GENDER & DEVELOPMENT NETWORK
Briefings
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Aspiring to alternative feminist societies

This paper seeks to collate and articulate common themes and aspirations shared by many feminists working towards building better societies. It is the result of a body of work by the Gender & Development Network (GADN) that has included an international online discussion and significant internal debate, both amongst members and with their southern partners on the topic of feminist alternatives to development.

1. Introduction

GADN began this project in order to allow its members and staff, who were feeling restricted to reacting to decision makers' priorities rather than setting their own agendas, to take a step back and consider how our work contributes to longer term goals. Whilst we recognise that feminism is as diverse as women the world over, and that there is not one but many visions of an alternative feminist society, this paper attempts to shine a light on commonalities. It first outlines some of the underlying values of feminist societies, before listing some common themes found in diverse alternative visions.

The themes in the paper reflect discussions of twenty years ago in Beijing, and show the enduring importance to women everywhere of the Areas of Critical Concern from the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA), which was agreed by governments at the UN's Fourth World Conference on Women. This paper aims to challenge us and other gender and development practitioners to rethink how best our work can contribute to future feminist societies. As part of GADN's Feminist Development Alternatives project we also seek to build alliances between feminists globally and to share our aspirations and strategies, recognising that the imperative for change is as strong in the UK as it is internationally.

The challenge then is how to move towards these aspirations. Central to achieving women's and girls' equality and human rights is a transfer of power to women and girls who have been marginalised by existing power hierarchies – power to have a voice, to set agendas and to confront the structures of inequality. This also means questioning the role of 'development' in upholding those hierarchies, especially between north and south, and ensuring northern development actors work in solidarity with women and girls in the Global South rather than displacing their voices and speaking on their behalf. This is addressed in other papers in the pack. As papers by Moosa as well as Wallace and Porter argue, financial support and solidarity with southern women's rights

organisations and movements helps shift the balance of power, supporting women and girls to exercise their collective agency and determine their own priorities.

There is a risk that by defining alternative visions, we suggest that UK-based development organisations can then implement them, thus obscuring the crucial role of women, particularly marginalised women, in defining and building their own agendas. We have taken this risk in this paper in an effort to demonstrate the potential benefits of feminist alternatives to a wider development audience. Similarly, we recognise that meeting basic needs for food, shelter and health care are met is a foundational principle of a feminist society, as participants in our online discussion stressed.[1] Here, however, we want to focus on those aspects of alternative societies that are less recognised in mainstream development literature – and that we believe are central to transforming structural gender power relations. We hope that showing how feminist societies might differ from existing ones will help spotlight for development actors some of the things that are wrong at present and be part of the impetus to work in a different way.

2. Feminist core values

Working towards collective feminist visions of alternative, socially-just societies requires envisaging what such a society might look like. While there is no country in the world that demonstrates the core values of a feminist society, there are some instances where parts of these visions have been put into practice, a few of which are in boxes in this paper and more of which are available in the synthesis of our online discussion.[2]

Thirty years ago, Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN) offered a groundbreaking critique of three decades of development work, highlighting the impact of four inter-linked and systemic global crises – famine, debt, militarism and fundamentalism – on poor women of the Global South. It, and other more recent papers, offered alternative visions for a different understanding of development. Since then, feminist leaders and networks have developed these perspectives on the economy, the environment, rights and democracy in an effort to shape global processes on sustainable development and climate change providing a wealth of literature.[3]

What emerge from this debate are multiple alternative visions that have common threads. They all go beyond seeking women's equality with men in the current social structure to propose a new basis for social cooperation that gives pre-eminence to wellbeing, stewardship of the environment, broad social cooperation and inclusion over economic growth and wealth. These visions not only aspire to women's equality with men, but to the transformation of all unequal power relations through the redistribution of power, resources and wealth between countries, ethnicities, classes, sexes and other axes of inequality. We have not addressed the emerging critique of a binary understanding of gender in this course of this project, but this critical debate will also

need to be explored as part of the development of feminist alternatives, recognising that the use of 'women' and 'men' does not address the complexity of sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI).

