Markers on the Way:
The DAWN Debates on Alternative Development

DAWN's Platform
for the
Fourth World Conference On Women
Beijing
September 1995

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Introduction

Ten years ago, on the occasion of the Third UN Conference on Women held in Nairobi, a network of women from the economic South produced a Platform Document which formed the basis for a series of panels. The response to the Document, **Development, Crises, and Alternative Visions: Third World Women's Perspectives** (Gita Sen & Caren Grown, Monthly Review Press, 1987) led to the launching of DAWN, and an ongoing programme of research and analysis on key development issues.

Over the past 5 years DAWN produced Platforms for the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in 1992, **Environment and Development: Grassroots Women's Perspectives** (Rosina Wiltshire, DAWN, 1992); for the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in 1994, **Population and Reproductive Rights: Feminist Perspectives from the South**, (Sonia Correa, Zed Press, 1994); and for the World Summit on Social Development in March 1995, **Challenging the Given** (CIPAF: Dominican Republic, 1995).

The current publication, **Markers on the Way: The DAWN Debate on Alternative Development**, represents the network's contribution to the debates and discussions on economic issues for the Fourth World Conference on Women, scheduled to be held in Beijing in September.

It was produced through a process of consultation directed by Gita Sen, DAWN's Research Coordinator for this project. Over the past two years these consultations took place through a series of Regional Workshops held in the Pacific, Asia, Latin America, Africa and the Caribbean. Comments on the text of this document were provided by Peggy Antrobus (Barbados), Srilatha Batliwala (India), Sonia Correa (Brazil), Joan French (Jamaica), Hameeda Hossain (Bangladesh), Devaki Jain (India) and Viviene Taylor (South Africa).

At this time when our governments and international agencies and institutions seem disinclined to address the contradictions inherent in the imperatives of growth, human development and environmental sustainability, we hope that this document serves to open up the possibilities for the ongoing debates that must take place as we attempt to strengthen the institutions of civil society in order to challenge globalization and the State to be accountable to the interests of people and the planet.

A book on these issues will be published by Zed Press (**Women and the New World Economy: Feminist Perspectives on Alternative Economic Frameworks**) at the beginning of 1996.

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MARKERS ON THE WAY: THE DAWN DEBATES ON ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT

In May 1990, DAWN (the South-based women's network, Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era) held an inter-regional meeting in Rio de Janeiro. Over 150 women from many countries came together to assess the past and plan the future of the network. Since its launching in Nairobi in 1985, DAWN members in different parts of the world had been analyzing and synthesizing experiences with the global crises of debt and food, and women's alternatives as expressed through organizations and movements. This work continued the process of analysis that had occurred during the preparation of the DAWN book, **Development, Crises and Alternative Visions: Third World Women's Perspectives**, for the Nairobi conference in 1985. That book had argued that the development crisis and its impact on poor women had a great deal to do with problems in the dominant development paradigm. The analysis done after Nairobi was presented and evaluated during the Rio meeting.

Clearly, much had been learned in the process of working on these themes. During the latter half of the 1980's, the effects of the spread of structural adjustment and stabilization programs to many more countries, and the related erosion of state capacity to guarantee minimal needs such as food security, basic health services, literacy, safe

water, public health, or freedom from violence had been felt most acutely by women. Conditions of life and livelihoods were worsening in many countries, coupled with a sense of hopelessness, a belief that "there is no alternative". The sense of crisis appeared, if anything, to be growing deeper and more all-encompassing.

Given this context, as important as the analysis of the past was the need to plan for the future. What substantive issues should DAWN address in the forthcoming five years? In 1990, in addition to all the dilemmas posed by structural adjustment policies and the declining autonomy of governments, the cataclysmic changes that had shaken the socialist world in 1989 had to be acknowledged and assimilated. All through the 1970's, socialism had appeared to be on the upswing especially in Southern countries. Political changes in country after country - Vietnam, Mozambique, Ethiopia, Angola, Tanzania for example - had seemed to point to new and interesting experiments with alternative paths to development. Whatever their concerns about authoritarianism, lack of democracy, or state-sanctioned patriarchy, many feminists had looked to these and to the older socialist countries as providing at least some elements of a socioeconomic order that could serve as an alternative to the brutal dog-eat-dog realities of a purely capitalist system.

1989 provided a rude awakening to these hopes. Although the year served as an unmistakable marker, the decline of socialist experiments had begun much earlier and took

different forms. In some countries such as in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union itself, there was a spectacular collapse of the political structure that pointed to the weaknesses of the institutional basis of the society, and in particular its participatory structures and processes. In others such as Angola and Mozambique, external pressure and subversion made it impossible for alternative development experiments to come to fruition. Still others, such as China and Vietnam retained their political structures, but joined the scramble for globalization and rapid economic growth of their capitalist neighbors.

How to make sense of these changes? What were their implications for development paradigms, old and new? In particular, what could be feminist perspectives on development alternatives in the changed context? Did the collapse of socialist ideologies mean that there really was no alternative to the harsh realities of globalized capitalism? What framework could women use to critique existing global processes, and to develop alternatives? These questions and others confronted those attending the DAWN meeting.

Out of the ensuing discussions the decision was taken to renew the search for development alternatives, taking full account of the rapid and sometimes bewildering changes of the global political economy. The task was to catalyze fresh thinking on issues of vital importance to women especially in the South. A process of regional meetings, research and analysis has served to open and vitalize the debate.

Although the process is still ongoing, some of the key issues that have been raised during this process are discussed here.

The project that the network embarked on in 1990 has been a difficult one. This has been a path with no road-maps and few markers to guide us. The fact that other social movements have been struggling on the same terrain has provided a sense of comfort but little substantive guidance. One thing in our favor is that, working and analyzing from Southern women's perspectives naturally provides us with some basic guiding principles, e.g., the importance of the work and resources needed to care for human beings; the conviction that such care and, indeed, the development of a holistic human potential is or ought to be the main goal of economic growth, and the understanding that unequal and oppressive gender relations and structures may be constantly reshaped in response to processes of economic change, but they do not disintegrate easily.

