

- ▲ Habitat – Post Tsunami Issues
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CED

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This digest features important articles on development and social transformation in order to reach those working in the field and not having knowledge of these documents. It is aimed at promoting further reading of the originals, and generation public debate and action on public issues. The articles are compiled and edited for easy reading and comprehension of the concepts, and not so much to reproduce the academic accuracy of the original texts.

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# *Habitat – post Tsunami issues*

*Thousands of houses have been built in the last 24 months for those affected by The Tsunami of 2004. Estimates vary, but it is clear that there is still a huge task ahead to build houses for all those displaced in December that year.*

When that is done, will it be enough?



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## **Disaster Rehabilitation, giving direction to Sustainable Development**

A Talk *by Sandeep Virmani*, Recorded in April 2006, Paris.

[http://59.92.116.99/website/RDC/RDC-interviews/SandeepVirmani\\_Transcript.doc](http://59.92.116.99/website/RDC/RDC-interviews/SandeepVirmani_Transcript.doc) [L.Y03.VB34]

## **Challenges and risks in post-tsunami housing reconstruction in Tamil Nadu**

*by Jennifer Duyne Barenstein*, Humanitarian Practice Network <http://www.odihpn.org/report.asp?id=2798>

[C.ELDOC1.0705/challenges-post-tsunami-house-TN.html]

## **The Daily Apocalypse** *by Satya Sagar* January 01, 2007, Vol.6, Issue 1

[http://combatlaw.org/information.php?article\\_id=851&issue\\_id=32](http://combatlaw.org/information.php?article_id=851&issue_id=32)

[C.ELDOC1.Y00\_/01jan07col3.html]

**Tsunami Recovery: Sustainability, Poverty, and the Politics of Aid** *by Dr. Vandana Shiva* Keynote Speech by Dr. Vandana Shiva at the 10th Anniversary of HRH The Prince of Wales's Business and Environment Programme, Developed by the University of Cambridge Programme for Industry

<http://www.navdanya.org/articles/06tsunami-speech.htm>

[C.ELDOC1.0705/politics-of-aid.html]

People, **all** people, women and men, poor and rich, children, youth and adults, have the right to a place, not only to sleep and cook,

but also to work and play, study and have fun;

a right to spaces, access to public spaces  
like the bus stand, the market, the boat yard,  
the temple, mosque or church,  
the community hall, the school and college,  
the right to water, power and fuel;

the right to health and sanitation.

Or is this available only for the residents of Amby Valley?

Is an ecologically and livelihood sensitive habitat too expensive for the poor?

Is psychosocial equilibrium and equity available for ALL peoples, all communities?

These are some of the issues relating to Habitat issues beyond merely providing living quarters, come to the fore.

From the experience of relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction come many insights and learning. These have an implication and impact far beyond the confines of disaster zones – lessons for habitat issues in urban and rural settings, in slum rehabilitation and mass rural construction, in infrastructure development, and adaptation and mitigation of the impact of climate change.

With this 16th edition of development digest, we bring to you a short series of what participants in the development process associated with relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction have learnt and shared among themselves and the communities they have worked with.



Excerpts

## **Disaster Rehabilitation, giving direction to Sustainable Development**

*A Talk by Sandeep Virmani*

What are alternate building methodologies and what are main stream? In India, over the last 50-60 years, the diversity of building methodologies has narrowed to mainly concrete, steel and glass. Most of our engineers are trained only in this technology. So when a disaster happens, they do not understand any other material or ways of working.

Every year the largest construction that happens in the country is still in mud and earth, and it is the artisans' structures in the villages. There is a lot of traditional knowledge or traditional systems that are available, but these have not been given recognition by our formal systems and we are not using them. We in the cities are working with concrete. But, the total concrete construction that happens is still a relatively small as compared to the entire construction happening in the country. So the construction happening in the villages and the building methodologies being used are still main stream.

It is true that the concrete boxes are being used increasingly and the artisanal structures are reducing. And this is the debate on sustainability that we would like to change.

Sustainability to us means something that's replicable by society that reduces needs at some point. There is a difference between a conservationist and an environmentalist. An environmentalist wants to maintain the existing standards of comfort and energy use, but wants a technical solution. But what we have to do is to try using technology in ways that reduces needs.

Decentralization has to be a very key component of anything that has to be sustainable right down to communities. You cannot achieve sustainability if you have inequitable growth.

The second question is in terms of people's likeness for concrete boxes as opposed to more sustainable materials. After the Gujarat earthquake in 2001 we had two policies. One was "take the money and build your own house". The second was "you can partner an NGO and the NGO will build a house for you". About 65% people chose to build their own house and about 35% chose to partner an NGO to build. Almost every NGO said that people asked for concrete boxes and that is how the villages came up.

We did a survey about three years after the disaster to study what people did with the money they had received for building their houses. We found that 95% of them had used artisanal methods. They used tiled roofs and not flat roofs. So the satisfaction equation was 'If you are going to give me money or spend it on me, yes, I would like to have a concrete box. But if I have the money in my own hands, I have other higher priorities than a fancy idea of a concrete roof.'

Disasters & Sustainable Development

Disaster can be used as an opportunity to enable people to express and envisage their own re-development, as they would like it. Creativity flows tremendously during disasters, finances are available and a lot of international experience is focused on a small area. It is important to have a good coordination mechanism to address an issue at the earliest. If you start a debate at the appropriate time, you'll get solutions from all around. And then these can be adopted into policy frameworks and channelized. This is how we managed to achieve so much in three or four years otherwise it would have taken a decade to do the rehabilitation work. We will look at three examples at the village, city and regional level.

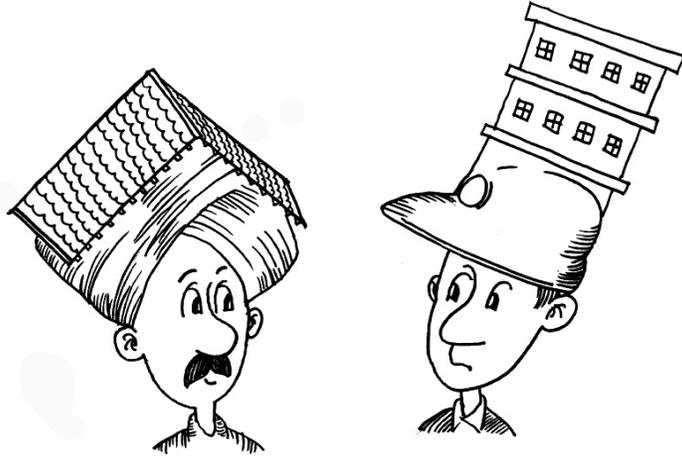
### **Rehabilitation in Tangdhar, Kashmir**

Along with 10 NGOs we worked in the Tangdhar Valley situated at 10,000 feet. Terrorism is a major problem in this region. The earthquake happened in October and the first snowfall happens in the first week of December. So we had only two months to get people into some kind of shelters so that they could face the winters.

The typical response of most engineers, architects and people was things must happen fast and pre-fabricated structures should be used. The State Government invited us to suggest a fast construction method. We told them, after a disaster the only thing that people are left with is their piece of land, their rubble and their surviving community. The best therapy for them is to actually go and start constructing some form of temporary shelters again themselves.

