formulated in legal or formal terms becomes a real issue.

The third issue is that of peace and militarisation, important to women because they are the ones most victimised. Also, when the whole community fabric becomes fragmented because of war, women are the ones who pay the price. In this process, there are women on both sides — women who are members of militant groups, women who are members of fundamentalist groups, and large numbers of women who are on the other side. What do we do as women about frameworks of peace-making and peace-building that will create democratic environments accepting and tolerant of differences, and allow us the space to say that not only women but every disadvantaged person in society can live with dignity and respect?

6.2 South East Asia Cecilia Ng

This presentation reflects the Malaysian experience, drawing on experiences in the women's movement. The significant point is that the view of the state has moved from the state as a uniform, unitary representative of class interest to something which is shifting historically. The state is both a product of a historical process and a structure of power. Within that context, there is no more a question of whether feminism or the women's movement ought to engage with the state, but rather how to engage and on what terms, with what tactics and for what goals.

Looking at various modes of engagement of the women's movement in Malaysia, mobilisation and confrontation appears less intense than in other South East Asian countries. The outcome of confrontation, however, has basically been state repression. Despite this, and a lot of compromise, mass demonstration and confrontation have had successful outcomes from this mode of engagement.

An example of the cooperation and accommodation mode is the domestic violence action network. In this formation, newer women's groups and alternative women's groups worked together and united with mainstream women's groups to fight for the domestic violence act. They sat around the table with representatives of the state machinery, police, Islamic department and legislative bodies and got the bill passed. While this became a landmark in the struggle of the women's movement in Malaysia, we realised that we compromised many things in the act. It is actually difficult to say whether we won or we lost.

Concerning electoral politics and the limits of representation as a mode of engagement, in Malaysia there is a so-called parliamentary democracy but it is very restricted and moving towards an authoritarian state, if not a dictatorship. There are nominations rather than elections at the local level, so how to engage in the electoral process? In 1990 there was an effort to produce a women's manifesto outlining women's demands to the political parties, but it received limited response from women's groups. Because of the shift in the political scenario linked to the detention of the Deputy Prime Minister and

the postponement of elections, there was a chance to come up with a women's agenda for change. This time the response was extraordinary, because it came from 77 groups cutting across women's groups, consumer groups, villager-based groups and environmental groups.

Out of 192 parliamentarians, only seven responded to a request to endorse the agenda. The effort was successful in highlighting the issues but showed the power to make politicians listen was still lacking. However, the effort will continue. In a sense the women's agenda for change was not focused on women's agenda per se, but looked at development, democracy, and other fundamental issues with which women's issues are linked.

6.3 Pacific

Elizabeth Cox

This paper attempts to analyse the role of women's movements vis a vis the state, the social movements and emerging civil society of Papua New Guinea. It discusses the origins, growth and role of a significant rural women's movement, and later more diverse and mostly male-led social movements in Papua New Guinea. Despite a fundamental conservatism and a lack of a feminist framework and outlook, the mass rural women's movements have been a constant and often countervailing force. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s they were the largest non-government body of popular educators and implementers of a nationalist vision of equality and participation, integral human development, a redistributive economy, equal access for all to basic services, protection of the natural environment/ subsistence base and preservation of non-violent, gender-sensitive 'PNG ways'.

Throughout the 1990s the women's movement, in good faith, let their name, leaders, resources, facilities, vast constituency and enduring credibility be used by those building a new platform for revisiting the goals of independence that are enshrined in the constitution. Lacking a feminist base and framework, the women gave away too much and were quickly displaced into the role of disempowered working bees in their own organisations and among their own constituencies. The men and a few comparatively ambitious and opportunistic women's leaders assumed the credit and the captaincy of united social movements. For a short while they were dramatically successful in challenging state logging, mining, lending, and SAP responsive policies and practices. Their most stunning achievements were mass mobilisation to block land registration (once a key SAP conditionality) and a draconian and authoritarian Internal Security Act.

A decade of NGO and state efforts to gender sensitise development goals, policies, organisations, programmes and leaders have hardly scraped the surface. The women's movement has been betrayed by government and more recently by key men who championed the rapid rise of human rights and social advocacy movements only to enter mainstream politics and switch sides; quickly becoming as corrupt and unaccountable as the government leaders they once vilified.

No one in PNG denies that the country faces a crisis of gross financial mismanagement, especially of the revenue derived from the massive scale and speed of the extractive gold, copper, timber, oil and gas industries over the past two decades.



PNG remains a country based on surviving small collectives closely tied to their land. In spite of a magnificent national constitution, fired by a great vision and fiery nationalism, the general lack of education and the persistence of traditional and colonially influenced gender discrimination has meant the constitutional vision is hardly known and very weakly articulated in policies, programs, projects and day-to-day life.