Although we have been treading on new ground, it became clear early on that many aspects of the socioeconomic processes we are living through today are continuations from the past. An unabated crisis of basic livelihoods, food and income insecurity, unemployment, environmental degradation, and class / caste / racial / gender violence characterizes the lives of many. There has been a growing marginalization and re-privatization of public services that are essential to the reproduction of human beings. This takes the form of reduced entitlements of resources and

legitimacy, increasing burdens on women, and new forms of triage of the vulnerable within and among countries.

These problems are symptomatic of basic flaws in a global economic process that continues to reproduce great and growing inequalities of wealth and incomes within and across countries; unequal economic relations between rich and poor countries with an unabated and crushing burden of debt servicing on some of the latter; trade relations and agreements that work to the disadvantage of the economically weaker countries; continuing low rates of growth, savings and investment in many countries; continuing crises of government finances across the world; and a scramble to open the world to private flows of trade and capital without adequate environmental and/or social safeguards.

There are also many new features of global and national political economies with which we have had to come to grips.

1) Central to these is the speed and range of the globalization of economy, politics and culture in the last decade. New technological revolutions in microelectronics and biotechnology are changing labor processes, altering relations of production and distribution, feminizing some sectors of the labor force, and leading to a hitherto unprecedented globalization of the production and economic power of transnational corporations. Female labor is being used

more flexibly, and women workers are more mobile than they have ever been before.

2) Related transformations in global trade and finance have increased the flows of global capital many fold, and rendered global and national monetary systems volatile and difficult to manage. This instability has been used to further justify fiscal stringency and press for greater exports.

3) Uneven processes of globalization are reshaping traditional economic and political alignments among countries. New trade and economic zones, and growth poles are emerging. The Third World as we knew it, never a very unified entity, has fragmented; its erstwhile members now include some of the fastest growing economies as well as some of the slowest in the world, with consequent divergences in interests and concerns. Consequently, the conditions women face in different parts of the world vary widely, as do their needs and concerns.

4) The role of state as an economic agent guiding economic activity has been considerably undermined by processes of economic globalization, by the collapse of the Soviet bloc, and by the relentless ideological assault of the Bretton Woods institutions. **However, the repressive capacity of the state in much of the South has not been weakened**; governments have

often responded quite ruthlessly to any opposition to globalization.

5) Other forms of violence have also increased. With the end of the Cold War, the world armaments industries have increasingly turned their attention to markets in the South. Further, a growing global subterranean economy based on narcotics, weapons and money-laundering has altered the political culture of a number of countries; its fingerprints can be seen in many recent outbreaks of localized wars and violence. The majority of the victims (and refugees) of such violence are women and children.

6) Of immense concern to women is the resurgence of patriarchal forces globally and locally, in the guise of religious fundamentalism and cultural nationalism.

7) Its flip-side is the globalization of culture made possible through new communications technology, and a growing hegemony of different forms of media, affecting tastes, consumption patterns, aspirations, and gender relations in far corners of the world. The objectification of women's bodies and of female sexuality is becoming a universal phenomenon.

Not everything, however, is so bleak. The 1980's and 1990's have witnessed an upsurge of democratic processes and movements in many places. For instance, people's resistance to apartheid and the awareness that the social,

economic, and political crises facing South Africa must be reversed can be seen as part of the wider move towards democracy. The consequent negotiated settlement and break-up of the apartheid state has provided greater impetus for an alternative vision of development deriving from a more participatory process. During the last decade women's movements and organizations have become more prolific, better organized, and more skilled and articulate than before. Along with other social movements we are becoming players who have to be taken seriously by international agencies and governments. We are increasingly able to mobilize political strength to influence outcomes at the policy table. The pressure on states to be more open and accountable is beginning to take effect, at least in some areas.

Trying to develop a framework to analyze and understand these changes through the DAWN process of exchange and reflection has raised some fundamental issues, the most central of which are discussed in the next sections.

GLOBALIZATION[1] AND GOVERNMENTS: THE PROBLEM OF ACCOUNTABILITY

The first issue is how to chart a course between the Scylla of globalization and the Charybdis of failed /outdated experiments with inward oriented economies. The dominant ideology of globalization and open economies, according to its main proponents, the Bretton Woods institutions (BWI), holds that all experiences with import-substituting industrialization, and/or experiments with state run production have been unmitigated failures. Third World governments have been put down as inefficient, wasteful, and corrupt (rent-seeking). Their interventions in economic production have been criticized for distorting the structure of economic incentives, and leading to a misallocation of resources. The World Bank and the IMF also hold that governments have been profligate in their use of resources, running unviable budget deficits which have been financed through internal and external borrowing.

The Bretton Woods prescription, as is well known, is to cut back sharply on government expenditures, to remove

[1] We use the term "globalization" rather than "markets" in order to be clearer about the process. The language of "markets" is a carry-over from old debates about markets versus socialism; the globalization of today and the markets it creates are far removed from the simple competitive markets of the old debates. The terminology of "markets" includes everything from the weekly village vegetable market to the movement of billions of dollars in response to a computer signal. Many markets may be helpful and useful in meeting needs and allocating resources, although different markets may need appropriate forms of regulation. To challenge the processes of globalization is not to challenge the concept of markets per se.

restrictions to the functioning of private capital, and to open the economy to free flows of trade and investment. It is equally known that, after a decade of stabilization and structural adjustment programs, few countries have regained a capacity for growth or investment. In many countries, real incomes have declined, social development indicators such as infant mortality, literacy and school attendance have worsened, women's work burdens through income earning or compensating for lost public services have increased, and domestic and public violence have become more common.

Two major flaws in the Bretton Woods approach stem from the short shrift it gives to **institutional** reforms, and to **external** economic factors. Few social activists within our countries would seriously question the need for de-bureaucratization or for institutional reforms directed towards broader social participation with particular attention to the involvement of the "popular" sectors in economic and political decision-making. But this is not the direction that structural adjustment programs have taken. Ironically, in many instances the result has been the destruction of whatever state capacity for governance existed before, combined with corruption that is sometimes more centralized and on a larger scale.