They said we could try this in one village and if it worked out they would think in terms of making a policy.

We had discussions with the Tangdhar people. We asked the local artisans about the structures that did not collapse during the earthquake and what was unique about them. They explained that these structures were those in which the building was not anchored into the ground. They were floored on top of a plinth that was made in stone. So when the earth moved these houses did not take the entire impact. This was something that the engineers could not understand. How can a building not be anchored in the ground?



We started in one village. The government was to provide the money after the shelter was completed by the individual family. They built the entire structure in two days and two nights. And the entire village made its own shelters in five days. Also, because people knew that they would get a fixed amount of money for rebuilding their shelters, they were keen on recycling as much material as possible, so they could get some cash in their hands at the end of the process. Almost all the material was recycled.

Later the Jammu & Kashmir Government developed a policy based on this experience. It also announced an incentive scheme wherein if people completed their houses before the first snowfall, they would get an additional Rs.5,000. In a period of just 25 days about 7000 interim shelters came up. And by the time the first snowfall actually happened, about 20,000 shelters were completed. Material banks were created and it was ensured that people didn't have to go to the forests to cut wood.

However that's as far as temporary shelters is concerned. How do we actually do this entire process for permanent shelters with the involvement of people?

### **Rehabilitation in Kutch and Bhuj in Gujarat**

We learnt this in the 2001 earthquake in Kutch, Gujarat. About 600 villages and six towns were affected and this was a large area.

Two policies were declared. One in which people could build their own houses and they are given money in installments, through bank accounts. The second one in which they could partner an NGO. However the decision of "how I want to get my own house built" remained with the village community. It was not forced upon them.

Here what we basically did was provide \$178 worth of material. These were made available in three stages for people to build through material banks. However, they had to make their own arrangements as far as the labor was concerned and make their own temporary shelters. Basically our work was only to organize.

About 22,000 structures came up in 6 months. We asked about 10-15 villages to send all their masons to us. We had a three day discussion with them on what went wrong and why so many houses got destroyed. They had a lot to share and soon a whole knowledge base on safe construction was created. This was supported with scientific information. 80 Masons went to about 450 villages and held meetings with others. In just four months, the seismic standards shot up from 30% to 86%.

Once people knew that they could build their own structures they started making their own kinds of buildings. They agreed that mud is a material that they understood well because they had farms and it is also easily available. They also wanted a light structure instead of concrete, without thatch, with tiles. The women were very clear; they did not want the walls to be maintained all the time.

So we introduced 'soil-cement earth blocks' which are structurally strong and energy efficient. However these were not allowed in our building bylaws, the ISI codes. Dr. Arya, National Seismic Advisor, Government of India, analyzed the structural strength of these blocks following which the Gujarat government introduced a guideline on stabilized earth technologies including use of light roofs, tiles and sand filled foundation.

This was a huge cost savings for people in the villages. They were also keen on employment so that they could keep a part of the rehabilitation money rather than spending it on buying all the material from outside. So they were very happy to make their own earth blocks.

Another problem was that masons were becoming scarce. The cost of masons shot up to double because of the demand and supply change. So we started working with the rammed earth technique. This technique allowed very fast and safe construction, without masons. To discourage the use of wood we promoted fabricated steel. We later on went on to use 'wattle and daub' because it has much better thermal properties and its something the villagers knew very well. Little hooks were designed to be put on

each tile attached with loose wires so that during a cyclone, when the air fills into the room, it works like a spring. It opens up, releases the pressure and comes down again. So it was a very simple innovation done in collaboration with BGS Germany.

The villagers then celebrated the bhunga in a more elaborate way. Because there were many people coming from outside to these villages, they hosted people in these traditional structures made with thatched roofs instead of tiles. Women used lime to decorate their homes. Artisans from this area have started taking walling contracts to see how they can bring these technologies into urban areas.

Similarly small towns in India have very narrow lanes. They have the cul-de-sac systems. The Environment Planning Collaborative, Ahmedabad, worked in Bhuj after the earthquake. It was impossible to get into the city. The inner city was completely destroyed and because of the narrowness of lanes it was difficult to have rescue systems in place. There were about 588 plots whereas there was place only for 390 plots.

So if a well laid out inner town was to be developed again, 30% people would have to move out. We held several public meetings and put the problem before the people. They themselves made a decision. Based on this everybody was asked to apply stating clearly, whether they wanted to move out to a new laid out larger plot or continue staying within the old city with deduction on their original plot size. About 38% opted to move out. The people who had commercial interests within the city did not mind having some deductions.

So the entire inner city was actually taken away from the owners for a period of three months and replanning was done. There were a lot of problems at the individual level, which the various committees setup had to solve on one-on-one basis.

Another initiative in the city of Bhuj that we worked on is the *Urban Watershed Management*. The city of Bhuj is about 450 years old. The kings at that time had developed a very interesting water management system. There are nine interconnected lakes. Also there is an aquifer which is sandstone.

So water was brought into these lakes, the water percolated into the ground and was taken out through what they called 'thousand wells'. These wells were managed by the communities. Once these lakes dried up, the gates were opened to put water into these lakes, which would again percolate into the ground. These were interconnected through canals, tunnels, gateways, barrages; through really intricate systems of channeling water into these lakes.

The 2001 earthquake actually gave us an opportunity to revive this entire process. One long canal had got de-linked. The tunnels had also broken down. So we connected these. About 30 wells have been revived so far. They have sweet water again. There is a huge sewerage system that has been put into place, and we are trying to recycle and re-use the water in the city.

Then we also took up a small *social housing project* for the people who were earlier living in the inner walled city of Bhuj and were not given land in the city. These were basically those people, who were living as tenants and in slums. The government also provided services for these people. We helped them with part finance and part bank loans, for them to be able to build their own houses. The artisans who built the rural areas also built this township. So the entire township is done in earth construction.

Professor Aditya Prakash, (member of the team responsible for developing Chandigarh) has suggested some very interesting concepts. He believed that that the Indian city is not bereft of villages. So you need to have concepts which are sustainable, where villages are incorporated within the city. He suggested that along any highway between cities, a town or towns develop. It is the rural areas around the city that actually cater to all the basic needs of the town. So we need to give them space within the city.

We are trying to implement these concepts in Bhuj. This is an experiment to see how sustainable growth of social housing can be managed.

## **Rehabilitation in Aceh, Sumatra**

At the regional level, in Aceh, what we have tried to get people to make their own regional plan of 25 villages. There are about 12 NGOs helping them to build. It is the people's plan that the NGOs are implementing.

*Finally, these are some of the indicators that we look upon while evaluating artisans on any work that is done:*

- Is it upgrading local skills?
- Are local materials being used?
- Is there cultural/environmental affinity-are the parameters related to these aspects taken into consideration?
- What is people's contribution? Are they participating or just involved as laborers?
- Is it cost effective? (A lot of artificial money comes in after disasters and if you leave behind things which people cannot actually build later on, on their own, it doesn't have any value)
- Are the problems being solved? (It is not necessary that anything traditional is fine. There are problems that need to be solved, because the communities are changing and there are new aspirations. So you have to be able to constantly address these issues) ▶

Disasters & Sustainable Development

***Recorded in April 2006/ Paris at the "Sustainable Built Environment: an Indian Experience - Approaches and Practices Overview".***

**Sandeep Virmani** *is the Managing Director of Hunnarshala Foundation in Bhuj, Gujarat, India.*

Excerpts

## **Challenges and Risks in Post-Tsunami Housing Reconstruction in Tamil Nadu**

*by Jennifer Duyne Barenstein*

The Indian Ocean tsunami of December 2004 was one of the most powerful in recorded history. With an official human toll of 10,881 and material losses of over \$1bn, India was one of the most severely affected countries. Over three-quarters of India's disaster-affected people belong to Tamil Nadu's coastal fishing communities. Of the 154,000 houses damaged or destroyed by the tsunami, 80% belonged to fishers.