PNG's ratification of important Human Rights treaties, notably CEDAW and the CRC, is invisible, like a well-kept secret. Well educated middle-class women monopolise the information and the opportunities associated with PNG's participation in the UN women's conferences. There is no real linkage with what was once a vibrant and promising rural women's movement.

Feminism and feminist movements have generally not gained firm ground in most Pacific Islands beyond the level of individuals and the relatively small networks of academics and activists working on gender violence and other economic and social development issues. In contrast to the ready acceptance of economic prescriptions from 'the west' in matters of social change and particularly with regard to the gender transformations implied, Pacific Islanders have been firmly resistant to what they reject as foreign ideas and ways. Women as much as men make these pronouncements, yet fail to come up with a vision or strategies suited to the social and economic realities, the hardship, inequality and oppression endured by their sisters.

Over the past three decades in many small Pacific Island states, the voice, mobilisation, participation and transformative leadership of women has emerged in association with various political and social movements: nuclear free and independent Pacific, human rights and pro-democracy, women's movements and associated 'end violence' networks and campaigns, to name a few. The origins of the women's movement in PNG are rather different, and can be more clearly understood against a background of a fast-changing economy and social order, from an agrarian base towards increasing dependence on enclave resource extraction.

The social and political ramifications of change, combined with limited education, exposure and a lack of feminist leadership, has forced women to focus on survival and stability at family, clan and community level. This has contained the growth of the women's movement. Notwithstanding this containment, the work of rural women's organisations, and the base that they offered the male-led and dominated social movements of the 1990s, has meant that critiques of government policies and alternative visions of development exist, although currently they appear dormant.

6.4 Discussion

Discussion centred on diversity and the problems of exploitation of grassroots women. Selvey Thirunchandran said that women could still operate on the principle of equality within the fundamentals of feminism, despite differences. She described her experience when Left politicians in Sri Lanka started to become chauvinistic, but felt it was still possible to engage in dialogue about left politics. Similarly, the feminist movement in Sri Lanka was divided, but on ethnic grounds. This did not mean that there was something wrong with feminism, but sometimes choices had to be made based on certain considerations of persons and organisations.

The issue of diversity within the women's movement remained a fundamental dilemma for Sunila Abeysekera. She said years ago nobody talked in terms of ethnic, language or religious categories within the women's movement, but women's organisations that now announced themselves with ethnic or religious labels were a real indication of the crisis and divisions within the movement. Unless many in the movement accepted that class, ethnic, religious or linguistic membership had privileged them in the past and now represented real disadvantages, it was not going to be possible to talk about feminist perspective. She queried how to avoid instituting power relations that would silence a particular person or group of workers within an organisation, or disadvantage people because of what they did.

It was important to interrogate the whole patriarchal structure of power in all countries, the difference would be found only in the degree, magnitude and forms, Ava Shrestha said. All women in the region had to contend with the confining power of religious values, attitudes, norms and traditions. It was important to carry on work in sensitising governments and other institutions of power about gender relations.

Lourdes Veneracion-Rallonza was concerned about women and national security. She came up with three propositions: That women were agents of change and movers; the conditions detrimental to women ultimately affected their way of engaging in the state and their way of effecting change; and finally that national security should mean people's security and central to this notion was the security of women. In operationalising these concepts there was a need to take account of historical and cultural factors and the collective experience of a group of women in a country or region.

It was difficult to move away from self-interest, Junya Yimprasert said. She had watched stronger movements get a share of power and resources, while weaker movements were left empty-handed. Another of her concerns was the state's ability to share power. In Thailand, where there had been more than 200 agreements signed between the Government and the Assembly of the Poor, not a single one had been implemented. The way the state was presently constituted meant it had a self-preservation character and would always be afraid to share power with the people.

Shanaz Iqbal agreed that in Pakistan, the women's movement had been quite strong but now the majority of women involved in this struggle had formed their own NGOs. There was a debate in Pakistan about how much these NGOs actually contributed to the women's movement, and whether they had been harmful or helpful for women's advocacy.

A Malaysian perspective was given by Cecilia Ng, who said she could speak of a women's movement among the educated middle class and a social movement that was more community based and involved grassroots women. Efforts were made, sometimes successfully and sometimes not, to make links between the two. There was also a history of divisions on the issues of ethnicity. Cultural fear was systematically propagated by the state in its policies, she said, but she saw ethnic-based ideology slowly cracking. The 1990s saw a rise of a mass-based democratic movement that touched women and men from the educated class and poorer communities.



7. Inter-regional Panel Power and Politics

7.1 South Asia Farida Shaheed

In the South Asian context, power throughout the pre-colonial period was vested in the king, who owned all the land. He could give land to persons, and expected loyalty, an army, monetary assistance or compensation in return. In the colonial period, the structure remained more or less the same while control was transferred to the British. Post-independence, the structure continued, with little stability in the state and a shaking and shifting of power and sovereignty. In the past 10 years there is evidence that power is now shifting towards the International Monetary Fund-World Bank.