Getting the Bretton Woods institutions to recognize these problems, however, has been like pulling teeth - a time-consuming and painful process. It has led many to aver that the principal interest of the Bank and the Fund is not

genuine institutional reform, but an attempt to open as many economies as possible to free flows of trade and investment. In this sense, they are seen to have functioned as the "storm-troopers" of the current wave of globalization in the world economy. Particularly ironic to social actors within our countries is that the attack on national bureaucracies and institutions should have come from a large international bureaucracy with no accountability to anyone but themselves. There have been few, if any, cases of Bank or Fund bureaucrats being penalized if their prescriptions (which acquire tremendous power through the mechanism of conditionalities) fail to deliver the goods.

Be that as it may, the Bretton Woods institutions have been enormously successful in opening up the world to globalization, and it is this long-term process that women's organizations and others must focus on. **Can globalization be challenged, controlled and/or regulated in the interests of the poor, especially women more generally? What role can and should governments play, and can they be made accountable? What should be the role of multilateral agencies, and how can they be made more accountable?**

Globalization: the challenges

The relationship of capitalist economic processes (of which the current globalization is the latest form) and human well-being has never been straightforward, although many ideologies (especially those of the market) obfuscate the complexities. The path of economic growth (despite raising

aggregate incomes and productivity) can diverge from human well-being by

- making livelihoods and entitlements insecure for many;
- creating and/or reinforcing socioeconomic inequalities, including those of gender, race, caste and class;
- marginalizing the labor and resource needs for human reproduction, thereby "marginalizing" women and our work;
- despoiling the environment;
- creating imbalances among different human needs by privileging the acquisition of material wealth over human and spiritual values, resulting in violence, alienation and despair;
- generating conflicts and violence.

Globalization heightens these problems because it increases the power of private profit-makers, while reducing the capacity of states to regulate their actions. This is particularly true for labor conditions, environmental damage, and economic inequality. Most of the above consequences of economic growth processes have well-known implications for women which we will not discuss here. As mentioned earlier, women in many countries have already been experiencing them in the context of structural adjustment programs.

But globalization also has certain unique features compared to earlier processes. One of these is the potential for

increasing female employment in the unorganized, so-called "informal" sectors, labor intensive industries and agro-business for exports. Under the pressures of inflation and lack of job-creation in organized industries, women have taken to increasing and new avenues of income-earning. Given the general conditions of slack labor markets nationally and internationally, their earnings and working conditions (especially health and safety) in these jobs often leave a great deal to be desired.

It has been noted that export-processing zones (EPZ's) are less able to attract investors today because entire economies are offering them the conditions that were previously available only in EPZ's. However, despite the low wages and poor working conditions in these export industries (compared to international standards in these industries, or to male workers in formal employment) women workers often have the potential to earn higher incomes than in their traditional jobs, and to break away from the hold of traditional patriarchal structures.[2] Women's own survival strategies through self-employment sometimes exhibit not only remarkable resilience, but a set of values that emphasize sharing, pooling, and reciprocity in resource use.

How can this potential be supported and strengthened?

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[2] Indeed, one reason for the backlash from fundamentalist patriarchs is the growing ability of women to escape from their hold under the strictures of economic compulsion.

We must remember, however, that not all of the new female income-earning is under relatively bearable conditions. Economic compulsions are forcing women - young, married, and old - to seek employment, often in dangerous and demeaning conditions as service workers. These women, particularly those working far away from home as migrants, require support and organization. Exporting firms also resort to domestic outwork in the workers' homes; in such circumstances, women's labor increases but they rarely have access to the income, and are unable to escape the hold of familial patriarchs. Women's organizations and networks have become increasingly active and vocal in the last decade in raising issues of concern to women workers, especially migrants. They have been demanding that governments and agencies play a more responsible role in ensuring their safety and rights. Can governments respond effectively? This raises the more general question of states' capacity for governance.

Governments' role

According to the Bretton Woods institutions, a good government is one that does not intervene in production, but limits itself to providing physical and social infrastructure, including a legal framework favorable to private property. Setting aside Bretton Woods ideology, however, it is clear that the relationship between globalization and governments in fact accommodates considerable variety. There have been interventionist states such as Japan, South Korea and Singapore that have been highly successful in making their economies globally

competitive, and supporting very rapid rates of economic growth, while providing certain social development services. Indeed, it is difficult to find countries with **non-**interventionist governments that have been able to generate sustained high rates of economic growth and adequate social development in the last few decades.

Based on these East and Southeast Asian experiences, there are some (both within the Bretton Woods institutions, and within the successful Asian countries) who argue that democracy and rapid growth in the context of the global economy are incompatible. However, authoritarianism is clearly no guarantor of economic success. From the 1960's onwards, many countries have experienced the coexistence of dictatorships with poor economic performance and rampant corruption.

A third type of relationship between globalization and governments is where an economy has removed most of the constraints to trade and capital movements (often under Bretton Woods pressure), but markets and economic institutions have not developed in response. This type of "globalization without markets" has been the experience of a number of countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Going global is clearly no guarantee of economic growth.

From women's perspectives, other things being the same, a government that prioritizes social development is clearly preferable to one that does not. Authoritarianism without social development is clearly worse than an

authoritarianism that pays some attention to health, education, clean water etc. But women have also paid a high price for the economic and social development successes of the East and Southeast Asian countries. In countries like Japan and South Korea, labor market structures are deeply gendered, with women forming a hard-working but distinctly secondary workforce. Severe gender biases such as son preference continue to exercise a stranglehold. In Thailand, female labor in sex-tourism has been part of the official policy for earning foreign exchange. In Singapore, the ability of nationals to participate in corporate service employment is predicated on the availability of cheap foreign household labor. And in Malaysia, prosperity has brought with it double standards in marriage and sexuality for men and women. **The lesson appears to be that, unless concerted and direct efforts are made to tackle the sources of gender inequality, even the best combinations of global economic success and social development can have very mixed effects for women.**

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT: AN ALTERNATIVE PARADIGM?