Whether these disaster-affected communities will be able to restore their livelihoods and recover materially and psychologically from their traumatic experience depends, among other factors, on whether external aid is culturally sensitive, and can build on local capacities and skills. This requires a better understanding of housing culture and practices within tsunami-affected communities.

### *Housing culture in Tamil Nadu*

House-building in India is a culturally sensitive and highly ritualised process. It is a social event. Tamil Nadu's fishing families generally construct new houses on the marriage of a son. They consult an astrologer, who decides in whose name the house should be built, draws the plans, showing the orientation of the main entrance, walls, and the number of doors and windows; establishes an auspicious date and time to begin the construction, and performs a ritual on the construction site as well as before occupation of the new house.

Women have a central role in the construction process. As their husbands spend most of their time at sea, women are often responsible for mobilising labourers, buying materials and supervising the works. Although the main construction work is done by specialised castes from neighbouring villages, adult family members contribute with their labour.

Post-tsunami reconstruction

The size of the house and the construction materials used depend on the owners' socio-economic status, age and personal preferences. Many fishers' houses consist of only two or three rooms, with a large semi-open veranda at the front. The veranda is the most important room in the house: it is where people spend their leisure time and entertain guests during the day, and where they sleep at night. Inner rooms are used mainly for storage. In most cases the kitchen is separate from the main house, and is invariably located in the south-east corner of the homestead plot. Fishers' houses are typically painted with beautiful geometric patterns, or images of flowers or animals. Homes are surrounded by thick vegetation, which provides shade.

### *Post-tsunami Housing Reconstruction in Tamil Nadu*



Soon after the tsunami, the government of Tamil Nadu, with assistance from the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the UN Development Programme (UNDP), developed a comprehensive Emergency Tsunami Reconstruction Project (ETRP). Under the ETRP, the government planned to provide assistance to repair, rebuild or construct 140,000 damaged houses in Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry. NGOs, voluntary organisations and public and private sector enterprises were invited to 'adopt' villages for reconstruction, and were granted the freedom to choose their own architects and reconstruction approaches. The response was unprecedented: almost every coastal village in Tamil Nadu has been adopted for reconstruction by NGOs.

The majority of NGOs opted for full reconstruction by means of construction companies. The aim has been to replace all self-built traditional houses with 'modern' settlements of flat-roofed reinforced concrete buildings. The number of houses to be built is defined by the number of married couples, regardless of whether they live in a joint family or constitute an independent household. The promise that each couple would be entitled to a new house has led over the last year to a dramatic increase in marriages. The assumption that fishers live in independent nuclear families is also reflected in the design of the proposed

houses. In general, houses have no veranda, or only a very small one. The new houses are constructed in rows on plots that are too small to allow for future additions. Considering the small size of the houses, this would be an important requirement.

Where land can be found at an acceptable price, new villages are built on sites adjacent to the existing settlement. In most cases, however, no additional land can be found, and the new village is built on the same site as the old one. Villagers are often forced to demolish their old houses and to surrender their land to make space for the construction of the new village. The social tensions emerging out of these processes are already tangible, as families whose houses were not damaged by the tsunami try to resist demolition. Many companies require completely clear ground before starting construction, necessitating removing all trees. In a climate where temperatures typically reach 40 degrees centigrade, it is hard to imagine how people will manage to live in their tiny flat-roofed cement houses without any shade.

### *Conclusions*

The employment of construction companies in post-disaster housing reconstruction is not necessarily the most effective and sustainable option. Where people have the capacity to build their own houses, it may be better to limit the role of external agencies to the provision of financial and technical assistance.

Construction companies tend to build standard houses that do not meet the specific requirements of the families for whom they are intended. When construction materials and expertise are imported from outside, communities may find it difficult to repair or maintain their new homes. Villages reconstructed by professional companies generally pay little attention to communities' social organisation and settlement patterns. Occupancy rates for houses constructed by external agencies often remain low, as people refuse to move in. Whenever possible, people may in fact prefer to repair their old and damaged houses at their own expense, leading to impoverishment and wasted resources.

Post-tsunami housing reconstruction in Tamil Nadu is in its early stages, and it is too early to judge its ecological and socio-cultural consequences. It appears, however, that most NGOs involved in housing reconstruction have insufficient knowledge and experience in this field, and do not appear to be aware of the social risks associated with their reconstruction approach. There is an urgent need for NGOs to reconsider what they are doing, and to realise that there is more to post-disaster housing reconstruction

than building disaster-resistant homes. Construction companies may not be best placed to come forward with ecologically sustainable, socially equitable and culturally sensitive solutions. ▶

About the Author: **Jennifer Duyne Barenstein** is a lecturer and senior researcher at the Department of Social Anthropology of the University of Zurich and at the Department of Environment, Construction and Design of the University of Applied Science in Lugano.

Excerpts

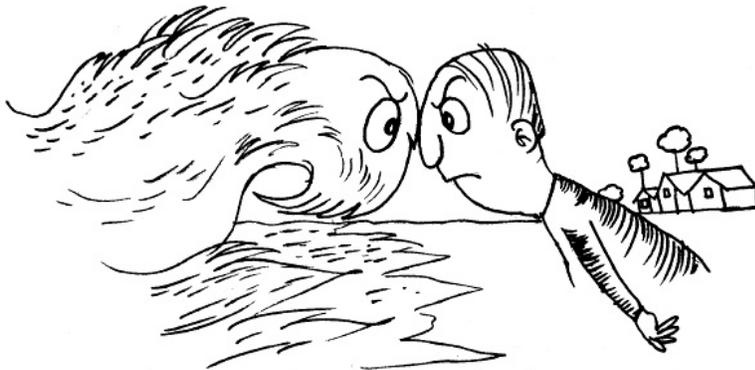
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by *Satya Sagar*

At the second anniversary of the Asian earthquake and tsunami of December 26, 2004, it is worthwhile pondering what it was all really about. Going by the numbers (over 225,000 dead, a million more displaced and impoverished) or by the area affected (12 countries across two continents) the event of December 26, 2004 was indeed a big one.

The tsunami challenged many assumptions that people had about many things. It overturned the idea of the sea as the very source of all life for many traumatized fishermen who have for centuries lived off its bounty.

For all its heartrending, graphic images of death, destruction and sorrow, I am still confused about what constitutes a disaster. Is it about the numbers involved? Is it about the way people died or suffered? Is it about the identity of the people involved?



To give an example of how the mathematics of mass disasters works or does not work, some three months after the tsunami, the Indonesian authorities made a quiet announcement that few noticed. Apparently over 56,000 people who had gone missing since the tsunami and had been feared dead were in fact found to be alive and living in the temporary camps set up for the displaced people. It occurred to me then that if I had mourned for those 56,000 people prematurely, what a waste of 'high quality, high profile mourning' it would have been!