The collation of feminist visions in this paper, based on the existing literature and debates, suggests three core values running through feminist alternative visions:

- a society where human rights and equality are achieved for all
- a society based on wellbeing and sustainability rather than economic growth
- a society based on inclusive, participatory and democratic governance[4]

While principles of equality and human rights have frequently been incorporated into development discourse, their application in development policy and practice has fallen short of feminist visions. This section looks at the transformative potential of these core values. The third section of this paper then goes on to look at the themes of imagined feminist societies through the prism of these values.

2.1 A society where human rights and equality are achieved for all

At its simplest, a feminist society is one in which life choices and chances, wellbeing and enjoyment of rights are not affected by sex or any other marker of identity. DAWN's 1987 paper described a world where "hierarchies, power and gender subordination were broken down and where women became full and equal participants with men".[5]

At the heart of feminist alternatives is the dismantling of patriarchy, defined by BRIDGE as "systemic societal structures that institutionalise male physical, social and economic power over women".[6] Thus in a feminist society women and girls will be truly equal to men and boys, sharing equal power and living free from the social institutions that have prevented them from using that power. Here, we will briefly unpack what this means.

Equality for all

Central to feminist visions of an equal society is the aspiration that women be *equal to one another* as well as to men, recognising the many and overlapping forms of inequality that women experience and the fact that some women oppress other women. The aim then is a levelling of all inequalities – including economic inequality between the Global North and the Global South, and the growing inequality within countries between the wealthiest and the poorest.

Returning to DAWN's paper, the authors argue that, "feminism cannot be monolithic in its issues, goals and strategies since it constitutes the political expression of the concerns and interests of women from different regions, classes, nationalities and ethnic backgrounds."[7]

Recognising intersectionality within feminist analysis acknowledges the way different forms of inequality intersect to create unique and varied experiences of discrimination.[8] Transforming the lives of those facing the harshest oppressions should be the starting point for feminist alternatives. Understanding that power is distributed not only along the lines of gender but also along multiple axes of discrimination including race, class and colonial experience highlights the need to acknowledge unequal power relationships among women too. Mukhia and Kachingwe further take up this discussion of intersectionality.

The importance of rights and the role of the state

Human rights are a core value of alternative feminist societies. The principles of universality, equality and non-discrimination are an important legal basis for gender equality that should be codified in national constitutions and legislation, drawing from international and regional instruments that enshrine and protect women's and girls' rights such as the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the BPfA, UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, and the Sustainable Development Goals.

A human rights framework codifies the political, civil, social, cultural and economic rights of women and girls, recognising that all rights are equal in importance and cannot be fully enjoyed with enjoyment of the others. Achieving human rights requires true democracy – that is, a high degree of participation by communities, civil society, minorities, women, young people, indigenous peoples and other identified groups.[9] This increases state accountability as well as being inherently valuable in terms of inclusivity and equality.

Human rights frameworks place the obligation of promoting and protecting women's human rights on the state and other duty-bearers, providing a channel for redress to those whose rights are denied or abused.[10] Whilst states have an obligation to ensure respect for human rights, in reality investment in this area is guided by political and economic rationales. For example, promoting the economic and social rights of people living in poverty through public expenditure on social investment and social services could be increased in almost all societies by increasing revenue from taxation – the UK Women's Budget Group's (WBG) paper discusses these measures in more detail.[11]

Human rights frameworks already provide an important tool for feminist activists fighting for gender equality. From advocating for new laws to securing justice for survivors of violence to making sure women are at the table during peace processes, women's rights organisations use the principles of human rights to hold governments to account and deliver real change for women.

Agency and self-determination

Agency and self-determination are closely linked to human rights and key to feminist visions. Social norms – reflected in the formal structures of society as well as the

informal rules, attitudes and behaviours that govern social life – are some of the most powerful constraints on girls' and women's agency, mediating their capacity to make choices and act upon them. Whilst social norms can vary greatly across cultures, there is commonality across contexts in deep-rooted gender norms relating to the status of women and girls, expectations of their role in society and control over their bodies and sexuality. The ability to exercise agency at the individual and collective level, through collective action, is a core value.

