

FiLmReviEw

Reclaiming the state

A documentary film features women from the global South and their views about the erosion of state power in the globalized neoliberal economy

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The women of the South are worse off today as a result not only of the trade-offs that have been made to further the goals of a globalized economy, but also of the continued erosion of the power of the state. States and governance have been marketised such that the reality for women of the South is that government has become incapable of providing for their basic needs nor of dealing with the exploitation they suffer. This is the thesis of the documentary film *Marketisation of Governance: Critical Feminist Perspectives from the South*.

Produced by the Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN), the film critically examines how trade agreements at the global and regional levels have effectively disenfranchised citizens and demolished the sovereignty of their laws. The film consists in interviews with researchers representing different regions of the

world and powerful images of protest actions against globalization. Superimposed across the screen are images of women surviving armed conflicts, women taking political action, women struggling to obtain basic necessities and the many exploitative working conditions that women workers confront daily. DAWN brings these dilemmas out into the open and comes to the conclusion that the state is under threat. In a speedily globalizing economy, the state is being reorganized to serve market interests, as evidenced by the increasing influence of international financial and trade institutions such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and World Trade Organization. Globalization is eroding the power of the state under the guise of free-market “democracy” and widening the gap between the social classes.

The film asserts that governments are forced by international financial institutions to restructure themselves and to function as private companies. For example, though globalization provided women with greater access to jobs, these jobs are casual and informal requiring crude labor in substandard and horrendous working environments. Local production and small enterprises are eliminated in favor of big corporations that produce in the name of "efficiency."

The challenge for the women's movement is how to reclaim the state, redefine the government's agenda and recast power. As the film talks of the world of women organizing for social change, among its most persuasive voices are those of feminists who have been actively engaged in the struggle of women to "reclaim governance." For these women, the whole terrain remains a shifting site of struggle and is therefore open to change.

With feminist politics and economics as its tool and language in analyzing current issues, *Marketisation of Governance* is able to present a comprehensive and up-to-date report on where women stand today in terms of their role in society and their struggles.

On the whole, *Marketisation of Governance* is convincing and fresh, especially to the uninitiated. Those who want to better understand the shifting institutional contexts and the compacts emerging from globalization processes could use the film to grasp the basics of feminist analysis on important issues we are grappling with today.

The film, produced for DAWN by WAYANG of Malaysia, serves as a companion to the book *Political Restructuring and Social Transformation* written by DAWN's Research Coordinator Vivienne Taylor from research papers, consultations, and debates ongoing since 1998. The book was launched in Geneva in 2000 at the WSSD Plus Five Conference simultaneous with the launching of the United Nations' Global Compact.

All in all, the film serves as a prompt to social movements and feminists to think about how to work together to strengthen resistance against corporate-led globalization and to reclaim the state, not only for women but for the rest of the world's marginalized peoples. ■

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