Disasters - a continuing apocalypse

This is how ridiculous the situation gets when one starts measuring disasters in terms of the numbers involved. The simple truth is that every individual is an entire, unique universe on his or her own and with the passing of every individual an entire universe collapses.

The lack of focus on individuals caught up in disasters is just one of the problems with the general response of the world, governments and even NGOs to the Asian tsunami over the past two years. There are many other problems too.

**Lack of context:** One of the obvious shortcomings of the international response to the tsunami disaster has been the complete lack of contextualization. While the specific problems generated by the tsunami are unique and need to be addressed, it is my contention that this can be best done only by taking into serious account the background in which the disaster occurred. The lack of understanding of history, culture and local level politics is evident in the way the international response by the moneybags to the tsunami in Sri Lanka has played a role in reviving a dormant conflict.

**Local culpability:** The primary responsibility for whatever happens to the people lies with the local elites, the societies in which the survivors live and in many ways with the survivors themselves. In that sense, one of the important long-term goals of any form of rehabilitation should aim to build traditions and institutions that can deal with disasters of all kinds on a regular basis.

**Who are the "affected people":** Throughout the rehabilitation efforts of the past two years, the focus of the government and NGOs have been on dealing with the problems of 'tsunami survivors'. All others living in the same context, however vulnerable, have been deemed 'irrelevant'. For example, many poor communities in coastal Tamil Nadu, with low development indicators prior to the tsunami, or the thousands of refugees of the civil war in Sri Lanka surviving without basic necessities for long, have been completely bypassed in the distribution of relief and material aid. A fantastic opportunity was lost in using the huge sums of money pouring in after the tsunami to launch long-term social justice programmes.

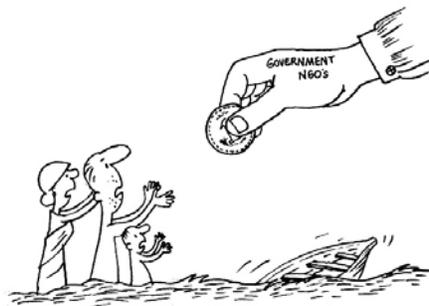
**Lack of linkages with other disasters:** Almost all the relief and rehabilitation efforts undertaken in the tsunami affected countries have been done with little reference to other natural disasters that have taken place in recent years. Whether it is the earthquakes in Turkey and Iran, or Hurricane Mitch, there is a

huge bank of experience and knowledge of dos and don'ts that can benefit those dealing with the situation in India, Indonesia, Sri Lanka or Thailand.

No one in coastal India knows about what is happening in coastal Thailand or Indonesia or even Sri Lanka. Apart from the valuable lessons to be learnt from each other, if there had been greater efforts in this direction, this could also have been the beginning of a new South-South international solidarity movement.

The Gujarat earthquake of 2001, in which over 30,000 people lost their lives, offered ample lessons at least in what should not be done while rehabilitating survivors. Not one lesson was incorporated into the post-tsunami efforts leading to similar problems.

**Learn from the survivors:** Another disturbing aspect is the way governments and NGOs have approached the 'affected population'. The pattern has been to look at them as completely helpless people in need of relief, rehabilitation, and counseling. There has been little attention paid to the trained and inherited skills, inherent strengths and human resources of the affected communities.



As a result of such an attitude, there are no programmes to help the survivor community consolidate and develop their own traditional skills, and better still, use these talents creatively to make additional income or create new livelihood opportunities in an atmosphere of self dignity and collective pride.

**Disaster as Godzilla:** The fundamental problem with 'disaster management' and 'disaster response' efforts all over is the way they are fixated with the definition of the disaster as a sudden, one-off calamitous event for which we need special institutions, policies and even gadgets to cope with. The core perspective

which guides this approach is one that looks at 'disasters' as being some kind of hidden monster or enemy out there to combat whom we need large and sophisticated weaponry.

In all this, the use of the armed forces to cope with natural calamities is a deeply worrying trend and one with long-term negative implications for all democratic societies. This is particularly true in the developing world, where, unfortunately, most disasters occur, and where the role of the State in public welfare has been systematically demolished by a combination of neo-liberal economic policies pushed by the World Bank and IMF and the outright corruption of the national elites.

**Disaster and democracy:** Whether it is nationally elected bodies, the bureaucracy or other government agencies, the sad fact is that over the years they have become defunct and useless when it comes to dealing with crisis of any sort. This leaves the military and the police among the few State institutions that are still relatively intact and functional. But where does all this leave ordinary citizens? Are they to remain forever dependent on the arrival of 'heroic troops' from remote corners of the country (and globe) after every disaster? Is there nothing that can be done at more local levels where citizens themselves are empowered to solve their own problems?

Maybe it is time we redefined what we mean by 'disasters' and instead of seeing them as one-off, unexpected phenomenon, consider them as part of a larger social and economic continuum. To understand this, we only need to look at the state of the roads, access to drinking water and sanitation, public health systems or means of communication in most developing countries, which have become a day-to-day disaster anyway.

For those who are afraid of impending apocalypses anywhere I have a message – the apocalypse is already over, it is happening right now, there are a million little apocalypses happening all the time. So stop searching for the BIG one and look more carefully at the little one in your immediate line of sight. ►

About the Author: **Satya Sagar** is a journalist and video-maker based in New Delhi. He is also the regional editor of '[www.tsunamiresponsetwatch.org](http://www.tsunamiresponsetwatch.org)' a website that monitors post-tsunami developments in South and South-East Asia.

Excerpts

## **Tsunami Recovery: Sustainability, Poverty, and the Politics of Aid**

*by Vandana Shiva*

Intelligence is first and foremost about the ability to receive feedback, and correct the course of one's action on its basis. The Tsunami disaster can be a major learning for humanity about sustainability and poverty alleviation. However, there are indications that even a disaster of such magnitude and such massive human impact is not enough to wake us up from our non-sustainability slumber. "More of the same, with vengeance" seems to be the recipe of official aid, without assessing the role of non-sustainable development in aggravating the vulnerability of coastal ecosystems and coastal communities and amplifying the tragic costs.

In a world of major human impact on the planet's vital processes, "natural" disasters are not purely natural. In indigenous world views, even the "natural" disaster of the Tsunami was man made. People in the Andaman and Nicobar islands view the Tsunami as the rage of the sea.

People died in larger numbers where "natural" protective barriers of mangroves, beaches, sand dunes had not been destroyed for hotels and industrial shrimp farms. They were protected where communities worked with nature to create and protect ecological barriers. Such villages can provide us lessons on sustainability and poverty reduction, and also provide signposts for sustainable recovery.

International aid played a major role in the destruction of the coastal ecosystems. In 1992, the World Bank invested \$1685 billion in agriculture and fisheries. Of this, India received \$425 million for intensive shrimp farming. Shrimp was farmed traditionally in India as part of integrated systems. The most famous is "Chemmeen Kethi", which is as perennial as natural ecosystems, and is based on a rotation of shrimp and rice cultivation. However, when production is not viewed in diversity, but through the monoculture of the mind, bio diverse outputs are ignored, and high productivity, high sustainability systems are declared low yielding.