A second major issue that has been part of our discussion and reflection during the last five years is the idea of "human development". UNDP, through its Human Development Reports, has done the most to popularize the concept.[3] But even the World Bank now acknowledges that governments have a role to play in ensuring basic social infrastructure such as primary education and primary health. Can this idea, in the forms that it is now being espoused by various agencies, serve as an alternative to the dominant Bretton Woods paradigm of globalization?

An important issue here is the nature of a new consensus that is emerging about the relative roles of states, private producers, and civil society. The proponents of this consensus argue that economically productive activity is best left to private producers, while states should play an aggressive and active role in the social sectors, and poverty eradication. The argument is that, if economic growth picks up and employment grows, then growth will not only

[3] During the last five years UNDP has been producing a Human Development Report (HDR) each year. It comes out at roughly the same time each year as the World Bank's World Development Report (WDR) and focusses on many aspects of human development, providing extensive data that the WDR does not cover systematically. Its Human Development Index ranks countries by certain indicators of human development, and often provides a stark contrast to their ranking by GNP per capita. Increasingly its concepts have been refined and have become more gender-sensitive; the HDR provides a salutary though not adequate corrective to the concepts and approaches of the WDR.

generate incomes for many, but will also generate resources (both public and private) for the social sectors, and poverty removal.

But the **weaknesses** of the new consensus are many:

a) growth may not pick up for many countries. This is especially true in the poorest countries where both the base of economically valuable skills and physical infrastructure are currently weakest. But it is also true of the recent experience of a number of Caribbean countries whose human development indices are quite high, but where growth is stagnant;

b) growth may occur but employment generation may be weak. This was the experience of a number of countries in both South and North during the 1980's when the rate of industrial growth was high, but job creation in the private organized sector was stagnant and even declining, leading to the phenomenon of jobless growth;

c) both growth and employment may rise, but the jobs created may provide neither economic security nor human dignity. Many examples of modern day export sweatshops exist to bear this out;

d) growth may occur at the expense of significant and irreversible environmental damage;

e) the processes of economic restructuring that are argued by the Bretton Woods institutions and others to be essential to generate faster growth have very high social and human costs, including greater insecurity of livelihoods for many, sharp increases in the work burdens of women, reduced access to services such as education and health, in part because of the decline in public service provision, and in part because of higher costs consesquent on privitization and higher charges in the public sector.

Thus the deck will be stacked against governments willing and interested in doing something about human development even before they begin. The pent-up frustrations created by the poor employment prospects of young people, the worsening distribution of consumption and income, and the aspirations generated by an increasingly multinational media are vented through the rise of fundamentalism of various kinds, fascism, ethnic conflicts, and growing violence against women.

Because of its associations with the consensus outlined above, some have argued that we ought entirely to drop the concept of human development. Alternatively, if the idea of human development is to transcend the problems inherent in the mainstream consensus, then it is necessary to i) engender the concept[4]; ii) spell out the principles on which it should be based; iii) re-define the concept itself;

[4] Some attempts in this direction have been made in the recently released Human Development Report 1995.

and iv) clarify the links that ought to exist between human development and economic growth.

Engendering human development

It is worth remembering that this is the second time in the development dialogue / debate of the last four and a half decades that people and their needs are coming nearer the center of policy discussion. The first time was in the 1970's when there was a consensus around the importance of focussing on people's basic needs, a consensus that emerged out of a belief in the inadequacy of trickle-down growth, and from the debates around dependency and the calls for a new international economic order.

The 1980's, as we know, saw a reversal of this consensus, with the primacy of economic growth becoming reestablished as the dominant policy direction. In the 1990's, once again, discussions of human-centered development, human security, or sustainable human development are coming to the center of policy debate.

But there is a difference. In the 1970's there was no gender in the debates; perhaps understandably so since the field of "women in development" was minuscule, and the international women's movement was still a fledgling. This is not true in the 1990's. Discussions of human-centered development in the 1990's have no excuse to, and cannot afford to repeat the mistake of the 1970's. It will be too costly for women, and too costly for human development.

A **gender perspective** is crucial if the paradigm of human development is to break out of its current impasse. A gender perspective means not only recognizing, as many in policy circles are now willing to do, that women suffer the worst when human development is inadequate. **A gender perspective means recognizing that women stand at the crossroads between production and reproduction, between economic activity and the care of human beings, and therefore between economic growth and human development.** They are the workers in both spheres - those most responsible, and therefore with most at stake, those who suffer the most when the two work at cross-purposes, and those most sensitive to the need for better integration between the two.

The implications of this understanding are:
a) the importance of recognizing women as the potential political actors with the strongest stake in human centered development; and the need to **engender human development** in a way that has not happened up to this point, by integrating a gender-perspective at the highest policy levels, and strengthening women so as to enable them to hold economic and political policies and systems accountable;
b) uncovering, researching, supporting, and strengthening the economic alternatives (policies, programs, models, experiences) that women have themselves been creating, as well as those others which link economic activity and human development in humane and fulfilling ways.

Principles for human development

In the DAWN discussions, five principles emerged as a critical core for a genuinely human-centered development:

i) Human development means supporting the development of people's potential to lead creative, useful and fulfilling lives.

ii Human development for all is or should be the **primary and direct** goal of economic growth processes.

iii) Transforming gender relations is central to the human development of both women and men.

iv) Class, caste, race and other social relations of power are embedded in inequalities between and within nations, and interwoven with gender relations so as to pose major barriers; their transformation is key to human development.

v) Human development must be environmentally sound and ensure secure and adequate livelihoods for poor people, especially women.

These principles raise a number of questions and issues that require clarification.

