

# Women's Human Rights and Gender Justice in the post-2015 Era: The role of WIDE+ and feminist organizations

Changing global policy paradigm for women's rights



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## Summary

*Authors: Ulla Björnberg and editors Virginia López Calvo, Gea Meijers, Patricia Muñoz Cabrera, Silke Steinhilber.*

The WIDE+ meeting in Barcelona focused on the strategic viability of the Beijing-paradigm on women's rights under current power constellations. Twenty years after the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA) was agreed, WIDE+, together with other feminist and women's rights groups and networks, are confronted with policies, discourses and alliances that undercut women's human rights. Therefore, the meeting discussed whether feminists should opt for new strategic avenues and reformulate their agendas. What are the key issues to focus on? How can feminists most effectively secure the future of the women's rights paradigm in the post-2015 agenda?

During the meeting several tendencies that pose threats and backlashes for women's human rights, were identified. Examples from Europe, Latin America and Asia illustrated the dominance of neoliberal strategies for development, and the negative consequences for women's rights, which are not analysed or clearly made visible.

A key concern in the Beijing platform was that women's rights should be regarded within a wide perspective. Over the last two decades, this has been increasingly neglected in the ideas and strategies for development and economic growth. Instead, development is more and more framed as the 'marketization of everything': a continued proliferation of free trade agreements and policies that lead to resource-grabbing and growing inequalities. Among such lines, neoliberal forms of empowerment for women advocate for their inclusion into a damaging economic system, instead of a transformation of power relations to bring about alternatives towards sustainable forms of economic and social life. Women's rights are instrumentalized in the interest of economic growth (no questions asked about distribution) or geopolitical power, rather than furthered as an end in itself.

At the same time, today there are ideologies and social movements that support neo-conservative and even fundamentalist ideas and values, which are opposed to those that women's movements across the globe have for decades been striving for: gender equality, reproductive rights, women's bodily integrity and rights to economic agency. During the last

decades, civil society, including global feminism, has become increasingly fragmented and, thereby, weakened.

Women's rights are only marginal in the post-2015 agenda, despite the celebration of the twentieth anniversary of the BPfA. Governments refrain from opening up the paradigm for review out of fear (particularly of more progressive governments) that the outcome will be weaker than past agreements. New rights are difficult to get on the agenda.

In response to the threats to women's rights and to revitalize an encompassing women's rights agenda, the meeting discussed several proposals:

### Changing the paradigm for women's rights

**Feminists need to further develop approaches that link different kinds of discrimination and inequality, economic growth and development models. Women need to be recognized as economic agents, as producers, as agricultural workers, paid and unpaid care workers, and key sustainers of human livelihood.**

Policy frameworks too often view women as a discriminated group, as victims of violence or a vulnerable group in need of protection. The women's rights movement worked hard to put these issues affecting women on the table, which was an important contribution, but feminists also need to move beyond a paradigm that views women mainly as a discriminated group to a broader approach in which inequality, economic growth models and discrimination is tackled. Women need to be recognized as economic and political agents: traditionally and historically women have skills and knowledge that contribute to food security for all, to sustainable livelihoods and biodiversity. When one views women within a broader concept of work, one can see that most women work and use a lot of skills and knowledge. Women's work is typically unpaid or underpaid and undervalued by the current market economy.

A feminist debate on women's economic contribution would also entail discussions about fair and decent work (including in situations where there is no structured employee-employer relation), justice in capitalist economies, and would contribute to voicing

demands to the state to ensure an accepted standard of living for women and men.

### **To re-connect feminist organizations and movements**

**Feminists need to seek out and strengthen strategic alliances and coalitions and show solidarity. They have to reclaim and regain sight of the big picture, re-connect issues and link the local, the regional and the global.**

**Strengthening a European feminist voice on development and the global economy can only happen in exchanges and mutual learning with partners in the global South.**

Feminist movements have become weaker, so to get our voice heard, we have to form coalitions and networks. Black, migrant and refugee women in Europe, as well as young women, should be valued partners. Progressive leaders and people inside important institutions can help facilitate change. Working with pro-feminist masculinity associations and groups could also be considered, because fighting for gender equality means deconstructing concepts of masculinity, although this is not the same as promoting women's empowerment. And feminists need to build alliances with labour unions or workers' organizations.

Feminists need to seek out strategic alliances, show solidarity and share strategies with other feminist networks. Legal precedents and advocacy experiences from another country can be useful to galvanize national campaigning efforts. Sometimes, we can also learn from our opponents: Anti-choice networks, for example, could be instructional case studies of cross-border mobilization.

In order to build a strong feminist voice the fragmentation inside the feminist movement needs to be addressed. Feminists need to define our common issues, while respecting our differences. This implies redefining our language and messages and reclaiming the space to promote women's rights. While seeking out synergies, feminists need to mitigate competition for scarce resources.

Feminist associations, groups and movements should broaden their targets for advocacy and lobby through engaging with all international processes that monitor human rights, bringing a gender analysis into international human rights frameworks. Thus, feminists should not only be

engaged with CEDAW and the CSW, but should also engage with the other treaties and bodies, such as the international Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural rights, the UN human rights council, and the UN rapporteurs with a mandate of relevance for women's rights issues.

To develop and strengthen strategic alliances, it will be necessary to learn new skills and enter new spaces, while also engaging with the media.

### **(Re-)defining a feminist agenda**

**Feminists need to constantly expand their knowledge about the challenges posed by current economic, financial and trade policies and their impacts on women's human rights. This analysis should be connected to the analysis of other areas where a backlash on women's rights is experienced.**

**In the face of neoconservative and fundamentalist mobilization, women's bodily autonomy and sexual and reproductive health and rights have to remain a focus of attention. Bodily autonomy and sexual and reproductive rights have to be regarded as intersectional with all other rights and their economic dimensions should be considered.**

**As feminists struggle to broaden their targets for advocacy and lobbying, they also need to fight against the criminalization of the women's rights movements.**

All the issues covered in the BPfA are still relevant for today's feminist agenda. However, using knowledge and perspectives from across the world, today it is necessary to widen and deepen many of the aspects covered, for example, the conceptualization of unpaid work, including care. And the free expression of one's sexual and gender identity is a central component of feminist agendas.

European feminism also entails advocating against racist and Eurocentric policies, such as the closing of borders, asylum quotas, etc. A human rights based approach on migration should be advocated for that includes feminist perspectives and respect for international human rights conventions, such as the Refugee

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Convention. Europeans need to position ourselves as global citizens who have equal rights with migrants instead of defining ourselves as gatekeepers.

*Bodily autonomy*, encompassing sexual and reproductive rights, health, protection and education and the need to eradicate all types of sexual abuse, gender based violence and harmful practices, is a necessary condition for gender equality. Women's bodily autonomy needs to be included in the conceptualization of an alternative economic agenda since the current patriarchal economic system has a huge impact on women's bodies.

In the context of ongoing democratic struggles in Europe, and while struggling to be loud voices in European and global debates, feminists are fighting the criminalization of the women's rights movements, like the GAG Act in Spain prohibiting demonstrations.

### Challenges and targets for WIDE+

The participants at the meeting reflected on the impact of the topics and challenges discussed for WIDE+ as a Europe-based feminist network. Concrete avenues for action were considered, many of which align with ongoing plans, activities and strategic reflections.

### Regarding the Beijing + 20 and Post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Financing for Development agendas:

- Many feminists in Europe are not familiar with the SDG process. It is important to communicate it in a simpler way to more NGOs whilst keeping a strong focus on gender equality and women's rights.
- Advocate for strong accountability frameworks, including promoting strong national implementation plans and concrete commitments to dedicate resources for gender equality and women's rights, and influencing the indicator setting process of the SDGs.

### Regarding WIDE+ focus and expertise on trade:

- Publish one or more updated position paper(s) that can be widely used to understand the impact of the trade agreements on women's rights. Previous WIDE economic literacy programmes and Central American women economic literacy schools can serve as models.
- Develop alternatives to the current economic models by engaging with the Alternative Trade

Mandate, an initiative that attempts, not only to resist, but also to be innovative.

- Join spaces and coalitions, like the public WTO forum and the TTIP campaigns.
- Support ongoing activities of WIDE+ partners in the global South, such as the people's ethical tribunals in Chile, where civil society demonstrate how transnational corporations violate human rights.

### WIDE+ contribution to debates on Violence against Women and Girls and on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights:

- Focus on VAWG and SRHR (by using the concept of bodily autonomy) to stimulate debate within the WIDE+ network and support members to integrate this analysis into their work. For instance, feminists need to look at the nexus between migrant women, non-migrant women, the neo-liberal economy and care work intersecting with SRHR.
- Further reflect on strategies to challenge resourcing to address VAWG and bodily autonomy. Avenues are: gender budgeting, mobilisation of domestic resources (taxes) and linking these to global economic justice issues.