This is how the World Bank introduced the intensive industrial shrimp farming to increase shrimp production. While the traditional system requires no external input and provides rice and shrimp for

consumption and sale for a local producer, the industrial shrimp farms require USD 11000/ha of investments. Production thus moves out of the hands of local communities and becomes a corporate activity.

Industrial shrimp farms cause major salinisation of water and agriculture. Shrimp feed needs 10 times more fish caught at sea than is produced, leading to a factor ten reduction in availability of fish protein for the poor. 87% of the intensive feed becomes pollution, which is dumped in the sea, on farms, in creeks; further destroying fish and fisheries livelihoods. Each acre of a shrimp farm has a footprint of 200 acres. Each dollar traded in export of Shrimp leaves ten dollars of destruction in the local ecology and economy. In contrast to ecological production, the intensive shrimp industry lasts only 5 years in a local. It has been called a "rape and run" industry.

While industrial shrimp farming was introduced as "development" for the fishing and farming community, the "beneficiaries" became victims of displacement and unemployment. Giant corporations and local politicians and bureaucrats become the beneficiaries of non-sustainable development.

Poverty and non-sustainability are two sides of the same mal-development which robs people of economic security and ecological security. Non-sustainability is extracting natural resources faster than they can be renewed and adding pollution loads heavier than nature can recycle. This burden of ecological non-sustainability goes hand in hand with the burden of poverty, since the resources that are destroyed support the livelihoods of local communities. Without resources and livelihoods people become poor. Local communities are thus made poorer by "aid" which is supposed to alleviate their poverty.

The tsunami recovery and rehabilitation plans need to take into account the vulnerability arising from non-sustainable development as an intrinsic element of disaster preparedness for un-natural disasters to which human actions have contributed. We need to be prepared to face droughts, floods cyclones of increasing frequency and intensity as a result of the climate change resulting from the atmospheric pollution caused by the fossil fuel economy.

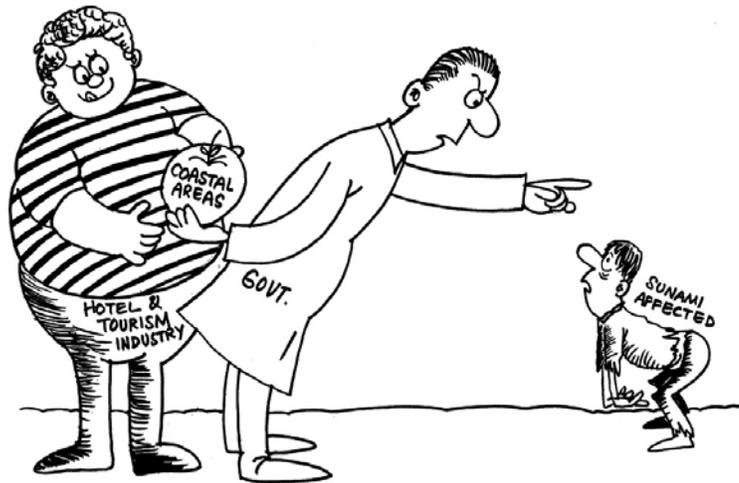
For this, ecologically destructive policies need to be reversed, and destructive activities stopped. Ecological sustainability, and people's participation, and human rights must guide recovery plans.

However, official rehabilitation plans and policies are threatening to create further ecological destruction in coastal zones and further social and economic displacement of coastal communities. The World Bank is preparing to rehabilitate the prawn farms it had financed, which India's Supreme Court had ordered closed. While the illegal, destructive industrial aquaculture is being rehabilitated; there are attempts to further displace coastal communities to 1 km from the shoreline, as part of rehabilitation plans. It was after all, to protect the fragile coastal ecosystem that the Government of India had passed the Coastal Regulation Zone laws. This environmental law was violated by the prawn farms, since no development activity can be undertaken within 500 metres of the shore line.

The construction lobby is the other lobby which systemically works against environmental laws by mining sand from beaches, by constructing roads, hotels and resorts along the coast. In June - July, 2004 a coastal road was permitted on the beach in Besant Nagar in Chennai in violation of CRZ and in spite of local protests. While roads and bridges were washed away, there is a proposal to build a 1076 sea wall along the Tamil Nadu seacoast from Chennai to Kanyakumari.

Ecologically appropriate biodiversity reduced the vulnerability to the Tsunami yet the World Bank and other aid agencies continue to ignore the lessons. They want to build sea walls of concrete, and rebuild the industrial aquaculture farms, which caused the devastation of the ecological barriers nature and people, had built over centuries. They want to flush out the people without whose knowledge and skills the real coastal protection and coastal recovery cannot take place.

That this cancer of non-sustainability is not just an Indian disease but is global becomes evident from the fact that even in Sri Lanka, the Government is intent on maintaining a shoreline exclusion zone in which private residential buildings will not be permitted and



in which

tourist/holiday commercial property development is to be exclusively permitted.

Development and aid thus become new opportunities and more consumption for the rich, and displacement of the poor from their homes, their lands, and their resources, their livelihoods. Such “aid” creates poverty, it does not reduce it. This formula of displacement as development and non-sustainability as recovery is violative of all ecological principles and of human rights.

In my home Doon Valley, we have a large forest sanctuary, the Rajaji Park, home of tigers and elephants, boar and deer, birds and monkeys. A few years ago, people driving on the road through the sanctuary started to throw bananas and bread for the monkeys.

Today the monkeys wait on the road for food. Often they are crushed to death by passing traffic. The forest, which they have abandoned, has all they need and security too. Yet they have forgotten that their food comes from the forest, not from passing cars. Sometimes I feel aid that ignores sustainable living and livelihoods and human capacities and human dignity is like the piece of white bread thrown at monkeys of a forest from the window of a passing car. Let us together work to prevent reducing our coastal communities to the status of monkeys of Rajaji sanctuary. Let us join our energy and intelligence with theirs to rebuild their lives and homes, with beauty and dignity, sustainability and self-reliance. ►

*Keynote Speech by Dr. Vandana Shiva at the 10th Anniversary of HRH The Prince of Wales's Business and Environment Programme, Developed by the University of Cambridge Programme for Industry*

# WSF – beyond its ‘use by’ date?

The World Social Forum (WSF) was seen as a counterpoint to the Annual Davos Retreat of the rich and the powerful; as a riposte to the confabulations and machinations of international capital and corporate networking that took place annually at the Swiss Resort.

The WSF is now in its seventh year. What kind of an animal has it turned out to be?

Has it been an imitation gone on for too long? Has the imitation left it impotent and shambolic? Is it so much of a Forum that it has been emasculated of all revolutionary potential?



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**Is the WSF Movement in Crisis?** *by Lee Sutar* February 16, 2007

[http://www.socialistworker.org/2007-1/619/619\\_11\\_WSF.shtml](http://www.socialistworker.org/2007-1/619/619_11_WSF.shtml)

[C.ELDOC1.0705/socialist-worker-WSF.html]

**World Social Forum: Just another NGO Fair?** *by Firoze Manji* January 26, 2007

<http://www.pambazuka.org/en/category/features/39464>

[C.ELDOC1.0705/WSF-NGO-fair.html]

**The World Social Forum: From Defense to Offense** *by Immanuel Wallerstein,*

February 07, 2007 <http://www.zmag.org/content/showarticle.cfm?ItemID=12053>

[C.ELDOC1.0705/WSF-defense-to-offense.html]

**From WSF 'NGO trade fair' to Left politics?** *by Patrick Bond* February 01, 2007

<http://www.zmag.org/Sustainers/Content/2007-02/01bond.cfm>

[C.ELDOC1.0705/WSF-NGO-trade-fair-politics.html]

Did big money (international NGOs) capitulate to local (Kenyan) moneybags and oppressors at the last WSF?

