Twenty years ago the global women’s movement secured over 172 references and an entire chapter devoted to protecting and expanding women’s rights in Agenda 21. Today, we are witnessing a retreat from the gains and promises made toward an engendered sustainable development paradigm. Regrettably, there now are little or no mention of women’s conditions in the inter-governmental process leading up to Rio+20.

With a world spiraling into an abyss of seemingly never-ending crisis, the promise of engendered sustainable development becomes more far-fetched. There is now an urgent need to change mindsets and to accept that limitless economic growth does not equate with well-being or sustainability. New indicators and data now suggest that people’s well-being is anchored on the creation of more equal societies.

The following is adapted from Anita Nayar’s speech, DAWN’s coordinator for Political Ecology and Sustainability, delivered on behalf of the Women’s Major Group at the Rio+20 Intercessional, 15-16 December 2011, United Nations Building New York. In her speech, Anita highlights five calls to action imperative for the re-design and implementation of an engendered sustainable development model for the world’s future.

**FIRST CALL**
For governments to reaffirm that the issue of gender is crosscutting in development processes and that gender equality and women’s human rights are vital to achieving sustainable development. The renewed commitment of governments may be put to test in its development of the proposed Sustainable Development Goals. In drafting these goals, the world cannot lose sight of the interconnectivity of both processes.

**SECOND CALL**
For the world’s leaders and decision makers to recognize the unequal and unfair burden that women carry in order to sustain collective well-being. For equality to be truly realized, the development of indicators that measure time spent by women on performing unpaid or underpaid work is crucial. By doing so, women’s invisible labor and the value of social reproduction are both brought to the fore. Such will ensure that women’s work is appropriately accounted for and recognized in macroeconomic policy and decision-making.

Anita Nayar also represented DAWN in the Asia Pacific Preparatory Meeting for Rio+20 held from 19-20 October 2011. This meeting helped craft the regional statement of the Women’s Major Group, which received endorsements from over 40 organizations in the Asia Pacific. The statement can be downloaded at [http://www.dawnnet.org/advocacy-cso.php?id=182](http://www.dawnnet.org/advocacy-cso.php?id=182)

The inter-governmental negotiation process continues with a series of meetings leading up to the Rio+20 conference. The planned dates and venues are as follows:

- March 19-23 First Informal Informals, UN, New York
- March 26-27 Third Inter-Sessional, UN, New York
- April 23- May 4 Second Informal Informals, UN, New York
- June 13-15 Third (Final) Preparatory Committee Meeting, Rio de Janeiro
- June 16-19 Days of Dialogue on Sustainable Development, Rio de Janeiro
- June 20-22 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio de Janeiro

For more information please see [www.uncsd2012.org](http://www.uncsd2012.org)

A parallel People’s Summit will also be convene in Rio de Janeiro. The planned dates are as follows:

- Jun 5: World Environment Day – Preparatory mobilization for Rio+20
- Jun 15-16: Activities organized by local social movements
- Jun 17: Opening march of the People’s Summit
- Jun 18-22: Self organized activities and the Permanent People’s Assembly
- Jun 20: International day of mobilization
- Jun 23: Final message of the People’s Summit

For more information, refer to [www.rio20.net](http://www.rio20.net)
Sustainable development has been central to DAWN discussions since its inception. DAWN subscribes to the notion that, similar to justice, human rights, and more equal gender relations, all individual actions that contribute to life-supporting systems and forms of exchanges that promote ecological sound farming, disarmament and reintegration (DDR) programs, the gendered needs of ex-combatants, post-conflict militarized states and Security Sector Reform; and

The special vulnerabilities of conflict including disability, women and single women heads of households;

- Lack of female representation in peace processes and in decision-making environments and in public fora;

- The discriminatory use of religion and culture – freedom of movement, expression and association for women (including in education and engagement in collective orientations), and the need to ensure sexual and reproductive health and rights.