### WIDE+ contribution to debates and policymaking on women's migration:

- Recognize women as victims and survivors, as well as agents of change. This requires sharing spaces of representation, leadership, and horizontal visibility -without ethnocentrism- with migrant activists. WIDE+ can work on alliance building with global women's networks or associations at the grassroots level, which implies WIDE+ trying to increase the number of migrant organizations as members.
- Advocate for the full respect of existing provisions on gender-based asylum criteria and gender-sensitive treatment of migrants and refugees, as well as a more humanitarian set of criteria in the granting of immigration and residence status for women.

When considering the challenges and possible activities of WIDE+ as a feminist European network, members need to keep in mind the amount of ownership in the network on each issue. WIDE+ is managed through volunteer work. While there seems to be an understanding of the importance of transnational networking, alongside national or local issues, feminists need to translate general understanding into concrete action and also realize that investing our time in WIDE+ is very worthwhile.

## Plenary Session 1- Women's Rights and Gender Equality under pressure: new contexts, old constraints

*Facilitator: Edmé Dominguez*

The session assessed two major threats to the women's human rights paradigm: conservatism/fundamentalism and economic neo-liberalism across the globe.

The backlash that feminists face today has interlinked elements, thus challenging us to develop an encompassing view and forcing us to concretely strategize to reconnect struggles and to refine our agenda.

### 1. Women's human rights under attack by fundamentalist and neo-conservative movements: common origins, traits and methods

*Silke Steinhilber*

Women's human rights face a global backlash, which can be viewed as a swinging back of the pendulum and a push back in response to successes of the feminist movement. While it plays out differently in countries and regions around the world, there are some shared traits of this backlash worth highlighting.

#### Origins

There are three common origins of fundamentalism (most often faith-based) and neo-conservatism. First, a reaction to a trend in the last decades termed "postmodernism", which has led to increased complexity and heterogeneity within collectivities, and often to the fragmentation of "old" group identities. The resulting insecurity causes some people to hold on to or reconstruct rigid norms, convictions and ideologies. Second, fundamentalism and neo-conservatism can be an expression of frustration with liberal democracy and the neo-liberal economic model that promotes a withdrawal of the state from social provisioning. Fundamentalist forces use the growth of inequality, increased economic insecurity and precariousness to garner support from the discontented, marginalized and excluded. Third, specifically faith-based groups attempt to recuperate their loss of power and influence as a result of growing secularism.

#### Key issues

While many topics are on the agenda of right-wing fundamentalist mobilization, sexuality and sexual reproductive health rights are very often at the center of their contestation. Interestingly, right wing movements, at least in Europe, do not openly question the political participation of women. The battles around sexual rights can be found in many arenas:

- European Parliament's reports to promote sexual rights encounter well-organized resistance, leading in 2013 to the rejection of the "Estrela Report" on sexual and reproductive rights. The "Lunacek Report" on LGBT rights was adopted in 2015, but only with difficulty.

- The wave of attempts to reverse abortion legislation, as experienced in Central and Eastern Europe in the 1990's, has never subsided as seen in recent discussions in Spain, Turkey and Ukraine, for example.

- In Germany and other countries, conservatives mobilize strongly against the inclusion of sex and diversity education in the public school curriculum, but there is a lot of resistance to it as well.

These movements make use of different discursive strategies, while using and redefining, definitions and concepts that were central to feminist debates for decades. For example, the notion of citizenship is perverted by extending it to unborn embryos. Or the age-old feminist debate on the boundaries of the public and the private is referenced in attempts to eliminate sex education in schools and to declare it a private, i.e. a family matter. A central conflict is also on the definition of the family, with fierce resistance to new laws, such as on adoption or marriage, which formalize the de-facto multiplicity of family forms.

#### Methods

Fundamentalist and neo-conservative movements around the world are increasingly well connected, not only within Europe. "Old" forces and networks like those in the Catholic and Orthodox Churches today find new allies in networks such as New Women for Europe or the World Congress of Families. Images and arguments travel easily across countries and languages, such as the white crosses used in anti-choice demonstrations. Funding flows, alongside the exchange of ideas and arguments in the various networks, will need to become a focus of greater feminist attention.

There is a lot of strategic action in the arena of the European Parliament and a lot of international action through new media, including the strategic use of new media to spread violence against feminists. Trolling and verbal violence exerted against feminist bloggers and women's rights activism in the public space and media has to be considered a form of organized violence. These are concerted attempts to create the impression of a cultural hegemony opposed to women's right, in Europe and beyond.

## **2. Grassroots women's struggle with the harmful impacts of the neo-liberal economic model**

*Patricia Muñoz Cabrera*

Grassroots women in Latin America are confronted daily with the impacts of the current neo-liberal economic model. Through an array of strategies and mechanisms they are not only resisting, but also trying to transform economic policies which have proven to be disempowering and disenfranchising. In today's Latin America the backlash in women's human rights is most palpably felt by grassroots women in those areas that are being disputed for their rich biodiversity and export potential. Cases abound of women workers enduring serious violations of their fundamental economic, social and cultural rights. Regretfully, these human rights abuses hardly inform macro-economic policies, nor do they make it to the corridors of macro-economic decision makers.

To many grassroots women in Latin America the situation is one of life and death. To make things worse, governments are not getting the full picture of the multiple forms of violence produced, reproduced and perpetuated by the current neo-liberal economic model.

### **Economic developments in Latin America and the Caribbean in a nutshell**

At the macro level, trade liberalization processes are causing big tensions in Latin America and the Caribbean. These are regions with asymmetric economic relations at different levels, with powerful economies in Chile and Brazil, compared to weaker countries in Central America. In the current race for trade liberalization and the search for new market niches for foreign direct investment, China is displacing the lead role so far played by the US, while the EU is trying to keep its primacy.

These tensions are acutely felt on the ground, as illustrated by the increasing wave of forced evictions and displacements, popular protests and street mobilizations to denounce the loss of lives and livelihoods caused by trade policies. Paradoxically, governments' obsession with macro-economic growth, and social conflict in the region have grown exponentially. As has been amply documented, there is a current race towards commodification of people and nature. This is having a disenfranchising impact on the ground, as grassroots men and women workers are denied the right to pursue endogenous productive and development models.

Structural inequalities among men and women, and between diverse groups of men and women, are growing in Latin America and the Caribbean. The current model of macro-economic growth is preventing states from designing, let alone implementing socially oriented policies aiming to ensure equitable well-being. In fact, to counter the current economic crisis affecting the region, governments -especially Brazil and Chile- have responded with austerity plans and new structural adjustment measures, which have resulted in further cutting down on public expenditure. The most frequent argument used to justify this shrinking of social policy space is that public social expenditure hinders competitiveness. Consequently, social services are being increasingly privatized. Significantly, the marketization of social services has resulted in an increased social burden, which is acutely felt by poor women workers in particular.

Undoubtedly, the race towards trade liberalization poses a latent anger, since it legitimizes structural and institutionalized violence that dwells in impunity. The many forms of violences generated by extractivism (for instance mega-mining and agro-forestry) are a result of unfettered trade liberalization and the inability of governments to enforce legislation in compliance with the right of grassroots men and women to a life free from any form of violence. In addition, there is a crisis in government and political leadership as evidenced by widespread corruption.

In the context of Beijing's commitments, Latin American governments have been unable to comply with the Beijing recommendations. Recommendations in the area of "women and the economy" are a case in point. Two specific recommendations refer to governments' responsibility to ensure that "national policies related to international and regional trade



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*Speakers during the first Plenary Session*

agreements do not have an adverse impact on women's new and traditional economic activities (para. k); and that "corporations, including transnational corporations, comply with national laws and codes, social security regulations, applicable international agreements, instruments and conventions, including those related to the environment, and other relevant laws (para. l).<sup>1</sup>

### **Cosmetic Gender Equality in policy-making**

Despite the empirical evidence demonstrating the harm done by the new wave of austerity policies and structural adjustment programs, Latin American decision makers and international financial institutions, such as the World Bank, have pursued their gender policies and gender equality narratives as if nothing has happened. The current mantra for Gender Equality is to promote investing in women in a way that it guarantees future returns in terms of productivity and competitiveness for national economies. Gender equality not only becomes an instrument to justify an economic model that

is hurting women and girls on the ground. Worse even, it shows deep contradictions amongst policy-makers: on the one hand, they want to promote gender equality; on the other

hand, they continue to push for an economic model that is harmful to women and girls and which is exacerbating historic inequalities affecting the region.

In this context, it is relevant to note that when Latin American decision makers prepare their official reports to the CEDAW committee, there is scarce or no analysis on the impact of macro-economic, trade and investment policies on women's lives and livelihoods. It is often the case that experts from governmental agencies dealing with the economy, foreign trade and investment, do not take part in CEDAW reviews or in mid-term progress reports on Beijing's recommendations. This is a serious gap, since these experts are major decision-makers in policy areas that have a direct impact on women's lives. Integrated policy models and practices are urgently needed, if governments genuinely want to demonstrate that efforts towards achieving Beijing recommendations are not jeopardized by the current agenda of trade liberalization.

