

**WORLD SOCIAL FORUM MUMBAI:
THE WORLD'S SECOND SUPERPOWER?**

NGO & CIVIL SOCIETY PERSPECTIVES

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SUMMARY

United by the slogan, “Another World is Possible”, an estimated 100 000 people from around the world gathered for the fourth World Social Forum in Mumbai, India. The annual six-day event, involving hundreds of conferences, workshops, seminars, and cultural events has become a globally significant gathering of activists, NGOs, and social movements that some have termed, “the world’s second superpower”.

Designed as an open space for discussing alternatives, exchanging experiences, and strengthening alliances, the WSF hosts a diversity of perspectives. Over the course of the week, this year’s participants outlined alternative ideologies and approaches to “neo-liberal economic policies and capitalist-led globalisation”, with discussion topics ranging from the rights of garment workers, to the privatisation of water, American foreign policy, human rights issues, international trade agreements, the environment, and children’s rights, among many others.

The fourth meeting of the World Social Forum, however, also marks a distinct shift in the WSF movement: this was the first year the event took place outside of Brazil, the birthplace of the WSF. The move from Porto Alegre to Mumbai was designed to highlight Asian issues and provide local perspectives on topics such as Indian-Pakistan relations, the caste system, child labour, patriarchy, and religious fundamentalism that have been typically overshadowed at the predominantly Latin American and European-dominated World Social Forums of the past.

Although many feel that this year’s WSF in India was an overwhelming success and evidence of the true international character of the Forum, others have a more critical view, pointing to certain weaknesses and the emergence of internal divisions within the Forum. Though differences of opinion are not new to the WSF, this year’s debate over the inclusion of political parties and other actors—such as the private sector and armed militant groups—was particularly contentious. While some claim that broad participation is essential for the implementation of alternative policies, others claim that the Forum must maintain its ‘independence’ in order to preserve its legitimacy. With the emergence of the anti-WSF group, Mumbai Resistance or MR 2004, hosting its own “anti-imperialist” forum in Mumbai, the debate is clearly a timely one.

In addition to debates over inclusion versus exclusion, a debate over the outcomes of the forum also re-emerged. As the WSF enters its fourth year, some are pushing for action beyond discussion and for more concrete outcomes while others claim that the WSF should not be concerned with outcomes, but rather it should continue to serve as a platform for discussion of alternatives and for building solidarity on issues.

With this year’s Forum attracting so many participants, some critics claim that the Forum has reached a critical cross-roads and must address its weakness before it risks becoming unmanageable. As the World Social Forum struggles to find its way forward and addresses its growing pains, many are watching the future of this “superpower” with great interest.

INTRODUCTION

The World Social Forum Movement

The World Social Forum emerged from the post-Seattle protests as a collaborative effort of several NGOs and social activists. Founding members included Bernard Cassen, head of the French NGO ‘ATTAC’ (the Association for Taxation of Financial Transactions for the Aid of Citizens), Oded Grajew, head of a Brazilian employer’s organisation, and Francisco (Chico) Whitaker, head of an association of Brazilian NGOs. With the aim of creating a “world civil society event”, the group secured the support of the municipal and state governments of Porto Alegre and Rio Grande do Sul and the ruling Brazilian Workers’ Party (PT) and the World Social Forum was born.

Originally considered as a counterpoint to the World Economic Forum, the annual meeting of world’s political and corporate powers in Davos, Switzerland, the World Social Forum (WSF) was created to provide an open platform to discuss strategies of resistance to what was considered the WEF model of ‘economic and corporate’ globalisation.

According to its Charter of Principles, the WSF is “not an organisation, nor a united front platform, but an open meeting place for reflective thinking, democratic debate of ideas, formulation of proposals, free exchange of thoughts and inter-linking for effective action by groups and movements that are opposed to neo-liberalism and to domination of the world by capital and any form of imperialism, and are committed to building a planetary society directed towards fruitful relationships among humankind and between it and the Earth”¹.

The first World Social Forum, held in Porto Alegre in 2001, attracted 20 000 participants, mainly Brazilians, with some representation from Europe. The second Forum, held in 2002, expanded to nearly 50 000 participants, again mainly from Brazil and Europe. However, by the third Forum in 2003, the numbers doubled—nearly 100 000 people from around the world attended, marking a significant increase in numbers as well as in diversity of participants. This year’s Forum, the fourth WSF, again attracted some 100 000 participants, this time including mostly Asians due to the Forum’s location in Mumbai.

The call ‘Another World is Possible’, the slogan of the WSF, has now echoed around the world, spawning regional and thematic forums in many countries. As the social forum movement continues to grow in size and geographical representation, it is increasingly recognised by many as one of the most significant civil and political initiatives of the past several decades.

¹ Please see Appendix A, “WSF Charter of Principles”.

WSF Mumbai

Porto Alegre, Brazil was seen as a natural location for the first, second, and third World Social Fora. In addition to Brazil's supportive, pro-Left government, organisers were also attracted by its rich diversity of grassroots organisations and the highly visible impacts of neo-liberal policies on shantytowns, factories, and the poor.

Following the third WSF, organisers recognised that it was time to hold the WSF in another country. Founding organiser Chico Whitaker explained, "We understood that we cannot do this alone, we have to repeat the experience all over the world and relate all of our different experiences." As an emerging superpower with a diversity of social movements and grassroots organisations of its own and in part due to its status as a G3 nation (alongside Brazil and South Africa), organisers suggested that the Forum move to India.

Unlike Porto Alegre, which is known worldwide as a socially progressive city, Mumbai was selected for many of the opposite reasons. Described by many as a "city of ugly contrasts between the filthy rich and the wretchedly poor", India's financial capital is seen as "a concentrated expression of India's many contradictions"—a city which generates more than one quarter of the country's revenue but also houses the largest slums in Asia.

Despite the Indian government's promotional advertising campaign 'India Shining', Indian journalist Praful Bidwai claims that globalisation has resulted in "warped and uneven development, vicious and growing inequalities, growing crime and insecurity, the collapse of public services and the rule of law, massive corruption, and a hollow democracy". However, despite the challenges, WSF organisers felt it was important to confront these paradoxes directly by holding the Forum in Mumbai.

WSF Funding

The majority of funds for the WSF, approximately sixty percent of the total budget, comes from overseas organisations. These include:

- Action Aid, UK
- Alternatives, Canada
- Attac Norge Solidarites, Norway
- Comite Catholique Contre la Faim et pour le developpement (CCFD), France
- Christian Aid, UK
- Development and Peace, Canada
- Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst (EED), Germany
- Funders Network on Trade and Globalisation (FNTG), USA
- Heinrich Boll Foundation, Germany
- Humanist Institute for Cooperation with Developing Countries (HIVOS), the Netherlands
- Inter Church Organisation for Development and Cooperation (ICCO), the Netherlands
- Oxfam International
- Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), Sweden
- Solidago Foundation, USA
- Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation (SDC), Switzerland
- Tides Foundation, USA
- World Council of Churches, Switzerland

The remainder is provided by the India General Council, comprised of some 200 Indian organisations. The total budget for the WSF is estimated at \$1.8 million US.

In the past, the WSF has also accepted funds from other organisations, such as the Ford Foundation. However, due to growing criticism over the Ford Foundations' "imperialist ties", organisers made a conscious decision to accept no money from any source affiliated with multinational corporations. Minar Pimple, a volunteer in charge of WSF finances, explained: "Our decision to accept donations from any agency was taken after long deliberation and consensus among organising committee members. None of the donors here are MNC-funded. In the case of the Ford Foundation, although they have nothing to do with the Ford Motor Company, we have chosen not to receive funds from them."

Despite the decision, however, some critics continue to claim that the WSF is funded by "imperialist sources". People Against Imperialism, an umbrella organisation of Indian groups involved in organising Mumbai Resistance 2004, claim that multinational corporations continue to funnel money for the WSF through other agencies. Anti-WSF activist Pravin Nadkar argues that accepting funds from such sources only serves to "blunt the world struggle against imperialism by co-opting events such as the WSF".

WSF Mumbai Aims

In an attempt to revitalise and broaden the WSF's agenda as well as to make the WSF more inclusive and representative of Asian issues, organisers shifted their anti-globalisation to include a wider, yet also more localised, perspective. As such, this year's forum focussed on the following themes:

- Imperialist globalisation
- Militarism and peace
- Communalism, religious sectarianism, and fundamentalism
- Racism and casteism
- Labour and the world of work
- Exclusions and discrimination
- Patriarchy

Indian trade unionist and member of the India Organising Committee for the WSF Gautam Mody summarised this year's emphasis: "Our vision is to create a world where there is no war, there is equality of gender, there is no casteism or religious fundamentalism, and one that is economically sustainable."

WSF Programme

The WSF was organised to provide space for self-organised activities, hosted by the participating groups themselves, as well as WSF-organised activities. As in the past, WSF 2004 included diverse forms of interaction: plenary sessions, conferences, panels, round tables, seminars, workshops, cultural events, solidarity meetings, rallies, and marches. The cultural programme included theatre, films, and street plays.

The following section gives a brief overview of some of the main WSF-organised events. For further details on the more than 200 workshops and smaller events held daily, the programme—including events organised by other organisations—can be accessed on the WSF website: <<http://www.wsfindia.org/event2004/>>.

WSF Conferences:

Conference Title	Speakers
Food Sovereignty and Natural Resources	Devinder Sharma (India), Rafael Alegria (Honduras), Medha Patkar (India), Brinda Karat (India), Roger Moody (UK), Maude Barlow (Canada), Jose Bové (France), Dit-Dit Pelegrina (Philippines), Jean Dreze (India), Itevina Massioli (Brazil), Mamadou Sissokhol (Senegal)
Militarism, War, and Peace	Nguyen Binh (Vietnam), Abdul Amir al Rekaby (Iraq), Dennis Brutus (South Africa), Chandra Muzaffar (Malaysia), Keun Soo Hong (South Korea), Beverley Keene (Argentina)
Media, Culture, and Knowledge	N. Ram (India), Nikhil Wagle (India), Bernard Cassen (France), Namvar Singh (India), Augusto Boal (Brazil), Richard Stallman (USA), Aminata Traore (Mali), Fernando Martinez Heredia (Cuba)
Wars Against Women, Women Against Wars	Arundhati Roy (India), Nawal el Saddawi (Egypt), Piedad Cordoba (Colombia), Saher Saba (Afghanistan), Irene Khan (Bangladesh)
Globalisation: Economic and Social Security	B.L. Mungekar (India), Prabhat Patnaik (India), Joseph Stiglitz (USA), Samir Amin (Egypt), Cecilia Lopez (Colombia), Laura Tavares (Brazil), Trevor Ngwane (South Africa), Antonio Tujan (Philippines), Javier Correa (Colombia), Benedict Martinez (Mexico)
Discrimination and Oppression	Bhagwan Das (India), Blanca Chancoso (Ecuador), Durga Sob (Nepal), Martin Macwan (India), Eugenia Poma (Bolivia), Victor Dike (Nigeria), Tagawa Masato (Japan)
Work and the World of Labour	Guy Rider (UK), Alexander Zharikov (Russia), Prabhat Patnaik (India), Juan Somovia (Chile), Indira Jaisingh (India)
Religious, Ethnic, and Linguistic Exclusion and Oppression	Prabhash Joshi (India), Teesta Setalvad (India), Pervez Hoodboy (Pakistan), Amarjeet Kaur (India), Tanika Sarkar (India), Balji Bhai Patel (India)

WSF Panels:

Panel Title	Speakers
Globalisation, Global Governance, and the Nation State	Aijaz Ahmed (India), Muchkund Dubey (India), Anand Kumar (India), Juan Somovia (Chile), Federico Mayor (Spain), Mary Robinson (Ireland), Bas de Gaay Fortman (Netherlands), Elisabeth Gauthier (France)
The World Trade Organisation	S.P. Shukla (India), Walden Bello (Philippines), Paul Nicholson (Spain), Vandana Shiva (India), Yash Tandon (Uganda), Rafael Freire Neto (Brazil), Dot Keet (Zimbabwe)
Political Parties and Social Movements	David Choquehuanca (Bolivia), Fausto Bertinotti (Italy), Luis Ayala (Chile), Joao Vaccari Neto (Brazil), Prakash Karat (India), Aruna Roy (India), Alejandro Bendana (Nicaragua), Grazia Francescato (Italy), Suniti (India), Cesar Alvarez (Brazil)
Globalisation and its Alternatives	Muto Ichio (Japan), Satu Hassi (Finland), D. Raja (India), Cesar Benjamin (Brazil), Walden Bello (Philippines), Wolfgang Sachs (Germany), Michael Albert (USA), George Monbiot (UK)
Neo-Liberalism, War, and the Significance of the WSF	Chico Whitaker (Brazil), Boaventura Sousa Santos (Portugal), Lidy Nacpil (Philippines), Christophe Aguiton (France), Sohi Jeon (South Korea), Simon Boshielo (South Africa), Michel Warschawski (Israel), Roberto Savio (Uruguay), Dionicio Nunez (Bolivia)

WSF Participants and Speakers

It is estimated that, of the 100 000 participants in attendance at the fourth WSF in Mumbai, 78 000 were from India and the remaining 22 000 from overseas. Participants represented some 2 500 NGOs and civil society organisations from more than 130 countries. Though it is impossible to capture the full spectrum of diversity present at the WSF in words, participants included labour leaders, social movements, aid workers, left-leaning politicians, NGOs, women's rights activists, farmers, Indian tribals and Dalits, Tibetan monks, sweatshop workers, alternative media journalists, economists, social theorists, poets, authors, actors, students, street children, the homeless, peace activists, Indigenous Peoples, and environmentalists, among many, many others.²

However, despite the evident diversity, a study conducted by WSF organisers following the third WSF points to several “deficits”. Data collected for the 2003 “Profile of Participants” suggests that the WSF suffers from a “deficit of globality” in its struggle against neo-liberal globalisation.

More specifically, the study points to a “geographical deficit”, claiming that though it is difficult to gather a significant representation of civil society networks and movements around the world, future fora need to address this problem—either through moving the location of the WSF or by holding smaller regional and local fora. In part, the move to India was done in recognition of an Asian participant deficit, but the study claims that little has been done to address Africa, Eastern Europe, and the Caribbean and that the WSF “lacks ways of lending higher visibility to peoples and cultures that are practically invisible today due to the overwhelming homogenisation of dominant globalisation”.

Another deficit identified by the profile is socio-economic in nature. The profile states: “Where are the people who live in slums, the popular segments of the big cities, the Indigenous People, and the peasants? The profile of the educational level of the participants shows clearly that we are not an expression of these majorities that have no or little voice. And what about the young public? For sure, there are large contingents among the participants, but have we really found the way to include them just by organising youth camps?”