DAWN called on for the Committee to define obligations of States for conduct and policies effects rights extraterritorially highlighting that the fact obligations under the international humanitarian law (IHL) and human rights; and with respect to CEDAW; there is a need to address the lack of clear standards and accountability for humanitarian organizations, external military interventions, institutions that play a role in conflict and post-conflict reconstruction and recovery; and there is a need to redress governments’ inability to hold various institutions accountable.

Civil society groups also requested the Committee to provide them with a plan of action and timeline for the drafting process, including planned continuing consultations with them. It was noted that the economic and social preliminary stage of elaboration. The promised regional and thematic consultations will soon be held. It is imperative for the Committee to engage with the committee at a substantive level to ensure that the GR will protect and strengthen the rights of women and girls living in situations of conflict, transition and in post-conflict states.

DAWN together with IWRAW AP, WILP, GNWP and other technical experts have been working on a global initiative to move forward collectively in support of the GR, with rigorous analysis and treatment of the issue through various CEDAW processes. At a global consultation in Colombo together with the GR text and the need to increase monitoring and reporting mechanisms for sexual and reproductive health and rights; and societal violence; and trafficking, and address impunity and reparations as a part of transitional justice and peacekeeping;

- The impact of small arms on women and the increase in domestic and societal violence;

- Women in conflict and post-conflict settings;

- The right to work, the participation of women in political and public life;

- The right todBirth control/or/owner/s, with respect to CEDAW; there is a need to address the lack of clear standards and accountability for humanitarian organizations, external military interventions, institutions that play a role in conflict and post-conflict reconstruction and recovery; and there is a need to redress governments’ inability to hold various institutions accountable.

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- The right to
Development assistance for health: a political exercise

Adapted from the presentation "Financing for and Governing Global Health" delivered by Francoise Girard, representing the International Women’s Health in the DAWN Training Institute held last 9-27 October 2011 in Siem Reap, Cambodia.

How are resources for development assistance for health (DAH) decided upon? Does money go to those countries with the greatest burden of disease? Is the number of life years lost to sickness or illness used as an indicator in the decision-making process? Is it safe to assume that the poorest countries receive the most development assistance for health? Which factors are considered in allocating or distributing development assistance for various health issues in a country? Who decides when child health requires more investment over HIV or the other way around?

Using data produced by the Institute of Health Matrix and Evaluation (IHMME, 2010), there are inconsistencies evident in the decision-making process around DAH. Examining the health profile of each country, it was reported that in spite of the relatively low ‘burden of disease’ carried by some countries, countries like Zambia, Argentina, Colombia, Ghana, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Uganda and Malawi were among the more fortunate recipients of DAH. In stark contrast to this, countries like the Democratic Republic of Congo which has a higher ‘burden of disease’, is reported to receive funding that is not proportional to the country’s needs.

Interestingly, trends also indicate that countries receive bloated budgets for specific health issues. Marked as lost commodities by more privileged countries, the phenomenon of donor darling is most perplexing, unjust and highly politicizes the decision-making process around DAH. The biased distribution of DAH poses great problems for countries in great need and frees countries with the capacity to pay for their own healthcare from certain responsibilities – not only to their populace as well as the world’s poor.

Agriculture at risk across the regions

Adapted from the presentation delivered by Norma Maldonado, environmental activist from Guatemala at the DAWN Training Institute held last 9-27 October 2011 in Siem Reap, Cambodia.

Compared to previous decades, governments around the world have failed to pay sufficient attention to agriculture. Each region has its unique set of problems in relation to agriculture. For instance, lands in the North Asian region are losing out to desertification and overgrazing of pastures. In the Pacific and Southeast Asia, flooding linked to rising sea levels have destroyed hectares and hectares of crops, putting lives, livelihoods and food security at risk. In the Caribbean region, agriculture is avoided like the plague by some of its constituents owing to its historical links to slavery. African countries on the other hand have opted to focus more on mining than agriculture, while countries in Latin America have opened itself up to the use of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) and chemical-based fumigation.