<sup>1</sup> See Beijing Strategic Objective F.1. Para. 165: "Actions to be taken by governments."  
<http://www.un-documents.net/bpa-4.htm>

### **Experiences of women at the grassroots level**

The struggles of grassroots women for social and gender justice are in sharp contrast with the cosmetic trend affecting gender equality policies within governments and international institutions. Their struggles can be read as an invitation to us: 'fight with us, don't forget about us'.

As ANAMURI, a women's organization representing women wage workers in Chile<sup>2</sup>, has documented the loss of labour rights and the loss of dignified livelihoods as major consequences of the neo-liberal economic model for grassroots women. Through an organized initiative called the "ethical tribunals," they are trying to expose the impact of neo-liberal policies and put forward proposals to improve the policies and practices promoted by the Chilean government, Chilean businesses, and foreign multinationals. The main purpose of their ethical tribunals is to demand an end to all forms of violence against women's workers.

In Ecuador, the women's movement *Luna Creciente* has documented the situation of grassroots women's efforts to set up a model of agro-ecology that is empowering to them. Unfortunately, when requesting support (in the form of subsidies) from government they have been offered microcredit to become businesswomen. Agro-ecological productive models are different from traditional business models, since they consider caring for nature and more collective distribution of the benefits resulting from the productive activity. This is what entrepreneurship sustainability means to them, and it includes a set of values and gender-sensitive policies that can help them in their endeavors.

Another illustration of the pitfalls of macro-economic policies is the persistent invisibility of women's care work and the frequent confusion between care work and unpaid work done by women. In several rural areas of Central America, women's unpaid work is not included in fiscal accounts. In some countries, women's unpaid rural labour can amount to up to 30 per cent. When they get home at the end of a

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<sup>2</sup> ANAMURI also represents VIA CAMPESINA in Chile, and includes women from different sectors such as women seasonal workers, women migrants, black, indigenous and non-indigenous wage workers active in areas targeted by mega-mining: [www.anamuri.org](http://www.anamuri.org)

working day, they are confronted with care work in the household (cooking, cleaning, washing, etc). Rigorous distinction between care work and unpaid work done by women is a fundamental struggle connecting women in Latin America and globally.

Migration is another topic that is important to grassroots women in Latin America. Women's increasing transnational migration has a new face. It does not only have Europe as a final destination, but also South American countries like Chile, Uruguay or Brazil. At present, an important share of the privatized household care market in Brazil depends on the labour of Filipino women and Brazilian black women. Filipino and black women are situated at the bottom of the social ladder and called upon to fill in the gap produced by a state that is unable to deliver appropriate and equitable care. As a result, the responsibility of some care activities is shifted to the household, reproducing inequalities between women who can afford to pay for the care and women who provide those services.

To conclude, it is important to realize that grassroots women in Latin America and the Caribbean are fighting for collective emancipation and not only for women's empowerment as individuals. Their struggle is inspired by the belief that existing as an individual goes together with being members of a collective. To them, coexistence of the individual with the collective is a fundamental way to live in our material world. Becoming empowered as an individual is a fundamental pathway towards building alternatives that can bear the promise of improving our collective well-being, including the protection and preservation of our natural resources (our common goods).

### **3. The backlash and the Beijing agenda for women's human rights**

*Christa Wichterich*

The Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) was framed by a women's human rights paradigm focusing on poverty eradication, violence against women, and sexual and reproductive rights, with three main strategies: state-civil society cooperation, women's empowerment, and gender mainstreaming. Despite some achievements for women's rights, the recent review of progress on the BPfA noted progress has not been linear but uneven and unequal, sometimes contradictory. At present women's

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rights organizations are facing the fiercest backlash ever, with shrinking spaces and shrinking funding for the human rights and feminist agenda.

The women's human rights and social justice agenda has been under huge pressure from neoliberalism, neo-conservatism, fundamentalisms, and new waves of violence and militarization. This is due to changing power relations including the rise of emerging economies and those with fundamentalist agendas, and the conflation of the neo-liberal growth model with development. Development is more and more framed with the 'marketization of everything': a continued proliferation of free trade agreements and policies that lead to resource-grabbing and growing inequalities. This model suggests neoliberal forms of empowerment for women, it proposes the advancement of gender equality within the current damaging economic system, the so-called 'poisoned pie' or 'polluted mainstream', instead of transforming power relations to bring about alternatives to the current economic system.

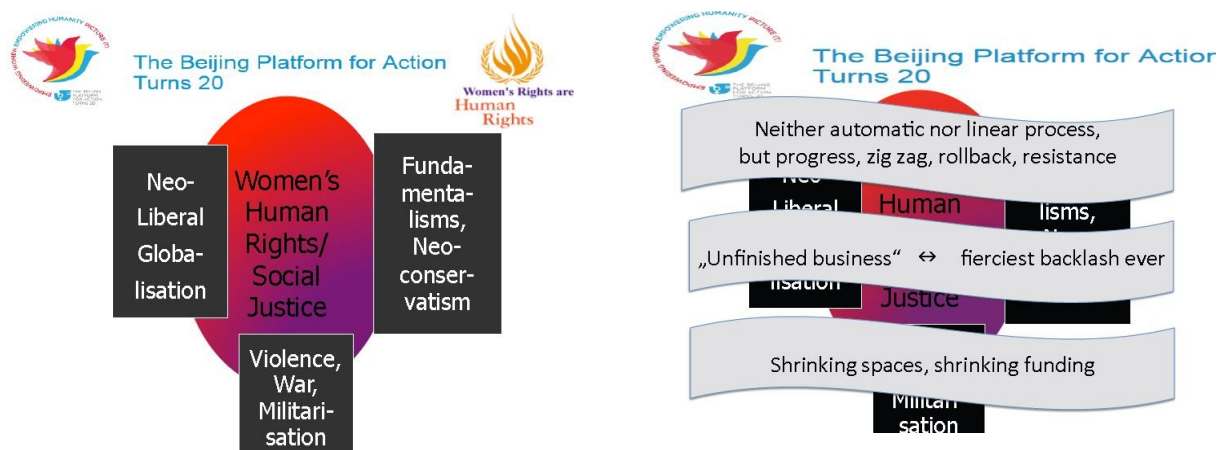
There has also been a fragmentation of civil society and the instrumentalization of the women's rights paradigm towards achieving growth or geopolitical power (military intervention in Afghanistan). How do feminists react to the changed contexts, to shrinking spaces and shrinking finances, to new issues and actors, to the mentioned backlashes and current developments? This year the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) decided that the CSW will keep on working on the BPfA, adding the new global agenda of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to it.

### Critically reviewing Beijing: is it really still relevant?

Shortly after the CSW the women's network of *Via Campesina* adopted their own future feminist agenda from their local context and without referring to the 'same old' CSW agenda. First, the key point of their feminism is to campaign against violence against women and against economic, structural violence. Second, their focus is on land rights but not necessarily individual property rights. It is also about collective rights, which brings back an early criticism of the human rights paradigm as relying heavily on a Western concept of individualism that excludes a collective dimension. Third, they say clearly that the gender equality agenda is not sufficient to cover their main problems, which are: land-grabbing, evictions and the neo-liberal agenda in agriculture. Fourth point: they are developing alternative economic models based on food sovereignty, seed and water sovereignty etc. starting from their close cooperation with nature.

A question to ask women's rights defenders is: what the women's human rights paradigm, as set out in the Beijing Platform for Action, still means for them. Wichterich put this question to four friends in the past weeks. Farida Akhter from Bangladesh said it has never been relevant to their work. The Plan India director, Bhagyashri Dingle, underlined that Beijing was too abstract and removed from practical work. Monisha Behal, who works with her NGO in the conflict ridden area of Nord East India, said that in the beginning they were all very enthusiastic about Beijing, but now it has become a log frame imposed by donors. A Moroccan activist

*Sheets Wichterich shared to explain the trends in the backlash against women's rights*



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stressed that their struggles are determined by the local context and if they refer to women's human rights then it is more in reference to CEDAW than to the BPfA.

### How do WIDE+ members position themselves towards Beijing+20?

There is a new generation of women's organizations and for many the Beijing paradigm is more or less meaningless because they have not experienced the spirit of that time. Many radical feminist voices are no longer at the UN as after Beijing they went to the World Social Fora and the global justice movement. The civil society landscape has become very diverse and fragmented, specialized and profession-nalized. For some, implementation of the BPfA has become an end in itself instead of a means to gender justice. Many join the caravan to the next UN events and topics (FfD and SDGs) because that is where the money is. Everywhere young pro-family activists stand against abortion, among other issues they protest against like LGBTI issues and the Islam.

Feminist CSOs always have to struggle for space at the UN and with their governments. It is again a problem to gain access and to have real voice in the agenda. WIDE+ as a European network needs to ask where the earlier progressive positions of the EU have gone. Is the influence of the 'neocons' already that strong at the EU level? The UN and state governments have taken over CSO's languages and hijacked their spaces. For example, the caucus at the CSW – which has always been a space for CSOs to monitor and critique the UN and governments - was turned into an advocacy and lobby training for newcomers this year. An example in terms of language: two years ago the CSW declaration had strong language about protecting women's human rights defenders, while this year this was not even mentioned. An interesting analysis of Civil-Society-State cooperation by the Indian feminist Kalyani Menon Sen has been written on a blog at UNRISD, in which she concludes that women's rights activists should turn back to movements and the grassroots and invest their energy there, more than with states.