Clearly, the WSF is attempting to address these deficits, in part by changing location for the WSF 2004. However, many of the problems identified at WSF 2003, in particular, the marginalisation and exclusion of the less-educated and poor from full participation in the Forum, have yet to be resolved.

² Please see Appendix B, “Partial List of Speakers”.

WSF: THEMES

The following section outlines some of the main issues under discussion at the WSF and provides an idea of the range of organisations involved and their perspectives. This discussion is intended to provide a general overview of *some* of the perspectives of *some* of the organisations present and is, by no means, intended to serve as an exhaustive summary of the WSF 2004.

Media

In one of the WSF-organised conferences, “Media, Culture and Knowledge”, roughly two thousand participants gathered to discuss the importance of democratic and pluralistic media coverage. Roberto Savio, Secretary General of Media Watch, a global media watchdog, warned of the dangers of increasing media concentration in the hands of “media tycoons”. Savio claimed, “The situation of the media has dramatically worsened for people who believe that media should be about democratic pluralism.” Pointing to the coverage of the Iraq war, Indian media activist N. Ram, argued this was a perfect example of the “surrender of independence, truth-telling, and any commitment to justice”. In conclusion, Savio emphasised the importance of organisations like his own, created at WSF 2002, to “provide critical analysis of the mass media and to fight for ethical journalism”.

In another session, “The Inter-linkages of Globalised Media and ICT Systems to Economic Globalisation, Militarism, and Fundamentalism”, ISIS Manila examined the negative impacts of “globalised and corporatised media”. Emphasising the need for increased awareness among information and communications technology activists as a form of resistance, ISIS also pushed for a “radicalisation” of the current information technology discourse.

Technology

In a workshop on technology issues, Indian experts explained how, despite the rapid expansion of the Indian high-tech market, the advancement is being made at the expense of basic needs. Though the statistics seem to point to a ‘technological boom’, they argued, less than five in one hundred Indians have access to a basic land line.

Additionally, they claim that India’s high-tech industry is producing thousands of “cyber slaves”—low-wage, sweatshop workers at the lowest end of the value-chain. The workshop also described how “call centres” have trapped thousands of skilled young people in the “most wretched and undignified jobs of all” where employees work 12 to 14 hour shifts for low wages, with little chance for career improvement.

Small Arms Control

In a joint campaign, Oxfam International, Amnesty International India, and the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA) pushed for greater control of small arms. As part of their “Million Faces” petition, the organisations collected ‘photograph signatures’ supporting an international treaty on small arms. Part of the campaign included an elephant draped in banners, an attraction which caught the attention of many participants. Former High Commissioner for Human Rights and Irish President Mary Robinson supported the campaign, claiming that small arms are the “weapons of mass destruction”. Robinson stated, “It is also a shocking problem for women, who are raped at the end of a gun. I hope this campaign on small arms will become an early example in this century in the same spirit as the Landmine Convention.”

Corporate Accountability

As part of a larger discussion on corporate crime, “Challenging Corporate Crime in a Globalised Economy”, the International Campaign for Justice in Bhopal emphasised the need for corporate accountability. A series of testimonials on the impacts of corporate crime at the community level were heard from victims, including the Dow Chemical accident in Bhopal, the Unocal incident in Burma, the draining of groundwater resources by Coca Cola in the Indian state of Kerala, the use of Agent Orange in Vietnam, and dioxin pollution in Michigan by Dow Chemical. The event was organised with support from Bhopal Gas Affected Women Stationery Workers’ Association, Earthrights International, Amnesty International, and Greenpeace International.

Tibet

A large delegation of Tibetans, present for the first time at a WSF, called for the release of political prisoners and the end of Chinese occupation. During the WSF, large groups gave out leaflets, held candlelight vigils, and circulated petitions calling for support to “Make Tibet a Zone of Peace”. Passang Dolma of the Tibetan Women’s Association, said, “We believe that this appeal is extremely relevant for the WSF because achieving a zone of peace and non-violence in Tibet should be the struggle of the entire world.”

Other activities and exhibits included a sand mandala for world peace, a photo exhibition, cultural performances by Tibetan children, and a seminar on human rights in the region. “The event on human rights will inform the WSF about the systematic violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms in Tibet”, said Norzin Dolma of the Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD).

Many of the Tibetan participants at the WSF were pleased at the attention their campaign received. “It has been encouraging for us that many people have come to our stalls to express their support, not only through signatures, but also through words,” one participant said.

Food and Agriculture

On the topics of food and agriculture, numerous workshops and solidarity meetings were held. In one session, entitled “Food Security, Livelihoods, and Human Rights”, hosted by the South Asia Alliance for Poverty Eradication (SAAPE), the South Asia Peasant Coalition (SAPC), Jubilee South, the Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Ecology, and FIAN India, participants discussed alternative methods for regaining control over food sources.

Highlights of other food and agriculture sessions included Jose Bové’s call for a global boycott of firms producing packaged food and beverages. Bové also sought radical changes to the proposed agriculture agreement in the WTO, arguing that the WTO’s policies are “threatening our future”. “Seeds are being patented and controlled by big industries. This means farmers cannot use their own seeds and they will be out of work. Patenting of seeds has to stop,” he said.

Vandana Shiva, a well-known Indian seed activist also called for resistance to the corporate control of food. “The campaign against globalisation, free trade, and big business has only just begun. The struggle between people and capital is now an epic struggle between life and death.”

Devinder Sharma, another well-known food activist, pushed for resistance to genetically-modified foods, arguing that the industry is using false claims to promote its products. “The slogan of GM food as the means to eliminate hunger and malnutrition is being spearheaded by USAID only just to benefit the multinational companies. Unfortunately, what is being conveniently overlooked is the fact that hunger and malnutrition primarily exist not due to lack of production but due to access to food and its proper distribution. The paradox of plenty and surplus at a time when millions starve is a valid pointer to flawed policies.”

Echoing these sentiments, Via Campesina, the international peasants network, called for the end of multinational involvement in staple crop gene modification. In particular, Via Campesina voiced its opposition to US-based multinationals Monsanto and Cargill and their control of the rice crop. Via Campesina Director Rafael Alegria argued, “We want the traditional knowledge of peasants and Indigenous Peoples to be recognised and respected as they are the ones who historically produced the seeds.” Together with members of the Landless Worker’s Movement (MST) in Brazil, Via Campesina asserted: “Food is not merchandise, but a fundamental right of human beings. It is first necessary to eat. After that, food can be sold.”

Housing and Homelessness

In a workshop entitled “Searching for Survival with Dignity on City Streets”, ActionAid India described how “unjust globalisation and unchecked liberalisation has aggravated the plight of homeless persons and the magnitude of the problem”. Representatives of the Kibera slum, near Nairobi, discussed the need to maintain dignity while living in harsh conditions. Josiah Omotto, Director of Maji na Ufanisi, a Kenyan NGO, supported this: “We are going to celebrate those living in slum areas as heroes and heroines who have remained strong despite difficult conditions.” At the same time, however, Omotto pushed for improved city management policies and for politicians to take the issue of poverty seriously.

Miloon Kothari, UN Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing, reiterated the need to recognise the rights of the homeless. “The homeless are the most marginalised and vulnerable of the urban poor but have remained invisible to everyone, including planners, policy makers, and people”. As a result, the workshop focussed on various strategies to improve the situation, including lobbying for pro-poor housing and shelter policies; launching legal interventions such as petitions to challenge the closure of night shelters; public litigation on the burial of deceased homeless persons; and further research on anti-homeless laws.

P.K. Das, an Indian housing activist, expressed the importance of meetings such as the WSF in the campaign for better housing. “When a number of organisations worldwide come together on land or housing rights issues, it puts pressure on the government. A network of more than 20 organisations in India working on housing rights has been formed. It is a great opportunity for them to become part of a larger political movement.”

However, many housing activists felt that the WSF needed to take concrete action on the issue of homelessness, arguing that the WSF’s “talking approach” was inadequate and only “preaching to the converted”. One activist argued that it would be better to spend all of the money collected for the WSF on building a settlement for the squatters who normally live at the Nesco grounds, the site of this year’s WSF.

Citing statistics from the UN report “The Challenge of Slums: Global Report on Human Settlements 2003” that one in six people around the world are currently thought to be living in slum conditions, Mike Arunga from Shelter Forum East Africa, also called for concrete actions. “Governments have forgotten that shelter is a basic human right. The WSF must not be just another talk show, but must take the shelter issue seriously. It must lobby governments to consider sustainable incomes for slum dwellers.”

The debate on housing and homeless issues also brought forth the issue of government participation in the WSF. One participant noted that, without support and action from the government, no amount of discussion will solve the problem. She said, “It is the governments that make decisions. If they are not represented [at the WSF], nothing much can be implemented, even if the meeting comes out with a million recommendations.”

Health

Though health issues did not play a major role at the WSF itself, the Third International Health Forum for the Defence of People's Health was held in Mumbai as a run-up to the WSF. Organised by the People's Health Movement, the forum focussed on the impact of war and neo-liberal economic policies on public health and included testimonies from those faced by war in Palestine, Africa, Afghanistan, India, and Ecuador.

HIV/AIDS

Much as health issues played a minor role at the Forum, many claimed that there was a “notable absence” of HIV and AIDS-centred workshops, and complained that no free condoms were handed out—a common practice at such international meetings. Some activists claimed that this was because organisers viewed the issue as an “African problem”.

Agreeing with the absence of HIV/AIDS workshops, Minar Pimple, WSF Mumbai organiser sympathised, “If the Forum shifts to Africa, I guess one of the issues they will want to discuss is HIV/AIDS. Not many civil society or social movements from this region are taking this as a major issue”.

However, some activists were angry that AIDS was not given its “due profile”. Leonard Okello of the Support for International Partnership Against AIDS in Africa said, “We needed more space to discuss HIV/AIDS. Asia is in a state of denial. They are sitting on a time bomb which, upon explosion, will affect us all.”

Commenting on the little treatment the issue received, mostly in sessions organised by ActionAid Africa, Noerine Kaleeba of UNAIDS expressed disappointment that HIV/AIDS is still framed as a “health issue”. “For a forum like this where people's voices and experiences are meant to have an impact on international policy, it is sad that HIV/AIDS has been reduced to a health problem.”

Tourism

This year's Inter-Continental Dialogue on Tourism marked the first ever panel on the issue at any WSF. The dialogue, which included activists from all continents, aimed to generate awareness about “the impacts of one of the world's largest industries on communities and resources in its relentless march for profits”. Representatives from various countries shared their experiences in their struggle to democratise and regulate the tourism industry. “Social auditing” was identified as a useful tool in meeting these objectives.

The event was hosted by Tourism Concern; the Women's League of Burma; Kalpavrisht, an Indian watchdog organisation; the Association for the Defence of the Kuelap, a Peruvian NGO; the National Campaign for Dalit Human Rights; the World Dignity Forum; the International Gender and Trade Network; EQUATIONS India; the Ecumenical Coalition on Tourism (ECOT); EED-Tourism Watch Germany; and Arbeitskreis Tourismus und Entwicklung (AKTE), Switzerland.

Women

The role of women in 'making another world possible' was emphasised in various sessions. In the workshop entitled "Diverse Alternatives for Global Changes", Canadian representative of the World March of Women Dianne Matte explained that women are essential agents in achieving another world, but that their needs must first be addressed. "Reality is that out of the poorest of the world, seventy percent are women. If you do not address specifically the complete reality of women's lives, you are not changing anything. With increasing poverty, women are also being targeted through sex trafficking. And, if you think of the rise of fundamentalism, women are targeted by right wing organisations too".

Nepalese feminist activists Laxmi Pokharel and Nirmala Barala also emphasised the plight of women in Nepal, pointing to the more than 80 000 girls who are smuggled out of the country, destined for brothels and arranged marriages.

In the workshop "The Struggle Against the Trafficking of Women and Children: The Globalisation of Gender Insecurity", participants focussed specifically on the issue of human trafficking. The International Movement Against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism hosted the event, aiming to increase awareness of the links between gender insecurity and trafficking.

Other events focussed on the gender-specific impacts of institutions such as the WTO and the IMF. The International Gender and Trade Network (IGTN) examined how universal goods such as water and air are rapidly being privatised and how trade agreements such as the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) affects women in particular.

Another session looked at the myths surrounding micro-credit. Though often promoted as a "silver bullet" for empowering women, this session was dedicated to unravelling some of these myths and exploring the negative impacts of micro-credit. Speakers discussed how micro-credit decision-making is frequently dominated by men; how pressure is placed upon women as the guarantors of the loans; how micro-credit adds to the time constraints faced by many women; and how micro-credit is an inadequate mechanism for solving many women's problems. Participants called for more access to decision-making and for participation at the policy level instead of more micro-credit.

Trade

In light of India's key role in the collapse of the WTO Ministerial trade talks last September in Cancun, many participants felt that this year's WSF was an ideal platform to build on the momentum. Attributing the collapse in Cancun to solidarity actions organised during last year's WSF, Jeremy Corbin, a British Labour MP, commented, "I hope this forum brings about the same kind of pressure on the next round."

Regarding the need for a global trade activist movement, Martin Gordon from Christian Aid agreed that it was time to "tip the balance of international trade rules in favour of the poorest" by building a trade campaign that focuses on practical campaign actions.

The Transnational Institute (TNI), Focus on the Global South, RMAALC Mexico, SAAPE Asia, and the Alternative Information and Development Centre took this idea further, calling for the formation of Southern-based regional trade blocs. According to these organisations, this would provide the foundation for a more multilateral and pluralistic world order and could promote a more 'people-centred' development strategy.

Trade activist Walden Bello also supported the notion of South-South cooperation, but focused on the G20 nations as a potential "alternative power centre". Bello explained, "The G20 derailed the Cancun ministerial and this alone demonstrates its importance and power, but in order to accomplish something in the long-term, we must keep pressure on the G20 to expand their scope beyond the WTO".

Member organisations of the international Trade Justice Movement held workshops on how to further internationalise the movement. Organisers included Christian Aid, ActionAid, Focus on the Global South, and the Hemispheric Social Alliance.

Oxfam also focussed on fair trade issues as part of its global "Make Trade Fair" and "Big Noise" campaigns. During the WSF, Oxfam visited the Dharavi slum to announce the launch of the new Fair Trade Organisation mark, the first global mark for organisations working on fair trade. Oxfam announced that there are already 130 organisations registered to use the new mark. The event was celebrated with a brass band, an African dance troupe, and local Indian artists.

