



## PRESS RELEASE

### Contacts:

Ms Catherina Hinz  
Director - Communications and Advocacy  
Deutsche Stiftung Weltbevölkerung  
(DSW)  
(Contact for German journalists)  
Email: [catherina.hinz@dsw-hannover.de](mailto:catherina.hinz@dsw-hannover.de)  
Fon: +49 511 943 7320 | Cell: +49 162  
471 5969

Ms Jennifer Woodside  
Head of Advocacy & Communications  
International Planned Parenthood  
Federation (IPPF)  
(Contact for European journalists)  
Email: [jwoodside@ippf.org](mailto:jwoodside@ippf.org)  
Fon: +44 20 793 982 27

### For immediate release

Ms Kathy Bonk  
Executive Director  
Communications Consortium Media  
Center (CCMC)  
(Contact for US journalists)  
Email: [kbonk@ccmc.org](mailto:kbonk@ccmc.org)  
Fon: +1 202 326 6767 | Cell: +1 202 716  
8959

## Indian Film Star, Director Lives Her Commitment to Women

**BERLIN, September 2** — Nandita Das was a beautiful child of wealth and privilege in India, but seeing a very different reality for other women changed her life – and the view of the world she now wants the rest of us to see.

The award-winning Indian film actor and independent filmmaker, a featured speaker at the Non-Governmental Forum on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Development meeting here this week, works to demonstrate “the very layered and complex lives of women” in both the movie roles she chooses and the films she directs.

“My family was liberal and I was not treated very differently from my brothers,” she said in an interview before her speech. In graduate studies in social work among Indian village women, however, “I saw the stark contradictions between my life and the lives of the women I was working with. That exposure to reality has affected my choices ever since.”

The Forum has drawn some 400 non-governmental organization representatives from 131 countries here to assess 15 years of progress since the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development rewrote the global dialogue on those issues, placing investment in women at the center of cost-effective ways to slow population growth and promote sustainable development.

Das, 39, has made many unconventional choices on her road to stardom. She lives in New Delhi rather than the Indian “Bollywood” filmmaking capital of Mumbai, and is best known on the subcontinent not for popular song-and-dance epics but for her dramatic performances in *Fire* (1996), *Earth* (1998), *Bawander* (2000) and *Aamaar Bhuvan* (2002).

Her roles have often concerned women’s lack of choice in a society where arranged marriages are the norm, and their search for justice in response to violence. “It is such an unequal society, broadly patriarchal,” she said, “but there are so many extraordinarily strong women.”

Das made her much-applauded directorial debut in 2008 with *Firaaq*, a wrenching tale of the aftermath of the 2002 Gujarat carnage on five different relationships. The word means both “separation” – in this case among Hindus and Muslims and individuals – and “quest,” in this case for peace and reconciliation.

“There is no overt violence in the film, but you can feel its presence all around you,” she said. “The women in it are strong, focused on solutions and on dealing with the situation rather than focusing on the violence.”

Das is likely to win even broader global fame when she stars next year in the film version of Salman Rushdie’s best-selling novel *Midnight’s Children*. It revolves around another theme of separation, the 1948 split of Bangladesh from India.

Das said she was skeptical for many years on the value of international conferences like the *Global Partners in Action* gathering, but now sees their value in forging partnerships, reminding governments to keep their promises to women, and in letting women’s voices be heard by a large audience.

Putting women’s experience into common language is critical for making it part of the mainstream political discussion, she said, and that is her goal now as a director and an actor.

“Once you get the opportunity to tell your own story in your own way, you don’t want to have others tell it,” she said. “Too many women don’t have the right platform to be able to tell their own stories.”

To reach Nandita Das during the Forum: [contact@nanditadas.com](mailto:contact@nanditadas.com)