Redefining the concept

Fundamentally a focus on human development as the goal of economic and social processes should reaffirm the centrality of people realizing their potential to be creative, useful and fulfilled members of society; **the acquisition of material wealth is a means to that end, not an end in itself.** It stresses values of self-realization through creativity, through participation in community, through sharing and reciprocity, and through a rich ethical and spiritual life. A society that gives such values short shrift by raising material acquisition from the status of means to the position of a dominant end impoverishes itself in many ways, and lets loose forces of social disintegration and violence. Social disintegration and social pathologies are not so much results of extreme poverty (except insofar as poverty and marginalization go hand in hand with the breakup of communities and value systems) but of an obsessive, even frantic search for material acquisition as an end in itself bereft of human values.

There is a pressing need now for a clear rearticulation of values for at least two reasons: **first**, the environmental unsustainability of the materially acquisitive life-styles which are the support base of an acquisitive economic system; **second**, the human unsustainability of economic processes which value human beings if they are wealthy or failing that, if they are useful and difficult to replace in the process of wealth creation. All other people are marginalized or rendered subordinate. These two tensions are in some sense endemic to the dominant global economic

system; but they have become particularly acute over the last decade when ameliorative policies to sustain human beings have taken a back seat to the pressures of globalization.

What is or should be the relationship between human development and economic growth?

At present the problem is that the economic growth of countries has become once again an end in itself, and human development[5] is viewed as a means to that end. **This needs to be reversed.** This does not mean that economic growth is not important. It is important given the extreme material deprivation of large numbers of people in the world and particularly in the South. **But growth needs to be managed and qualified so that it contributes to human development.** One crucial aspect of the above is to guarantee a base of economic security for materially poor nations and people, through more equitable global economic and especially trade arrangements (eg, an insurance fund for primary commodity producers) and systems that guarantee access to material resources by poor people. These systems should themselves be designed on human development principles and should be "debureaucratized" and participatory.

Besides better distribution of the fruits of growth, what **kind** of economic growth should be promoted is also important. Booming export earnings through despoliation

[5] It is no accident that it is called "human resource development" in the dominant paradigm.

of natural resources, or sex-tourism may lead to very high rates of economic growth for a time, but they run counter to environmental sustainability, and human values, especially gender equality. Both environmental controls and human controls are crucial. These are complex and difficult but essential. Regulating and controlling market forces, transforming states to be supportive of human development goals, and strengthening the institutions of civil society are crucial in this.

THE CHALLENGE OF SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS

Over and over again in the DAWN debates, the problem of environmental degradation has come up as a major concern of women in every country. There is a clear perception that the problems have become more acute during the last decade, and that there is a close link to the economic processes that are currently under way. With structural adjustment programs and the opening of economies to global pressures, the strain on natural resources which are central to the livelihoods of poor people, and to the work and responsibilities of women has become acute.

Under pressure to raise exports and increase foreign exchange earnings, governments have given large-scale timber concessions in forests, allowed shrimp farming in ecologically sensitive areas, opened up delicate coastal and mountain areas to large-scale commercial tourism, allowed the commercial dumping of industrial and hazardous wastes from abroad, turned a blind eye to polluting industries, and promoted a renewed privatization of common lands. As women face them, the consequences include the despoliation of forests, loss of access to common resources that are vital to livelihoods, the lowering and pollution of water tables and ground-water, contaminated soils, air and water, a pressure on livelihoods, increasing health hazards, and considerably greater work burdens for themselves and their children.

Within the general trends, particular regions face certain acute problems. For instance, nuclear testing and dumping are a major hazard in the Pacific, and continue unabated in some islands. Clear felling of forests continues in Sarawak, affecting tribal lives and livelihoods. Women identified not only external pressures but also the elites and middle classes within their own countries (and sometimes the men in their own families and communities), who are busy getting rich by selling off the common natural heritage.

The debate between North and South governments around environmental issues seems particularly ironic to women. Two sets of elites appear to be battling over who has the right to pollute, and who has the right to consume natural resources more rapidly. In the meantime, the livelihoods of the poor, the work burdens of women, and the health effects on both current and future generations are ignored as minor issues. For women, environmental hazard does not only take the form of a major disaster, but is the daily erosion of the quality of their lives. Moving towards a genuine sustainable development will require challenging the dominant forces of globalization, and demanding accountability from governments and agencies who are charged with environmental protection.

FROM TINA ("there is no alternative") TO TMBA ("there must be an alternative)

The DAWN journey on the path of alternative development has not led us to a new blueprint, a different model. The time for models may be past - not only has the socialist model lost its shine, but its opposite, the model of competitive capitalism exists only in textbooks and in the ideologies of extreme social conservatives. The processes of economic transformation through globalization that the world is now living through are too complex and varied for our responses to it to be easily pinned down into a neat blueprint of alternatives. What may be appropriate or right by way of economic policy or social action in one situation may be entirely wrong in others.[6]

What we have come to, instead, is a set of methods or processes that we feel are essential if we are to be able to move out of the crises we now appear to be locked into. The first is to continue to challenge the detrimental dimensions and effects of globalization, locally, nationally, and globally. The second is to work to transform the state so that governments can begin to serve people and women in particular, and the third is to energize the building and

[6] Even the World Bank has (hopefully) learned from its disastrous attempts to stamp a single mould of structural adjustment programs on to every country. But old habits die hard. The Bank, in its triumphalism over the fall of socialism, still attempts in many countries to chant the same mantras against state involvement in economic activity, even though it has been forced belatedly to acknowledge the role the state has played in the currently fastest growing economic region in the world.

strengthening of the institutions of civil society of which women's movements are a part.

Challenging globalization

In recent history, there have been five great social movements that have challenged the paradigm of growth through globalization.[7] These are workers' movements, left movements, environmental movements, the peace and human rights movement, and women's movements. They have responded to the different ways in which the globalization of economic growth processes has been making livelihoods and resource entitlements of poor people insecure; reversing hard-won standards for conditions of work and wages; reinforcing socioeconomic inequality (based on race, caste, gender, income and wealth); marginalizing the work and resources needed for bearing, raising and caring for people; degrading and despoiling local and global environments; generating conflicts and violence; and privileging the acquisition of material wealth over spiritual and other values, thus breeding selfishness, alienation and despair.