One proposal to take forward is to define and clarify our feminist agenda in the context of the backlashes discussed in this session. Second (and a key word at the CSW) is to 'reconnect' organizations and movements. Feminist movements have become weaker, so in order to make their points and to have a stronger

voice they have to form coalitions, in particular with young women, but perhaps also with progressive leaders. In this reconnecting, feminists and women's rights activists have to reclaim strategies for solidarity. Third, they have to reclaim and regain sight of the big picture, reconnect issues and once again link the local with the regional and the global.

### 4. Conclusions from Plenary discussion

Participants stressed the importance of investigating and understanding the systematic stigmatization of feminist movements in the public political realm and in all forms of media. Further, strengthening alliances with partners around the world and reinforcing avenues of mutual learning were highlighted. Many consider that women's movements in Eastern Europe are particularly weak and fragmented at the moment.

There was a consensus on the need to re-engage with the defence of concepts and terminology in feminist theory and practice. Feminists need to be careful about the language they use: for example they should not copy language from conservative domains like speaking about "pro-life" when in fact meaning "anti-choice".

The revision of the BPfA should have been a driver of the Post 2015 agenda but currently women's rights are not central in the debates. Governments refrain from opening up the paradigm for review because of fears that the outcome will be weaker than what was agreed in the past. New rights are difficult to get on the agenda. For example, *Via Campesina* is advocating for (collective) land rights for people living in rural areas, while governments are opposing these rights.

WIDE (the predecessor to WIDE+) always focused on economic justice and this is also a key matter for WIDE+ and its brand, but members have to ask how they can link it to other issues and engage more groups and activists with this perspective.

## **Public Panel Debate: Addressing challenges to the realization of the Beijing paradigm**

In the public panel debate, held on 17<sup>th</sup> June, three feminist activists were invited to identify challenges to the implementation of the Beijing paradigm and to discuss response strategies<sup>3</sup>.

Jivka Marinova reflected on her experiences with the BPfA in Bulgaria where the government, after many years, adopted a large part of the agenda. Bulgarian women's NGOs were the first to advocate for it. The last law protecting the rights of women stems from 2005. Since the country entered the EU in 2007 further progress halted and state obligations to provide services have slowly shifted to NGOs. In this context the Beijing paradigm is challenged in two major ways. First, there is a big backlash in society with voices against divorce, abortion, abuses of domestic violence, etc. Second, those backlashes are also supported by young people. Young women have withdrawn from the feminist debate and it is difficult to get across that what they have today is a result of "our" work and "our" struggle.

Vickie Knox saw a mixed picture for women's human rights in the UK and Ireland. The feminist identity is being challenged in the UK, but young people in Ireland are celebrating feminism and sexual rights, such as the right to same sex marriages. Globally, sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR) have remained a battleground despite being part of the BPfA. Previous commitments in the international development policy framework have been watered down. In the SDG Agenda - as with its predecessor the MDGs - women as owners of their bodies are sidelined, and there is no acknowledgment that abortion is a key part of reproductive health rights. In this context, the language of gender equality is problematic for sexual and reproductive rights since it does not indicate that women's access to services, such as for abortion, should be protected.

Montse Pineda reflected on her activism in Spain and concluded that the fragmentation of

movements is a challenge and the direct consequence of the neo-liberal economy, in which women and men are pushed into being competitors with each other and not activists in solidarity. The propagators of this philosophy want the women's right paradigm to be reversed to the pre-BPfA situation. To address this neo-liberal attack on women's human rights means recognizing the need for synergies with other spaces. For example, feminist demands in Spain, such as for the implementation of the BPfA, have not been a part of street protests. Feminist agendas are very fragile and there are power plays to define what the crucial women's issues are. Feminists need to be aware of these power dynamics, especially in policy discourse, structures and political processes. For example, cross-cutting gender policies are not well understood by national parliamentarians in Spain and in a meeting she had with them it was stated that a policy or law based on feminism would exclude people, as it would be against equality. With the current centre-right government gender is only a specific topic when the debate is about male violence.

Marinova, Knox and Pineda listed the followed key issues for a feminist agenda:

- All issues that are part of the BPfA are still relevant for the feminist agenda and need to be advocated through a holistic perspective.
- Care work needs to be further conceptualized, using knowledge and perspectives from across the world.
- Feminists should focus on women in positions of power and involve young women. It is fundamental that migrant women are included in their struggles.
- Feminists need to fight against the criminalization of the women's rights movements, such as the GAG Act in Spain to prohibit demonstrations.
- A more humane view on migration should be advocated and feminist perspectives on migration should be developed. Europeans need to position themselves as global citizens sharing equal rights with migrants, instead of defining themselves as the gatekeepers.
- There is a need to reclaim and re-politicize the SRHR agenda, which should not be separated from an alternative economic agenda, since the current patriarchal economic system has a huge impact on women's bodies.
- Feminist need to keep talking about abortion until every woman in the world has access to safe and legal abortion.

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<sup>3</sup> Since two of the speakers on the public panel, Christa Wichterich and Priti Darooka, spoke during the WIDE+ meeting, this reports presents an integrated version of both presentations. The other part of the public panel is presented in this section.

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- Feminists should include LGBTQI rights in their agenda as well as addressing poverty.

In the discussion with the audience it was stressed that feminists also need to learn new skills and enter new spaces. For example, in India feminists have built up their knowledge of monetary policies and are now part of a national finance commission. Feminists should also keep engaging with the media.

The audience debated whether feminists should increase their energies in engaging with the international Post 2015 development processes. It was argued that involvement in UN processes is not as effective in protecting women's rights as is advocacy towards national or local level policy makers. An example was shared from the UK, where the national law on female genital mutilation has been introduced, but no prosecutions have ever been made under it. Because there is no enforcement mechanism at UN level, feminists should focus on changing practices at the local level and influence local decision makers. On the other hand, feminists should ask themselves if they are expecting change too quickly from UN processes. It is true that women at the local level are tired of preparing papers for the CSW, SDGs, CEDAW, etc. but realistically, how fast can one move ahead? Where is our biggest potential for transformation when looking at the local, national, regional and global levels?

**Integrating gender equality in the human rights paradigm**

*Marta Macias, Catalanian Development Agency (ACCD)*

During the panel on 17<sup>th</sup> June Marta Macias introduced the ACCD. They are launching a new strategic approach that will integrate gender equality and human rights. Women's human rights and the collective rights of all peoples are the two strategic objectives.

The new strategy recognizes that women are disproportionately impacted by poverty and inequality as well as intersecting forms of discrimination, such as ageism. The process of empowerment involves citizens (as rights-holders) becoming cognizant of the state's obligations to uphold their rights. As such, the approach of the ACCD places people at the centre and has been developed through a participatory process. It has recently been adopted by the Parliament of Catalonia.

Adequate resources are needed to overcome inequality and feminist approaches are needed to overcome patriarchy. There is a need to also challenge global social and economic injustices, fundamentalisms, militarisms, and conflict. The Catalanian Development Agency is calling for funding proposals from both Northern and Southern women's and feminist networks and groups to help address these negative patterns.

## Session 2 - Renewing the Feminist Agenda in the Post 2015 era

*Facilitator: Ulla Björnberg*

In this session a key concern was to collectively reflect on specific themes and agendas that could help overcome the fragmentation of feminist movements. Brief topical introductions were followed by simultaneous working groups.

### 1. Introduction: livelihood, social security and work

*Priti Darooka*

There is a need for shifting the paradigm in the development agenda in three major ways. First, the global policy community needs to move beyond conceptualizing the problem of development as poverty eradication and shift towards addressing forms of inequalities. A key inequality that the agenda should focus on is the growing importance of capital against the decreasing weight of labour. And income poverty should not be the main indicator; instead there needs to be an unpacking of all the multilayered vulnerabilities and the intersection of multiple forms of discrimination that causes them.

Second, the concept of dignity should take a central place in development. Human dignity is part of the language of the socially and economically excluded groups and the very foundation of all human rights. However, dignity has not been brought into the discussion on human rights as an operationalized condition. The principles of dignity can establish standards for human life beyond survival. It puts humans back in human rights and stands in sharp conflict with the relentless social trends towards commodification of human life, making it susceptible to be traded in private markets. An operationalized concept of human dignity includes the right to food, to national resources as well as a right to markets. It is important, however, that feminists and others challenge themselves to discuss what are collective and what are individual rights, in this context.

### Redefining work and women's economic contribution

The final paradigm shift is one that redefines the role of women and the concept of work. The dominant discourse on how societies view work is that of paid or waged work. A feminist

analysis defines a lot of unpaid activity as work and challenges the boundaries of where work takes place. The home should be viewed as a common work place where a lot of women work.