In Pakistan after independence only four classes were able to govern the country. The landlords; the army; an educated class that migrated from India who were able to gain control of the bureaucracy; and about 25 families which became extremely wealthy from industrialisation. Vested interests brought them together and intermarriage intensified their collective control. Between an authoritarian government and citizens who had no direct link with the state, the elite have become mediators.

The most common hindrance or constraint to women's autonomy was their lack of education and awareness. Women played a big role in the freedom movement, and although it failed to talk about women's rights, the movement automatically broke some barriers by enabling women to get out of their houses and win some rights. There has been a slow development of reserved seats for women, but those selected tend to be religious women whose job is to talk more on how to restrict women.

Women are to some extent knowledgeable in national and international issues and have been in the forefront of various struggles not necessarily to do with the traditional concerns of politics. When women want to do something they act by creating social organisations, they do not have to participate in any political party.

In the past 50-53 years, there has been no political party organised by women themselves, at least in Pakistan. Various studies show that women have

been misused in political parties and not made part of the mainstream. Women are used to add to the numbers in political parties and to go from house to house during election campaigns to ask women to vote for particular candidates. During the martial law period, many laws were drafted in the name of Islam against women, for instance a 1984 law of evidence that proclaimed that women's testimonies were worth half the weight of men's.

7.2 South East Asia

Maureen Pagaduan

I tentatively take you on a path of cultural politics, power, empowerment and the ethics of politics. Culture is a way of life. It covers diverse fields of social relations with examples such as subjectivity, consciousness and identity, practices of daily life, the power of symbols, icons and rituals, nationalism, religion and community, language, sexuality, pleasure and desire, movement and time, space, music, sports, moral universes, prejudices, ideologies, exclusion, inclusion, superiority, difference, plurality. There is also language and the discursive fields of culture, the way we talk, what is normal, abnormal, sane, insane, legitimate, and illegitimate. There is also physicality and sensuality in culture.

Cultural politics looks at globalisation as a social process, a formative aspect of individuals, collectives, communities and nations, a distinctive experience to every individual while at the same time it conveys a collective dimension. It bridges through the microcosm of everyday life to the macro-political and economic structure, the local and the global. As such, globalisation is also a cultural phenomenon. There is in culture an economic dimension just as in political economy, there is a cultural dimension. The cultural dimension of political economy is obvious the moment language and/or desire enter the sphere of economic and political activity. Some examples are the masculinist or sexual structuring of economic activity, the ethno-specific culture of finance, the tension between family, leisure and work, the religious determinants of economic and political life, the legacies of ethnic tradition, the vagaries of taste, and the symbolic economies of the city.

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, the shaping of our hearts and minds rather than direct force. Our control ideology discourse is also linked to knowledge. It produces a sort of normalising of power and punishment through self-control and the control of the body. Capitalist culture is hegemonic and global and at the same time does not exhaust the sphere of culture. Local cultures are diverse and dispersed and any central uniform hegemonic power has to contend with its plurality. Hegemonic cultures also offer life-affirming positive factors that give pleasure and meaning to people's lives. The pleasures of consumption, romance, reading, sport and sexuality as well as hope, misery, dignity and honour, successes and failures. Active positive hegemonically-derived pleasures have a role in augmenting and strengthening counter-hegemonic practices, if only by grounding the latter in a positive rather than a negative aspect of people's lives.



Cultural politics is concerned with text, discourse, symbolism, codes, in sum, with production, distribution and consumption of meanings and with the practices associated with these. Cultural politics is part of addressing the totality of peoples' lives and of recognising the autonomy of multiple sites of oppression and despair, as well as power and empowerment. For this reason they often act as flash-points for political mobilisations. And, ultimately, cultural politics is about the radical transformation of consciousness.

State power has often been taught to dominate and to subordinate. Power as a productive framework stresses the agency of people. Resistance in this case is defined as the agency to impact as a creative alternative to power that is about domination and subordination. Power viewed in a relational paradigm is often negative and repressive. Positive power, on the other hand, is a constant opening up of possibilities. While positive power may emerge unexpectedly as a contradictory effect of hegemonic practices, it may also be an anticipated outcome of progressive deployments. A productive approach to power decentralises conflict. A productive approach looks at struggle not only as the ways by which one gains access to power but as changing power's character and relative efficacy. The productive approach to power highlights the importance of an ethic, a framework that helps us explore both ways of deploying, as well as engaging, power. Power is therefore always an on-going process.

7.3 Pacific

Kushma Ram

Globalisation is not a new phenomenon that suddenly appeared in the political and economic landscape. It has been with us over a few centuries, perhaps even when colonisation began. What is probably new is the pace at which globalisation is proceeding, making capital and labour highly mobile and also attempting to homogenise the global political processes that are taking place, thereby blurring national boundaries and weakening states' capacities. Another feature of globalisation that might be new is the advances made in communications technology, giving a peculiar character to globalisation and globalising processes.