Back at the WSF grounds, fair trade NGOs hosted the "Fair Trade Workshop", a multi-faceted discussion of fair trade issues that sought to identify the links between fair trade and other issues, including food sovereignty, local development, and trade negotiations.

Other sessions examined how international trade has led to an explosion of sweatshop labour. Sweatshop Watch convened a session with garment workers, union representatives, lawyers and trade activists to discuss the inhuman conditions of garment workers around the world and to identify opportunities for action. Fair trade labels, such as Dignity Return, a Thai project initiated by the Solidarity Group, were promoted as well as a campaign against Walmart, the largest retailer and second largest corporation in the world.

Institutional Reform

One commonly recurring theme in many workshops was that of institutional reform, with particular attention paid to the WTO, the IMF, and the World Bank. Former World Bank Director Joseph Stiglitz spoke on the issue, criticising institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF for having policies that “cater to a single set of objectives” and for triggering instability by imposing structural adjustment programmes on developing countries.

Stiglitz also pointed out the negative impacts of privatisation, a practice encouraged by many of the international financial institutions. He warned that the attempts by the IMF to “reform social security” really translate into the privatisation of services. He argues that this serves to erode the “already meagre protective measures that workers have” and “paves the way for transnational corporations”. In conclusion, Stiglitz called for the protection of social benefits and stressed that they should remain at the centre of democratic debate in each country.

Other activists, such as South African activist Dennis Brutus and British author George Monbiot took a strong position on the issue, claiming that institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank are “no longer necessary”. In place of the IMF, Monbiot suggested the creation of a new “global clearing house”. He also argued that, if current institutions fail to meet the needs of indebted nations, these nations should threaten to default on their loans.

In session after session, participants and speakers criticised the World Bank and the IMF, pointing to a wide range of issues. The Bretton Woods Project and ActionAid accused the institutions of developing a tight relationship with other organisations such as the WTO in order to cement their control over global finance. Speakers in other sessions focussed on the role of the World Bank in the privatisation of the mining and water sectors. Laura Tavares, a Brazilian participant, summed up her dislike for the institutions: “The IMF and the WB create stability for finances, not for people.” To mark the 60th anniversary of the institutions, activists planned for a global day of action. The protest is set to coincide with the institutions’ spring meeting which will take place April 22nd-25th.

In one workshop, the NGO Forum on the Asian Development Bank tackled the role of that particular institution in “creating poverty” in Asia. Another session, hosted by the Bank Information Centre, targeted the World Bank. In a joint session, hosted by 50 Years is Enough, EcoNews Africa, and the Forum for African Alternatives, the organisations called for the “retirement” of the World Bank and the IMF and planned coordinated days of action on specific themes, including water, dams, debt, HIV/AIDS, etc.

Some of the more moderate responses to the institutional question focussed on necessary reforms. Juan Somavia, Director General of the ILO, pressed for more transparent decision-making. “Changes should be adopted within the international bodies to make their decisions more transparent,” he claimed.

Eveline Herfkens, former Dutch Minister of Development Cooperation, emphasised the role of civil society in achieving greater institutional accountability. She argued that, in order to improve global governance, what is needed is greater civil society control over international bodies. “These institutions are not independent. They are ours. They are made up of our governments and the people sent by our government to work in the multilateral institutions and should be held accountable to us.”

The Transnational Institute (TNI) emphasised democratisation as a powerful force for institutional reform. In “Deepening Democracy: From the Local to the Global”, speakers examined the weaknesses of electoral democracy and discussed alternatives for new, effective, and sustainable kinds of democracy. Speakers included Hilary Wainright, TNI and Editor of Red Pepper; Dot Keet, TNI and AIDC South Africa; and Walden Bello, TNI and Focus on the Global South.

Foreign Debt

Aimed at strengthening people’s movements and broadening participation in people’s struggles against debt, a coalition of organisations hosted a series of workshop on debt. The Committee for the Abolition of Third World Debt (CADTM), Jubilee South, the World Council of Churches, Acción Ecologica, World Bank Boycott, the Belgian National Centre for Cooperation and Development (CNCD), RNDD Niger, and GRAPr Congo coordinated the following sessions: “No Peace, No Justice Under Debt Domination”, “Ecological Debt Creditors”, “Illegitimate and Odious Debt”, “How to Finance Human Development Without Debt”, and “Illegitimate and Ecological Debt and Trade: What are the Links?”

The organisations also hosted a “Debt Audit Workshop” to question the legitimacy of the debts owed by developing countries and to generate responses to the debt crisis. The topic of debt drew hundreds of participants who debated potential solutions. Some of the African participants called for the money owed to donor organisations to be used instead to develop the agricultural sector where over 70 percent of the African population is employed.

Others pushed for African countries to withdraw from the WTO, arguing that the collapse of the WTO trade talks proves that industrialised countries do not care about the fate of developing countries. One speaker argued, “Africa must think about withdrawing from the WTO if it continues missing with the continent. It is our right to unite and decide our own internal policies, be they on health, trade, or agriculture. The WTO must not interfere at all.”

Dot Keet, a Zimbabwean activist, claimed that solution to the debt crisis lies in increasing government accountability. “Our African governments must know that we are watching them. Even if they go to meetings with the West, they should have it in mind that we are with them and that we are keeping track of their actions,” she said.

Water

Water, one of the most popular topics at the forum, was also the topic of its own forum. The People's World Water Forum took place in New Delhi from January 12-15, 2004, in advance of the WSF, to create a positive agenda to deal with the "corporate grab for the world's water". The Forum, which dealt with a range of issues, such as the privatisation of rivers and public utilities and the burgeoning bottled water industry, ended with the launch of global campaigns against Coca Cola and the French water multinational, Suez.

Additionally, during the WSF, a special two-day symposium was held to discuss the impact of the practice of river-linking in India. Though proponents of river-linking claim that linking will feed the water starved rivers in southern areas by diverting water from larger, northern rivers, thus enhancing water availability, panellists expressed concerns.

Peter Bosshard of International Rivers Network argued, "This is the biggest river linking project in the world, yet the process of development of this project has been completely undemocratic and non-transparent. Neither the Planning Commission or any other normal approach has been used to get this project to the starting point." The symposium was organised in cooperation with South Asian Dialogues on Ecological Democracy; the Centre for Study of Developing Societies; the Ecological Foundation; Swadeshi Trust; Toxics Link; the South Asia Network on Dams, Rivers, and People; the National Alliance of People's Movements (NAPM); and the International Rivers Network (IRN).

Another coalition of NGOs working on water issues hosted a session entitled "Alternatives to Water Privatisation: People-Centred Water Management is Possible". The event looked at the lessons of participatory public water delivery in Brazil, Ghana, and elsewhere and focussed on the hurdles faced by communities struggling to develop similar models. Speakers also discussed the potential of international solidarity actions such as the Public-Public Partnership between utilities in South Africa and Brazil.

Organisers included the Transnational Institute, Friends of the Earth International, the Council of Canadians, Public Citizen, the Water Vigilance Network (Philippines), the World Development Movement, Corporate Europe Observatory, the National Association of Municipal Sanitation (Brazil), the National Coalition Against Privatisation (Ghana), and Public Services International (PSI).

A second session, entitled "Publicly Financing Water for All", convened by the same organisations, looked at alternative funding mechanisms for public water utilities and how debt and trade agreements affect states' ability to deliver public services. Speakers included Danuta Sacher (Bread for the World), Antonio Miranda (Association of Public Municipal Water and Sanitation, Brazil), Jude Esquera (Water Vigilance Association, Philippines), and Simo Lushaba (Rand Water, South Africa).

The Alliance for a Responsible, Plural and United World (Alliance21) also hosted a talk on the formation of a "global water alliance" with the aim of fostering and linking all organisations working on water issues around the world.

Several organisations also looked specifically at the role of the bottled water and soft drink industries in the water debate. More than 500 Indian participants marched under the banner of the People's Forum Against Coca Cola, an initiative launched at the People's World Water Forum, to oppose Coca Cola's operations in the states of Kerala, Maharashtra, and Uttar Pradesh. Claiming that the company over-exploits groundwater resources, Dalits and Indigenous Peoples pushed for international support in their campaign against Coke.

Medha Patkar, an Indian anti-dam activist, argued, "Coca Cola's actions are symbolic of the criminal power of corporations that are looting people of their basic needs—water, in this case—but, people are fighting back". Last April, she explained, Coca Cola was the target of a boycott protesting the US-led invasion of Iraq. As a result of that protest, Coke's sales dropped by more than 50 percent in the state of Kerala and elsewhere.

Environment

In an effort to link the World Economic Forum and the World Social Forum, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the Stakeholder Forum for Our Common Future, and the World Conservation Union (IUCN) launched a new global awards initiative. Called the "seed awards", the initiative aims to recognise entrepreneurs in environment and development.

UNEP Executive Director Klaus Töpfer said the awards were designed "to honour, support, and promote the entrepreneurial spirit of those working in partnerships that contribute to the achievement of the UN's Millennium Development Goals and the World Summit For Sustainable Development's Plan of Implementation." In Mumbai, the news was announced by Maude Barlow (Council of Canadians), George Monbiot (author), and Lidy Nacpil (Freedom from Debt Coalition and Jubilee South).

Anti-dam activists, present at the WSF, campaigned for increased awareness of the ecological and social impacts of both large and small hydro dams among other participants. During one session, an anti-dam speaker commented on the importance of the WSF in generating heightened awareness, but warned that the process takes time. "This WSF process is part of a long haul. By united the struggles of all those concerned with an alternative worldview, it gives us the feeling that we are not alone. It will take time for its impact to be felt precisely because our alternative vision is decentralised and will need to evolve."

Indian tourism watchdog EQUATIONS coordinated an event which brought together tourism activists from Machu Picchu and Burma to discuss the similarities of their struggles. Coordinator K.T. Suresh stated, "I'm not sure all of the experiences from every part of the world will have a direct correlation, given the political and other differences, but it will be useful to know the experiences from Africa, the Caribbean, and

Thailand, for example, especially when it comes to plans to develop Goa as a cruise ship destination. We don't have any experience with that.”

Mines, Minerals, and People, an India-wide alliance of communities affected by mining organised sessions designed to strengthen their own alliance and reach out to other global alliances. National Head Ravi Rebbapradaga said, “The WSF provides the perfect platform to build solidarity with other natural resource and Indigenous groups. An event of this magnitude is a great opportunity for us to articulate our struggles on an international platform. We will use the WSF to highlight and learn lessons from various forms of struggle and to create consciousness of the impacts of mining and the need for regulations.”

Focussing on the impact of international trade agreements on the environment, Friends of the Earth International hosted “After Cancun: Corporate Globalisation, the Environment, and Equity”. The discussion centred on how to utilise the collapse of Cancun as an opportunity to further challenge the current trade liberalisation dynamic and how to work toward joint campaigns to maximise this opportunity. Speakers for the event included Alberto Villareal (REDES-Uruguay), Manuel Lopez (COECO Ceiba-AT), Sahabat Alam (Friends of the Earth Malaysia), Ricardo Navarro (Friends of the Earth International Chairperson), and Ronnie Hall (Friends of the Earth Trade Programme).

The Centre for International Environmental Law (CIEL) examined the impact of investment on the environment in its session, “Investment within the Trade Regime”. The session looked at how the expansion of world trade and investment is exacerbating environmental problems and clashing with environmental standards, thus undermining national environmental protection. In a second session, CIEL targeted export credit agencies as violators of social and environmental standards due to the absence of social and environmental policies governing their behaviour.

Sustainable energy and the impact of electricity sector reforms on natural resources was the topic of discussion in a different workshop. Hosted by the Transnational Institute, Censat Agua Viva/Friends of the Earth Colombia, and Friends of the Earth Latin America/Caribbean, speakers attacked neo-liberal economic policies as the cause of unsustainable practices.

Some activists felt, at the end of the Forum, that environmental issues did not receive adequate attention. Leading the critics was Vandana Shiva who felt that “issues such as pollution, global warming, sustainable use of resources warranted more than the few seminars scheduled, but they were not deemed important”.

Anti-Globalisation

One of the broadest topics under discussion at the WSF, the “anti-globalisation” theme emerged in countless discussions. As W.R. Varada Rajan, an Indian trade unionist, explained, the WSF is all about anti-globalisation. “This forum will explode the myth that there is no alternative to economic globalisation. It will also explode the myth that this model of globalisation has universal acceptance,” he said.

Taking a more radical stance, a group of 200 South Koreans from the Globalisation from Below pushed for revolution against globalisation. Kim Snghyun explained, “We are here to make the point that revolution is the only solution to the world’s problems.”

Gautam Mody, an Indian activist, echoed the need for immediate action. “Though many economists in the First World would try to argue that India has been the beneficiary of globalisation, this is not so... Year after year, the government reports themselves say that rural poverty is up, unemployment figures in absolute terms are higher than ever, and the crime rate too is higher than ever before.”

On the topic of globalisation, the International Forum on Globalisation (IFG) hosted a session entitled “Alternatives to Economic Globalisation” to discuss alternatives to the policies and institutions of the current global economy. In particular, the session explored alternatives to the WTO, the IMF, and the WB and emphasised the need for policies that shift power to people, thus rebuilding local communities. Speakers also touched on methods for ‘reining in corporate rule’ and for providing vital goods through public services. Speakers included Debi Barker (IFG), Maude Barlow (Council of Canadians), Walden Bello (Focus on the Global South), Tony Clarke (Polaris Institute), Edward Goldsmith (the Ecologist magazine), Colin Hines (Protect the Local, Globally), and Vandana Shiva (Research Foundation for Science, Technology, and Ecology).

Other speakers emphasised the positive side of globalisation, calling for more optimism. Nguyen Thi Binh, Vietnam’s Vice President, explained, “Not all globalisation is bad. There are two kinds of globalisation—the capitalist one, which is like exploitative colonialism and then there is the globalisation of movements for peace and progress”. Shirin Ebadi, Iranian Human Rights lawyer and recent Nobel laureate, repeated this message. “I hope that, one day, there will be a world where globalisation will not be synonymous with inequality, a globalisation where the human being is in the centre.”

Attached to the anti-globalisation issue is the anti-corporatism issue. WSF organisers felt it was important to consider alternatives to multinationals in every aspect of planning the Forum. As a result, there was no Coca Cola—only squeezed sugar cane juice, no Microsoft Windows but rather Linux operating systems, and no brand name bottled water or Nescafé but tea and coffee provided by local companies. W.R. Warda Rajan, an organiser explained, “it was a deliberate decision. If 100 000 people gather and it doesn’t hurt the multinationals a wee bit, it sends the wrong message.” Additionally, Arundhati Roy, renowned author, pushed for targeted boycotts of the corporations that benefited from the war on Iraq.