2.2 A society based on wellbeing rather than economic growth

Redefining society's goals

In feminist visions of alternative societies, values of wellbeing, caring and respect are at the heart of society's ambitions. They are central to progressive relationships between the state and individuals, among people and with the environment, while the pursuit of economic growth and wealth is relegated to a means rather than a goal.

To that end, the Casablanca Dreamers, a network of southern activists and academics working to empower women, have called for reflection on the kinds of societies that are being created and the extent to which they can achieve social and economic justice.[12] The international feminist network AWID has also highlighted the need to transform economic power so that people and quality of life lie at the centre of development.[13]

Many feminists have found Amartya Sen's capabilities approach useful. It views the end goal of development as the expansion of the freedom of people to choose the kind of life they wish to live.[14] Rather than focusing on income and wealth, Sen's approach asks what choices people have and what individuals are *actually* capable of doing and being – and what barriers prevent each individual from achieving such goals. Unlike traditional development approaches that often sacrifice the individual for the greater good, the capabilities approach looks at how each individual is (and can be) enabled to live, emphasising the importance of agency.

These alternative perspectives also imply that two previously hidden components of the economy should be at the forefront of social, political and economic thinking and acting: the valuing of care and the preservation of natural resources. This contrasts with the marginalization of care as a societal value (caring for others) and as a form of work (providing care). It also contrasts with a view of nature as an object of domination, as a resource to be exploited and as a site for waste.

Box 1: *buen vivir* and alternative societies in practice

Buen vivir, or *vivir bien*, is a Spanish term used in Latin America to describe alternatives to development focused on the good life, embracing a broad notion of wellbeing and cohabitation with others and nature. Early formulations of buen vivir emerged in South America in reaction to classical development strategies, either due to its negative social or environmental outcomes or the debatable economic benefits. Many critiques highlighted the shortcomings and negative impacts of development projects implemented by governments and multilateral development banks in Latin America in the last decades.

Pursuing *buen vivir* implies an exploration of alternatives to development beyond traditional Eurocentric knowledge, and it rejects growth as the object of development. *Buen vivir* also tends to value the contribution of indigenous knowledge, but it is not limited to non-Western knowledge and draws on feminist critiques of unequal gender roles and links to social hierarchies and domination of nature. It is a fluid and evolving concept that varies across contexts, demonstrating the possibility of viable economic and social alternatives.[15]

This concept has been incorporated into the constitutions of Bolivia and Ecuador. To that end, the definition of state included in the constitution of the Plurinational State of Bolivia is, "a state based on respect and equality among all, with principles of sovereignty, dignity, complementarity, harmony and equity in the distribution and redistribution of social products."[16] This constitutional principle is incorporated in the National Development Plan, which defines the country's transformation as a long-term process based on four pillars: dignity, sovereignty, democracy, and productivity.[17]

The centrality of care and caring

Many feminists believe that recognition and redistribution of the care economy is central to any alternative paradigm.[18] This includes the recognition of the unpaid care work that is primarily undertaken by women and girls, but it goes beyond that as well to encompass valuing the caring professions and forging an economy that prioritises caring for people and nature.

Writing about an alternative economic system, Eyben and Fontana call for "a people-centred development where care is recognised as the foundation of human wellbeing."[19] They argue that the low value currently placed on care ignores its positive benefits for social wellbeing, highlighting that, "male policymakers subconsciously choose not to acknowledge the centrality of care because it is in their gendered interests to do so."[20]

Valuing finite resources

Feminist movements and academics have criticized the concept of a 'green economy' proposed at Rio+20 for ignoring gender and relying on green technologies and market

mechanisms that preserve the economic structure and the profit-making logic of the existing system. Instead feminists advocate for an alternative economic model that operates within the boundaries of the planet's finite resources and regenerative capacity.[21]

Wichterich, a feminist economist, describes three interlinked components of a feminist model: the care economy, the commons (or communally-owned land, property and knowledge), and alternative consumption and production patterns that resist the growth focus of neoliberal globalisation. Private property is seen as the root cause of individual greed; instead communities should define and administrate common resources, whether these are forests, childcare or food production.[22] Moreno's paper discusses feminist ecology as a means of achieving sustainability and recalibrating our relationship with nature.