Economic restructuring has necessitated political restructuring in the South Pacific region. The state has had to reconfigure to take the demands of economic restructuring, making it more difficult to achieve the kind of social transformation that we imagined states should produce.

The development of the state has undergone severe battering, its functions and capacities having dramatically changed over the years. It is no longer sole provider of the people's needs. The demands of development have become more sophisticated. Other actors and stakeholders have entered the development process, such as NGOs, civil society groups and private corporations. Most notable and perhaps most disturbing is the direct and significant involvement of the private sector in the development process.

With profit being paramount, neo-liberal economics does not produce equitable and gender-just development. Despite this, neo-liberal economic policies are still being pushed as the preferred development option; economic growth, in fact, being seen as the key to development.

We have long criticised the virtues of development based on the growth model. Now the World Bank has admitted that growth does not necessarily trickle down, that sustainable human development must have a holistic approach, and that economic development alone cannot meet developmental objectives.

Finally and significantly, although the state has undergone severe battering and has had to re-constitute itself in different ways, one feature has remained constant and consistent - that it is and has always been a male state. The South Pacific is distinct from other regions in that there are still a number of colonies fighting for political independence; it has a small islands make-up; and the development needs of the main islands differ from those of the outer islands in each national group, creating many problems in terms of distribution of resources. The South Pacific region has some of the world's smallest economies, with great diversities within individual countries.

Economic reforms based on the neo-liberal economic logic have been the single most significant factor contributing to the weakening capacities of South Pacific states. Privatisation, de-regulation, public sector spending etc., have created more spill-over effects than these restructured states can handle. Global and regional financial institutions and their consultants have been the ghost writers of development policy. Sovereignty has lost much of its meaning.

Women have borne the brunt of economic reform programmes and with an already disadvantaged position further marginalisation has been inevitable. The increase in export production and manufacturing industries has seen more women go into paid employment but at a great cost. They are working for low pay, in poor conditions and in unsafe and unhygienic environments. This kind of employment has contributed to undervaluing work done by women because they can take on unskilled work and therefore be paid poorly. Categorising women as unskilled legitimates low pay for them.

Privatisation of shipping services has caused problems with water supplies and the distribution of drugs that affects already poor infant and maternal health. Budget cuts in the education sector are pushing many children out of school and public service redundancies have serious impact, especially in rural areas. The picture is dismal but there are rays of hope, for example in Fiji where a new government elected by the labour movement and the poor has been critical of the development paradigm based on economic reforms adopted by previous governments. Other positive processes include a national women's advisory council, recruitment of minorities including women in the public service, a new constitution which prohibits discrimination based on gender, and other affirmative actions.

The state has to be de-masculinised. The social construction of the roles between women and men has to be examined. Often these are camouflaged under the pretext of culture and traditions. We need to protect and promote heterogeneity and diversity. Often, these very idiosyncrasies form the basis of women's subordination and oppression. Issues of women's equality and the structural causes of women's powerlessness must form the crux of mainstream debates on development. Only then can political restructuring result in the kind of social transformation for which we women search.



7.4 Discussion

Mary Jane Real suggested the hesitancy of women to seize power partly stemmed from the inability to comprehend how to transform power so it positively reflected feminist ethics.

Whatever political restructuring and social transformation has occurred has been mainly a political project of states, Gigi Francisco emphasised. Within this, we interrogated how the state, for instance, utilised the integration of women into formal structures and how the state, given its limitation and construction, was itself trying to change in order to meet the demands coming from the outside and within. She wanted to situate these political projects by states and inter-state bodies such as the UN as being linked inextricably to their need for survival in the light of what people referred to as the rolling back of the state in the period of corporate globalisation. She also tended to see the women's movement as broader than the geographic and political boundaries of the national state. While parts of the global women's movement were rooted in national-local realities, its breadth and spread was more akin to an inter-state formation. Finally, there were many points and locations from which to interrogate the state - personally, locally, nationally, regionally, and globally. Moreover, issues of power and politics existed in people's identities, relations, homes, and not just in the formalised space of governance and statehood. How to inter-link analyses and critique and advocacy was her main concern.

It was important to bring into the discourse that cultural and social power, when it combined with political power, created oppressive patterns for gender behaviour, Shereen Huq said. She also raised a point about hegemony, related to persuasion and consent. When both were acquired through a cultural process or a cultural concept of power it became all the more dangerous because it could be sustained. This kind of power was becoming a dangerous global phenomenon.

Other participants brought up points about the struggle of the poor for survival and alternatives to controlling power. Maureen Pagaduan said she felt cultural politics gave class and political economy a fresh dimension. It stressed an idea of power in which conflict was decentralised, and made people look at the way power was used to minimise or remove conflict through the pleasurable construction of shared knowledge, desires, interests and values.