Redefining work implies redefining the role of women. Women are currently viewed in larger policy frameworks as a category of discrimination, victims of violence or a vulnerable group that needs to be protected. The women's rights movement worked hard to put these issues affecting women on the table, which was an important contribution, but feminists also need to move beyond this paradigm that views women mainly as a discriminated group to a broader approach in which inequality, economic growth models, and discrimination is tackled. Women need to be recognized as economic agents; they are producers, unpaid care workers and gatherers, working in agriculture and other forms of sustaining livelihoods. Actually, most women work as a broader concept of work shows and, traditionally and historically, women carry skills and knowledge that contribute to food security for all, to sustainable livelihoods and biodiversity. Women's work is typically unpaid or underpaid and undervalued by the current market economy.

In this broader approach that highlights women's economic contributions, one needs to ask: what are fair, decent and just working conditions in situations where there is no structured employee-employer relation, and what should states do in these situations. At minimum states should provide a floor of social security that ensures an accepted standard of living for men and women.

### The care economy as an alternative to neo-liberalism

The world needs new paradigms that underpin alternative economic models in which an entry point is the concept of the sustainable and caring economy. It draws on the capability approach developed by Amartya Sen that entails a rights-based approach to sustainable development based on principles of freedom, equality, justice and the protection of nature. In this model growth is not an end in itself, but rather a means to enhanced well-being and better standards of living. And nature is not conceptualized as a bundle of resources to control and extract, but to be treated as an actor in the economic system and as an end in itself.

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Care is integral to sustainability. The caring and sustainable economy recognizes, reduces and redistributes women's unpaid care work, from women to men and from household to state, by providing better access to services and investment in infrastructure, so that people can easily provide more in their livelihoods.

### Feminists stepping outside spaces of comfort: CEDAW and CSW

Feminist associations, groups and movements should step outside their comfort zones and broaden their targets for advocacy and lobby by engaging with all international processes that monitor human rights:

- The feminist movement is only engaged with CEDAW and tries to incorporate all relevant issues into the treaty and its review. They should also engage with the nine other treaties, such as the international Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural rights.
- Instead of directing our energies solely to the UN rapporteur on violence against women, feminists should target other UN rapporteurs too.
- If even a fraction of the women's rights activists that attend the CSW took part in the deliberations of the UN human rights council, there would be an impact in bringing a gender analysis into international human rights frameworks.

## 2. Introduction: migration, refugees and EU policies

*Arlene Cruz Carrasco*

This presentation outlines key issues for refugees and migrants in Europe and provides a set of proposals for the feminist movement. Policy makers in the EU see forced migration as a flow of tens of thousands of people which becomes a crisis to deal with because they consider that their national economy cannot carry more migrants. They are not discussing what these people have left behind: what is happening with their now fragmented families, with women and children?

EU member states have their own asylum laws and the question now debated at EU level is what you can decide as a common policy on behalf of all members. This was apparent in the discussions over voluntary versus mandatory quotas per country, before the EU adopted its proposal with 'emergency mechanisms' for the relocation within the EU of 40,000 asylum

seekers over a 24-month period. Underlying these debates is a common trend of European countries closing their borders. An example is Spain, where the government is pushing for stricter asylum laws, while policemen remain unpunished for causing the death of a dozen refugees when they fired rubber bullets into boats trying to cross the Moroccan border.

There is widespread discrimination against migrants, who are seen as those that take up benefits instead of contributors to society. As a migrant you feel this in many ways: because of the way that you live and dress and your lack of knowledge of the language and it adds to a feeling of homelessness. It is already difficult for migrants from outside the EU to legally stay in a European country, which is only possible if one has all the right papers and a job in the EU. Even when one is granted a work permit, discrimination remains very tangible. The panellist Arlene Cruz Carrasco gave an example from her own experience where, although she has lived for years in Spain and pays her taxes, she has no right to vote and to take part in the democratic decision making systems of the country.

### Towards a feminist agenda on migration

Feminism should advocate against racist and Eurocentric policies, such as closing of borders, quotas, etc. In order to build a strong feminist voice, the fragmentation inside the feminist movement needs to be addressed, and feminists should acknowledge migrant women for the valuable knowledge that they bring from their home countries, as well as their leadership. We need to formulate common points of action and unite, thus creating a participatory synergy between migrants and feminist movements. This is how feminism can grow. Feminists also need to have common agendas with people inside important institutions, like the parliament, that could help facilitate change. Finally, the feminist agenda has to make visible the transnational activism of migrant feminists that connects them with the women's and feminist movements in their countries of origin, and give them a relevant space so that they can be consolidated and shared with the rest of European feminism.

The recognition of citizenship as inherent to the human condition, and not conditional on obtaining papers, needs to be added as a pending demand on the feminist agenda. Likewise, feminists should make clear that no woman should be considered feminist if she



has an ethnocentric or racist attitude against other women.

## **2. Workshop: Migration, Refugees and EU policies**

One key challenge facing feminists is the lack of proper language used in EU countries to interpret the migration process. While there are many types of migrants, definitions are not used with care. For example, some media do not distinguish between refugees and migrants, which is harmful. The concept of refugees needs to be broadened in the law to enable human dignity. It should be stressed that all migrants have equal rights whatever their status, condition and position in the host country once they get there. Moreover, one should not lose the connection between migration and development (or lack thereof) in the country of origin. The link between migration, development and gender is essential.

The laws on forced and voluntary migration have tightened and it has become difficult to get a residence permit or citizenship rights. Many EU member states have adopted and restricted their migration laws. This creates a Europe in which there is a concrete and an abstract 'wall'. This is another huge challenge feminist face in promoting an approach to migration (forced and voluntary) that is based on human rights and human dignity.

The participants in the workshop talked about the experiences of migrating women. Seen from a human rights perspective, migration is more risky for women and they are also victims of different types of migration: sex trafficking, forced marriage, etc. Examples of vulnerabilities and abuses women face in migration were shared:

- The ambivalent approach of the Catalonian government leads to no improvement in the rights of migrant sex workers. On the one hand, the government does not want 'happy' houses in the city and they take measures against them. But on the other hand, sex tourism is big business so they allow it.
- In Libya, a huge people-smuggling business has developed in which women are very vulnerable, for example, to rape.
- Female migrants face a loss of identity, difficult access to work, and exploitation. Each woman has her own story. A story was shared of a migrant who had endured serious abuse in horrible circumstances

and still the Danish government did not grant her a residence permit.

- Female au-pairs are in a precarious situation, since in some countries, such as Denmark, their contribution to a household is not defined as work by law, but is framed as a cultural exchange that benefits all parties. This does not offer enough protection of their rights, which should be addressed.

## **Proposals for strategic action**

The feminist movement should:

- Recognize women as victims and survivors as well as agents of change. This requires that feminists work on a clarification of concepts and on expanding the views on migrant women's capacities and their agency for change. It also requires sharing spaces of representation, leadership, and horizontal visibility (without ethnocentrism) with migrant activists.
- Advocate for a more humanitarian set of criteria in the acceptance of residence permits for women.
- WIDE+ can work on alliance building with global women's networks or associations at the grassroots level, which implies WIDE+ should try to increase the number of migrant organizations as members.

## **3. Introduction: Violence and sexual and reproductive rights**

*Deniz Bayram*

The last 13 years under the government of the Justice and Development party (AKP) in Turkey has had its impact on women's rights: the laws on violence against women and girls (VAWG) and Sexual Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR) turned against women's rights. The government has employed a strategy in which they promulgated women in the role of mothers and adopted laws that reduced women's individual rights, in particular SRHR. The government's economic policy promotes women as 'machines' to increase the population and the massive corruption of the governing political party has led to an exclusion of women from big infrastructural projects.

The government has excluded civil society and targets the women's movement by specific political actions and political discourse:

- Changing the 'ministry of women' to 'ministry of the family'.

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- They have stated that 'abortion is murder'.
- The prime minister supported the air attack against Kurdish people.
- Women who are not married or do not have children are stigmatized.
- The government attacked SRHR by accusing feminists of not understanding the special status attributed to mothers in Islam.

### 3. Workshop: Violence and Sexual and Reproductive rights

Feminist movements and networks -such as WIDE+- should continue to address VAWG and SRHR and expose the economic impacts of these. VAWG is a cause and a consequence of



All participants during the coffee break outside

Turkish feminists created alternatives for women and a voice to recognize the self-defence of women against violence. They follow the trials and judicial processes of women who eventually killed their husbands in self-defence. Apart from legal follow-up, they also produced a political position that clearly states: "Women have a right to self-defence against male violence". Therefore, they should not be faced with trials and/or accusations in these circumstances.

Women face challenges against the growing conservatisms that pit family values against women's rights to decide on their own bodies. The feminist movement in Turkey needs constant and sustained collaboration at international level.

unequal power relations. Feminists should stress that VAWG and macroeconomic policies are interlinked. Structural violence emanates from economic exclusion, poor working and living conditions, and is perpetuated by the state and corporations as well as on an interpersonal level. The economic costs of VAWG are huge: a report by the EIGE estimated the costs to the EU in 2012 as several hundred billion Euros<sup>4</sup>. The complete removal of sexual rights from the post-2015 agenda means that it is our responsibility to get sexual and reproductive rights back onto the

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<http://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/MH0414745EN2.pdf>

agenda in a way that is implementable and enforceable.

