

**DSA Conference  
Sept 14<sup>th</sup> 2016**

**Feminist  
Alternatives  
Project:**



**KEEP  
GOING  
FOR  
WOMEN'S  
MOBILISATION**

# Background GADN's Feminist Alternatives project

- On-line discussion & series of 7 papers launched in June 2016
- The need to step back
- What could feminist societies look like?
- No 1 vision of a feminist future
- From looking at alternative visions to alternative methods
- Common threads

# Challenges outlined by writers

1. Co-option of feminist language and goals for less transformative agendas
2. Fragmentation of the gender and development agenda
3. Changing aid architecture
4. Prevailing neo-liberal economic model built on gender inequality

## Methods towards a more feminist future

1. A more integrated feminist agenda with power at its centre
2. A return to our central principle of resistance
3. To better analyse how different inequalities and oppressions intersect and are institutionalized at all levels
4. Greater engagement with and funding for women and girls in the Global South

# Continuing the conversation

- How can we best express that women's rights matter because women's rights matter?
- What needs to change in how we do our work as gender equality advocates?
- How can we better work with women's intersectional identities?

# Feminist Alternatives to Development: envisioning feminist futures – from ideas to outcomes

[http://gadnetwork.org/gadn-  
news/2016/6/21/feminist-development-  
alternatives-pack-now-live](http://gadnetwork.org/gadn-news/2016/6/21/feminist-development-alternatives-pack-now-live)

Gender and Development Network's Feminist Alternatives to International Development Project  
ENVISIONING FEMINIST FUTURES: FROM IDEAS TO OUTCOMES

[SLIDE 2]

1. Background to the project

**Gender and Dev Network** – network of UK based NGOs, academics, freelancers. Our Feminist Alternatives project responded to **member orgs desire to increase the impact their orgs had on** furthering women's & girls' rights & gender equality and to **understand alternatives being promoted globally**

- ***The need to step back*** - Felt that many of us within the Network were being constrained by funding cycles, political moments, organisational mandates etc – this was project was a **breath of fresh air**, allowing us, as practioners, to step back from our day to day work and examine how were we contributing to a feminist future.
- ***Online discussion on what feminist societies could look like*** – what would the common values be **in line with human rights frameworks** such as CEDAW and the subsequent Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action – longstanding goals of many feminists
- ***Recognised that feminism can't be monolithic*** - **no 1 vision of a feminist future** as feminism represents the political expressions of women from very diverse regions, nationalities, classes, ethnicities. So we **invited feminists we knew and admired to present their views** in very diverse papers, in an effort to help us listen deeply to the views of others, determine what was really important and to challenge our own assumptions.
- We ***moved from looking at alternative visions to looking at alternative methods***. This was partly in response to the concern that articulating **alternative visions** (with all the caveats) **could enable donors to then co-opt this and use their own methods towards it** - when **methods matter**. On the other hand – we recognized that people sometimes need to see what an end goal may look like. **Papers were food for thought** of how to get there.
- ***Common threads despite the diversity of the papers***. Writers agree that at the heart of any feminist alternatives is the **belief that gender inequality is structural and rooted in unequal power**, and that addressing this is a **political project** where **women's voices and women's representation must be central**. For many feminists in the Global South development alternatives has referred to **undoing the colonial legacy of underdevelopment**, equalising North-South economic relations and restoring the dignity of colonised people.

[SLIDE 3]

2. Challenges as outlined by the writers

- ***Co-option of feminist language and goals for less transformative agendas*** - increasingly hear the once radical term 'empowerment' being used by everyone from the W Bank to philanthropic foundations as a way to promote economic growth, or peace or family wellbeing rather than to challenge patriarchy.

- **Fragmentation of the gender and development agenda** – has become these piece meal, de-contextualised pieces eg **VAWG fragmenting** into sexual violence in armed conflict, DV, FGM. How **social norms have become a new buzz word**, yet challenging norms has been part of the holistic approach taken WROs for years.
- **Changing aid architecture** – increasing role of private sector, shrinking of civil society, retraction of the State, the impact of more conservative religious ideologies and govt policy shifts in response to this. **Diminishing funding** leading to the push for **demonstrable and immediate results, stifling sustainable feminist work** and thinking. **Push for innovation** – no-one wants to hear about what isn't working. **Lack of recognition of women's rights expertise held by WROs** – funding going to mainstream orgs – prevents WROs being able to pursue their own political interests.
- **Prevailing neo-liberal economic model** – hugely problematic as it's **built on systems of discrimination, oppression and exclusion** at all levels from the local to the global.

