

# DAWN INFORMS

Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era



## DAWN

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## Talk MDGs, Think BPA

Excerpts from a presentation by Peggy Antrobus on the AWID, DAWN, UNIFEM, WEDO and WICEJ panel in New York, 3 March 2005.

The Millennium Development Goals provide a strategic entry point for raising issues that are important to women with people who pay no attention to us otherwise.

They provide an opportunity for challenging the assumptions of the neo-liberal policy framework. Since the structural adjustment policy framework of the 1980s — the so-called Washington Consensus — we have known that neo-liberalism widens the gap between the rich and poor and exacerbates poverty. Although in recent years the phrase 'structural adjustment' has been replaced by phrases like 'public sector reforms', 'privatisation' and 'trade liberalisation', the policy framework remains essentially the same with the same consequences. Far from eliminating poverty and hunger, the framework suggested by MDG#8 increases these scourges. 'Public-private partnerships' between a weakened public sector and an emboldened private sector gives the private sector special advantages and opportunities for increasing their control of assets and services that are essential to social reproduction, such as water, health care and education.

Another opportunity is in pointing out linkages between gender relations and key issues. The demands of women's unwaged work in the household and care of children and elderly, along with their reduced access to assets and resources, and discriminatory practices all serve to curtail their ability to earn incomes comparable to men of their class, race and ethnicity. Women's poverty, low levels of education and the low priority given to human development jeopardises their lives and those of their children.

Maternal mortality is a measure of women's vulnerability and the link between maternal mortality and lack of sexual and reproductive rights has been established. Women raised to consider themselves subordinate to men easily accept that their lives are not as important as that of their children. Thousands of women die each day because their lives are not valued by society or themselves.

Women's powerlessness to negotiate safe sex, along with gender socialisation practices that orient them towards pleasing men and placing the interests of men over their own makes them particularly vulnerable to HIV/AIDS. It is no accident that the highest rate of increase in the spread of the virus is among girls 15-24 and among married women.

The task force on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment has done a good job of pointing out the limitations of the indicators

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**D**AWN *informs* is published by Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN) as a networking tool for its members. DAWN is an autonomous inter-regional organisation of the South which acts as a network and catalyst advocating alternative development processes that emphasise the basic survival needs of the world's people, particularly Third World women and their children.

Subscriptions for printed version: Free to women based in the South. Friends based in the North are asked to make an annual minimum contribution of US\$20.00. Please notify any change of address by contacting [dawn\\_angafri@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:dawn_angafri@yahoo.co.uk)

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