Many people are unaware of the side effects brought about by GMOs or conventional seeds. To many people, it is a quick solution in enhancing the quality of food, but this too has serious consequences. GMOs have been found to cause infertility and illnesses such as prostate cancer and breast cancer. Some reports claim that companies manufacturing commercial seeds are also into the pharmaceutical business. This implies that the very same companies that produce commercial seeds manufacture medicines that help cure illnesses linked to their products. Ironically, the food that is supposed to provide people with sustenance and the medicine that people consume nowadays may at times, do more harm than good.

In many countries, it was reported, that crops with the best quality are often those that are exported. Poorer quality produce is left for the consumption of the population of countries where these crops originally come from.

In many countries, it was reported, that crops with the best quality are often those that are exported. Poorer quality produce is left for the consumption of the population of countries where these crops originally come from.
The fourth global DAWN Training Institute (DTI) was held in Siem Reap, Cambodia from 9 to 27 October 2011. Twenty-seven young women activists from Latin America, Asia, Pacific, Caribbean, and Africa attended this three-week training. The programme draws on DAWN’s Southern feminist analysis which inter-links issues under the four themes of Political Economy of Globalisation (PEG), Political Ecology and Sustainability (PEAS), Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), and Political Restructuring and Social Transformation (PRST).

"On behalf of the DAWN team and the secretariat, thank you so much for your active participation in the learning process as well as for your openness and cooperative spirit which you have contributed to the success of the DTI 2011”
-Zoe Randriamara
DAWN Training Coordinator

"I will remember what Zoa told us- we could change history if we want to but we shouldn’t be victims of history”
-Rosa Vichiex Caceres (Peru)

"We have armed ourselves with new thinking and ideologies and it’s time to think what we can do and what we can act on when we have these things when we go back to our home”
-Wang Jue (China)

"It was very useful for me to go through the exercise, and see how many issues were inter-linked with each other”
-Tonya Haynes (Barbados)

"All the topics that were chosen for the debates were very relevant and the kind of topics were not just a yes or no position, which forces us to think about different arguments”
-Rashni Nuggehalli (India)

“We were able to build our skills on how to deliver the content we’ve been learning so far in a structured manner and a creative one”
-Filomena Tuwanuatu (Fiji)

“During the group work it was interesting to see the similarities between our inter-linkages despite the different areas we work with”
-Shungi Mulli (Kenya)
In collaboration with the Center of Concern, the Agribusiness Action Initiative and the Asian Farmer’s Association, DAWN convened 18 activists working in rural areas and the agricultural sector for the capacity building workshop A Bottom-Up Approach to Rightsing Financial Regulation held last 5-6 December 2011 in the Philippines. The workshop spanned off from an earlier initiative that produced the Kuala Lumpur Guidelines, which linked the issue of human rights with advocacy work on trade, investment, financial rules and regulation.

With increased understanding of the growth of private sector investment in agriculture and food systems in the region, principally in the Mekong sub-region, the workshop was largely attended by delegates from the Mekong sub-region with some representatives from Indonesia and the Philippines. The workshop primarily aimed to: 1) build the capacity of its participants to develop nation-wide financial and investment regulation proposals that facilitate human rights and development; 2) establish clear links between financial regulation and selected issues undertaken by human rights, grassroots and peasant/rural-based movements; and 3) identify global issues, such as transnational agribusiness firms, coaching participants on how to mobilize globally and launch effective advocacy strategies.

The workshop represented a first step in generating Asia-wide conversations around the linkage of financial regulation and human rights. The workshop resulted in the collective identification of urgent themes for research and global advocacy building. These are:

1) Financing for production and the protection of the farmer in the real economy

- conduct a region-wide mapping of the impacts of financial regulation on both women and men farmers;
- understand how the financial regulation framework for the region as designed by the ASEAN;
- organize institutional capacity building trainings and workshops on financial regulation for CSOs.

2) Food price speculation and the farmer in the real economy

- strengthen women and men farmer cooperatives and eliminate the need for brokers;
- support capacity building initiatives for women and men farmers; and
- make loan available for women and men farmers to facilitate their (financial) capacity, and boost the farming sector as a whole.