Labour

As a prelude to the WSF in Mumbai, the World Confederation of Labour (WCL) held its third World Trade Union Forum to promote its message: “Jobs with Dignity for All”. Delegations to the WSF commented that the move to India did not dissuade them from attending, but rather proved that there is a “common will to demonstrate that the neo-liberal model is not the solution for the development of humanity”. In one of the speeches, the WCL also emphasised the importance of international labour standards and the ratification of basic conventions that could “guarantee decent work for all”, especially in a country like India where conditions are “very precarious” and “child labour is a reality”.

Commenting on the importance of an ‘independent’ WSF, Willy Thys, Secretary General of WCL, stated: “The WSF demonstrates that there exists a power of resistance to the power of the multinationals and to the power of the financiers. If we want to keep this power of resistance, give it its full impact, let it play its full strength, the WSF must be and remain an open and apolitical space.”

Other labour workshops, hosted by the Centre for Trade Union and Workers’ Services (CTUWS) examined labour standards in the international system as well as technological advancements, the shift into the informal labour sector, and the difficulties of organising workers in this informal sector. Speakers reiterated the need for trade union solidarity between unions in the north and south.

Juan Somovia, Director General of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), tackled the issues of labour and dignity of work, criticising the current economic paradigm for eroding dignity in the workplace. Calling for a replacement of the “economic model of globalisation that puts market values over human values and economic rights over human rights”, he suggested changing the rules of trade and finance that are “blatantly unfair to the developing world”.

Indian mill worker activist Meena Menon spoke of the importance of the WSF to local unions. “We used the WSF to organise labour groups worldwide. Our speakers included Anne Scargill who has led militant women’s battles against industrial closures in the UK, Americans fighting industrial displacement, workers who were laid off in Argentina and Belgium, and Indian workers from the Calcutta mills, the Assam tea gardens, and coal mines. Interesting networks are bound to emerge.”

The Clean Clothes Campaign and the Centre for Education and Communication organised an event on organising workers. Entitled “Experiences in Organising Garment Workers”, the session focussed on strategies employed in various places to organise workers.

Indo-Pakistan Relations

In support of improved relations between India and Pakistan, organisers for this year's WSF opened the Forum with Sufi rock band Junoon from Pakistan, a group that has openly advocated peace between the countries. As a result of the thawing of icy relations and perhaps pointing to a new era of goodwill between the countries, participants from both India and Pakistan openly enjoyed the opportunity to mingle. Pakistani participants stated that they were very pleased to be able to visit India and brought a message of peace as part of their "Peace Caravan" delegation.

However, despite that the WSF hosted one of the largest delegations of Pakistan participants recently allowed to visit India, some Pakistani participants complained that it was very difficult to secure a visa into the country and that there were an inadequate number of visas granted to meet the demand.

Art

The WSF, in addition to endless speeches, workshops, seminars, and other meetings, also hosted a wide range of artistic and cultural events and exhibits. In addition to the large installations in the main halls, a screening room was set up to showcase documentaries and films on diverse topics, ranging from imperialist globalisation, patriarchy, militarism, communalism, casteism, racism. In total, 83 films were screened during the WSF. Under the category "Other Worlds are Breathing", films such as *The Corporation*, which explains how multinational corporations have "crushed, belittled, and absorbed us all into some new order", were screened.

Other films focussed on more specific problems. "Diverted to Delhi", for example, talked about how young Indians working in call centres are forced to put aside their cultural identity, modify their accents, change their names, and take on new personalities. "Say I Do" chronicled the story of three 'mail order brides' from the Philippines, now living in Canada. "Gujurat: A Laboratory of Hindu Rashtra" focused on the violence that engulfed Gujurat in March 2002 when more than 2 000 Muslims were killed. "Kaiippuneeru" documented the practices of Coca Cola in Kerala, India and "Making a Killing" exposed the tobacco industry's practices. "Seeing is Believing: Handicams, Human Rights, and the News" looked at how new technologies have transformed human rights work.

In addition to film screenings, 150 street plays took place and countless poets and playwright held readings around the WSF grounds. Dance performances showcasing groups from around the world were held on the main stage.

Religious Fundamentalism

In a workshop entitled “The Many Faces of Fundamentalism”, speakers from Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN) analysed the ways in which different fundamentalisms—religious and market—affect women’s lives. One of the key challenges facing women’s rights activists, they claim, is the emergence and evolution of fundamentalism, in all of its various cultural and religious forms, many of which are aimed at depriving and secluding women.

The Muslim Women’s Rights Network offered a discussion entitled “Muslim Women and Sexuality” to address how different communities regulate and control women’s sexualities through religious and cultural practices such as purdah, child marriages, and ‘honour’ killings. Specific topics included the state and sexuality, sexuality and the right wing, gender and sexual pluralities for Muslim women, and the construction of Muslim women’s bodies and their sexuality in the Koran. The event, co-hosted with the Safra Project, an organisation dealing with lesbian, bisexual, and trans-gendered women, was open to women only.

Militarism and War

Another popular topic at the WSF this year was militarism and war. Given that this was the first WSF since the war in Iraq began and that last year’s WSF in Porto Alegre played a pivotal role in mobilising the millions of people who took to the streets in protest of war on February 15th, 2003, it is hardly surprising that it dominated many of the sessions.

Around the WSF grounds, posters and placards pointed the finger at the USA and President Bush, in particular. Slogans such as “Stop USA”, “No to War”, “Speak Up Against Bush”, “Bush—Wanted Dead or Alive”, “Bush Off!”, “A Village in Texas is Missing its Idiot”, and “When Bush Comes to Shove, Resist” plastered the walls of the Forum. Some of the garbage cans even had labels: “Bush—Spit on Me”. During many of the marches, audible anti-American chants were heard, leaving some of the American participants struggling to explain that they did not support the US government either and calling for clarification between Bush and the United States in general.

American participant Kitty Rudman from Global Funds for Women said, “Being from the US, initially it was difficult to convey our message against globalisation but then we are all here fighting against the same problems. We are against Bush and his policies too, the same way Indians are against them. Activists from Tamil Nadu were raising slogans against the US but after we spoke to them, they are now shouting against ‘undemocratic means’. This is what communication is all about.”

However, many of the discussions on militarism and war resulted in finger-pointing at the US. Critics, such as Walden Bello, accused the US of being responsible not only for the “quagmire” in Iraq but also for the collapse of the WTO Ministerial in Cancun last year.

Bello called the US an “over-extended, fatally diseased empire”. He argued that, “although the crowds in Mumbai undoubtedly continue to regard the US as a mortal threat to global peace and justice, they will be cheered by the increasing difficulties of an arrogant empire that fails to see that decline is inevitable and that the challenge is not to resist the process, but to manage it deftly.”

Joseph Gerson, founder of the United for Peace and Justice movement, said, “I am not surprised by the anti-Bush sentiments here. If anything, people have been very kind to Bush.” He added that the huge anti-war rallies organised at last year’s WSF helped to bring home a “significant political message—the legitimate right to criticise Bush and expose the illegitimate nature of the US-led conquest”.

Many sessions also announced plans for a global day of action on March 20th, the anniversary of the US-led invasion of Iraq. Considered by many peace activists as an “anniversary which cannot be ignored”, they want to send the message to the US government that resistance to the war continues. Gulbadan Azam, a Pakistani participant, explained: “The planned demonstrations on March 20th, 2004 are very important for peace. We have to continue to challenge the US agenda in many ways—through dance, art, and powerful protests.” Danielle Auroi, a Green Party MP, said, “I will be out there demonstrating in Paris because we don’t accept the way Bush is acting.”

Human Rights

Encompassing a wide range of perspectives, Human Rights advocates gathered at the WSF to discuss topics ranging from the rights of sexual minorities, the rights of sex workers, gay rights, children’s rights, rights of the marginalised, rights of the physically challenged and caste-based discrimination.

Amnesty International’s message for the WSF was “Globalise Human Rights”, in recognition that increased awareness of Human Rights around the world is “an example of the positive side of globalisation”. A spokesperson for the organisation explained that human rights cross borders and that every man, woman, and child has these rights—not because of their citizenship, social status or heritage, but simply because they are human beings.

Amnesty International General Secretary Irene Khan spoke at one of the largest gatherings, entitled “Wars against Women, Women against Wars”, which attracted tens of thousands of people.

In another smaller session, entitled “Challenging Corporate Power in a Globalised Economy”, Khan advocated for greater corporate accountability. “Economic globalisation has expanded the reach of corporate power and it is more urgent than ever that companies be brought within the rule of human rights law. Voluntary initiatives by themselves are not enough—voluntary approaches only work for the well-intentioned.

The historical reality is that some form of legal framework is necessary to restrain abuses.” The session was jointly organised by Dignity International, the International Network for Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ESCR-Net), the Interchurch Organisation for Development Cooperation, and the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT).

Speaking at one of the large Human Rights panels, former Irish President and UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Mary Robinson said that “while many countries have given legal recognition to human rights, the fact that millions of people are still unaware points towards the gross failure of governance”. She also criticised the WTO and the international trading system, calling it “unfair” and arguing that “it does not reflect the views of the majority”. Robinson also pushed for institutional reform and a legal commitment to implement human rights.

The seminar “Development in the South and Respect of Human Rights” centred on case studies of the violations of economic, social and cultural rights. The event was jointly organised by CRID, Terre des Hommes, Peuples Solidaires, IPAM (Initiatives for an Alternative World) and Federation Internationale des Droits de l’Homme (FIDH), and the Pénélopes.

The Inter-American Platform of Human Rights, Democracy and Development also held a roundtable entitled “Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights” to discuss and share experiences on economic, social, and cultural rights. The objective of the roundtable was to prepare for the Working Group about the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (OP-ESCR) that was held February 23-March 5th, 2004.

The World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) hosted a session entitled “Violence and Exclusion” which examined how, in the “increasingly post-liberalised environment, violence is being inflicted by state and non-state actors (companies, individuals or others) and how violence is also targeted at social protests and other attempts at mobilisation against policies or actions that may lead to a further deterioration in socio-economic necessities and services.” Speakers discussed caste discrimination, indigenous peoples and land, women and housing, children living and working on the street, and collective punishment.

Many organisations emphasised the importance of the WSF as a platform for building solidarity on the Human Rights issue. The People’s Movement for Human Rights Education called for WSF participants and their organisations to find an “agenda common to all NGOs, regardless of their main topic of interest and work” and to launch a “Human Rights Cities Global Programme”, an ‘educational revolution’ which requires citizens to place human rights at the top of the list of priorities.

Migrant Rights

On the topic of migrant rights, a coalition of several Indian organisations jointly hosted three workshops: “Labour Mobility in WTO Rounds”, “Beyond Borders: Building a Global Migrant Rights Movement in the Global Economy”, and “The Migrant Phenomenon”. The discussions were aimed at confronting the various challenges faced by migrants around the world, including globalisation, development, trade, human rights violations, and racism. Speakers pushed for an intensified campaign for the ratification of the UN Migrant Workers Convention. The events were hosted by the Centre for Education and Communication (CEC), the Migrant’s Forum India (MFI), the Migrant’s Forum Asia (MFA), the National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (NNIRR) and the Indian national network “Desis Rising Up and Moving (DRUM)” .

The National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights in Mumbai expressed its disappointment with the WSF’s lack of support for the migrant community at this year’s Forum. “While support for travel to the forum has been almost negligible for the migrant community, it has only been compounded with the need for state documentation to cross borders”, one speaker claimed. “Many migrants have been denied visas, travel documents, and some even turned away at the airport and at the border.”

Sexual Minorities’ Rights

In a discussion entitled “Human Rights Violations Against Sexual Minorities”, speakers described the situation of Indian transvestites, also known as “hijras”. Arguing that groups such as lesbians and gays around the world are among those most marginalised, speakers claimed that the rights of sexual minorities are frequently violated. Testimonials from gays “under attack by the ultra Protestant church” in South Korea and other minorities from Japan and the US were heard. The group called for support groups, sexual education in schools, information campaigns, and the provision of counselling.

Explaining the situation of sexual minorities in India, Elavarthi Manohar, head of the Indian gay rights group “Rainbow Planet” said, “The mainstream in India understands discrimination based on race and caste, but not on sexuality. This is an effort to incorporate sexual issues into the mainstream.”

Some delegates representing sexworkers and the transgendered/gay/lesbian rights groups reported friction between them and participants from more conservative local organisations.

Sex Workers' Rights

During the WSF, Durbar, the sex workers' organisation of West Bengal led a rally of more than one thousand participants, including transgendered and HIV positive people in march around the grounds. The objective of the march was to increase awareness and build solidarity among participants.

Rainbow Planet, an umbrella group for sexual rights organisations, issued the demand for more rights for the sexually marginalised at the WSF. Chanting slogans such as, "Sex workers of the world, get united!", "Stop violence against people in prostitution", "Only rights can stop the wrongs", "My gender, my right", and "Judge not, support sexual preference", participants called for the end of the stigmatisation of sex workers, their children, lovers, and families.

Pink Triangle, a Malaysian NGO working with issues of gender and sexuality, used performance art to convey its message. Members explained that, especially in Asia, where illiteracy poses a challenge, "people prefer to use culture and entertainment to get their message across...we're entertaining!" Organisers said that, due to the large number of sex workers in the audience, "it was good for them to see what sexually marginalised people in other nations are up to—besides, we are not asking for special rights, just equal rights—to treatment, jobs, like anyone else".

Children's Rights

During the WSF, a special conference was held to increase the awareness of the hundreds of thousands of children working in cottonseed production and sweatshops in Asia. The Conference included 2 000 children participants.

The Forum also declared Jan 20th as Child Rights Day, in recognition of the importance of children in building 'another world'. Vidya Apte, a core group member of Child Rights for WSF, an umbrella group of organisations involved in children's issues, said that, at previous Fora, children's rights were not given adequate space.

However, at this year's WSF, nearly 20 children's rights organisations were in attendance. A representative of the newly formed umbrella group "Child Rights for World Social Forum" (CR4WSF) said, "Participation of children from different parts of the world will be most important as they give their perspective on how globalisation, government policies have affected their lives."

Ila Hukku, Director of Child Relief and You (CRY) echoed this. "We are attempting to highlight the case of this forgotten constituency [children]—one that accounts for nearly 40 percent of India's population and we hope that this focus will help influence pro-child policies at both national and international levels by bringing children to the forefront."

The World Council of Churches held a seminar “Building an Alternative World: Affirming the Dignity of Children” to look at the many obstacles facing children in the world today. Topics of discussion included child labour, child trafficking, sexual exploitation, inadequate education and social systems, and family disintegration. The WCC reiterated the need to find new ways and approaches to “uphold the dignity of children” and to explore how religious communities can be involved in this process.