Box 2: Challenging the system, one conversation at a time

"Community food projects are bridges that bring diverse and internally fractured communities to a meeting point," explains Clare Joy of OrganicLea. "It's about standing together and about people taking back control of their communities, their spaces, their basic human needs, their lives – as a necessary precursor to any 'system change'; and about gently supporting the realisation of the commonality of struggle and the common ground we have to build on together. And that this happens slowly, one conversation at a time."

Based in London, UK, OrganicLea is a workers' co-operative, growing and selling organic produce in the local area and inspiring others to do the same. Work experience and training are provided for local residents on the site and through schools, housing associations and support services. The project particularly targets those most excluded from the jobs market: migrants, asylum seekers, unemployed young people and those who have been excluded from school.

Alongside the provision of produce and practical skills, the project also challenges notions of equity and justice. Growing and preparing food is a 'safe' issue for bringing people together: it meets very practical needs and facilitates reaching out to excluded people, particularly women, but it also raises important concerns around the ethics of growing and distributing food in a relatable way, while creating a safe space for collective thinking. Food is a common concern where unusual alliances are made, such as the meeting of young anarchists and Muslim mothers in early-years outdoor learning sessions at the project. One of these mothers –Tehseen – found Zapatista coffee alongside local produce on the farm stall. At home she followed the story of struggle in Chiapas, and was exposed to the world of global free trade deals wreaking havoc on small farmers lives. "I understood OrganicLea's vision," she said, "and my family and friends are told this story if they want to share coffee at my home."[23]

A new economic model that serves people rather than markets

Alternative feminist visions argue for wholesale change of the current economic model from the local to the international level:

> *It is not enough to call for the participation of women in existing patterns of market-based production, or for the empowerment of women within existing paradigms of development, or for gender mainstreaming within existing configurations of institutional power. It is the forms of production, the paradigms, and the institutions themselves that need questioning and transforming, both through changes in the ideas that generate economic policies, and through social mobilisation.*[24]

Feminist networks such as RIPESS have argued for a socially just economy, or a *solidarity economy*, where rights are respected – and where human beings, the environment and the production and reproduction of life are placed at the centre of economic and development goals.[25] The European feminist network WIDE+ has called for a change in the common paradigm from a market citizenship to a social citizenship.[26]

Proposals for alternative economic models to serve and fulfil the rights of all people based on principles of equality, human rights, sustainability and democracy include creating a *social economy*, or *social solidarity economy*,, and are being put into practice in countries such as Ecuador and Bolivia through the guiding concept of *buen vivir* (see Box 1). Such models entail a challenge to existing consumption and production patterns, a reassessment of the role of the state, and limits on the concentrated accumulation of wealth by the richest people and corporations, alongside the recognition of the care economy and preservation of natural resources.[27] The WBG, Mukhia and Kachingwe, and Moreno all look at many of these underlying problems of current macroeconomic models and the possibilities for alternatives.

Box 3: Self-Employed Women's Association

SEWA is a trade union, first set up in Gujarat, India, in 1972 with women who had lost their jobs when cotton mills closed. SEWA's vision is a people's economy that "doesn't seek to commodify absolutely everything in order to profit from it", but rather exists to serve people's needs. It has grown to be a national movement of several interconnected types of organizations supporting informal women workers, including cooperatives, social security organizations, savings and credit groups, a bank, a housing trust and many others – all under the SEWA umbrella. Its goals are to ensure that poor, self-employed women workers obtain work security, income security, food security and social security (at a minimum health care, child care and shelter) and are autonomous and self-reliant, individually and collectively, both economically and in terms of decision-making.[28]

2.3 A society based on inclusive, participatory and democratic governance

Building participatory decision-making

Feminist visions of democratic decision-making are based on the view that the world, with its diverse societies, work and living environments, and organizations, should be built in a participatory manner based on the respect for the right of individuals and peoples to decide on their own development.[29] Participatory democracy is based on participation of all citizens in political, economic and social decision-making at all levels. This is key to empowerment, rights and self-determination and implies bringing people currently outside the political process into it.