Plenary

8. Integrating Discussion on Issues and Debates

This was a session to share the ideas and insights stimulated by sub-regional and inter-regional discussion in the previous sessions, to achieve a unified understanding of what could be done together in terms of feminist research and action.

8.1 Introduction

Gigi Francisco explained the session was intended to generally answer the question: "What are my insights about PR&ST as a feminist and member of the women's movement in the Asia-Pacific regions?" Within this there were two specific questions: "What are the dilemmas that I still see in terms of PR&ST? What interconnections do I see?"

Vivienne Taylor said the way the debates had flowed showed there was still a struggle with what analytical tools should be used to actually identify what was wanted to take forward. She shared some key elements that could be used as a starting point for analysing change:

Looking at institutional or structural aspects of PR&ST can include policies, practices, structures, systems and procedures. It can include review of executive policies, practices and legislation at all levels. There is also a need to look at women within institutional frameworks, within policies, structures, processes and procedures. When this is done we can begin to say that we are looking at fundamental transformation, at what has changed in terms of legislation, constitution, or structures.

The next element useful in identifying change is the normative aspect, where we can examine whether values and attitudes have changed. Has organisational behaviour changed and how is this change relevant to PR&ST? This is a preliminary way of linking personal and societal issues.

Examining functional and distributional aspects involves questioning to what extent shifts have taken place in re-prioritising the needs of those people who have been excluded from mainstream society. This does not only include those who have been excluded in terms of economic power, but also social power.



How is power distributed and at what levels is there redistribution of power? How are basic resources distributed as well as other resources?

These tools will help us begin to look across the whole gamut of the feminist movement and state, globalisation and state, and power and politics. We could then pick up cross-cutting issues, and begin to identify those elements and processes that reinforce some of our concerns about women's disempowerment, subordination and unequal gender relations.

8.2 Discussion

Prema Gopalan said there were emerging strategies that needed testing at various levels, sharing and examining more carefully. Analytically, she felt that political restructuring was still being approached with a view that it was overly state-led or determined. There was a block being caused by a continuing image of the state as always powerful. She expressed concern about the changing and paradoxical role of the state. People had to be clear about what value they were bringing to engagement with the state. Some hard questions needed to be asked, such as how women had impacted agendas in the five years they had penetrated India's local government; how had they been able to change the nature of politics, or was it the other way around?

Maureen Pagaduan suggested unifying around the principle of inclusivity, meaning to affirm all practices and strategies that try to break down monolithic or dominating power structures, one of which is the state. She agreed that the discourse on power and politics was far too dominated by the discourse on the state. All other discourses could be included to break down that dominance.

A fundamental concern of Madoka Chase was to alleviate suffering that led to anger and hatred. In a globalising world, it seemed to her to be increasingly difficult not to participate in exploitation of other people. Strategies needed to be identified to mitigate the anomalies in society brought about by dominating power, but done with consciousness of the repercussions each small action had on the rest of the world.

Some participants emphasised the need to listen to the voices of the poor and of grassroots women. They also raised the importance of interrogating the whole patriarchal structure of power. Several brought up the issue of diversity, and how to deal with power relations between those with different skills and capacities. It was not just the question of recognising diversity, but of how to engage in pluralist and democratic politics.

In the Nepali context, there was no visible feminist movement, Ava Shrestha said. In the past five to six years since democracy, however, women's issues such as violence, property relations, and trafficking had arisen. These issues invariably affected women in all spheres, including academics, researchers and politicians. Women from elite families with good education needed to reach out to grassroots women, talk to them and make sure their voices were heard.

Other commentators on the Nepali situation said that there was a dilemma in which the elite, professionals and civil organisations had been joining the bandwagon of politicians and bureaucrats. By doing so they had contributed to the maintenance of the status quo and had been weakened in critical examination of the relevance of externally injected fancies and fads about

political participation. Women had moved along broad issues, in democratic movements, but when it came to addressing women's issues they did not have their own movement. They operated on particular issues that were dropped when a project finished.

Sunila Abeyssekera said the women's movement needed to examine restructuring and social transformation within the movement, or it would become irrelevant and extinct. In the modern context, one of the biggest challenges South Asians faced was that they were pre-modern societies, she said. South Asian communities lived with caste, feudalism, and debt-bondage. In many parts of India and Pakistan, people owned people, not just this generation but the next, and people had to live with slavery. She questioned where in the women's movement in Pakistan the issue of debt-bondage was addressed; or in Nepal where there were similar serious issues.

Lourdes Veneracion-Rallonza said she had been trapped in the masculine paradigm and mindset of political science, and she had wanted to gain input on how to push forward a framework for linking women and national security. An area in which women had to be clear was the directional engagement of the women's movement, why it wanted to engage with the state, with whom, how, and at what level and frequency, she said.