Many groups also spoke about the problem of child trafficking. Choruses of children sang, “Sell potatoes, sell fish, but don’t sell children” to an audience at a session on Child Trafficking and young performers from Jabala, a Calcutta-based group that works with children in red light districts, spoke up about their personal experiences.

The International Federation Terre des Hommes estimated that, in India, nearly 30 000 children go missing every year and claimed that the government is not dealing with the problem. As a result, some children end up in the sex trade and some are killed for the organ transplant industry. IFTDH spokesperson Bernard Boeten said, “Children lose their right to identity when they are trafficked. This is emotional abuse”. Raffaele Salinari, president of IFTDH called trafficking the “worst form of child rights violation”. Other organisations involved in child trafficking discussions included Save the Children and the Campaign Against Child Trafficking.

Rights of the Marginalised

At this year’s WSF, ActionAid India announced the launch of the Alliance of the Marginalised People, a 1000 member alliance created to develop an agenda for care and social change. The Alliance includes members from all over India, including all walks of life—homeless people, street children, sex workers, HIV-positive people, disabled people, those living in chronic hunger, landless labourers, Dalits, and those affected or displaced by violence and conflict.

Organisers of the Alliance remarked, “The convergence of poor peoples organisations and community leaders at the WSF from all over the world and India is a unique opportunity to bring together and help build solidarities among the various groups of excluded, voiceless, and marginalised people—hence the Alliance of Marginalised People”.

Ana Paula Stock, a Brazilian student, said “We are not aware of the true extent of caste discrimination in Latin America, so it was an education for us to see the space opened up for the Dalits. I think the Dalits will also feel motivated to pursue their struggle after seeing the support they received from international participants during the forum”.

The Neutral Trade Union (NTU) of Mumbai hosted groups of Adivasis and forest workers from different parts of India, offering them food and accommodation and arranging meetings with people working on a diversity of issues. The interchange was designed to bring groups together to exchange ideas and experiences.

The National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights organised a Dalit Swadhikar Rally to draw the public's attention to Dalit rights. Posters for the event described casteism and discrimination of Dalits as a "Hidden Apartheid". The march was organised in cooperation with ANHAD (Act Now for Harmony and Democracy).

In the workshop "Development Induced Displacement", speakers stressed the role of the World Bank in violating the rights of those displaced by the projects it funds. According to Narmada Bachao Andolan anti-dam activist Medha Patkar, "Those who have been displaced should claim the right over the resources that have been newly generated from the project". She also argued that people should have the right to accept or reject technology.

Regarding those displaced from forested areas, several organisations launched the Mumbai Forest Initiative, a set of 10 principles that grant people living in and using the forest more rights.

Forum ASIA's workshop, "Human Rights and Internally Displaced Persons in South Asia and South East Asia", focussed specifically on how ethnic conflicts, development projects, and religious or communal conflicts cause people to flee from their homes. Speakers argued that women, in particular, bear the brunt of all types of displacement.

ActionAid India and the Denotified and Nomadic Tribes Rights Action Group offered a workshop called "Restoring Rights of the Forgotten: Denotified and Nomadic Tribes" that featured testimonials, lectures and a short theatre presentation on the issues affecting the rights of some 60 million people.

Organisers of the seminar "Indigenous Peoples and their Land Rights" described the situation of an estimated 30 million Dalits and members of tribal communities that have been displaced since Indian independence. Claiming that the issue is frequently overlooked, speakers called for the issue to be increasingly politicised and internationalised and pushed for greater legal literacy and more 'barefoot lawyers'.

The Society for the Advancement of Rural People of India (SARPI) hosted a session called "Education and Empowerment of Rural Women" which centred on the importance of education as a force for social transformation. Organisers of the session felt that their presence at the WSF, both in terms of increasing their awareness of what is happening around the world and for establishing contacts with like-minded groups.

Rights of the Physically Challenged

The National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People (NCPEDP) expressed disappointment that the WSF and its facilities were "not disabled-friendly". Executive Director Javed Abidi explained: "We had informed the WSF in advance that we were bringing our delegates so there should be ramps for the wheelchairs. We even

sent them literature on how to construct these ramps. But they have not done a good job. And, they have given us a hall for only 200 delegates, but that is not going to be enough.”

Satish Varma, a paraplegic participant, attributed the situation not only to a lack of forethought and proper planning, but also to insensitivity to the needs of the physically challenged. “How is it that no one has bothered to spare a thought for the physically challenged who will not be able to move from one hall to another?”

As a result, a protest of several hundred participants took place in the midst of other marches. Angry participants claimed that “physically challenged people have not been given the same status and dignity as others or else such a shoddy place would not have been given to us for our session, ‘Promotion of Employment for Disabled People’”.

CHALLENGES FACING THE WSF

As the World Social Forum prepares to hold its fifth meeting in 2005, many organisers and participants are reflecting on the evolution of the movement, its strengths and weaknesses, and charting its path forward. Part of the critical process of self-reflection included a book of essays entitled “Challenging Empires: The World Social Forum”. The book, which contains submissions from many of the original organisers as well as authors outside of the movement, both praises and criticises the movement. Many participants in Mumbai also noted that, in many regards, the WSF is at a critical crossroads. Some feel that the WSF has grown beyond manageability and must re-think its aims and objectives. Others, however, feel that the WSF has just achieved its ‘critical mass’ and is now beginning to take shape as a powerful political force.

Programme and General Logistics

Due to the immense size of the programme—more than 1 200 workshops—many participants commented that a lot of sessions were repetitive. Milan Rai, a participant who ‘blogged’ the WSF complained that “many of the panels turned out to be speakers speaking for much longer than they were allotted” and that the result was a “disconnected stream of announcements and opinions from the floor and no real sense of either an emerging consensus or identified objectives”. This view was echoed by many.

Sylvia Borren, Executive Director of Oxfam Netherlands said that, as a result of the panel format of the WSF, discussions lacked “interactivity”. She said there was “too much focus on the current, popular, large panels chock full of ‘talking heads’” and that “everybody is telling their own message, but not spending a lot of time listening to each other”.

Part of the problem with many of the larger sessions was poor acoustics. The extremely large halls, with capacity to house as many as four thousand participants at once, were not designed for microphone speaking. As a result, speakers had difficulty hearing each other, let alone hearing questions from the audience. Many participants, frustrated with the situation, abandoned the larger panels for smaller workshops in smaller rooms where microphones were not necessary. Additionally, with the loud drumming and music from the constant marches winding their way between the meeting halls, speakers frequently found their voices were drowned out by the commotion.

Participants also complained that much of the programme was conducted in English, with inadequate or poorly functioning translation. WSF organisers had arranged for Babels, an international network of over 4 000 translators to simultaneously translate all events in the five main halls into six languages. However, due to poor acoustics and technical difficulties, many of the sessions were inadequately translated and large portions of the audience could not follow the presentations.

Frustration with English dominated sessions ran high among many participants who claimed that this constituted cultural imperialism. Satyajis Das, a participant, protested, “We can’t expect the entire programme to be conducted in a single language, because people are coming from different countries. Although English is the colonial language, it is not the common language of the world.” Others expressed disappointment that there was no translation of the workshops and other seminars, just the panels. One activist stated, “In the country in which the programme is taking place, there should be a sincere effort to translate into that country’s language. That is only happening in the major seminars.”

Commenting on the domination of the English language at the WSF in general, Avadeesh Kumar from India stated: “Speaking English is a mark of success, so people with their egos will not admit they cannot understand it. That is why you see so many expensive posters and brochures handed out here in English. People take them and do not complain, but they will be thrown in the dustbin.” She added, “I have hardly seen any material for distribution in Hindi. I was promised there would be translation in so many languages, but I haven’t seen it.”

Exclusion and Elitism

A recent study entitled “Profile of Participants” aimed at uncovering exactly who attends the WSF meetings. The study, which was conducted following the third WSF, shows that participants tend to be young (18-30), overwhelmingly university-educated (more than 70% had attended university), “anti-imperialist” in their ideologies, and independent of political parties. Though the majority of participants were Brazilian at the first three Fora, this trend was clearly reversed in India. However, despite the presence of Indians, many felt that participation remained divided along economic, political, and gender lines.

In the study Brazilian sociologist and member of the WSF International Council Candido Gryzbowski exclaimed: “It is an elite that attends the WSF. The poor and excluded, like slum dwellers, peasant farmers, or indigenous people are not represented.” He also commented that though young people form the majority of the participants at the WSF, this is not reflected in the debates.

Many participants noted that due to these socio-economic and cultural divisions, there were, in effect, two Fora: one inside the meeting rooms where intellectual debates were held among the elite and another on the streets where informal networking, cultural performances, and marches dominated, with little interaction between the two.

Gryzbowski agreed that this was the case. “In social and cultural terms, the geographical relocation of the WSF resolves in part, but not fundamentally, the deficit we face. We must recognise, because this is our own contradiction, that we are an elite of citizen activism. The larger, more excluded sectors, although organised in social movements and networks, do not participate in a meaningful way in the Forum, whether because they

lack the economic means to do so, or because the Forum, because of its dynamic, does not draw them in.”

Participants themselves recognised their exclusion from the Forum. One participant, speaking on behalf of a larger group, argued: “There are people [the poor] here who never had a chance to be on the stage and be heard. We the poor have only one role here. We can see and know what is going on among ourselves. Outside of that, everything is written in English. How would a poor man understand this? Many of the poor here do not even have enough money to eat properly.”

According to George Monbiot, British author and activist, this economic exclusion seriously weakens the WSF. “We are not engaged with the working class. We are unintelligible to each other. The process leading up to our movement is a process that does not come from the bottom. We are unintelligible to each other.” Consequently, Monbiot argued that only a “radical agenda” would save this new protest from becoming irrelevant. “We have to turn the organisation upside down. There has been a capture of this movement by the intellectuals,” he said.

Some speakers and participants attributed the divide to the WSF’s decision-making mechanisms, and in particular, a lack of transparency. Anita Anand, contributor to the “Challenging Empires” book, commented, “Like all movements, there are concerns about the WSF’s decision-making structures, the need for greater transparency, lack of adequate communication in and between networks, and the power struggle between established activists and their relatively unknown grassroots counterparts. There is concern for more representation of women, people of colour, and minority communities.”

Milan Rai, the “blog” activist, summed up his feelings about the WSF on his website. “I’m left with the feeling that much of the WSF process is like this: very good people, very good intentions, largely one-way communication, a lack of structured debate, and a mysterious process of decision-making somewhere off stage.”

Other critics felt that the exclusion of certain parties was contradictory. Jai Sen, for example, argued that “though the forum declares itself ‘open’, in reality is it only open to particular sections: to those who already agree with certain policy formulations.” Sen claims that this limits participation to those who can broadly be said to be on ‘the left’ and says that the Forum also “discriminates against individuals”. As a result, he says this “adds up to a rising dogmatism and an organisational fundamentalism that is a hallmark of old politics...The WSF is showing distinct signs of behaving like a tightly controlled corporation, a movement, or an organised religion—not an open space.”

Some said that the deliberate exclusion of militant and certain political groups from the WSF led to the creation of Mumbai Resistance. Mumbai Resistance, also known as MR 2004, coincided with the WSF but aimed to attract a more radical, “real anti-imperialist following”.³ MR 2004 blasted the WSF’s “so-called open platform”, noting that it

³ For further information on MR 2004, please see “Parallel and Alternative Events”.

excluded the real revolutionaries like the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia and Fidel Castro.

Though few WSF participants crossed over to attend the MR, many commented that, although the group chose to exclude itself by hosting its own forum, the division of anti-imperialists into two camps—the MR and the WSF—weakened both. Some local participants, explaining that the MR included some of the most important Indian movements fighting globalisation, were disappointed that the MR went mostly unnoticed. Other participants and speakers, notably Arundhati Roy, called for more integration of the WSF and MR, stating that, had they participated within the WSF, these radical voices would have given it a very different flavour, pushing it further to the left.

Politicisation of the WSF

Linked to the debate over the exclusion of militant groups and divergent voices is the debate over the exclusion of political parties, the topic of many heated discussions at the Forum. Though the WSF's Charter of Principles specifically excludes the direct participation of political parties, individuals are still free to participate. Though supporting the idea that it is first necessary to strengthen social movements and later include political parties, some claimed that the WSF does not need to be “anti-party” in the meantime.

In particular, some Indian participants were displeased that the Communist Party of India was not more prominent at the WSF. One participant argued, “India has one of the largest Communist movements in the world. The WSF could not have happened in India without the support of the big communist political parties. They were even present in the Indian Organising Committee, alongside other non-aligned activists and intellectuals, and though their presence was ‘discreet’, it was extremely important.”

Others supported a larger role for political parties and government representatives, believing that the presence of politicians at such events would sensitise them to the real needs of the masses. Salete Camba, for instance, said: “Politicians and entrepreneurs should participate, to be conscious of people's problems and desires. They have the means to push development—the population alone cannot do that. All sectors must participate in the next WSF.”

Roberto Savio, in agreement with the need to ‘politicise’ the WSF, claimed: “The movement is being ignored by politicians. Look at the example of the February 15th peace marches. Aznar ignored them, Blair declared that the participants were wrong, Berlusconi argued that the numbers were inflated by communist forces, and Bush dismissed the phenomenon as a ‘focus group’. This is why the Forum must become political or risk being of use to participants only.”

Others claimed that the inclusion of political parties or government representatives would push those representing them to open up to the broader issues at hand, instead of merely representing a “political platform”. Supporters also claimed that it would prevent the centralisation of knowledge and its use as a manipulative tool for political support; reduce hierarchical relationships where individuals are treated as ‘political supporters’; and refocus political debates on ideas, not vote-winning. In one session, the speaker described this approach as “horizontal social articulation”, and claimed it would form the basis of all new global movements.

However, many participants and speakers also called for the continued independence of the WSF, free from the influence of political parties or governments. George Dor, Director General of Jubilee South, said, “It is essential that this forum must be without governments. We will have our times of meeting with the government. We need a space where we can come together and develop our strategy. There is a lot of danger when we invite the governments. Some of the organisations are likely to be compromised.”

Medha Patkar said the WSF should remain “an expression of people power and non-electoral politics”. In order to build the strength to challenge electoral politicians, she argued it was necessary for activists to keep control over their own spaces.

Another speaker warned that it is “time to recognise that controlling the organisation of a Social Forum in any country is a tempting political prize for political parties”. He cautioned, “If we cannot invent a transparent, democratic, international process which really ensures the participation of all parts of the movement, the process—more divisive than unifying—will end up as a vulgar front organisation of some party.”