A core value of truly participatory and progressive democratic decision-making is building of agency for those previously most marginalised from power, and for collective action to allow collective expression of agency. Wallace and Porter as well as Moosa look further at agency and collective action.

Box 4: The Occupy movement

The Occupy movement has attempted to learn about real democracy and non-discrimination – and the challenges and opportunities engendered by this process – in practice from the bottom up. Women were everywhere within the Occupy movement's mobilisation and protests, but it is significant that in these early days there were no specific demands related to women's economic rights, nor any attempts to integrate feminist economic analyses into its vision of alternative economic realities. Within Occupy, strategies to promote more inclusive movement-building have begun to grow. At Occupy Wall Street, a series of feminist general assemblies were organised that addressed not only women's role in an economic justice movement but also issues of patriarchy, heterosexism and transphobia. Safe spaces committees were formed within encampments in order to build secure spaces for women to camp and meet. Occupy caucuses have been set up for women, as well as people of colour and queer people, and groups such as Occupy Patriarchy and Women Occupying Wall Street have emerged to highlight women's demands from the Occupy movement. The caucuses have at times blocked proceedings, to demand changes in language.[30]

Understanding power

Feminist visions recognize that achieving more democratic forms of decision-making requires a redistribution of power, but also that this in turn requires a comprehensive analysis of where overt and covert power lies and how it is exercised.[1]

[1] The *powercube* concept is a particularly useful tool here. See *Powercube: understanding power for social change*. Undated. Available at: http://www.powercube.net/analyse-power/ (accessed 6 Jun 2016).

Thus, in alternative feminist societies, legislation would promote and protect equality, working towards equalising visible forms of power. The abuse of hidden power, for example through behind-the-scenes corporate lobbying, would also be curbed. The invisible exercise of power through discriminatory social norms that reinforce gendered and other unequal roles would also be challenged.[31] The rebalancing of power would take place not just in public spaces and institutions but also in private spheres, and particularly within the family.[32]

Achieving gender equality and women's human rights requires a fundamental redistribution of power from men to women, and disruption of the means of perpetuating male power, including gender-based violence and control of women's reproduction. It also requires a redistribution of power from multinational corporations to states and citizens; among men and women, where power is unequal on the basis of class, race, sexual orientation or other forms of discrimination; and from Global North to Global South, including from northern INGOs to southern women's rights organisations and movements.

Many feminists also argue that a reconceptualization of power is needed. The traditional concept of power is where power is used to dominate others, and to prevent others from gaining power themselves. The use of this type of power, sometimes referred to as 'power over', perpetuates inequality and injustice. From a feminist perspective a more positive type of power is power *within*, or self-belief situated within political awareness, and power *to*, or the capacity of every person to shape her own life.[33]

Understanding the dynamics of oppression – both overt and internalised – exposes the need to challenge internalised as well as structural barriers and give scope to the full range of human abilities and potential. As feminist and other social theorists have shown, societies ascribe a particular set of abilities to social categories of people along lines of gender, race and class, amongst others. Empowerment must involve undoing negative social constructions, so that people come to see themselves as having the capacity and the right to act and influence decisions.[34]

3. Imagining feminist societies

This section endeavours to paint a picture of the world that the values detailed above might make possible, drawing on themes that emerge time and again in discussions among feminists working towards alternative societies who share the values of equality for all regardless of identity, the centrality of human rights, wellbeing over wealth and participatory democracy. Many of these areas mirror the areas of critical concern in the BPfA, and are long standing goals of feminist movements.[35] These themes are described in more detail below, and achieving change in each one is an end in itself but can also disrupt the perpetuation of unequal power more broadly and therefore herald real change in gendered power relations.

The redistribution of power away from the current status quo is central to feminist societies. For structural change to take place that is sustainable and long term, women must lead in their own empowerment and determine their own priorities. For this reason the process of empowerment is critical to achieving alternative societies.

Fundamental change needs to be understood and achieved at the level of society, not just of individual women and girls – within the institutions and democratic processes of the state, within civil society and within the household. The role of the state is critical in the achievement and maintenance of an imagined feminist society. Mukhia and Kachingwe looks further at the importance of the role of state.