*Or is it such a success that year after year people, common people, the disempowered and their comrades and well-wishers, keeping the faith, gather together with optimism and fervour to renew their pledge for a better world – that*

*is possible? And return with increased energy and a renewed vision? Such that the collective strength of the gathering masses was more than a match for the local vested interests that tried to dominate at Nairobi?*

Is it a Forum? Is it a Marketplace for NGOs to show their wares? Is it a place where Revolutionaries congregate to plot their strategies?

There is no consensus on these issues, and from the Mumbai WSF onwards participation and dissent (with the WSF process) has been played out in the open, even at Porto Alegre, and later on at Nairobi too.

Is this evidence of a vibrant democratic process? Or is it a narcissistic self-absorbed pathology?

Neither the WSF nor the critiques give straightforward answers. Even if that – straightforward answers – is not a valid objective expectation, it is clear that the WSF process needs a radical rethink to remain relevant and useful.

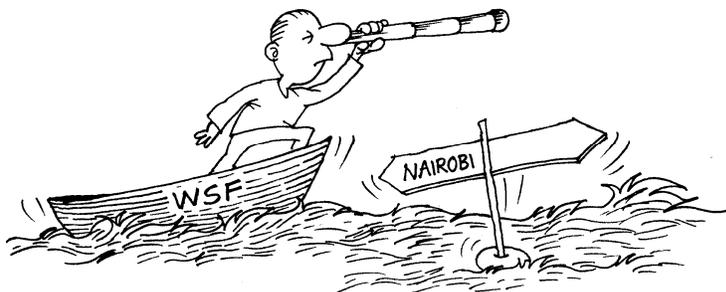


Excerpts

## Is the WSF Movement in Crisis?

*by Lee Sustar*

THE 2007 WORLD Social Forum in Nairobi highlighted some of the strengths - but also problems and limitations - of the international conferences. In fact, questions remain over the future of the WSF, with no meetings scheduled for 2008 and no location announced for the next planned event in 2009.



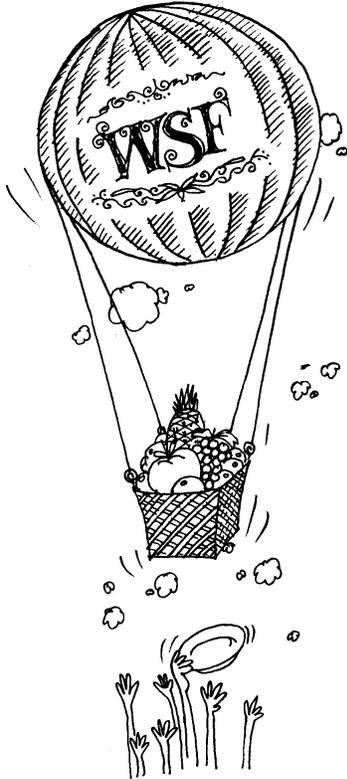
The January forum did, at times, reflect the diversity and potential of struggles against free market economic policies known as neoliberalism, as well as resurgent U.S. imperialism-particularly in neighboring Somalia. However, the conference brought to the fore the contradictions - in particular, the dominant role of NGOs with an explicitly non-political stance, as opposed to left-wing social movements and organizations that initiated the international gatherings in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in 2001 as a counterblast to the elite World Economic Forum meeting in Davos, Switzerland.

The conservatizing influence of the NGOs, has been present from the beginning - and reached new levels at the last WSF in Brazil in 2005. The big Brazilian and Latin American left, strengthened by the mass struggles of the recent period, have continued to have a major impact. By contrast, the organized left and social movements in Africa are quite weak.

"The WSF was not immune from the laws of [neoliberal] market forces," wrote Firoze Manji of the Pambazuka- Web magazine on African politics. "There was no leveling of the playing field. This was more a World NGO Forum than an anti-capitalist mobilization, lightly peppered with social activist and grassroots movements."

WSF in crisis?

IT ULTIMATELY took a protest, a blockade of the gates and the occupation of the WSF offices by left-wing groups and the poor to force a reduction of the entrance fee for locals from about \$7.50 to 75 cents - still a significant amount in a country where 56 percent of the population lives on less than \$1 a day.



Moreover, the political context was very different than in Porto Alegre, one of the most developed and wealthy cities in Latin America, where reformist city and state governments actively supported the initial WSF conferences.

Kenyan President Mwai Kibaki - elected in 2002 after strongman Daniel Arap Moi was eased out of office after 24 years - presides over the same corruption that made Moi notorious. The atmosphere reached into the WSF itself, where the hardline interior minister controlled the WSF's restaurant concessions, where food was priced out of reach of most Kenyans.

Nairobi, moreover, is home to one of the world's biggest shantytowns - the Kibera slum, recently the target of a "law-and-order" campaign by police. During the five days of the WSF, Kenyan newspapers reported that 23 people had been shot and killed by police in the slums - including three young men shot in the back after they allegedly vandalized railroad tracks.

The repressive atmosphere even spilled over into the WSF itself, thanks to Kenya's alliance with the U.S. in the "war on terror" - including a high-profile effort to seal its border with Somalia during the recent Washington-orchestrated invasion of that country by the Ethiopian military. On the first day of the event, Kenyan soldiers armed with rifles searched every car going in and out of the Kasarani Stadium sports complex, where the WSF was held. Thereafter, police and armed security clustered around gates that were opened only partially despite a crowd estimated between 30,000 and 50,000.

Despite the anti-neoliberal ethos of the WSF, the Nairobi event featured high-profile corporate sponsorships - such as CelTel, the Kuwaiti cell phone company that dominates much of the East African market.

"It was very disturbing to see the increasing commercialization, privatization and even militarization of the Forum with the high visibility of transnational corporations, subcontracting of much of the organizing to profit-making companies, and the highly visible presence of armed police and soldiers," noted Nicola Bullard of Focus on the Global South.

Eric Toussaint, president of the Brussels-based Committee to Abolish Third World Debt, had a similar assessment. "This seventh WSF was conceived in a bureaucratic way by a camarilla of consultants and leading big African and Brazilian NGOs," he said in an interview. "Merchandization and gigantism were the two main illnesses of this WSF. Nevertheless, we should continue to struggle inside the process to radicalize it."

THAT STRUGGLE did take place in Nairobi. Toussaint's group, along with Jubilee South and 50 Years is Enough and other organizations, held a series of meetings that documented the workings of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, and called for repudiation of the debt that is crippling Africa.

And even though most of the big NGOs muffled or even precluded political debate, the left and popular organizations challenged the official setup. According to Bullard, the WSF "was disappointing, but it was also marvelous. On the 'marvelous' side, there were the people, and the fact that we did not accept the situation. We protested. One local organization, the Peoples Parliament, held a three-day 'alternative' forum at a park in downtown Nairobi. This is something that I loved about this forum: the spirit of resistance, the spirit of protest and the fact that people did not accept that 'their' forum was being taken away from them."