Anita Gurumurthy said women's problems with power should be interrogated in a more focused way to understand what made them uncomfortable, so they could begin to challenge its notion and practice. She warned that if women stuck to caste and ethnic divisions it would contribute to depressing the collective feminist consciousness. She noted also that the significance of networking at local, regional and global levels could not be over-emphasised because the global political economy demanded engagement at many levels.

Poverty was a concern of Indu Agnihotri, who said the women's movement had not been able to sort out women's economic problems. Poverty had worsened and was identified by grassroots women as one of the biggest stumbling blocks to their participation in social processes. She was also concerned with the privileges that caste, tribe and class membership brought. There had been women's organisations from long ago that asserted and preserved their own identities, such as tribal women's associations. How to deal with this plurality was a question for the entire Indian society and for the women's movement. The problem as seen today was that while diversity was recognised, associating and engaging with others through democratic processes that genuinely respected plurality was still lagging.

An important PR&ST issue for Cecilia Ng was how to deal with the whole notion of democracy at the same time as having to deal with the ethnic-based fears and biases of the population.

Selvy Thiruchandran spoke about her experience as a member of the minority Tamil community, in which she had to ask herself whether to take up dialogue with the state or take up a position with the Tamil militants or Tamil nationalists. She had her own confrontations, and as long as there was oppression based on language, nationalism or rights-denial, she was with the Tamils, but had no agenda with them when it turned to terrorism and violence. It was impossible for her to deny or negate that she was a Sri Lankan Tamil, and the choices were never easy, but on other issues she was able to engage with the state and have dialogue.



She commented that underlining diversity, heterogeneity and difference was a collective feminist consciousness that was non-hierarchical and non-power seeking. She said people could still operate on the principle of equality within the fundamentals of feminism, despite differences. It was possible to transcend divisions of race, caste, ethnicity, class and nationalism. This was applicable in the South Asian context, where she thought there was an over-determination of ethnic and religious identity. It should be part of the agenda to transcend these constructions imposed by people seeking power.

The major insight which Maloy Tiogson gained was that political and economic restructuring was also taking place because of continuous contestation, resistance, negotiation and even revolution being waged by social movements including the women's movement, in relation to class issues, gender issues and ethnicity. She believed that this was why, even in the hegemonic discourse, gender had found its place. She also believed that there was a need for firmer understanding, and for restructuring of the women's movement, so that it could be a counter-force to the prevailing discourse.

Angela Gomez was concerned about the domination and exploitation of grassroots women by family and society. They were ignored and rarely given the chance to prove their capacity to lead. As a grassroots level leader for 23 years in Bangladesh even she had not had the chance to broaden her networking, especially amongst the upper echelons of society. So she was concerned about how the majority of women would make the social transformation expected, and how grassroots women would understand what educated women were saying. Rural women in particular were likely to be left out because they were religiously, socially, culturally and politically tied down. Often, what burdened them most were their superstitious beliefs, she said.

In Cambodia investments were being geared towards entertainment and industry, to the neglect of agriculture on which a majority of Cambodians depended for their livelihood, Serey Phal commented. State power wielded by a few was resulting in land being taken away from the people by investors. There were many groups advocating alternative development, but their differences made it difficult to create a collective movement. Attention was needed on how to unify diverse groups within Cambodia, she said.

Zarina Rahman Khan reminded participants that they were finding that the politics of women had not actually been institutionalised within structured systems, despite the entry of some women. The existence of informal structures and processes within the more fluid women's movement should not be overlooked, and could lead to more sustainable achievements in the long run.

Ngo Thi Tuan Dung expressed concern about the devaluation of women's work and the pressure for them to return to the home. She said Vietnam had opened its markets and changed from a highly socialist economy to a more market-oriented economy. The real question was how the country would integrate with the global trend yet hold on to its economic independence and cultural identity. She said the macro-economic policies in land reform and credit radically changed urban and rural life and affected women at household level. Vietnamese women used to be more active in the social sphere but suddenly they were made to go back to their "own world", into their homes. There was also misuse of government funds and corruption, and both men and women united to fight injustice.

8.3 DAWN's Response

Gigi Francisco introduced DAWN's response to the discussion, explaining that DAWN was not concerned with homogenising interpretations of Southern feminist movements on PR&ST, but with sharing in a project and process in equal, affirming and empowering ways. She shared the perception of many about the dilemma on diversity and confusion on directions. She recognised that there was a need for breakthroughs in terms of visions, organisations and mobilisations. They could go only step by step, with little victories and limited goals, even as they were guided by some comprehensive image of an alternative future.

Viviene Taylor emphasised that at whatever level, the form of engagement led to further engagement, and there was no point at which a decisive victory could be claimed. It was a futile exercise to say that restructuring in the political arena and social transformation was going to lead to some Utopia. The process itself was what she believed women needed to focus on; and how that process could be defined by a politics, an ethics and a vision that women could all share. Diversity should not shift women from their core objectives of what feminism meant, she said.