3) Public finance and budgeting for agriculture

- in Lao PDR, obtain funding for water conservation activities in partnership with the community to establish seed and domestic animal banking system and reforestation;
- provide regular orientation programs to poor farmers (women and men) on government programs and services;
- enhance existing government mechanisms that promote CSO participation; and
- provide a platform for sharing best practices on sustainable agricultural practices, linking small farmers to the market, enhancing the value chain, and integrating human rights in government agric. programs and services.

The meeting reiterated the need for strengthening political commitment, overcoming financial and legal obstacles, and transforming weak health systems, adverse social and economic conditions, violence and discrimination. All of these were perceived to impede women from accessing the necessary health services and information that allow them to make informed decisions about their sexual and reproductive lives.

During the meeting, the rallying call entitled “Our Rights, Our Lives: Women’s Call to Action towards Cairo+20” was developed. Supported by many SRHR activists, the contents of the call demand for immediate and sustained action, political will, and accountability over the following:

- the implementation of universal and equitable access to quality, comprehensive and integrated sexual and reproductive health services that includes counselling and provides information to women and adolescent girls in ways that respect their human rights and diversity;
- the roll-out of programs that empower women, particularly adolescent girls and young women, such as a comprehensive sexuality education that introduces and allows women to familiarize themselves with their bodies and themselves, gain bodily integrity;
- the protection and promotion of reproductive rights as human rights, and lobbying for the international adoption of sexual rights as human rights; and
- the facilitation of young women’s leadership roles at all levels and types of decision-making on sexual and reproductive rights and health, and ensuring the meaningful participation of women’s organizations in the design of health and development programs.

The meeting also reaffirmed the centrality of implementing a comprehensive SRHR “package” towards achieving the right to health and the Cairo Goal of Universal Access to Reproductive Health. Such a comprehensive package will need to include maternal health, family planning, STIs and HIV, comprehensive sexuality education and the protection of human rights.
As someone who has been involved in education practically my whole life, I’m very aware of how easy it is to fall into a dichotomy of those who know and those who need to know -- us versus them. The value of ICAE’s commitment in breaking those kinds of boundaries is something that over the years, ICAE has been bringing to the discussion of not only adult learning but learning in general. Breaking away from these boundaries is not an easy task. Apart from our own engrained tendencies, becoming a lifelong learner means venturing into unknown territory, where certainties are shaky. Lifelong learning, therefore, is challenging because it involves engaging with those shaky certainties, those dark corners that push us away where our comfort zones lie.

As the title of my presentation suggests, we now find ourselves in a fierce world that is dominated by the reconfiguration of economic, political and military might, coupled with uncertainties linked to the financial and economic crisis, climate change, food security etc. As history has shown, these types of rearrangements are not new. We ask ourselves, is our sense of crisis today worse than the 1950s when we were sitting in the middle of Cold War rhetoric and the aftermath of the atomic bomb? I’m not so sure. If any, what is for certain is that the serious challenges we face require for deepening our ways of interrogating -- a type of interrogation that goes beyond what many of us have been employing so far.

This brings me to the role of the intellectual. Almost 50 years ago, a gentleman by the name of Paul Baran made the distinction between intellect workers and intellectuals. A Stanford University professor who wrote a short essay called “The Commitment of the Intellectual” in 1961, he felt overwhelmingly frustrated with his fellow economists in Stanford and what he called the intellect workers -- defined by Baran as those who believe in the narrowness of one disciplinary expertise as opposed to searching for a more holistic and integrated approach to understanding the world. He got fed up with the persistent rationalization and justification of the social order that surrounded him in 1961. He grew tired of what he called the practice of “ethical neutrality” in research that kept intellect workers from making value judgments in the name of rigor and objectivity. He argued that we have more intellect workers in today’s world than those who believe in the narrowness of the intellectual, the true educator is also perennial. The true educator is grounded in openness and humanism, and the willingness to cross boundaries, and is able to take a stand on the basis of the best current knowledge available.