Women and girls have agency

Feminist visions commonly describe a society in which all women and girls have agency, meaning the ability to make decisions about their own lives and act on them to achieve a desired outcome, free of violence, retribution or fear. An increase in agency and autonomy of individual women and girls, however, will not deliver a feminist society alone; also necessary is the dismantling of discriminatory norms and institutions that limit the agency of all women and girls by defining socially accepted behaviour and roles based on sex, age and other aspects of identity such as sexuality, disability, caste or ethnicity.

Creating the enabling conditions in which girls and women can use their voices to participate in decisions that affect them, make free and informed choices about their lives, and have control over resources to act on those choices is closely linked to eliminating violence against women and girls and ensuring their full participation in all aspects of life.[36] In her paper, Moosa looks at the role of women's rights organisations in supporting women's organising.

Women and girls live free from violence

A life free from all violence is one in which all women and girls are safe in their own homes, on the streets and in the workplace; in which they are free from physical, sexual, psychological and economic violence that is used to control them and are therefore able to exercise choice and control over their own lives and affect change in the world around them.

In a feminist society, violence against women and girls (VAWG) is recognised as a violation of women's and girls' human rights. It is no longer taboo or seen as a private matter. It is not socially accepted, and women and girls with disabilities, elderly women, lesbian and transgender women, indigenous women and other marginalized women do not face additional heightened risk.

In such a society, there is no impunity for acts of gender-based violence. State security and justice actors respect the rights of all women and girls, and they have the capacity

to respond to any acts that violate the rights of any individual, based on legislation and policies that protect all women and girls. Women and girls, wherever they live and whoever they are, are able to access services and justice in the event of violence perpetrated against them. Private and public institutions are safe for women and girls and they do not fear violence at the hands of the state.

Care work is shared and valued and its providers have choice and voice

In feminist visions of alternative societies caring is a central value. Instead of being low-status and unrecognised, care work is valued and redistributed as a crucial social and economic good and made visible in social, political and economic policy making. In such a world, the state assumes responsibility for ensuring high-quality care is accessible to all, including making needed improvements in public services.[37] Sufficient investment in infrastructure and domestic technology reduces the time burden and drudgery of care work, while improving the quality of its provision. Women and men share responsibility for care work equally both within the household and the community, and gender and other stereotypes around care giving are removed. Those working in the care sector are adequately paid. All people who perform unpaid or paid care work have greater number of choices and opportunities, and a voice to participate in politics, the workplace and social and cultural life.

Women have equal access to and control over economic resources

Women's equal (with men and each other) access to and control over resources, as well as equal participation and influence in economic decision-making, leads to their economic autonomy and in turn enables empowerment in other aspects of their lives, so facilitating a more feminist society.

Supported by government policies, laws, regulation and public service provision, a feminist society would ensure that there is no gender pay gap or occupational segregation, and working conditions are both safe for women and compatible with their reproductive and caring choices. Women occupy the same roles as men in the same sectors for the same pay. States promote greater equality within the workplace and ensure decent, stable work with a minimum wage, equal pay for work of equal value, and the right to collective bargaining for all.

Women's ownership of assets is equal to that of men, and equal amongst each other, in land and property, savings and credit, rights-based inheritance and finance. This also applies to access to *the commons*, or resources that are held in common across society, including land, knowledge and other resources. Paper X (SOF) discusses related issues.

Women have equal influence at all levels of decision-making

Feminist societies would see women participate equally with men, and with all other women, in decision-making at every level of the public sphere, in the context of a participatory democracy that respects the rights of all people to self-determination and

to voice and influence in determining their own needs. In that sense, women are not just represented but have equal control and influence in all realms of decision-making – in the household, the economy and the political world.

In practice, women's voices carry the same authority and legitimacy as men's and as each other's. Women are seen as effective leaders and are able to exercise alternative styles of leadership without having to conform to male models in order to succeed in leadership roles. Public institutions have inclusive cultures and family-friendly policies, which allow all women and men with caring responsibilities to participate in decision-making. Women's rights organisations thrive with adequate funding and direct access to political space.