### **Key challenges for promoting and protection from VAWG and for SRHR**

Neoliberalism marginalizes and depoliticizes mobilization on VAWG and SRHR, thus allowing endemic sexual violence to continue along with restrictions on women's SRHR. This calls for further analysis and actions addressing patriarchal structures. There is also an ongoing appropriation of language that leads to a watering down of governments' commitments to BPfA articles on VAWG and SRHR. Thus the feminist movements need to reclaim protection against VAWG and SRHR as central tenets of gender equality.

Conservatism is growing, promoting a so-called "traditional" notion of family values. Stereotypes of motherhood are being reinforced with an emphasis on maternity rather than SRHR, as seen in the latest CSW documents. At the same time, right wing movements remain unsupportive of expanding women's rights as mothers, which is visible in their opposition to the EU maternity protection bill, which has not been adopted by the European Council since it was approved by the European Parliament in 2010. All these actions prevent women making decisions over their own bodies, with migrant and informal workers being particularly at risk of discrimination and exclusion.

The structural capitalist crisis also has impacts on sexual and reproductive health and rights. The financial crisis and austerity measures have reduced resources for countries to deliver good social protection for women. It is not solely a matter of resources: there are underlying power dynamics at play that favor a specific set of priorities. Labour rights are eroded, which impacts on women's SRHR for example: increasing rates of miscarriage amongst garment workers in Cambodia, pregnant women losing jobs or being forced to seek backroom abortions because they cannot afford privatized healthcare. The neoliberal economy also impacts on women's disproportionate unpaid care responsibilities. In Spain, for example, economic support to families with dependents and support for collectivizing care work has been cut. Now only women with economic resources can afford

care support – including paying for the labour of poor migrant women.

### **Overcoming fragmentation of issues and organizations**

Feminists need to define common issues, while respecting differences. SRHR and bodily autonomy should become a focus of feminist attention once again, intersected with all other rights. Feminists need to reclaim the space to promote these rights, seek out strategic alliances, and show solidarity with other feminist networks. Transnational learning and advocacy should be taken as strategies, for instance, by using legal precedents from another country to galvanize national campaigning efforts. Opposing forces can offer a similar strategic leverage, like learning tactics from the effectiveness of anti-choice networks. While feminists seek out synergies, they need to mitigate competition for scarce resources. At the same time, the low levels of funding and models that exacerbate competition and fragmentation also need to be challenged.

### **Proposals for strategic action:**

1. Creation of a WIDE+ Working Group to focus on VAWG and SRHR (bodily autonomy) to stimulate debate within WIDE+ network and support members to integrate this analysis into their work. For instance, feminists need to look at SRHR intersecting with migrant women, non-migrant women and care work.
2. Feminists should reclaim or redefine language, discourse, and space around SRHR and 'freedom' from violence and abuse. It was suggested to use the concept of 'bodily autonomy'. Bodily autonomy encompasses sexual and reproductive rights, health, protection and education to eradicate all types of sexual abuse, gender based violence and female genital mutilation. Moving away from the terminology of SRHR enables us to move away from the poisoned, moralistic and patriarchal debates that have arisen. Similarly, the 'right to choose' framing is problematic, as choices can be constrained and are limited by multiple factors. Without bodily autonomy, women cannot achieve equality: any denial of control over their own bodies precludes genuine control over any other aspects of their lives. It follows that bodily autonomy is a necessary condition for gender equality.

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3. Feminists need to further reflect on strategies to challenge financing and resourcing to address VAWG. Avenues are gender budgeting, mobilization of domestic resources (taxes) and linking VAWG to global economic justice issues.

### 4. Introduction: the Trade and Investment agenda

*Joyce Naar*

Feminist civil society organizations (CSOs) should have their voices heard in WTO negotiations because of the impact that WTO agreements have on our daily lives. Women should also become more involved in the WTO, where decisions are made by the rich and powerful (mostly) men.

It is a matter of urgency to be informed about the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), which was concluded in December 2013 as part of the Bali Package. The WTO members are being pushed to ratify the TFA as soon as possible to make sure that it will enter into force this year after ratification by two thirds of the members. The TFA will facilitate trade for transnational corporations and major trading economies that will benefit and earn trillions, while restricting small traders and services providers.

There is no media attention and hardly any information about the provisions and impact of the TFA. Most worrying, provisions of the TFA, such as Article 2, grants traders and other 'interested parties' (including those outside a country) rights in relation to new legislation and amendments concerning custom movements, the release and clearance of goods, including goods in transit. When ratified by governments, it results in an obligation to open the legislative process to prior consultation by traders and other interested parties located outside the territories of the state. These 'interested parties' could thus use lobbying and influence in national regulatory and legislative processes in a way that would inevitably tilt the balance away from the national constituencies and development priorities.

Furthermore, WTO member countries can be sanctioned through the WTO Dispute Settlement system when they do not fulfill the obligations of the TFA they have ratified, and when other WTO members are not satisfied with the way they are implementing the agreement. Possible sanctions and measures

are: suspension of concessions or other obligations, trade blockades, embargos, raising import tariffs, compensation, removal of subsidies, which could lead to de-industrialization and unemployment in many middle-sized countries and least developed countries.

The WTO Dispute Settlement system is in favour of the 'rich and powerful' just as the ISDS Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) procedure in cases of bilateral investment agreements, that allows transnational corporations to sue states. ISDS disputes have already cost governments hundreds of millions of Euros in compensation. For example, the Swedish nuclear energy group Vattenfall is [suing the German government](#) for its decision to phase out nuclear energy, while the French group Veolia sued the Egyptian government when it raised the minimum wage.

There have been more than 600 such cases and most of them have been decided in favour of the corporation because the arbitrators come from the same background as the lawyers and can switch places, creating classical situations of conflict of interest and lack of independence. ISDS arbitration by-passes the obligation of all states to ensure that legal cases are tried before independent tribunals, which are public, transparent, accountable, and appealable. They are also a threat to human rights. The same can be said about the WTO Dispute Settlement system, through which rich and powerful WTO member states sue other WTO member states.

Meanwhile, more agreements in the interest of the rich developed countries are being negotiated and promoted by these same rich developed countries. At the same time the WTO DOHA Development Round negotiations that are so important to the developing countries have been blocked since 2008.

Women's rights CSOs can work together and build their capacities in order to understand the ongoing WTO and EU trade issues and get involved. In this context, it is important to take part in public meetings organized by the WTO and EU. A strategic action would be to participate in the WTO Public Forum from 30 September to 2 October 2015 in Geneva, which is one of the most important platforms for dialogue between the stakeholders of the WTO. Also to participate in the Tenth WTO Ministerial Conference, which will be held in Nairobi, Kenya, on 15-18 December 2015. The accreditation process for non-governmental organizations is open until 16 October 2015

(midnight, GMT). Individuals should be registered no later than 13 November 2015. Online registration is available at <https://iam.unicc.org>.

the system, even if it they cannot completely escape capitalism in Europe? Most feminists are aware of capitalist structures but they have to address and link both levels: the political and daily-life.

#### **4. Workshop: women's rights in the trade and investment agenda**

Activists face several challenges in promoting the protection of women's human rights. Firstly, it is difficult to get women's rights on the global trade and investment agenda. Although decision-makers say that the WTO and other trade negotiations, are not about human rights, women's human rights, such as the right to food, decent jobs, etc. are harmed by trade negotiations, which are defending corporate interests. If negotiators include the concept of gender equality, it is from the perspective of how it can improve economic growth and be useful to businesses.



Two other challenges for feminists are the need to build up capacity to understand the very complex and technical elements of trade processes. At the same time as feminist spaces are shrinking for lack of spaces and resources.

Another challenge is to convince and inspire other feminists that trade is key to ensuring women's human rights, which is also a difficult task. Those working on trade issues need to communicate to feminists how important it is to focus on trade. An entry point for such dialogue is to elaborate on the conflict 'capital versus life'. Activists have to use synergies and build coalitions together. For example, feminists can connect other women's groups that have started fighting against TTIP (the EU-US trade negotiation) and bring in a feminist approach, that is currently lacking, to the dispute settlement clause. This is one of the key dangers of TTIP which threatens the legal democratic processes of states.

#### **Overcoming the fragmentation of current feminist mobilization**

The key strategy is to create and join coalitions between the groups who are working on trade and bring in the feminist perspective. There are organizations that work on trade, but mostly in a specific context. Interesting institutions and coalitions are: the "Seattle to Brussels-network", the Our World is Not For Sale Network (OWINFS), the Transnational Institute (TNI) and the women's ethical tribunals that create a "public" space for testimonies in favor of fundamental human rights that are harmed by macro-economic policies.