At the conclusion of the WSF, the Social Movements Assembly of more than 2,000 people adopted a statement that read in part, "We denounce tendencies towards commercialization, privatization and militarization of the WSF space. Hundreds of our sisters and brothers who welcomed us to Nairobi have been excluded because of high costs of participation. We are also deeply concerned about the presence of organizations working against the rights of women, marginalized people, and against sexual rights and diversity, in contradiction to the WSF Charter of Principles."

WSF in crisis?

The social forum movement has played a significant role in organizing the left internationally. It can continue to do so - but only if the left is able to assert itself within the WSF process to advance the cause of anti-imperialism and international solidarity. ▶

CONVERGENCE

Excerpts

## World Social Forum: Just another NGO Fair?

by Firoze Manji

The World Social Forum, which took place in Nairobi, Kenya (for the first time in Africa), was supposed to be a forum for the voices of the grassroots. But despite the diversity of voices at the event, not everyone was equally represented.



To describe only the diversity would be to miss the real, and perhaps more disturbing, picture. The problem was that not everyone was equally represented. Not everyone had equal voices. This event had all the features of a trade fair - those with greater wealth had more events in the calendar, larger (and more comfortable) spaces, more propaganda - and therefore a larger voice. Thus the usual gaggle of quasi donor/International NGOs claimed a greater presence than national organizations - not because what they had to say was more important or more relevant to the theme of the WSF, but because, essentially, they had greater budgets at their command. Thus the WSF was not immune from the laws of (neoliberal) market forces.

There was no leveling of the playing field. This was more a World NGO Forum than an anti-capitalist mobilization, lightly peppered with social activists and grassroots movements. And the sense of the predominance of neoliberalism was given further weight by the ubiquity of the CelTel Logo - the Kuwaiti owned Telecommunications Company that had exclusive rights at the WSF; a virtual monopoly provided to a hotel that provided food at extortionate prices that most Kenyans, if they were allowed in, could hardly afford. And rumors were rife that the business of catering involved people in high places winning

WSF - an NGO fair

exclusive contracts. Hawkers, on whom most of Nairobians depend for providing everything from phone cards to food and refreshment were for a while excluded physically (as well as financially) from entering the China-built Moi Sports Stadium in Kasarani, the venue for the WSF. And it was only when frustrated activists took direct action to occupy the offices of the organizers that a more liberal policy for entry was implemented.

This was the first full WSF held in Africa (Mali was host to one of the polycentric WSF's last year). The white North, with its hegemonic parochialism, was over-represented. Social movements from the South were conspicuous by their numerically small presence at the forum.

Probably the most consistently heavily attended forum throughout the week was that organized by the Human Dignity and Human Rights Network which had the largest tent, and held meetings after meeting throughout most of the week, with a caste of well known speakers. Like most of the events at WSF, the set-up of the meetings was of a traditional platform of speakers with the audience being talked at rather than being engaged in discussion. While we heard the experience of both survivors of human rights abuses and human rights defenders, there was little political analysis.

There was lots of talking and sloganeering. There was much discussion about policies and alternatives to existing policies. But one couldn't help feel the absence of politics.

The reality is that what ends up as policy is the outcome of struggles in the political domain - fundamentally between the haves and the have-nots. But in a week in which the voices of the have-nots were under-represented, I guess we should not be surprised by the absence of politics.

Everyone was disappointed by the surprisingly low turn-out: estimates of 30,000 to 50,000 people attended, compared with an expected crowd of 150,000. What made so many keep away in droves? ►

About the Author: **Firoze Manji** is Director of Fahamu and Editor of Pambazuka News

CONVERGENCE

Excerpts

## **The World Social Forum: From Defense to Offense**

*by Immanuel Wallerstein*

The World Social Forum (WSF) met in Nairobi, Kenya from January 20-25. The organization, founded as a sort of anti-Davos, has matured and evolved more than even its participants realize. From the beginning, the WSF has been a meeting of a wide range of organizations and movements from around the world who defined themselves as opposed to neo-liberal globalization and imperialism in all its forms. Its slogan has been "another world is possible" and its structure has been that of an open space without officers, spokespeople, or resolutions. The term "alter-globalists" has been coined to define the stance of its proponents.

In the first several WSF meetings, beginning in 2001, the emphasis was defensive. Participants, each time more numerous, denounced the defects of the Washington Consensus, the efforts of the World Trade Organization (WTO) to legislate neo-liberalism, the pressures of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on peripheral zones to privatize everything and open frontiers to the free flow of capital, and the aggressive posture of the United States in Iraq and elsewhere.

In this sixth world meeting, this defensive language was much reduced -simply because everyone took it for granted. And these days the United States seems less formidable, the WTO seems deadlocked and basically impotent, the IMF almost forgotten. The New York Times, reporting on this year's Davos meeting, talked of the recognition that there is a "shifting power equation" in the world, that "nobody is really in charge" any more, and that "the very foundations of the multilateral system" have been shaken, "leaving the world short on leadership at a time when it is increasingly vulnerable to catastrophic shocks."

In this chaotic situation, the WSF is presenting a real alternative, and gradually creating a web of networks whose political clout will emerge in the next five to ten years. Participants at the WSF

CONVERGENCE

have debated for a long time whether it should continue to be an open forum or should engage in



structured, planned political action. Quietly, almost surreptitiously, it became clear at Nairobi that the issue was moot. The participants would do both - leave the WSF as an open space that was inclusive of all those who wanted to transform the existing world-system and, at the same time, permit and encourage those who wanted to organize specific political actions to do so, and to organize to do so at WSF meetings.

The key idea is the creation of networks, which the WSF is singularly equipped to construct at a global level. There are now effective networks of feminists, labor struggles, activist intellectuals, rural/peasant movements, those defending alternative sexualities, anti-war network, and networks on specific arenas of struggle - water rights, the struggle against HIV/AIDS, human rights.

The WSF is also spawning manifestos: the so-called Bamako Appeal, which expounds a whole campaign against capitalism; a feminist manifesto, now in its second draft and continuing to evolve; a labor manifesto which is just being born. There will no doubt be other such manifestos as the WSF continues. The fourth day of the meeting was devoted essentially to meetings of these networks, each of which was deciding what kinds of joint actions it could undertake - in its own name, but within the umbrella of the WSF.

Finally, there was the attention turned to what it means to say "another world." There were serious discussions and debates about what we mean by democracy, who is a worker, what is civil society, what is the role of political parties in the future construction of the world. These discussions define the

objectives, and the networks are a large part of the means by which these objectives are to be realized. The discussions, the manifestos, and the networks constitute the offensive posture.

It is not that the WSF is without its internal problems. The tension between some of the larger NGOs (whose headquarters and strength is in the North, and which support the WSF but also show up at Davos) and the more militant social movements (particularly strong in the South but not only) remains real. They come together in the open space, but the more militant organizations control the networks. The WSF sometimes seems like a lumbering tortoise. But in Aesop's fable, the glittering speedy Davos hare lost the race. ▶

About the author: **Immanuel Wallerstein**, *Senior Research Scholar at the Yale University*, is the author of *"The Decline of American Power: The U.S. in a Chaotic World"*.