Women and girls have equal access to and attainment in education

Supported by government-funded high-quality free public education for all without discrimination, all women and girls have equal access to education at all levels and achieve parity in completion rates. This includes primary, secondary, vocational and university levels of formal education as well as informal learning like volunteer activity, unremunerated work and traditional knowledge. Illiteracy rates are reduced for everyone, with particular emphasis on women facing multiple discriminations.[38] Women and girls receive the training and education they need to be digitally literate and all women and girls have access to information and communications technology (ICT).[39]

Schools and other educational institutions are safe places for girls and women where they experience equality with men and boys, and where the content of their education holds the rights of all as a central tenet and seeks to empower all, regardless of sex or other aspects of identity.

Women and girls have equal control over and access to the media and information and communications technology

The media in a feminist society is a form of democratic expression open to all, which supports women's participation and promotes women's voices and views equally with men's. There are equal numbers of women and men in leadership and decision-making positions in all forms of traditional and new media. The media challenges negative gender stereotypes and promotes norms based on gender equality, calling out violations of women's human rights such as gender-based violence.

Women participate equally in the design, production and control of ICT, and as the creators of content that reflects their experiences and views. ICT is designed to be inclusive to all women and girls in terms of both access and content, and robust safeguards are in place to ensure women's and girls' safety and security when using ICT.

Women and girls have reproductive freedom

In a feminist society all women, including young women and adolescent girls, are able to exercise their reproductive rights to make free and informed choices about their fertility, and about whether and when to have children safely, thus ensuring that they can act on other choices in their lives.

In particular, they will have access to a full range of contraceptive services, including safe abortion and post-abortion care alongside pre- and post-natal care and safe delivery. This is underpinned by state legislation, policies and service provision that promote and protect the reproductive rights of all women and girls, and seek to involve women, especially the most marginalized, in design, implementation and improvement of services.

Women and girls have bodily integrity, free from negative body images and with choice to exercise sexuality and enjoyment of sexual pleasure

Sexual rights will protect all people's capacity to fulfil and express their sexuality, with due regard for the rights of others and within a framework of non-discrimination. This includes freedom of thought and expression in relation to sexuality, sexual orientation and gender identity. In this regard, LGBTI rights are closely intertwined with women's rights and the breaking down of discriminatory gender roles, and essential in a feminist society.

What is more, a feminist society sees the eradication of prescriptive notions of body image and gender presentation, allowing each individual – regardless of gender identity, sexual orientation, race, class or other distinction – to express their identity and move through public spaces without fear of censure or violence. This means confronting previously normalised ideas about femininity and masculinity, and how each of these must be properly expressed, but it also goes beyond this binary to touch on race, class, ability and other areas. In a feminist society, each individual can enact agency, make decisions and access rights without discrimination based on gender presentation, body type, racial prejudice or ability.

Women and girls live free from conflict

Feminist visions emphasize that peace requires that women and girls experience peace in their public *and* private lives, living free from violence, domination and coercion. Peace is a cornerstone of an imagined feminist society. It is a precondition for all people to fulfil their potential, for the enjoyment of human rights and for gender equality.

Women's movements and peace movements, in close collaboration, have emphasized the importance of women's full and equal participation in achieving and maintaining peace and security for all, particularly through consensual, collaborative and participatory decision-making.

4. Women and girls determining their own priorities

This summary of some of the aspirations for feminist societies has been gathered in this paper to prompt debate, and encourage us as well as those not rooted in the feminist movement to take a fresh and challenging look at our work on gender equality. It is intended as a starting point only, giving a sense that things could be different rather than way prescribing the alternative itself. It must not pre-empt the important process of allowing women and girls to determine their own priorities and lead their own development.

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The Gender & Development Network (GADN) brings together expert NGOs, consultants, academics and individuals committed to working on gender, development and women's rights issues. Our vision is of a world where social justice and gender equality prevail and where all women and girls are able to realise their rights free from discrimination. Our goal is to ensure that international development policy and practice promotes gender equality and women's and girls' rights. Our role is to support our members by sharing information and expertise, to undertake and disseminate research, and to provide expert advice and comment on government policies and projects.

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