It is a fact that power has shifted from the state to multinationals. But who is giving them the power? Most of the participants are sitting here with Apple products, for example. Not only does one need to raise awareness of the impacts of the trade agreements under negotiation, but also one's mindset needs to be questioned and alternatives need to be developed. How can citizens get out of the circle of capitalism or at least, how they can change behavior that feeds

It is a challenge to unite all coalitions, groups and institutions, and also to find money for this kind of work. In Austria, for example, patriarchal organizations have many resources and would like to include some 'gender aspect', but one cannot protect women's human rights by simply adding it to an unchanged agenda that is not promoting gender equality. There is a need to transform the institutions and agendas, since we are in a deep democratic crisis and face

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shrinking spaces, decreasing funds, and a push for the instrumentalization of gender equality.

### Proposals for strategic action

A summary of concrete proposals from this workshop:

- Publish an easy to understand text on the impact of trade agreements on women's rights, for example, through a list of issues.
- Mandate the WIDE+ working group on Trade and Gender to try to revive the past economic literacy programmes. A good example is in Central America where women created a network for women's economic schools in which the pedagogy was linking economics to their daily life. Feminism has to do that at the European level.
- Try to engage with the Alternative Trade Mandate, an initiative that attempts not only to resist but also to be innovative.
- Engage in forums, like the public WTO forum, and in the WTO negotiating processes.
- Support the people's ethical tribunals in Chile, where civil society make visible how transnational corporations violate human rights.
- Put women's human rights into businesses.
- The TTIP campaign has no central European-wide platform but it would be important. TTIP is an opportunity served on a silver plate.
- WIDE+ could update key documents on economic literacy and sustainability from its past.

### 5. Introduction: Beijing+20 & Post-2015 development processes

*Maria Vlahakis*

The BPfA is still the programmatic agenda for gender equality and women's empowerment. The 2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) agenda offers an opportunity to take into account the structural barriers that perpetuate gender inequalities and poverty, while the previous Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) agenda leveraged resources and political will but only focused on the symptoms of gender inequality. While women suffer the most from poverty, they have the least say in decisions that affect their lives and communities. Women's rights defenders are calling on UN and Member States to ensure the new SDGs include a standalone goal on the

human rights of women and girls, and a specific target to ensure women's full, equal and effective participation and influence at all levels of decision-making in public and political life, accompanied by indicators to measure progress on this target.

Feminists face challenges in the SDG process. Women are still denied basic human rights, gender inequality is persistent, sexual and gender based violence is a reality, sexual and reproductive rights are conditioned by the "conscience beliefs" of medical practitioners. Based on current rates of progress, women will not be equally represented in Parliaments until 2060 and will not make up half of the world leaders until 2118. Most of the progressive areas of the BPfA have yet to be fulfilled. There is a significant implementation gap in development to ensure gender equality and women's rights and this bodes scepticism towards the SDG agenda. There are concerns about the implementation of whole new framework at national levels once it is agreed in September. The latest draft of the SDG is extremely ambitious, but it is essential that this ambition is matched in the on-going work to develop concrete indicators and financial agreements. Feminists also need to ensure that there are appropriate funding programmes for women's empowerment.

Experience shows that women's rights organizations deliver on transformative change. A recent report of Womankind Worldwide highlights the important role of women's rights organizations as catalysts for change and realization of women's rights around the world. These organizations should be involved in helping establish national review processes to ensure they are set up to effectively monitor the progress in gender equality.

Feminists need increased support and, specifically, funding for women's rights organizations at all levels, especially at the local and national level.

### 5. Workshop: Beijing+20 & Post-2015 development processes

The SDG agenda is of global importance, for the South and for the North. Feminists should take part in the process of developing the agenda, particularly now that the process is heading into the final stage of being adopted. The UN's recent outcome document for the SDGs sets out 17 goals with 169 targets, which is very ambitious. It is a result of ongoing

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negotiations between member states. There has not been enough focus on the human rights' agenda in these discussions, in particular, the human rights of women and girls has not received enough attention. Feminists need to move this to the top of the agenda.

Feminist should focus their attention on the indicators that will measure the targets. There is a concern that the UN member states are only putting forward quantitative indicators, which are simple and easy to measure, and not suggesting anything that will allow feminists to measure transformative change. Feminists need to know which indicators are important so that they can make the case for their inclusion in the final set of global indicators and emphasize the importance of qualitative indicators.

### Challenges feminists face in the SDG process

There are many challenges in a context of a reduced space for civil society's advocacy and lobby:

There is a tension between the instrumentalist approach whereby achieving gender equality is seen as a necessity for sustainable development or economic growth, and one that takes gender equality as a women's rights issue and an end in itself. The SDGs should incorporate previous international human rights commitments such as from CEDAW, BPfA and the [International Conference on Population and Development](#) (Cairo, 1994).

The accountability framework will likely be based on voluntary commitments by states. How can citizens ensure that governments will implement the agenda, in particular, commit themselves to increased political will for women's rights, and allocate the required resources for the whole agenda? It would require governments to increase the amount spent on Official Development Assistance (ODA), while most governments are already failing to meet the UN's target of 0.7 per cent GNP.

There is a need to link economic and social issues and conceptualise the goals from a cross-cutting perspective, since they cannot be separated. Another topic to debate is how public-private partnerships could finance gender development.

The SDG process is removed from many in the CSO movement working on the BPfA agenda,

while these NGOs need to engage with the SDGs at global, national and local levels. It is important to communicate the goals in a simpler way to more NGOs, while keeping a strong focus on gender equality and women's rights. In this context, one needs to ask how the indicators will translate at the grassroots level and into the lives of women and girls. Feminists should promote the involvement of women's rights CSOs in the monitoring and reviewing process.

### Fragmentation of issues and organizations

Overcoming a fragmented gender agenda and moving towards a more holistic agenda will be challenging when there are so many different organizations working on different issues now. Ownership of the Post-2015 agenda could help overcome fragmentation. Feminists need to create a space for women to discuss the Post-2015 agenda. This could be an opportunity for women's rights organizations and feminists to regain a common agenda for the next 15 years. The common agenda could be around holding their governments accountable for their commitments on the Post-2015 agenda.

### Proposals for strategic action

Feminists and women rights CSO should advocate for:

- A strong accountability framework that is much more prescriptive, to avoid countries picking and choosing what they deliver. This includes strong national implementation plans, so it is important to influence the indicator setting process between now and December 2015.
- Dedicated resources for gender equality and women's rights: the financing document for Addis (the 'Addis Accord') should make a commitment to specific ODA funding for gender equality and women's rights, and to track how and where funding is spent through the (OECD) Gender Equality Policy Marker.
- Language that is based on women's human rights, which needs to be the focus, the perspective and starting point.
- Use debates and opportunities to discuss the Post-2015 agenda and network among women's groups, especially those that have not been part of the process so far, helping to translate complex agenda into simpler language.

### Plenary Session 3 - The role of feminist networks and organizations: which ways forward?

*Facilitator: Carmen de la Cruz*

The last session looked at the strategies of feminist networks. What is the added value of feminist networks? Whom should feminists collaborate with and which agents should be our primary targets?

#### 1. Re-locating Patriarchy at the heart of our feminist struggles

*Gertrude Eigelsreiter-Jahari*

The potential for the European feminist movement at this moment is at a very low point: patriarchal, neo-liberal, imperialist, fundamental and militarized ideologies are found in all aspects of society. Patriarchal values and views dominate in society, which means they are 'inside' the people as described by Paulo Freire, and this is really difficult to transform.

Feminist networks add value in important ways: first, participants in feminist networks share in their core a collective critique of the patriarchal system, while in other networks it might be an issue on the periphery or not important at all. Second, feminists strengthen each other and celebrate strengths in a political sense. It is very empowering to become aware that one is not alone but part of a much larger movement of people with similar views and values. Lastly, networks can make feminists more visible which could not be achieved as a single association. It is because of network-building that feminists have more power to act in international agendas, although the added value of the network is only realized when the international level is connected to federal, national and local levels, since the work at the international level only makes sense if it is brought back to the ground level. WIDE+ and other networks should involve women at grassroots level in international agendas, inform them about international processes and provide resources for them to attend international meetings.

One of the challenges is that finding a common voice is not always easy. Feminism unites people from many different backgrounds (age, place of birth, ethnicity, etc.) who share a lot of common values and views. When feminists are

aware of the differences and the commonalities, it is easier to speak with one voice. One of these differences is the use of the digital world, in particular social media, by different age groups. Young people have grown up using social media, but for older people it is still a form of communication they are not too used to. One needs to be aware of this and use the huge potential of online media, but also other public domains.

#### How feminists can transform our societies

Feminists need power to get an issue changed that goes against the mainstream and the establishment. Therefore, it is useful to study the structures of power. When choosing alliances and targets an analysis of power structures can help us understand what is possible and what is strategic. An example of a successful alliance, though not feminist, is the Austrian campaign around the TTIP. Big and small NGOs united and then powerful trade unions also joined the campaign, and even representatives of the Democratic Party became involved. Subsequently, it became a topic in the public domain. What feminists can learn from this example is that, after they have established ties with organizations that are closest to their cause, they should reach out to other movements and institutions that could add power.