While many focussed the debate over the inclusion/exclusion of political parties and governments, some participants actually pushed to open the WSF up to all interested parties, including multinationals and the private sector.

Elequicina Maria dos Santos from Brazil stated: “We do need government representatives in this meeting, as well as multinationals. Governments must be here to listen to concerns being raised by civil society organisations because they are the voice of the people. Multinationals, on the other hand, need to be told that their policies are cruel and have messed up the Third World. Retrenchment and privatisation are responsible for rising poverty levels in these countries. To make ‘another world possible’, governments, MNCs, and civil society all must work together.”

Again, there was opposition to this proposal. Paul-Emile Dupert, organiser of the World Parliamentarians Forum, argued strongly for parliamentary participation but opposed the inclusion of corporations at the WSF. “MNCs should not be included here as the idea is to limit or counter their power. We don’t need them here and it is not even appropriate to hold any dialogue with them at this particular time. This is not the forum for that—this is about citizen struggle...There is no doubt that this new world must be constructed with the help of all different groups, the problem is that we do not want them to control us, yet we recognise the need to dialogue with them.” In conclusion, he suggested that the best

way for all parties to participate would be to hold their own parallel fora and eventually integrate in the future.

Hector Ramirez of Colectivo Utopias Chile also opposed the participation of MNCs and governments. “This Forum should not have them. Rather it should campaign against their wrong practices and force them to act the right way. The Forum should create pressure. I feel their participation would have a negative effect. The WSF might then be co-opted in the whole process of wrongs perpetuated by them.”

Vagueness of Identity

As the WSF celebrated a ‘successful’ fourth Forum, participants and speakers alike reflected on what the WSF is all about. Though many congratulated the WSF for maintaining its openness and lack of hierarchical structure, others felt that the time has come for the WSF to prove its worth—or at least define some clear objectives.

Like many social movements, some claim that the WSF suffers from an “affliction of opposition”. Jeremy Corbin, a British MP and anti-war activist called the problem a “vagueness of identity”, saying that the WSF is not defined by ideology so much as it is by ‘opposition’.

Others wondered what direction the WSF would take in the future and how it might move beyond merely declaring ‘another world is possible’. One participant left the WSF this year questioning its purpose: “Can a large, diverse event move beyond being a festival to formulating alternatives? Will the concept of an open space become amorphous and unstructured?”

Some say, however, that the WSF must keep its broad approach in order to maintain its relevance, arguing that a single pronged approach would be wrong and would risk dividing the masses. According to Candido Grzybowski, “The battle against neoliberalism must be fought on all fronts.” He also denounced efforts to simplify the Forum’s agenda and prioritise some aims and objectives at the expense of others. “To try to eliminate the contradictions at the core of the WSF and turn it into a more homogenous space and process for confronting neoliberalism is the aim of certain forces, inspired on the classic political partisanship of the left. I would say that this struggle is legitimate and deserves respect...but it destroys innovation of the WSF, what it possesses in terms of potential to feed a broad and diverse movement of the global citizenry in building another world.”

Objectives versus Outcomes

In preparation for the fifth World Social Forum, many participants emphasised the need to define the purpose of the WSF and what the Forum should aim to achieve. Many participants discussed how, if year after year, the WSF debate continues with “no visible outcome(s)”, the entire movement risks becoming trivialised and/or marginalised.

In some of the discussions, participants worried that the WSF would soon be dismissed as a mere “talking shop” that produces “a great deal of rhetoric but no substantive plans of action”. Some attributed this to the fact that the WSF is “undiscriminating in its choice of participants” and “overly accommodative in its methods”, thus paralysing the WSF. As a result, they argued, the Forum cannot make progress on any issue and cannot distil a central message because so many views are being articulated.

The absence of concrete outcomes has begun to disturb some participants who have issued the call for more action. D. Raja, a participant and member of the Communist Party of India, reflected his experience with the Forum and gave his opinion of the “discussion-oriented” WSF: “If this is all about networking and building solidarity then it is okay. But that is not the case, since they are trying to change the world by declaring that “another world is possible”, but not saying how. There is no agenda for action to back such impressive words. This is cheating.”

In fact, the heavy emphasis on the “possibility” of another world sparked debate among many critics of the ‘debate-oriented’ approach. The Centre for National Democracy studies in Jakarta called for further action: “We do not want the argument ‘Another World is Possible’ to stop at the “possibility”, like a dream that would never become a reality”. The Centre also suggested that MR’s emphasis on “action” might explain its attractiveness to those disillusioned by the lack of concrete action at the WSF.

Even some of the well-known critics, like Bernard Cassen, joined the ranks of the discontented. He concluded, “The present formula cannot go on forever. We have begun to move in circles. For most people the forums have become some sort of a goodwill party”. Echoing this, French union leader Pierre Khilafa argued, “We can’t have the objective of “everlasting debate...We must create a point of support for launching political alternatives to neo-liberalism”.

The lack of outcome and direction also attracted the criticism of the media. In one article, the journalist mused, “How are the 100 000 delegates congregated in Mumbai going about their business to rid the world of exploiters and bloodsuckers since January 16? By unleashing a lava-flow of rhetoric...” He later clarified, “It’s not that people don’t agree with the emotional appeals, but rather that the appeals have become repetitive and seriously devoid of concrete steps forward”. As a result, he said, “When all the issues are brought together on a platform as vast and all-encompassing as the WSF, the issues get diffused and end up sounding silly.”

In response to the criticism, Gautam Mody, one of the WSF India organisers, stated, “If you approach the WSF as an event, that critique holds, but if you see it as one case of coalition building, a place to put alternative ideas on the table and then to consolidate support, then it is not so. Where you take it next is left to the individual. We are not in politics to offer direction; we are in politics to determine our own destiny.”

Others maintained that, due to the immense diversity of the forum, a consensus or outcome of any sort was simply not possible. However, even if outcomes were desired, some claimed, there was no mechanism to pick up on the progress that had been made at the forum and no way to systematise the consensus that was being built.

Jorge Saavedra Duraó, president of the Brazilian Association of NGOs encouraged participants not to waste a precious opportunity. “The forum mobilises too much energy to be limited to exchanges of ideas and reflection. The challenge is how to define mechanisms for taking decisions amidst a great diversity of actors and opinions.”

To address the apparent lack of mechanisms, some proposed a system of consultations which could be implemented in order to define some 10 issues of greater weight and which generate the most consensus; it would be a “big step towards programming actions and campaigns”, said one participant.

The Civil Society-NGO Divide

For the first time in the history of the WSF, the movement was faced with serious, organised opposition to the Forum. Though the WSF has come under criticism before, this year marked the first organised response. Under the banner of “Mumbai Resistance”, more than 300 organisations gathered to present “a real anti-imperialist opposition”.

For some, the splintering of movements was attributed to a divide between Indian popular movements and NGOs. Many participants and theorists explained that, due to their control over significant funds, mostly originating from industrialised world and often used to mitigate the impacts of disastrous aid projects of structural adjustment programmes, many NGOs are viewed with great hostility in India. It is a widely held belief, according to some, that as soon as activists become involved with an NGO, they become dependent on this ‘aid money’ and lose their link with politics and the masses. As a result, NGOs are frequently viewed with suspicion, and many claim they are “too close to the powerful and too far from the powerless”.

Summarising the extreme of this perspective, Jose Maria Sison of the International League of People’s Struggles (ILPS) stated: “The WSF seeks to derail and co-opt the growing militancy of the people against imperialist globalisation and war and redirect this towards reformism in order to perpetuate the world capitalist system. It includes the political bosses of the imperialist and puppet states but excludes representatives of national liberation movements. In accordance with its pro-imperialist ideological and

political bias so evident in its charter of principles, it maligns armed revolutionary movements as “totalitarian”, “reductionist”, “violence to the people”, “inhuman”, and “uncivil”. It harps on “civil society” as to mean good citizenship and docile non-governmental organisations under the bourgeois state system whose violence is directed against the working people. It is an equal party in a raunchy *ménage à trois* with the bourgeois state and big business.”⁴

Some participants feel that this divide—and the formation of the MR, specifically—represents a serious threat to the future of the WSF. According to Vandana Shiva, “this threat to the WSF is arising externally, from old-style politics based on patriarchal principles and the celebration of violence and fragmentation. The MR 2004, organised counter to the WSF, reflects the divisiveness and violence of old-style politics, which attempts to erode the politics of peace and diversity that the anti-globalisation movements have built over the last decade with their ‘live and let live’ approach. Our non-violence has been our strength, which the establishment cannot take away from the people, but it is threatened by some movements who make violence their main organisational goal.”

WSF Africa?

Another complaint that frequently surfaced at this year’s WSF was that Africa had not yet been chosen to host the World Social Forum. Many participants were disappointed that the 2005 WSF will once again be held in Porto Alegre, leaving no chance for Africa to host the event until 2006, at the earliest. Some say this weakens the WSF’s claims to be an “international movement” and that many Africans, as a result, feel “left out” of the WSF.

“The Americans have hosted it, Asia has hosted it... We think it’s our time,” said Demba Dop, a Malian from the Congress of African Trade Unions. “The sixth WSF should take place in Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, or South Africa... We need to deal with issues such as the heavy debt load many African countries owe and the HIV/AIDS epidemic.”

Mohau Pheko, a gender and economic justice activist from South Africa, expressed her frustration with the limited space for African issues: “Until and unless more grassroots people, especially from Africa, become part of this process, I honestly don’t see the need to come and mix with the same people and say the same things to each other... The physical presence of Africans at this Forum is not being felt in the content or substance”.

Responding to the accusations that Africa has been left out of the WSF, Africa Social Forum Chair Taoufik Ben Abdullah says there is progress being made. “It’s not enough in terms of numbers and categories, nor in the organisations present here, but from a figure of 30 participants [at the last WSF] to a figure of more than 300, we need to recognise that progress has been made.” Abdullah also attributed the low presence of Africans and African issues to the expense of bringing grassroots activists to India.

⁴ Please see Appendix C, “Anti-WSF Cartoons”.

Egyptian author Nawal el Saadawi announced that there are preparations underway for eventually holding the WSF in Africa. “We are working to have the WSF, after Porto Alegre 2005, in Cairo in 2006. Many organisations in Africa and the Arab world support us. All are interested in this. This is our hope.”

MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE WSF

The fourth World Social Forum went largely unnoticed by most of the international mass media. Of the few who did cover the event, most of the coverage characterised the Forum as an “anti-globalisation pow-wow” or a “gathering of confused hippies”. Without clarifying that the Forum rejects neo-liberal economic globalisation, many journalists called WSF participants “self-contradicting”, arguing that they oppose globalisation but fail to recognise that their Forum is a product of it.

Local media, including The Times of India, echoed these stereotypes, often depicting the WSF as a liberal arts and crafts show. According to one article, “Beyond the loud sloganeering and colourful protests, the WSF in Mumbai showcased the very real and growing legion of the discontented from around the world”.

Much of the mainstream media coverage also emphasised that there was no “outcome” from the Forum, failing to realise that the WSF is not about “outcomes”, “decisions”, or “declarations”. The Indian media largely dismissed the event, some even going so far as to describe it as a “Woodstock type fest that clumps all of the ills of the world into one basket, hoping that someone—Who? The governments are evil!—to pick up and throw the basket into the sea”.

Alternative media coverage of the WSF included a daily publication of WSF-specific news put out by Inter-Press Service (IPS), a group of international journalists working in conjunction with TerraViva, the daily journal of major global conferences. Approximately 50 000 copies of the paper were distributed free of charge to participants in both Hindi and Marathi as well as English and Spanish. Selected articles were translated into French, German, Finnish, Dutch, Swedish, Japanese, Portuguese, Hindi, Indonesian, Tamil, Sinhala, Thai, Mandarin, Nepali, and Kiswahili. IPS news was also available online. Indymedia India also covered the event from an alternative perspective, providing a web site, web radio station, and a video project.

A trio of Americans are also preparing “Another World is Possible TV” (AWIP.TV), a documentary on the World Social Forum in Mumbai. The documentary will include interviews from some of the ‘movers and shakers’ from social, economic, political, educational, medical, technological, and cultural worlds and is designed to be an educational video that will go beyond ‘preaching to the converted’.

The WSF was also covered online by “Ciranda”, a website containing hundreds of independent reports posted by a coalition of freelancers and journalists.

“The WSF: Challenging Empires”, a book of essays from international social movement thinkers as well as protagonists and critics of the WSF, was released at this year’s WSF. The collection of essays on the theory and practice of the WSF includes pieces by Jai Sen, Anita Anand, Arturo Escobar, Peter Waterman, and others. The book was published by the Viveka Foundation.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE WSF

As the World Social Forum experiences its first “growing pains”, organisers and participants alike are struggling to understand what role the WSF can play in the world and to determine a future course of action.

On the positive side, participants concluded that the WSF brings new ideas into discourse, it sensitises and connects movements, builds internal solidarity and produces a multitude of possible approaches, eliminating the idea that there is a clear or single answer to the world’s problems. Many participants also applauded the WSF as a process of collective decision-making and learning and felt that, despite its many problems, the WSF kindles a “light of hope”.

Many regard the social forum process as “an experiment of sorts”, an event that permits groups to come together, and feel that this approach, problematic or not in its outcomes, is “certainly better than promoting sectarianism or fundamentalism.”

However, though many participants easily pointed out the good aspects of the WSF, evaluating its “success” proved more difficult. Some claim that its success is evident from the mobilisation of masses for various causes—from the anti-war protests last March to the anti-WTO protests last September. Others claim that the WSF’s success can be measured by the number of smaller fora it has spawned.

Anita Anand pointed to a steady growth in numbers, arguing that this shows that the movement resonates with the people. Others, however, say that the Forum should not be judged on the basis of numbers, but rather on how it mobilises public opinion, deepens democracy, reclaims voices, and strengthens the role and capacity of people’s movements.

Some participants point to the “evolution of the WSF movement” as part of its success. By moving away from its original stance—opposition to the World Economic Forum- to a new more positive stance that includes the generation and promotion of alternatives, the movement has become a globally significant voice of the masses.

However, as one participant commented, “Whatever its positive aspects, the WSF in India was not the great step forward, the grand *rendez-vous* with the Asian movements that it should have been. And like a bicycle (or the WTO), a movement that doesn’t advance is in danger of falling on its face.”

IN CONCLUSION: FUTURE OF THE WSF

Many organisers and participants agree that, despite the successes of the first four World Social Fora, the movement is now facing a critical juncture. In order for the WSF to maintain its momentum, many believe the movement will have to address its internal weaknesses and divisions. Though the approach of the past has been to focus on commonalities among WSF groups and participants, there is a growing realisation that this approach may no longer work. As plans for the fifth WSF are underway, expectations run high that the movement will find its footing and secure its role as the “world’s second superpower”.