Emerging trends in the analysis and the experiences expressed at the workshop showed clearly that women did need to engage with forms of exploitation and domination at every level in society; those existing in relationships, households, feminist and women's movements, and the state. Women also needed to take on board, however, the course of their different histories. When women talked about political restructuring and social transformation, they actually needed to locate both themselves, the agencies through which they worked and their countries within a certain context.

She said participants had raised many questions about the nature of the feminist movement and women's movement; and about the issue of how states engaged in the process of globalisation. There was implied concern about the lack of accountability and sanctions on those forces that set the terms of trade. She suggested that the yardstick women used for inward reflection should be used also to look at how corruption, lack of transparency and unaccountable practices within powerful institutions at global, regional and national levels should be checked.

Concerning institutionalisation, she warned against conflating the state, government and other processes of governance. Women needed to look at institutionalisation in the formal government machinery and also in state processes, parliamentary processes, processes within the trade union movement and the women's movement and so on, so that gender equality was not seen just as a responsibility of government departments but of the whole society.

Participants' discussion on politics and power indicated the need to re-conceptualise and re-cast politics and power and look at how they permeated every aspect of people's lives. There was also a need to look at the different strategies required to engage in politics and power at different levels, for instance the engagement to shift the balance of power in the household would differ considerably from the strategy at societal level. She warned against getting locked in the trap of saying the personal was political, and that this meant that what people did within their personal situations would resonate at every



level in society. This was not going to happen. At global, regional and national level, strategies should be based on how alliances could be built - a question which participants had raised.

It also had to be understood that the state itself was a protagonist in the whole struggle that we were part of; just as at different moments, as individuals that engaged within our own organisations, we understood that our organisations became the protagonist as well. Conflict was constant, she said.

8.4 Final Session

In a final session, a plenary presentation of the sub-regional discussions linked research with advocacy at national, regional and global levels.

The South East Asia group was keen to proceed in a synchronised manner to make the project truly collaborative, with similar levels of appreciation of the major issues, even if there were differences in more nuanced analyses. They also wanted to bring in aspects of cultural politics across the theme papers and recommended that a PR&ST Regional WriteShop be held to enable writers to weave their papers in a more integrated way.

The major concern of the South Asia group was to include as many country cases as possible, even though there were difficulties with access to information and sparse documentation. Issues such as fundamentalism and militarisation which dogged the region also needed to be incorporated within the themes of power and politics. There was concern about networking and information sharing, but with a down-to-earth understanding of the limitations and conflict-laden climate in which it would work.

The Pacific group was handicapped by the small number of participants and the fact that key researchers for this project were not present. There are real constraints to doing research and analysis at the regional level and organisations engage more in networking across the region than in research and analysis. DAWN Pacific has, however, begun to encourage research and analysis of globalisation and gender, and this workshop and project will hopefully consolidate the work of building feminist research. Research papers from the project will be disseminated in the region with that aim.

Finally, the women agreed to start up a listserv for taking forward the sub-regional debates opened up by the workshop.

9. Participants

South Asia

Sunila Abeysekera, Sri Lanka, who has been in feminist activism for 25 years, in the past 10 years working with human rights in a more focused way, particularly in freedom of expression, issues of governance and women's political participation, and diversity.

Indu Agnihotri, India (Professor in History, Delhi University) active in the All-India Democratic Association, an association that works all over India on issues related to anything that involves women; engages with a lot of women's organisations on policy matters with the government; and lobbies for changes on law and policies.

Angela Gomez, Bangladesh (Coordinator/Executive Director, Banchte Sheka 'learning to survive') working for women who are exploited, oppressed, and deprived of their rights, organising them to take direct action; and also in the areas of legal rights, political awareness and income-generation; recipient of the Ramon Magsaysay Award for 1999.

Prema Gopalan, India: representing two organisations that work in partnership with people's organisations and grassroots women's groups on issues of economic empowerment, local governance, micro-credit, housing, etc., with a clear focus on translating insights from grassroots through action, research and advocacy.

Anita Gurumurthy, India, has been associated with DAWN and is currently working on a manual on globalisation for trainers and for NGOs; also concerned in the area of reproductive and sexual health; and works with youth on sexuality and media education.



Shireen Huq, Bangladesh (Naripokko 'Pro-women') a membership-based activist organisation which is engaged in advocacy, research and mobilisation on issues relating to women's rights, entitlements and equality, violence against women and women's human rights, and representation of women in cultural politics.

Shanaz Iqbal, Pakistan (Programme Officer, Shirkat Gah).

Farah Kabir, Bangladesh (Gender and Governance Advisor to the British Council) lobbies, advocates and works with women who are in politics at the local government level to look at different models in the region; and produces research and suggestions for alternatives.