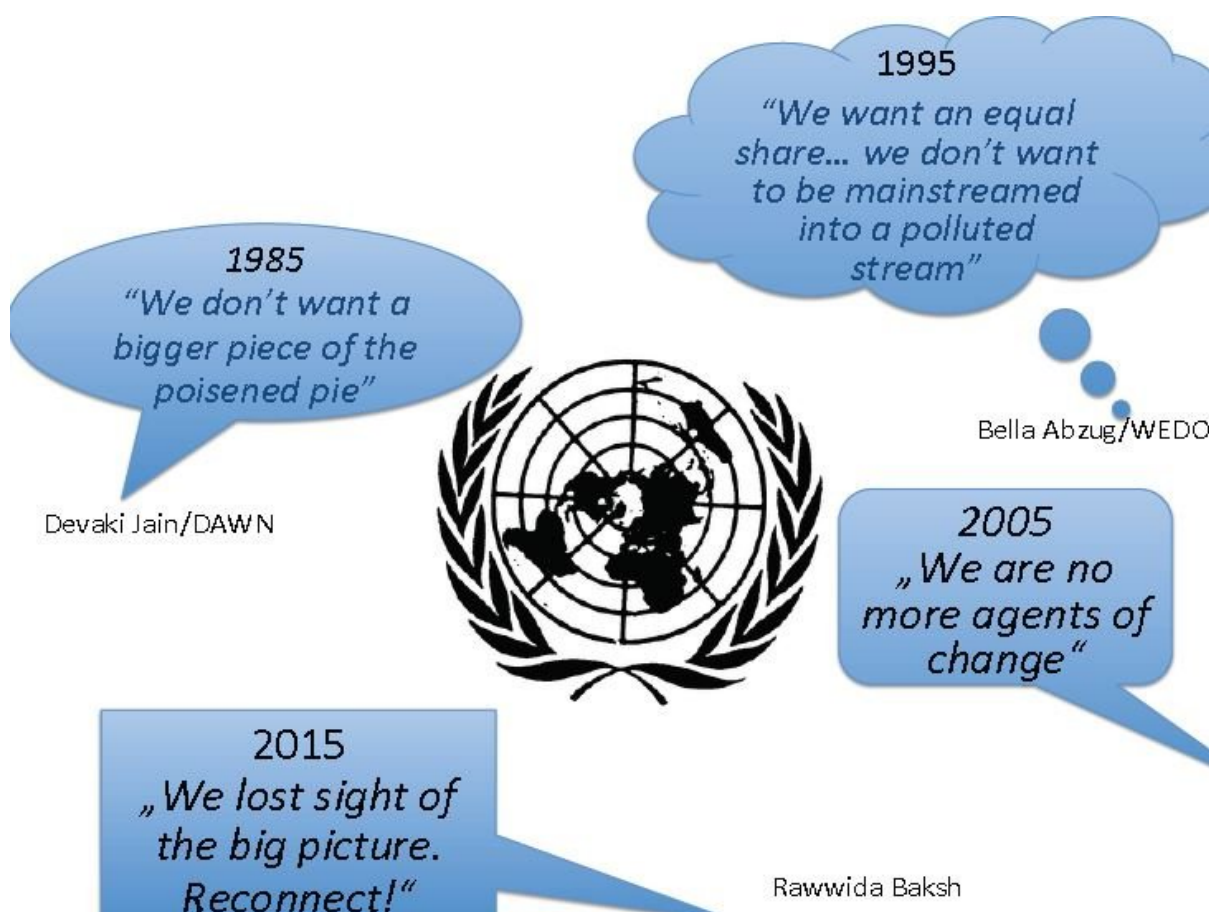
A few words about collaborating with the masculinity movement. *Eigelsreiter-Jahari* witnessed at recent CSWs that in this one space where women dominate, the inclusion of masculinities on the agenda leads to a diminishing space for women's empowerment. For example, last year there was a march of celebration and young males were visibly taking part, promoting gender equality, but they were not addressing women's empowerment.

#### 2. Speaking with a unified voice: new opportunities for feminist networks

*Sanne Holtslag*

The connection from the grassroots level to the level of the UN is one of the strengths of feminist networks. While it is important to bring international agendas to local and national activism, feminists can, and need to, 'feed' issues and experiences from the grassroots upwards as well. This is an asset for the Dutch network WO=MEN that focuses on lobby and advocacy on gender in international policy. Through their members, the network harbors a





One of the Sheets shared by Christa Wichterich in her presentation on 17 June

lot of information that policy-makers, for example, do not have and are not aware of. At times one needs to explain gender equality in a way that can be easily grasped, and concrete examples from the grassroots level are helpful in doing this.

A lot of the added value of WO=MEN is that it can speak as one voice, which increases visibility but at the same time is challenging, since members collectively need to decide on the issues and the sound of the voice. Still, it is a strength that not many other networks working around international affairs have.

### New and hybrid collaborations

In terms of new collaborations, one of the allies for WO=MEN that has not been mentioned so far is the global masculinity movement. There is a big debate in the feminist movement on whether we should engage with them and, if so, in what way. WO=MEN aims to work together with the masculinities groups. There are other opportunities at international level too.

A major opportunity are the kind of hybrid collaborations that have come up in the past decade. WO=MEN has collaborations with

different stakeholders, coming together on one agenda or issue because of a shared interest. An example is when WO=MEN recently joined up with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, labour unions, and some multinationals to set up a covenant around the decent work agenda, with guidelines for international value chains that involves the Dutch sector and government. This was a kind of incidental collaboration for which the network had to push to be taken on board, though our voice was welcomed. It is an example at the institutional level. A lot of these hybrid collaborations are being set up at grassroots level, also as a kind of reaction to the shrinking welfare state, and a creative way to deal with fragmentation.

### 3.Re-Occupy: Feminist networks organizing for transformative change

Deniz Bayram

The current feminist movement in Turkey has its roots in the second wave of feminism during the 80's, when feminists were the first group to take organized protests to the streets in order to gain the legal right to demonstrate. Coming

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from these first protests, feminist activists and associations have developed a mode of collaborating in unity that is spread over the whole country, not only residing in big cities but also taking root in small places. Sharing experiences and struggles, while respecting diversities, has been one of their strengths.

One important strategy that the feminist movement in Turkey employs is the creation of 'red lines', issues that bind them all together in a common response to transgressive government policy. These lines are protected by each women's organization. It would not have been a successful strategy if local diversities among associations and groups had not been acknowledged and respected. An example of this strategy was the response to the government's insistence on defining a women's shelter as a guest house. This redefining impacts the options of how a women's shelter can function since there are particular laws on running a guest house. In response to the government, all women organizations agreed that they did not accept this language and everybody kept using the language of a shelter. Another example was the campaign against abortion for which all associations and groups immediately came together.

One final point is the importance of international solidarity to oppose state crackdowns on protest. As in Spain, Turkey has adopted a law closing the streets to all groups including women. This happened a couple of months ago, just before the national election. Can feminists prioritize this issue on the international agenda?

### 4. Plenary discussion: closing remarks

Network-building can be useful and a challenge. It can be logical to work with pro-feminist masculinity associations and groups, because fighting for gender equality means deconstructing extant concepts of masculinity. Experiences with other possible alliances were shared, like the way the feminist political party in Sweden is getting support from young people. It was suggested to reach out to labour unions and workers associations. In terms of alliance building, the question is what the 'red lines' are for WIDE+ and feminist networks at an international level.

There was also a reflection on the feminist networks in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Building alliances and networks across this region has not been easy because national and

local organizations face different values and problems and there is a lack of financial resources to do transnational work. However, the conflict in Ukraine and with it, the erosion of Sexual and Reproductive rights, helped crystallize the mobilization of a movement around these rights that led to actions at the European Parliament. This was a positive experience. Still it is hard to organize such alliances as the spaces for collaboration are shrinking.

The debate turned to a reflection on WIDE+ as a network. Several suggestions were made as concrete avenues for action. One recommendation was to unpack the Post 2015 agenda and reflect on how to mobilize feminists in Europe by looking at experiences from other regions. WIDE+ members need to keep in mind with this agenda (as well as other ones) how much active ownership there is, since WIDE+ is managed through volunteer work. While there seems to be an understanding of the importance of transnational networking, as well as working on their own national or local issues, feminists need to translate this into concrete action and also realize that investing time in WIDE+ is very worthwhile.

In terms of the strategic role of WIDE+ it was suggested to reclaim WIDE as a feminist political home. After the previous WIDE dissolved the context in Europe has changed for feminism. Before the interlocked crises in Europe, feminists were on the outside looking to developments taking place in other regions. Now these dynamics that lead to a decrease of women's human rights, play out in Europe, which means a shift in a perspective is needed. Of the dynamics taking place in the EU, migration is a big issue that WIDE+ needs to take up. And feminists could start a 'Beijing liberation process' to free ourselves from both the old way of framing our paradigm and to give them critical distance to the UN. Finally, it was mentioned that it is difficult for new members to find a niche within WIDE+. Clarifying processes of how WIDE+ works and its strategic framework will help WIDE+ move forward.

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