Future Fora

The Social Forum of the Americas, the first continental forum of its kind to cover issues particular to this region, is set to take place in Quito, Ecuador from March 8th-13th, 2004. Issues up for discussion include power, democracy, and the nation state; violence originating from the “neo-liberalism project and the current economic order”; cultures and communications; and Indigenous and Afro-American Peoples’ issues. Plans are also underway for an Arab Social Forum to take place within the year. The fifth World Social Forum is planned to take place in January 2005, in Porto Alegre.

PARALLEL AND ALTERNATIVE EVENTS

International Youth Camp

The fourth International Youth Camp (IYC) coincided with the World Social Forum, not merely as a parallel event but with the objective of mainstreaming the discourse of youth. The IYC was designed as “a platform for youth of the world to interact and share their views, experiences, and struggles and to allow youth movements to unite on a common platform and discuss the paths forward to a new world”. This year’s IYC attracted approximately 10 000 youth delegates, of which more than 2 000 came from outside of India.

Organisers of the IYC emphasised the need for gender balance among the participants, but, despite their efforts, some felt that IYC discussions on feminism and gender relations raised tension at the camp. Some youth delegates claimed, “Although there was unity on fighting imperialist globalisation, there was not the same joint enthusiasm to battle patriarchy.” As a result, they claimed, “There is still a serious challenge for many young Indian women and though reality is changing, it is an extremely slow process.”

A “Virtual Youth Camp” was held online in advance of the actual IYC to allow youth participants to contribute to the planning of the actual camp. Participants were encouraged to contribute their suggestions in three areas: logistics on how to make the IYC open, democratic, inclusive, and participatory; possible topics for discussion; and the identification of organisations and movements they would like to facilitate the discussions.

Commenting on the importance of holding a separate youth event, Nitin More of the All India Youth Federation, explained: “We resist neo-liberal globalisation but we want to add our own angle, the youth perspective to the ‘another world’...The WSF’s main debate on globalisation centres on employment, social justice, and similar issues, but for young people, the primary concerns regarding globalisation are its crushing impacts on their rights to education, food, shelter, and other conditions that allow them to grow up—from childhood to decent adulthood.”

Mumbai Resistance 2004

Mumbai Resistance, or MR 2004, was originally conceived at the International Camp Thessaloniki Resistance held in Greece in 2003, and then later re-affirmed at the meeting of the International Coordinating Group of the International League of Peoples' Struggles (ILPS). MR was proposed as an alternative forum to the WSF because it was felt that the World Social Forum "camouflaged crucial issues, thereby diffusing the struggle against imperialist globalisation, rather than giving a focus to it".

As such, the MR aims to "take people of the world, including those attending the WSF, beyond the limits of 'reflective thinking and debate' and toward organised resistance against imperialist globalisation and wars". The MR also considers itself a "continuation of the militant traditions" set in the anti-globalisation and anti-war movements post-Seattle.

Regarding the WSF, the MR claims that many of the participants "talk radically, but fail to act". Many MR participants also consider that the WSF is dominated by western NGOs, and as a result, the WSF is "structured to give prominence to celebrities of the NGO world who, in turn, propagate the NGO world view." Some groups attending the MR, such as the Peoples' War Group, go further, claiming that the WSF rather than the WTO is the "real enemy". They argue that the "WSF people simply shout slogans when out of power, then implement pro-globalisation policies when in power" and accuse the WSF of being "not serious about changing the world".

MR has also characterised the WSF as "a safety valve", arguing that because it is "hobbled by its Charter that clearly states its opposition to the use of violence", the WSF is rendered useless. As a result, the WSF is left to "support a dialogue with the missionaries of globalisation" and to attempt to reform the system from within—an approach strongly rejected by MR. By refusing to include armed militants, the MR accuses the WSF of "merging perfectly with the needs of the imperialist bodies which are also seeking to isolate militant sections while developing 'constructive engagement' with others".

Moreover, MR vigorously states its opposition to donations from organisations with "corporate affiliations".

As part of its "action-oriented" approach, as opposed to the WSF's "debate-oriented" approach, the MR issued "Mumbai Declaration 2004: Against Imperialist Globalisation and War".⁵

MR's programme included plenary sessions, workshops, seminars, cultural festivals, and ended with a march to the US Consulate. The focus of the two-day event was "Imperialist Globalisation and War".

⁵ Please see Appendix D, "Mumbai Declaration 2004".

Organisers of the MR 2004 include:

- International League of Peoples' Struggles (ILPS)
- World Peoples' Resistance Movement (WPRM), South Asia
- Anti-Imperialist Camp, Austria
- BAYAN, the Philippines
- Communist Party of the Philippines, the Philippines
- Confederation of Turkish Workers in Europe (ATIK), Turkey
- Militant Movement, Greece
- All India Peoples Resistance Forum (AIPRF), India
- Secular Democratic Forum, India
- Bahujan Mukti Mahasangh, India
- Bharat Jan Andolan, (BJA), India
- Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU), India
- Chattisgarh Mukti Morcha (CMM), India
- Karnatka Rajya Raitha Sangha (KRRS), India
- Kashtakari Yuvak Sanghatana, India
- Lokshahi Hakk Sanghatana, India
- Muslim Youth of India (MY India), India
- Movement for Implementation of Land Reforms, India
- Samajik Nyaya Morcha, India
- Struggling Forum for People's Resistance (SFPR)
- Telengana Jana Sabha
- Yuva Bharat
- Bharatiya Kisan Unions, India
- Farmers' Relief Forum, Kerala, India
- Tamil Nadu Farmers' Association, India
- Nandyal Farmers' Association, Andhra Pradesh, India

Peoples' Movements Encounter II

The second Peoples' Movements Encounter (PME II) also took place during the World Social Forum in Mumbai. As a collaboration of grassroots organisations, including women, peasants, workers, Dalits, fishers, Indigenous Peoples, and other, the PME considers itself an “opportunity for marginalised sectors to come together to share and celebrate their experiences and to discuss how to further advance their struggles.”

This year's programme, centred on the theme “Struggling for Justice, Fighting the War”, was designed to “give voice to the toiling masses”. The first three days of the programme involved cultural performances from various movements around the world. On the fourth day, the PME hosted a “solidarity event”, a gathering of peoples' organisations, NGOs, and individuals. Events included a photo exhibit, a film festival, a food festival, speeches, and more cultural performances. The last day of events involved a mass mobilisation of those opposed to war and imperialist globalisation.

The PME II was organised by the following groups:

- Andhra Pradesh Agricultural Workers Union, India
- Institute for Motivating Self-Employment, India
- Tamil Nadu Dalit Women's Forum, India
- Human and Environmental Rights Forum, India
- Pesticide Action Network South Asia Programme, India
- World Federation of Fisher People, India
- National Fisherfolk Forum, India
- Bangladesh Agricultural Labour Union, Bangladesh
- All Nepal Peasant Association, Nepal
- All Nepal Women's Association, Nepal
- South Asian Peasant Coalition, Nepal
- Asian Peasant Coalition, the Philippines
- Asian Peasant Women's Network, the Philippines
- BAYAN (New Patriotic Alliance), the Philippines
- Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (Peasant Movement of the Philippines), the Philippines
- GABRIELA, the Philippines
- AMIHAN (Federation of Peasant Women's Organisations), the Philippines
- IBON Foundation Inc., the Philippines
- SINAGBAYAN, the Philippines
- TENAGANITA, the Philippines
- PAN-AP (Pesticide Action Network Asia and Pacific), Malaysia
- APWLD (Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development), Thailand

APPENDIX A:

WSF Charter of Principles

- 1.** The World Social Forum is an open meeting place for reflective thinking, democratic debate of ideas, formulation of proposals, free exchange of experiences and interlinking for effective action, by groups and movements of civil society that are opposed to neo-liberalism and to domination of the world by capital and any form of imperialism, and are committed to building a planetary society directed towards fruitful relationships among Mankind and between it and the Earth.
- 2.** The World Social Forum at Porto Alegre was an event localized in time and place. From now on, in the certainty proclaimed at Porto Alegre that "another world is possible", it becomes a permanent process of seeking and building alternatives, which cannot be reduced to the events supporting it.
- 3.** The World Social Forum is a world process. All the meetings that are held as part of this process have an international dimension.
- 4.** The alternatives proposed at the World Social Forum stand in opposition to a process of globalization commanded by the large multinational corporations and by the governments and international institutions at the service of those corporations' interests, with the complicity of national governments. They are designed to ensure that globalization in solidarity will prevail as a new stage in world history. This will respect universal human rights and those of all citizens – men and women – of all nations and the environment and will rest on democratic international systems and institutions at the service of social justice, equality and the sovereignty of peoples.
- 5.** The World Social Forum brings together and interlinks only organizations and movements of civil society from all the countries in the world, but intends neither to be a body representing world civil society.
- 6.** The meetings of the World Social Forum do not deliberate on behalf of the World Social Forum as a body. No-one, therefore, will be authorized, on behalf of any of the editions of the Forum, to express positions claiming to be those of all its participants. The participants in the Forum shall not be called on to take decisions as a body, whether by vote or acclamation, on declarations or proposals for action that would commit all, or the majority, of them and that propose to be taken as establishing positions of the Forum as a body. It thus does not constitute a locus of power to be disputed by the participants in its meetings, nor does it intend to constitute the only option for interrelation and action by the organizations and movements that participate in it.

7. Nonetheless, organizations or groups of organizations that participate in the Forum's meetings must be assured the right, during such meetings, to deliberate on declarations or actions they may decide on, whether singly or in coordination with other participants. The World Social Forum undertakes to circulate such decisions widely by the means at its disposal, without directing, hierarchizing, censoring or restricting them, but as deliberations of the organizations or groups of organizations that made the decisions.

8. The World Social Forum is a plural, diversified, non-confessional, non-governmental and non-party context that, in a decentralized fashion, inter-relates organizations and movements engaged in concrete action at levels from the local to the international to build another world.

9. The World Social Forum will always be a forum open to pluralism and to the diversity of activities and ways of engaging of the organizations and movements that decide to participate in it, as well as the diversity of genders, ethnicities, cultures, generations and physical capacities, providing they abide by this Charter of Principles. Neither party representations nor military organizations shall participate in the Forum. Government leaders and members of legislatures who accept the commitments of this Charter may be invited to participate in a personal capacity.

10. The World Social Forum is opposed to all totalitarian and reductionist views of economy, development and history and to the use of violence as a means of social control by the State. It upholds respect for Human Rights, the practices of real democracy, participatory democracy, peaceful relations, in equality and solidarity, among people, ethnicities, genders and peoples, and condemns all forms of domination and all subjection of one person by another.

11. As a forum for debate, the World Social Forum is a movement of ideas that prompts reflection, and the transparent circulation of the results of that reflection, on the mechanisms and instruments of domination by capital, on means and actions to resist and overcome that domination, and on the alternatives proposed to solve the problems of exclusion and social inequality that the process of capitalist globalization with its racist, sexist and environmentally destructive dimensions is creating internationally and within countries.

12. As a framework for the exchange of experiences, the World Social Forum encourages understanding and mutual recognition among its participant organizations and movements, and places special value on the exchange among them, particularly on all that society is building to centre economic activity and political action on meeting the needs of people and respecting nature, in the present and for future generations.

13. As a context for interrelations, the World Social Forum seeks to strengthen and create new national and international links among organizations and movements of society, that - in both public and private life - will increase the capacity for non-violent social resistance to the process of dehumanization the world is undergoing and to the violence used by the State, and reinforce the humanizing measures being taken by the action of these movements and organizations.

14. The World Social Forum is a process that encourages its participant organizations and movements to situate their actions, from the local level to the national level and seeking active participation in international contexts, as issues of planetary citizenship, and to introduce onto the global agenda the change inducing practices that they are experimenting in building a new world in solidarity.

APPENDIX B:

Partial List of Speakers: WSF 2004

- Ahmed BEN BELLA (Algeria), former President of Algeria
- Aijaz AHMED (India), Marxist thinker
- Alejandro BENDANA (Nicaragua), Director of the Centre for International Studies
- Alexander ZHARINOV (Russia), General Secretary of the World Federation of Trade Unions
- Amarjit KAUR (India), Secretary of All India Trade Union Congress
- Anand KUMAR (India), President of Student's Unions
- Anuradha MITTAL (US), Co-Director of the Institute for Food and Development Policy (FoodFirst)
- Aruna ROY (India), Social Work and Research Centre
- Arundhati ROY (India), author and activist
- Asma JEHANGIR (Pakistan), human rights advocate
- Ayse ERZAN (Turkey), peace campaigner, scientist
- Bernard CASSEN (France), general editor of Le Monde Diplomatique, founder of ATTAC
- Beverly KEENE (Argentina), Jubilee South
- Blanca CHANCOSO (Ecuador), leader of Indigenous People's movement
- Boaventura SANTOS (Portugal), social theorist, Director of Centre for Social Studies
- Brinda KARAT (India), General Secretary of All India Democratic Women's Association
- Cesar BENJAMIN (Brazil), Latin American economist
- Chandra MUZAFFAR (Malaysia), President of the International Movement for a Just World
- Chico WHITAKER (Brazil), Founder of WSF
- Christophe AGUITON (France), leader of ATTAC
- Dennis BRUTUS (South Africa), South African Liberation Movement
- Devinder SHARMA (India), food security activist
- Evo MORALES (Bolivia), Indigenous Peoples leader
- Fausto BERTINOTTI (Italy), National Secretary Rifondazione Comunista party
- Flavio LOTTI (Italy), National Coordinator of the Peace Round Table