Each movement has started with particular entry-points, but its ability to be effective has depended on its capacity to broaden its vision and to build alliances with others. These

[7] Within countries and regions, other social movements have also been very active, e.g., the movements against caste- or race-based oppression. In this discussion we focus on the movements that have especially focussed on the problems posed by globalization.

movements have built on the experiences and lessons learned in the social struggles of the 1960's and 1970's - nationalist struggles, civil rights movements, and anti-war movements. While their antecedents can be traced back to the earlier period, all of them have had to learn to transform themselves to deal with the problems of globalization.

A major dilemma that globalization poses for all these movements is the extreme mobility of capital that it makes possible. Capital flight is the sword of Damocles that hangs over the head not only of those who organize workers, the marginalized poor, or women, or who dare to protest against environmental decay and plunder, but over governments who attempt to regulate the conditions under which capital can enter or operate within a national economy.[8] Clearly, given national economies as they are now constituted, "delinking" from the global economy is not a real choice; few economies are large or self-sustaining enough to attempt this without enormous suffering.[9]

One possible way to reduce the volatility of capital movements is through a tax on global financial transactions. Such a tax would both raise the cost of

[8] Indeed, not even such organized opposition is needed for large amounts of capital to move. In today's financial markets, changes in investors' confidence can be triggered by random shocks, and can lead to major economic destabilization.

[9] The experience of Cuba with a forced "delinking" as a consequence of the U.S. economic blockade bears ample testimony to this.

speculative capital movements, and would also generate a fund that could be used for a variety of purposes, social or environmental. Although the tax is opposed by financial institutions, it is a far-sighted proposal whose time may still come.

But instruments like this tax will not reduce the problem of non-speculative capital flight. For this, the only solution appears to be to strengthen the foreign exchange buffers available, especially to the lowest income countries. For example, a buffer fund for primary product exporters could cushion them against external shocks, and also make it possible for them to stand firm against threats of capital flight. Access to such a fund would also reduce the need for development assistance, and ease the pressure on debt servicing. Something like the tax on financial transactions could in fact be used for this purpose. The irony of the recently concluded global trade negotiations is that they paid very little attention to the creation of such a fund.

The related problem of debt cancellation is an issue on which pressure needs to be maintained. Few people realize that a good portion of the current external debt servicing problem is a result of the variability of interest rates during the last decade. The situation of countries that have already paid back more than what they had originally borrowed but still find themselves neck-deep in debt is akin to that of the agricultural laborer, generations of whose family are bonded to the village moneylender through usurious interest rates. Despite many innovative proposals, the political will

among the rich countries and in the Bretton Woods institutions has been lacking. Only sustained pressure can change this.

Support from women's organizations and other social movements for proposals such as the tax on financial transactions or for debt cancellation should not be viewed as naive support for the proposals of Southern governments. Women are only too aware that the governments and elites in our countries are complicit in our economic problems, have often benefited personally from corruption and from the processes of globalization, play political games with fundamentalist forces, and are only too willing to shortchange our needs and concerns. We are also aware that the fragmentation of the Third World has meant that our governments are increasingly incapable of identifying common agendas and goals to which they can commit themselves. If we put our energy and organization into supporting proposals such as those identified above, or into reform of the Bretton Woods institutions so that they become more responsive to our needs, we will need to be as demanding of our governments in terms of participation and genuine democracy.

One important aspect of the challenge to globalization is the importance of reforming the Bretton Woods institutions themselves. There are now a number of global initiatives including the "Fifty years is enough" campaign, which is attempting to bring pressure for such reform. As is generally acknowledged, the Bretton Woods institutions

have not fulfilled a considerable part of their original mandate of ensuring global financial stability or the flow of development assistance in an even-handed way. While they have wielded the big stick against poor debtor nations, the largest and richest debtors have got away scot-free. Countries suffering from balance of payments deficits have had to bear all the burden of adjustment, while those with surpluses have not.

From the viewpoint of women and other social movements, far more serious is the role they have played in pressuring international and national policies in directions that will ensure free flows of trade and investment at any cost. Those costs have typically been visited on women, on workers, on natural environments, and on the poor and vulnerable. The international and national bureaucrats who are responsible for the policies bear no costs, not even for the many failures that their programs have suffered.

Under pressure, it is true that the World Bank has been forced to change, and to become more accountable for the environmental and human consequences of its actions. There have been some spectacular successes for environmentalists, such as the blocking of further funding of the Narmada River projects by the Bank. But even environmentalists have a long way to go before the Bank's projects take full account of their environmental consequences, and even longer before such thinking penetrates those responsible for making large policy loans such as for structural adjustment.

Other social movements, have also in the very recent past begun to make some headway. The NGO Working Group for the World Bank has noted that there does seem to be a growing concern about poverty and participatory processes within some of the Bank's regional divisions. As in any other large bureaucracy, however, these will remain at the level of lip-service unless strong signals and directions for change are provided from the very top of the Bank's hierarchy.[10] At the same time, in order to be more effective, social movements including women's movements have to become more effective in bringing about such changes by sharpening new and different kinds of skills and abilities for analysis, dialogue and advocacy; we will return to this below in the discussion on strengthening civil society.

Another crucial dilemma posed by globalization is the weakening of labor organizations, and of standard-setting bodies such as the ILO. The challenge is to strengthen the capacity of organizations that set standards and regulate labor conditions. But here again, innovative thinking is needed. It is clear that the heyday of the old-style, male dominated organization of formal, industrial workers is over globally. For some time now, wherever employment

[10] Some movement in this direction appears to be taking place under the Bank's new President Wolfensohn. The Africa division of the Bank has been given a clear signal that, hereafter, the emphasis should not be on lending at all costs (often throwing money into disastrous projects) but on the quality of lending in terms of social and environmental impacts. Wolfensohn has also sent a strong environmental signal by cancelling the loan for the huge Arun Dam project in Nepal whose environmental, social and financial viability had been challenged by the Arun Concerned Group.

has been growing, it has been in services and in unorganized, informal sectors. These are also sectors where women workers are found in larger numbers than in formal industries.