#### [SLIDE 4]

### 3. Some of the methods to get us to a more feminist future

- **A more integrated feminist agenda which has power as central** – most writers talked about a key enabler is the **dismantling of patriarchy through an analysis of and the transfer of power**. That the 'practice of power' was about a **more deliberate transfer of power from men & boys to women and girls** – power to have a voice, to set agendas and to confront the structures of inequality. But also the **transfer of power from the Global North to South**.

The **importance of enabling women and girls to dictate their own agendas and pursue their own priorities** came out strongly. Zohra Moosa from Mama Cash looked at the **importance of funding feminist movements to keeping the work political** and to achieving social change. Several writers talked about the **need for development practitioners to examine our own roles in reinforcing hierarchies and imbalances of power** and that our role should be one of standing back to support and enable, not to control and dominate.

Wallace & Porter outline **principles for a feminist approach to programmes and evaluation which successfully addresses women's lack of voice, power and representation**. Women for Change in Zambia write how **transformative change and empowerment requires time and money**. Elanor Jackson will talk more about these issues in the next session.

- **A return to our central principle of resistance** – the **resistance of women towards individualism, capitalism and patriarchy which demands collective action and movement building**, by women themselves thereby moving away from a focus on improving the lives of individual women while leaving their context unchanged.

That **key to this is addressing the pervasive and systemic nature of patriarchy and capitalism by challenging the neo-liberal economic model**. For example, the UK Women's Budget Group demonstrates how to bridge the gap between theory and practice through **Plan F** – a proposal for the UK government to achieve an economy that improves wellbeing in ways that reduce inequalities today and in the future. **Tica Moreno's paper describes how Brazilian women are putting feminist alternatives into practice** and, in so doing,



challenging dominant economic models and patriarchal structures through an alternative system of agroecology.

- ***That we better analyse how different inequalities and oppressions intersect and how these are institutionalized from the household to the global system*** – that we examine the ‘**matrix of oppression**’ of race, gender, sexuality, sexual identity, social class and geographical location amongst other axes of repression. **Feminist social movements can make a transformative contribution to public policy by merging the issues of injustice, inequality and intersectionality to challenge the current global economic model of privatisation and corporatisation.**
- ***Greater engagement with and funding for women and girls for in the Global South*** – many writers talked about the signs of a **resurgence of feminism** – how young women are embracing and reclaiming feminism in different ways. Even **more of a need to give a platform to feminist activists, advocates and academics from women’s movements** by inviting and promoting feminist speakers, citing feminist sources in our reports and sharing the stage with allies wherever possible.

Also – **the vital need for more women’s funds** (eg from donors like Mama Cash) who recognise that women’s rights activism is risky because it challenges deep social codes and that backlash is likely to achieve success. Recommendations from Women for Change include how **WROs can respond by working work in partnership** with other WROs; working in networks to access donor funding; learning from each other by sharing best practices, building trust and mutual accountability; and to continue to base our interventions on the realities of the women we work with and for.

[SLIDE 5]

#### 4. Questions to continue the conversation

- How can we best express that women's rights matter because women's rights matter?
- What needs to change in how we do our work as gender equality advocates?
- How can we better work with women’s intersectional identities?

[SLIDE 6]

Link to the papers on GADN’s website – invite people to read them and take part in the conversation

#### Timings

8.30-9am	Reception desk open. <b>Meet Tina at 8.30am</b>
9-10.30am	Panel session 7 <b>P64 Bringing feminism back into development practice</b> [Gender, Policy and Development Study Group] Convenors: Tina Wallace (Lady Margaret Hall Oxford University); Fenella Porter (Ruskin College) <i>Lecture Room B (Queens College): first of two sessions</i>
10.30-11am	Refreshments, North Schools (Examination Schools), Ground floor (Examination Schools), Near panel rooms (Magdalen and Queens Colleges)
11am -12.30pm	<b>P64 Bringing feminism back into development practice</b>