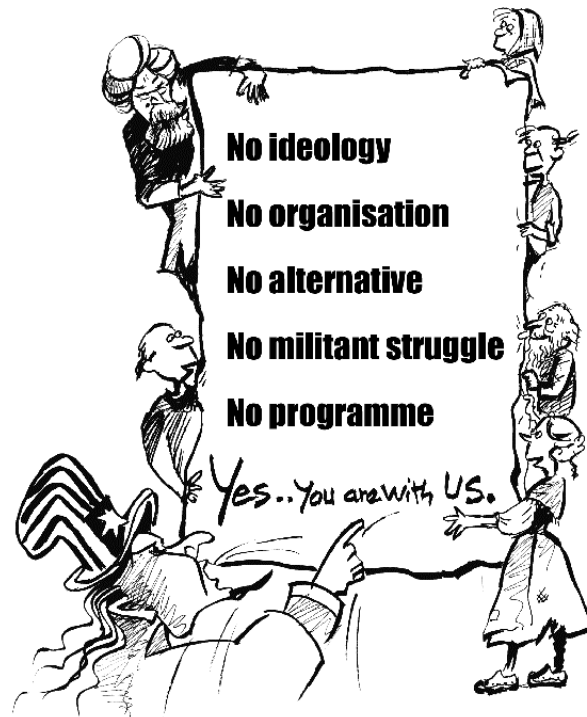
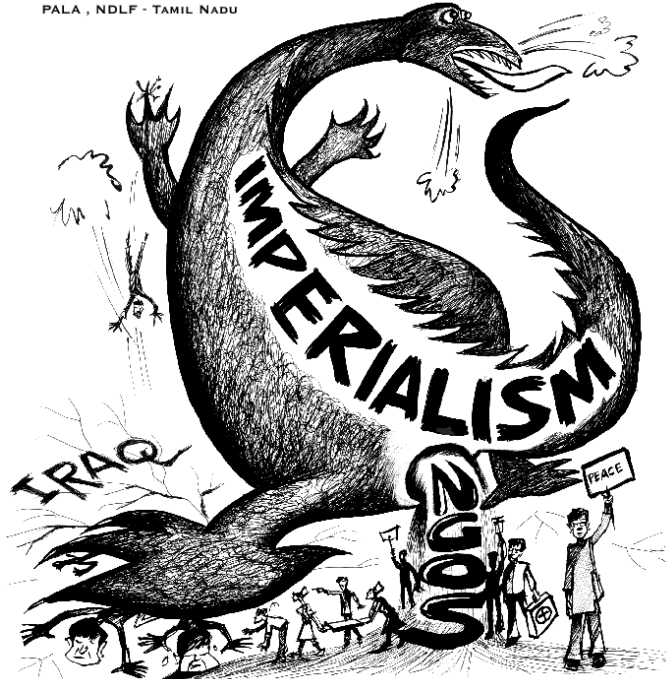
- George MONBIOT (UK) author, activist
- Gigi FRANCISCO (Philippines), Executive Director of Women and Gender Institute (WAGI)
- Gustavo CODAS (Brazil), economist, Central Union of Workers (CUT)
- Irene KHAN (Bangladesh), Secretary General of Amnesty International
- Jeremy CORBIN (UK), Labour MP, anti-war activist
- Jose BOVÉ (France) Leader of Confederation Paysanne
- Joseph STIGLITZ (US), former World Bank director, Nobel Economics laureate
- Juan SOMOVIA (Chile), Secretary General, International Labour Organisation
- Luis AYALA (Chile), Secretary General of Socialist International
- Lynne MUTHANI (Kenya), EcoNews Africa
- Mary ROBINSON (Ireland), former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, former President of Ireland
- Maude BARLOW (Canada) Chairperson of the Council of Canadians
- Martin MAKWAN (India), Convenor of the National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights
- Medha PATKAR (India) social activist, Narmada Bachao Andolan, anti-dam movement
- Michael ALBERT (US), Z Magazine/Z net founder
- Mustafa BARGHOUTI (Palestine) Secretary of Palestinian National Initiative
- Mutu ICHIYO (Japan), writer, anti-war campaigner
- Neth DANO (Philippines), Executive Director of Southeast Asian Regional Institute for Community Education
- Nira YUVAL DAVIS (UK), professor and author
- Nguyen THI BINH (Vietnam) Vice President of Vietnam
- Nora CORTINAS (Argentina), Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo
- P. SAINATH (India), journalist, author
- Pervez HOODBHOY (Pakistan), professor and activist
- Piedad CORDOBA (Colombia), Colombian Senate's Commission on Human Rights
- Prabash JOSHI (India), journalist
- Prabhat PATNAIK (India) Marxist thinker, economist
- Radhika COOMARASWAMY (Sri Lanka), UN Special Rapporteur on Violence
- Rafael ALEGRÍA (Honduras), leader of Via Campesina

- Roger MOODY (UK), peace activist, author
- Samir AMIN (Egypt), neo-Marxist theoretician and author
- Saher SABA (Afghanistan), Revolutionary Association of Women in Afghanistan
- Satu HASSI (Finland), Minister of Environment
- Shirin EBADI (Iran) Human Rights lawyer, Nobel Peace laureate
- Thandika MKANDAWIRE (Sweden), Director of UN Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD)
- Trevor NGWANE (South Africa), Anti-Privatisation Forum
- Vandana SHIVA (India) activist, Director of the Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Ecology
- Walden BELLO (Philippines), Director of Focus on the Global South
- Winnie MANDELA (South Africa)
- Wolfgang SACHS (Germany), Wuppertal Institute for Climate, Energy, and the Environment, author
- V.P. SINGH (India), former Prime Minister of India
- Yasser Abed RABBO (Palestine), Drafter of Middle East peace plan, the Geneva Initiative
- Yossi BEILIN (Israel), Drafter of Middle East peace plan, the Geneva Initiative

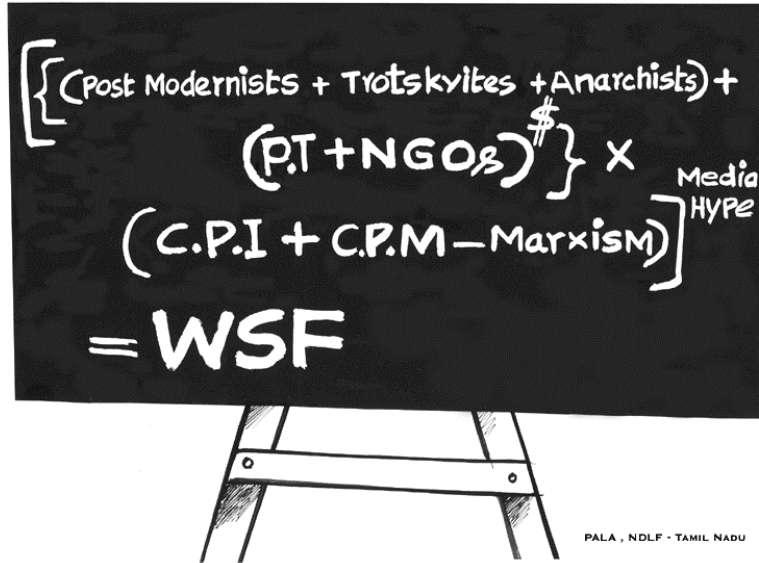
APPENDIX C:

Anti-WSF Cartoons

PALA, NDLF - TAMIL NADU



DECONSTRUCTION OF A TEXT



IndyMedia website

APPENDIX D:

MUMBAI DECLARATION 2004 Against Imperialist Globalisation & War

We “Mumbai Resistance 2004 Against Imperialist Globalisation and War”, an international event held in Mumbai, India, 17-20 January 2004 participated in by more than 300 organisations and thousands of individual from all parts of India and from other countries all over the world hereby adopt the following declaration.

We have successfully achieved the objectives of MR 2004 as conceived by the International League of People’s Struggles (ILPS) at the Thessaloniki Resistance in June 2003, to hold an international event co-sponsored by the broadest range of anti-imperialist groups, to consolidate and strengthen the anti-imperialist movement.

Drawing inspiration and strength from the unity, commitment, energy and international co-ordination that MR 2004 has gathered, generated and heightened, we make the following pledges and calls to action:

We PLEDGE to fight imperialist globalisation and war to the end. For this we will unite with all forces that stand in opposition to the horrors resulting from this new anti-people offensive.

We PLEDGE to steadfastly stand by the poverty-stricken masses, who are the worst victims of imperialist globalisation. We will unite with them in their struggles against imperialist plunder and war throughout the world.

We PLEDGE to vehemently oppose the disastrous impact on society in the form of the dehumanising poverty, destruction of the peoples’ livelihood, the destruction of the environment, the crass consumerism, the heightened alienation, and the increasing degeneration of the cultural life of the people.

We PLEDGE to fight against the further infringement and even whole assault on the sovereignty of all oppressed countries, that has come under massive attack by the forces of imperialist globalisation and their institutions like the TNCs, World Bank, IMF, WTO, etc. and also their imperialist governments, specifically that of US imperialism.

We PLEDGE to fight back the growing fascist attacks of ruling classes around the world and their whipping up of parochial hysteria, pitting one community against another. Particularly, Racism, Zionism, etc., which act as the ideological content of fascism in various regions of the world, will be opposed tooth and nail.

We PLEDGE to fight shoulder to shoulder together with the people of various countries that have come under the jackboots of imperialist aggression, particularly that of the US imperialists.

We PLEDGE to fight for the abrogation of all the loans to the third world by the imperialists and their agencies like IMF, World Bank, etc,

We resolve to put up a formidable fight alongside the Iraqi people until all US and other occupation troops are withdrawn from Iraq.

We resolve to fight alongside the Palestinian and other Arab people shoulder to shoulder in getting back their land and sovereignty; and that the Jewish and Palestinian people live in peace, with equal rights.

We resolve to fight for the withdrawal of all foreign troops from Afghanistan and all other countries of the world, and the disbandment of all US military bases around the globe.

We resolve to fight for the unconditional release of all political prisoners incarcerated by the reactionary regimes, particularly of those fighting US imperialism and their lackeys.

We resolve to fight for the scrapping of all the multilateral institutions like the IMF, World Bank and WTO, etc, and the removal of TNC operations in the oppressed countries of the world.

We resolve to fight for the forthwith annulment of all unequal Treaties, Agreements and Military Pacts signed between the imperialists and the oppressed countries of the world.

We are determined to achieve our full and total sovereignty – economical, political and military – of all nation-states of the world, and their fundamental right to national self-determination of all nationalities, where these have been infringed in any way.

In India, where this Conference is being held, we resolved to fight for:

- the end of 'economic reforms', liberalisation, privatisation, and globalisation of the economy, and the unhindered entry of foreign capital into the country.
- the end of imperialist paradigm of governance and development model. We stand for the establishment of people - centred development and institutions of real democracy with full employment and equitable entitlements. We resolve to fight for right to work.
- the end of all forms of State terror, in the form of undemocratic legislations like POTA, banning strikes and TU activities, extra-judicial killings, torture, custodial rape, disappearances and the banning of various parties and organisations.
- the end of state-sponsored Hindutva Fascism and defence of all rights of the minorities, and punishment for all those responsible for the demolition of Babri Masjid and the Gujarat genocide.
- the end of army operations against the nationality movements and withdrawal of all Indian forces from Bhutan being used to crush the movements based there; grant all nationalities their right to self-determination.
- the end of State terror against all democratic movements, including the armed revolutionary struggles of the masses, and demand the right to organisation and free speech to all.
- the end of the further infringement of our Sovereignty by imperialism in general and the US/ Israel axis in particular.
- the end of attacks on the peasantry, badly hit by: the flood of cheap imports; cut in investments; end to concessional credit, electricity, water; cut in subsidies, de facto scrapping of PDS; and corporatisation of agriculture.
- the end of attacks on students and youth as manifested in the privatisation of education, the loss of jobs, opportunities, and the extensive promotion of degenerate cultural values.
- the end of the incessant marginalisation of tribal people and the scrapping of all big projects leading to their displacement and their right to the forest land, wealth and self rule.
- the end of attacks on the working class and the growing spectre of unemployment; the repeal of the anti-labour laws, and end to VRS, a stop to the contractualisation of labour, etc.
- the end of all forms of casteism and the despicable practice of untouchability; and an immediate stop to the growing attacks on dalits with overt and covert state support. We commit ourselves to the struggles of all the oppressed caste people against Brahmanism that has regained in strength under neo-liberal globalization.

- A large majority of Indian population constitutes artisan castes and classes they have been adversely affected by the policies of globalisation. Without showing any alternative their livelihood is destroyed. We resolve to fight against this situation.
- the end the cultural onslaughts of Hindutva forces on the Dalits, Adivasis and other oppressed castes and their intrigues to use them as their cannon fodder for achieving their vile goal of Hindu Rashtra.
- the end of all manifestations of patriarchy and the growing commoditification of women in this period of globalisation; particularly the growing trafficking of women and the intensified debasement of women through advertising, tourism, pornography, etc.
- the end of Indian expansionism and the outright bullying and treaties to the neighbouring countries by the Indian ruling classes in close alliance with their US bosses.

We CALL on the people to boycott the products of TNCs/MNCs and thereby bringing massive losses on the imperialists and their empires markets, to leave the country particularly American imperialists' and build militant mass struggles to drive away them from our countries.

We CALL on the people to build firm resistance to the US military camps worldwide. We resolve to take up a consistent mass protest movement, till all US and other imperialist military camps are completely withdrawn.

We CALL on the people of all countries of the world, including India, to unite to fight back the imperialist offensive going on under the signboard of 'globalisation' and join to defend the rights of the working people throughout the world.

We CALL on the people to smash the imperialist aggressors, particularly the US, and ally firmly with the resistance movements, particularly in Iraq, Afghanistan and Palestine until victory.

We CALL on the people to oppose State terror, and anti-democratic laws like POTA whatever its form, and fight back their growing fascist onslaught across the world.

We CALL on the people not to be taken in by imperialist schemes and tricks to diffuse discontent, particularly by NGOs and Social democrats, but to build a mighty militant movement to smash imperialism and its agents throughout the world, and work towards building a new order, based on equality and justice for all – a world moving towards socialism.

We express our deep sense of solidarity and oneness with all people worldwide in struggles against imperialism and all reaction and strongly seek coordination in building common battlegrounds against our common enemy, that is, imperialism and the classes, which constitute its composition.

We, the struggling people of the world assembled here under the banner of Mumbai Resistance 2004 hereby declare our total support to the ongoing people's liberation movements in general and to the people of Nepal, Columbia, Peru, Philippines, Bangladesh, Turkey, India in particular. We severely condemn the military designs and repressive policies of US imperialism and their junior partners to suppress these peoples' movements fighting for real democracy.

We declare, from this anti-imperialist assembly of the people of the world, that we fight shoulder to shoulder along with them against US imperialism and their local agents and firmly resolve to intensify people's movements demanding withdrawal of troops from Iraq, fighting against Plan-Columbia and such other military designs of US in South America, and direct and indirect military intervention in South Asia in general and Philippines and Nepal in particular.

On this, the 18th Day of January 2004, let us all PLEDGE to unite and march forward in the path of struggle. Let us create a new bright future for all the toiling masses of the world. As a first step, let us OBSERVE March 20 as Anti-imperialist War-Day; the Day US/British forces aggressed on Iraq – a day to be observed by mass protests against the imperialists, and militant actions against imperialist forces and their agents in India and throughout the world.

January 18, 2004

Signed by

311 Organisations that Comprise MR-2004