New ways of organizing such workers, and improving their working and living conditions are being experimented with in many countries. These include workers' and social service cooperatives, associations of the self-employed, support networks for migrant and service workers, and organizations of urban slum-dwellers among others. Because such organizations do not rigidly compartmentalize working from living conditions, their approaches are more holistic and therefore more in tune with the realities of women's lives.

As difficult as the dilemmas faced by labor organizations, are the problems that globalization poses for the environment. As we have seen, these are not problems related to the future of the planet alone, but are the lived realities of the livelihoods of women in our countries today. One strand of thinking (heavily influenced by protectionist forces in the North) is to incorporate so-called "social clauses" on environmental and working conditions into international agreements. Southern governments have vehemently opposed any such attempt. What should be our response?

It is certainly true that the discussion about social clauses often makes them akin to a new form of "conditionality" on

a country's ability to trade or borrow. But it is important to emphasize that many ILO agreements (e.g., the right to free association and bargaining by workers, eradication of child and slave labor, the end of all forms of discrimination) are critical and intrinsic elements of our own agenda which have been considerably eroded, and are now being instrumentalized by Northern corporate and other interests. It is equally true that every attempt to improve the conditions of workers or to protect the environment in our countries is stonewalled by our own governments on the grounds of potential capital flight. Left to themselves, governments would do very little. In these circumstances, perhaps the best strategy is for women's organizations from both South and North jointly to press our governments for greater accountability on these heads in both North and South. The presence of such concerted pressure may provide us with just the leverage needed to bring about change.[11]

Many social movements in the South have been a little schizophrenic in our approach to our own governments. While we are usually highly critical of them within our national boundaries, we have tended in the past to close ranks with them in their dealings with the North. This support has often been given too easily on simple nationalistic or "Third World solidarity" grounds. We need to reflect carefully on the implications of such uncritical

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[11] After all, if our governments can keep pointing the threat of capital flight out to us, why can we not point out the dangers of trade sanctions or boycotts to them?!

support in the current global context. It is arguable that support should be given where and when appropriate, but only by demanding a return in terms of participation, accountability and genuine democracy.

Perhaps the biggest and most difficult challenge posed by globalization is the operations of transnational corporations. These include not only European, American or Japanese firms, but also a growing number from the rapidly growing industrial economies of the South. Making them accountable in terms of their production, marketing and labor practices is going to be a long haul, since governments are all bending over backwards to invite them in. But the struggle over the conditions of their entry and exit, as well as the terms on which they operate, is worth waging, and is far from over.

It should be clear from this discussion that we do not envision challenging globalization as a task for women's movements alone. Precisely because of the range and power of the globalization process, it is vital that different social movements begin building more bridges and alliances among ourselves. For women, such alliances are especially important because of the presence of a very different challenger to globalization operating from the extreme right, the force of patriarchal fundamentalism.

Threatened by the implications of globalization for the loss of their traditional privileges and influence in society, fundamentalists of every stripe are redefining "nationalism"

and creating supra-national identities based on patriarchal religions in many countries, both Southern and Northern. Control over women, in the name of cultural anti-imperialism and religious values is central to their project. The fact that economic and social processes are redefining women's roles provides grist to their mill, and allows them to mobilize male fears of loss of authority. **It is important that these forces are seen to be not simply anachronisms from an earlier time, but a modern-day, right-wing response to globalization.[12] Taking them on effectively should be a project not just for women but for the whole range of progressive social movements.**

Transforming the state

Criticisms of the state have been a central part of the globalization project spearheaded by the Bretton Woods institutions. States, especially in the South, have been labelled corrupt, inefficient and wasteful. Such criticisms, as we know, are not new. Thoughtful observers and members of social movements have been levying such charges for over three decades. What distinguishes our critique from that of the Bank and the Fund is our motivation, and the implications we draw from the critique. Our motivation has always been to challenge the state to become more accountable to the needs and concerns of

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[12] A careful reading of the writings put out by the Vatican in the context of its campaign against recent international human rights (Vienna, 1993) and population (Cairo, ICPD, 1994) documents shows a skilful blend of criticism of the effects of globalization on the poor, and of falling "moral values" that are blamed on women's liberation movements.

ordinary citizens, instead of only to the rich and powerful, inside or outside the country. The BWI's motivation appears to have been quite different - to destroy the state's capacity to put barriers in the path of free trade and capital flows. In the process, intentionally or otherwise, they have destroyed the legitimacy of the state and its institutions, without working seriously for institutional alternatives.

The implication of social movements' critique of the state is to make the state and its processes more transparent, open, and participatory and thereby more accountable; and to strengthen countervailing institutions to executive power, such as genuinely democratic and non-corrupt legislative bodies, an impartial judiciary, open communications media, freedom of information and association; as well as to build new institutions within civil society that would function as watchdogs over the state. The approach of the Bank has often been quite the reverse, despite increasing lip-service to popular participation. **Support for transparency and NGO involvement in monitoring is confined to the social sectors and to certain types of environmental effects, but is not part of the discussions around major economic policy loans in which the BWI are involved.**

Most damaging has been the singular lack of interest in supporting the building of institutions that would actually support the capacity for "good governance". If corruption, inefficiency and waste are really to be rooted out of the system, then it is essential to create institutions that will open state actions to public scrutiny. For this there has

been little enthusiasm on the part of the Bank or of governments. In its absence, the pressure for "good governance" has led to no governance at all. States' capacity for any form of governance has been severely curtailed along with state resources for development projects.

Indeed, "good governance" itself has been understood in much too technocratic a way. There has been too much discussion about the kinds of rules, procedures, and links between bureaucracy and politicians, and not enough on the fundamental requirements of transparency and accountability. As women, given our low presence in the traditional mainstream political and economic institutions, this absence of transparency and accountability means that our access to discussions, let alone to decision-making, is severely curtailed. "Good governance" for us means democratizing and debureaucratizing **national governments as well as international agencies** to make them more accountable.