Educators will need to take a stand. Ecology’s Precautionary Principle and the Do No Harm Principle applied in public health must not completely restrict us from searching for answers and most importantly, taking the stand of the voiceless. The role of the educator is to interrogate what has been normalized as the advocates in gender justice have been doing for a long time, and, more importantly, to leave behind the hubris of the educator.

Discomfort is a great tool for self-learning. It is in exactly at the moment wherein we are uncomfortable when we should ask ourselves, “What is there for me to learn in this?” It’s a challenge that has to be met anew in each generation, in each historical moment.

Finally, a disturbing return to neo-Malthusian arguments linking population with the food and climate crises is observed. Based on two examples drawn from contributions to the Zero Draft for Rio+20, some UN agencies have claimed that the “early stabilization of world population would make a crucial contribution to realizing sustainable development.”4 Demographers on the other hand have written that “slowing population growth makes many environmental problems easier to solve and requires less investment of financial resources to provide essential energy access to women in developing countries, shifting the world to an era of renewable energy.

A human rights-based approach to policy making is therefore essential. Such would also monitor, regulate and hold corporations accountable for their ecologically and socially unsustainable practices. This means protecting small farmers from financial speculation and land grabbing (including those for large scale agrofuel plantations); banning technologies such as geo-engineering and GMOs, and subjecting all new technologies to comprehensive assessments that elucidate their environmental health implications; phasing out nuclear energy and in place of this developing new and up-scaled financial resources to provide essential energy access to women in developing countries; shifting the world to an era of renewable energy.

Women have historically borne the brunt of economic crises. In the absence of or failing social insurance systems, women’s unpaid and undervalued labor acts have consistently served as stabilizers from deep economic shocks. The multiple burdens carried by women have serious consequences on women’s health and must be redressed appropriately.

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DAWN IN ADVOCACY SPACES
October 2011 - January 2012

OCTOBER 2011
• Oct 9 to 27 – DAWN Training Institute 4th Global Edition, Siem Reap, Cambodia
• Oct 19 to 20 – Anita Nayar at the Asian and Pacific Regional Preparatory Meeting organised by the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in collaboration with the UN Environment Program and the Asian Development Bank, Seoul, South Korea.
• Oct 24 – Marina Durano delivers speech on “Improved gender responsive monitoring and evaluation indicators for more effective accountability” at the KIGEPE and UNDP Symposium Promoting Gender Equality, Aid Effective and Sustainable Development, Seoul, South Korea

DECEMBER 2011
• Dec 3 to 5 – “Cairo @ 20 Strategy Meeting” convened by Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN), International Women’s Health Coalition (IWHC), and Realizing Sexual and Reproductive Justice (RESURJ), Mexico City
• Dec 5 & 6 – Gigi Francisco in “A Bottom-up Approach to Financial Regulation: Capacity Building Workshop for Asia” organized by DAWN with the Center for Concern, Agribusiness Action Initiative (AAI-Asia), and AFA, Manila, Philippines
• Dec 9 & 10 – Gita Sen delivers plenary address at the “ICPD Beyond 2014 Civil Society Stakeholder Group Consultation” Istanbul, Turkey
• Dec 15 & 16 – Anita Nayar at the 2nd Intersessional Meeting of Rio +20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, UN Secretariat, New York USA

JANUARY 2012
• Jan 9 & 10 – Kumudini Samuel at the UN Women South Asia Regional Meeting on Women, Peace, and Security, New Delhi, India
• Jan 24 to 29 – Gigi Francisco and Nicole Bidegain at the Rio+20 Thematic World Social Forum, Porto Alegre, Brazil; Gigi delivers speech in the Reflection Group
• Jan 19 – Anita Nayar in the “Global Governance: Shifts and Turns” panel at the Heinrich Böll Foundation Gender Equity and Sustainable Development Conference, Washington D.C. USA

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