Rojee Kattel, Nepal (News Editor, News Television) recently completed research on micro-projects and gender justice in rural areas; lobbies for women's movements and encourages them at the participatory level.

Zarina Rahman Khan, Bangladesh (Teacher, Department of Public Education, Dhaka University) whose areas are local governance, gender and development and rural development, with particular interest in political structures and their impacts on women, and women's political participation.

Amtul Naheed, Pakistan (Programme Officer, Shirkat Gah)

Sumika Perera, Sri Lanka (Women's Development Foundation) works mainly with women in the rural areas and edits the Sinhala magazine 'Area' published by the Women and Media Collective.

Indira Shrestha, Nepal (Chief Executive, Shtrii Shakti)

Ava Darshan Shrestha, Nepal (Board Member, Samanata Institute for Social and Gender Equality)

Archana Tamang, Nepal (Manager Fundraising, Action Aid)

Selvy Thiruchandran, Sri Lanka (Executive Director, Women's Educational Research Center) an organisation with a multi-faceted approach that does research and takes up projects for marginalised women; works in three languages; and distributes publications.

Dsilva Vinodinisurangi, Sri Lanka (Project Director, Women's Education and Research Center) which does projects dealing with women at the grassroots level, and gender-sensitisation.

South East Asia

Carol Anonuevo, Philippines (Researcher, UNESCO Institute for Adult Education) does research on adult education and how it can contribute to social transformation.

Chanida Chanyapate Bamford, Thailand (FOCUS on the Global South) working on policy research and advocacy mainly at the international level, linking discourses and debates at the global level to the realities of the micro-level.

Madoka Chase, Thailand (Alternative ASEAN Network on Burma) based in Bangkok to coordinate NGO activities around the South East Asian region and to try to lobby ASEAN governments into taking a more progressive role in encouraging the military regime in Burma to democratise; and also runs a internship programme for women from Burma.

Ngo Thi Tuan Dung, Vietnam (Researcher, Centre for Family and Women's Studies) working in research, teaching and advisory activities for development projects, including rural reform and micro-enterprise for women, violence against women and prostitution.

Le Thi Hanh, Vietnam (Research, Training Consultancy Office) working mainly in strategising plans for mass organisations such as the Women's Union at district and provincial level; and conducting research on gender issues in a development project aimed at women's empowerment.

Serey Phal Kien, Cambodia (Cambodian Women's Development Agency) which seeks to address the socio-economic and psychological problems resulting from Cambodia's two decades of civil war and political instability by empowering women and their productive and reproductive capacity through education, organisation, development, advocacy and cooperation.

Pepper Losiri, Thailand (Women's Studies Centre, Chiang Mai University) which is currently undertaking para-legal training for community leaders and women at the grassroots level; and training of researchers on feminist perspectives on constitution and political reform.

Ruth Margerison, Thailand (Director of WEAVE, Chiang Mai University)

Cecilia Ng, Malaysia (Women's Development Collective; teacher at the University of Putra) involved in training, education and networking, and research focused mainly on women and work and women's occupational health.

Maureen Pagaduan, Philippines: (Teacher, Community Development and Women and Development, University of the Philippines) is interested in organising women and trying to go back to her history of grassroots activism.

Mary Jane Real, Thailand (Programme Officer, Asia Pacific Women Law and Development Forum) which has a task force on women's political participation.



Maloy Tiongson, Philippines (ISIS-International Manila) an information-communication agency with a current preoccupation to follow the review process of the Beijing Platform for Action; trying to deepen analysis on how existing political structures contribute to failing to realise the BPFA.

Lourdes Veneracion-Rallonza, Philippines (Departmental Chairperson, International Studies, Miriam College) is also affiliated to the Women and Gender Institute with an interest in how to advance women's empowerment and democracy in the context of national security.

Pacific

Tereapii Napa, Cook Islands (Teacher) with interests in issues around political restructuring and social transformation.

Kushma Ram, Fiji (Assistant Coordinator, DAWN Secretariat)

Asia Pacific

Vanessa Griffen, Fiji (APDC Gender & Development Programme, Malaysia)

DAWN Coordinators

Claire Slatter, General Coordinator

Vivienne Taylor, Research Coordinator for Political Restructuring and Social Transformation

Vanita Mukherjee, South Asia Regional Coordinator

Gigi Francisco, South East Asia Regional Coordinator

Heinrich-Boell Foundation

Roshan Dhunjibhoy

Heike Loeschmann

Gade Surintrafoon

Mattana Gosoomp

Gregor Enste

Secretariat Team

Ainjani F. Abella

Sharan Lateef

Shyama F. Shepard

Junya Yimprasert (Thai Liaison)

Video Documentary Team

Chee Teoh, Malaysia (Co-Director, Wayang)

Sock Nye Ng, Malaysia (Co-Director, Wayang)

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