It is increasingly clear that "good governance", **understood in this way**, is crucial if the state is to provide the services that poor people, especially women, badly need. It is a prerequisite for the availability of and access to good health and education, clean water and fuel, childcare and basic nutrition at reasonable cost for the majority of people. **Although ngo's can effectively influence the direction of public policies, and can implement exemplary programs, no amount of service provision by non-governmental**

organizations can substitute for the state in some of these crucial areas.

Strengthening civil society

During the last two decades women's movements worldwide have learned a great many lessons through work done at local and national levels and more recently at the global level. In economic empowerment, by developing model programs for education, literacy, child-care, and social security, in training, in advocacy, and in political participation, we have learned much through processes of self-empowerment. These lessons are rich and complex, and we are still in the process of assimilating and absorbing them fully in order to cull out lessons for future directions. Most importantly, we have learned, through practice, the crucial necessity of working towards a broad-based strengthening of civil society.

Strengthening the institutions and organizations of civil society is clearly critical to the alternative development approaches and processes that we have been discussing. Currently these organizations range from social movements through community-based organizations and sectoral organizations such as trade unions to a wide spectrum of non-governmental organizations. They often vary in their focus: land rights, the rights of workers, women's rights as some examples, and in their approaches to service delivery, advocacy, lobbying and other functions. More and more, however, the all-encompassing effects of globalization are

stimulating a process tending towards common analysis and coordinated agendas. For this process to advance and to impact all levels of decision-making and action, it is critical that structured as well as informal mechanisms for ongoing sharing of analyses, consensus building, and coordinated action be established between organizations.

The process faces many challenges. The development of an integrated approach to human development which is holistic can show the way forward in the measure that the interaction among the organizations of civil society recognizes and acts to diffuse differentials of power; is based on commitment to dialogue; is rooted in the defense of human rights; and is anchored in a search for the fullest realization of human creative potential within an affirmation of human values. But not all institutions are equally placed in the dialogue.

While some institutions have been battered badly during the last two decades or so, others have been growing rapidly. For instance, during the last decade, there has been a mushrooming of ngo's world-wide at many levels. The declining legitimacy of the state together with the stagnation of official development assistance have gone hand in hand with increased availability of funds for ngo's from many sources.[13] Even multilateral and bilateral

[13] While it is true that the flow of funds for ngo's increased in the 1980's, European funds in particular appear to have levelled out in the 1990's. The new trend is toward direct bi- and multi-lateral lending to ngo's, but many ngo's are not yet acquainted with the challenges posed by this. The regional distribution of funds has also been changing, with more money flowing to Eastern Europe.

agencies are increasingly providing funds directly to ngo's. Women's organizations among others have been the recipients of such funding. But elation over the dynamism of the sector has to be tempered with caution.

The reasons for caution are many. First, the motivations of at least some funders and supporters are questionable since they appear to imagine that ngo's can be built up to substitute for state activity. Support for ngo's in such a case is sometimes part of an attack on state capacity per se. Second, the availability of funds has brought its share of carpet-baggers drawn by the smell of money. Their lack of real motivation, experience or background does not always limit their ability to attract funds. Third, problems of transparency and accountability hold equally for ngo's. There are too many cases of charismatic leadership turning into personalized scrambles for power and pelf. Fourth, ngo's often promise more than they can deliver. Fifth, ngo's can be as sexist in their attitudes and practices as any other organization.

These are not insurmountable problems provided different social movements are willing to take on the challenge of vitalizing and challenging ngo's. In the process, structural weaknesses in their access to technical knowledge, their capacity to function, to manage organizations, to liaise with other organizations and agencies can also be addressed. The issue of accountability is most critical. Ultimately

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Asia and Africa, and less relatively to Latin America.

ngo's need to be transparent and accountable not only to their own immediate constituencies but to companion actors in the movement for social transformation. The distinction between social movements and ngo's is vital here; social movements have guiding principles, ideologies and goals, whereas ngo's are a loose umbrella covering many different kinds of organizations, only some of which may view themselves as part of a social movement.

What is the role for social movements and for the women's movement in particular in this age of globalization? We believe our principal role has to be to act as autonomous watchdogs over both governments and international (and other) agencies, public and private, to provide models of alternative forms of development organizations that work for women, and to catalyze and challenge other movements to address issues of patriarchy and gender power. Of these, it is the second - the creation of alternative models - in which we have spent a great deal of energy in the last two decades. Our experience with the other two is newer and less well understood, even by ourselves.

Of particular importance, if we are to challenge the forces of globalization effectively, is to rethink our ability to work not only at local, national or regional levels but also globally. Willy-nilly we have been acting at the global level (for instance our role in recent UN conferences on human rights, population and development, and social development). **Such action is critical, because it is difficult if not impossible to challenge global actors, if**

we are unwilling to act globally ourselves. But not all sections of the movement are comfortable with such action - it is too new and too threatening to established modes of thinking and working. The most fruitful direction appears to be the one emerging in women's movements in many countries. In order to be effective in our national and regional contexts, action at the global level is linked to and supported by sustained and informed participation at local, national and regional levels. The past disjuncture between initiatives taken to address the search for alternatives at a global level and the limited gains achieved on the ground call for a recommitment to the twin strategy of building global solidarity from the bottom, as well as through the spaces secured through action at the international level.

We also need to strategize carefully the building of alliances with other movements and social actors. These alliances cannot be on the basis of old assumptions of traditional solidarity; all such assumptions have to be challenged and re-examined. As women we have had too much historical experience of assuming mutual solidarity with others in a struggle, only to find our concerns about gender being relegated to secondary status at critical moments. But alliances on negotiated terms and with clear understanding are essential if civil society is to be strengthened in these last years before the millennium.

This is clearly both a time of crisis, and of tremendous possibilities if women's movements can seize the opportunity to assess their strengths, be aware of their

weaknesses, and move forward boldly. The relationships among states, the forces of private profit and globalization, and civil society are being reshaped in new ways, both constricting and transforming. The crucial question is whether women can be involved in that reshaping. Are we as a movement willing to take up the challenge?

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