Excerpts

## From WSF 'NGO trade fair' to Left politics?

by Patrick Bond

A mixed message - combining celebration and auto critique - is in order, in the wake of the Nairobi World Social Forum. From January 20-25, the 60,000 registered participants heard triumphalist radical rhetoric and yet, too, witnessed persistent defeats for social justice causes - especially within the WSF's own processes.

- Kenya Social Forum coordinator Onyango Oloo listed grievances that local activists put high atop the agenda: 'the impact of mining and extraction activities on the environment and human livelihoods; discriminatory policies by successive governments that have guaranteed the stubborn survival of pre-colonial conditions of poverty and underdevelopment among many pastoralist and minority communities; the arrogant disregard for the concerns raised by Samburu women raped over the years by British soldiers dispatched on military exercises in those Kenyan communities; the pastoralists and minority communities being targets of state terror, evictions and denunciations etc.'
- WSF organizer Wahu Kaara: "We refuse unjust trade. We are not going to take aid with conditionality. We in Africa refuse to be the continent identified as poor. We have hope and determination and everything to offer to the prosperity of the human race."
- Firoze Manji, the director of the Pambazuka-an African news/analysis portal: 'This event had all the features of a trade fair. The usual gaggle of quasi-donor and international NGOs claimed a greater presence than national organizations - not because what they had to say was more important or more relevant to the theme of the WSF, but because, essentially, they had greater budgets at their command.'
- Nairobi-based commentator Tajudeen Abdul-Raheem (also writing in Pambazuka): "The WSFs show up Africa's weaknesses. One of the critical areas is our level of participation and preparedness. A majority of the African participants - even many from Kenya itself - were brought by foreign paymasters or organizations funded by outsiders. Often they become prisoners of their sponsors."
- New Internationalist editor Adam Ma'anit: "Perhaps the WSF has become too institutionalized. More worrying has been the corporate sponsorship of the WSF. The Forum organizers proudly announced their partnership with Kenya Airways. The same company that has for years allegedly denied the right to assembly of its workers organized under the Aviation and Allied Workers Union."

Left politics in the WSF

These sobering observations were reflected in a statement by the Social Movements Assembly at a January 24 rally of more than 2000: 'We denounce tendencies towards commercialization, privatization and militarization of the WSF space. Hundreds of our sisters and brothers who welcomed us to Nairobi have been excluded because of high costs of participation. We are also deeply concerned about the presence of organizations working against the rights of women, marginalized people, and against sexual rights and diversity, in contradiction to the WSF Charter of Principles.'

Setting these flaws aside, consider a deeper political tension. For Oloo, 'These social movements, including dozens in Kenya, want to see the WSF being transformed into a space for organizing and mobilizing against the nefarious forces of international finance capital, neoliberalism and all its local neo-colonial and comprador collaborators.'

Can and should the 'open space' concept be upgraded into something more coherent, either for mobilizing around special events (for instance, the June 2-8 summit of the G8 in Rostock, Germany) or establishing a bigger, Universalist left-internationalist political project?

In South Africa, the Centre for Civil Society (CCS) has hosted several debates on this question, with at least four varying points of view emerging.

Last July, for example, the great political economist Samir Amin presented the 'Bamako Appeal', a January 2006 manifesto which originated at the prior WSF polycentric event, and which combined, as Amin put it, the traditions of socialism, anti-racism/colonialism, and (national) development.

But reacting strongly against the Bamako Appeal, CCS student (and Johannesburg anti-privatization activist) Prishani Naidoo and three comrades criticized its 'last century' tone and content, which mirrored 'the mutation of the WSF from an arena of encounter for local social movements into an organized network of experts, academics and NGO practitioners.' Naidoo and the others praise the 'powerful undercurrent of informality in the WSF's proceedings [which] reveals the persistence of horizontal communication between movements, which is not based on mystical views of the revolutionary subject, or in the official discourse of the leaders, but in the life strategies of their participants.'

A third position on WSF politics is the classical socialist, party-building approach favored by Soweto activist Trevor Ngwane and other revolutionary organizers. Ngwane fretted, on the one hand, about

reformist projects that 'make us blind to recognize the struggles of ordinary people.' On the other hand, though, 'I think militancy alone at the local level and community level will not in itself answer questions of class and questions of power.' For that a self-conscious socialist cadre is needed, and the WSF is a critical site to transcend localist political upsurges.

A fourth position, which I personally support, seeks the 21st century's anti-capitalist 'manifesto' in the existing social, labor and environmental movements that are already engaged in excellent transnational social justice struggle. The WSF's greatest potential - so far unrealized - is the possibility of linking dozens of radical movements in various sectors. Before a Bamako Appeal or any other manifesto is parachuted into the WSF, we owe it to those activists to compile their existing grievances, analyses, strategies and tactics. Sometimes these are simple demands, but often they are also articulated as sectoral manifestos.

These four positions are reflected in a new book released at the Nairobi WSF by the New Delhi-based Institute for Critical Action: Centre in Movement (CACIM) and CCS. The book contains some older attempts at left internationalism. There are selections on global political party formations by Amin, analysis of the global labor movement by Peter Waterman, the Women's Global Charter for Humanity, and some old and newer Zapatista declarations.

Lest too much energy is paid to these political scuffles at the expense of ongoing struggle, we might give the last word to Ngwane, who reported 'Ordinary working class and poor people need and create and have a movement of resistance and struggle. They also need and create and have spaces for that movement to breathe and develop.'

The real question is what place the WSF will have in that reality. What space will there be for ordinary working class and poor people? Who will shape and drive and control the movement? I think what some of us saw happening in Nairobi posed some of these questions sharply and challenged some of the answers coming from many (but not all) of the prominent NGO's and luminaries in the WSF. ►

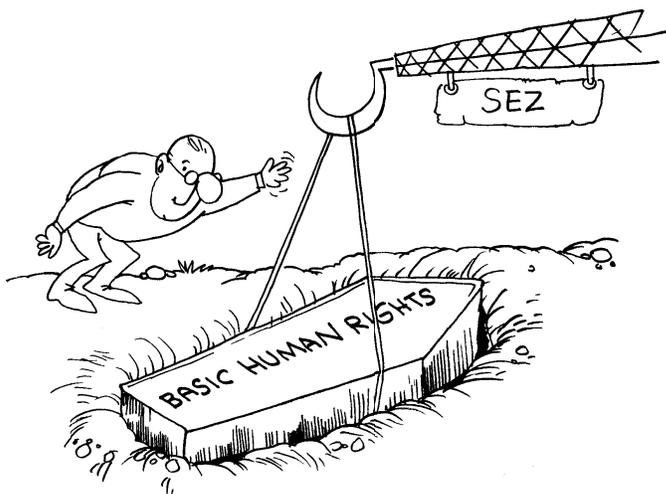
About the Author: **Patrick Bond** *directs the Centre for Civil Society.*

Excerpts

## Wrong Model to Emulate

by Dipak Basu

The dispute of the farmers against the oppressive governments in Singur, Nandigram, Orissa, Chhattisgarh and Narmada Valley in India is not a war between industry and agriculture or between progress and conservatism but between basic human rights and a government determined to create a pure capitalistic heaven by taking over poor people's only possession of a little land and a home without paying proper compensation. The dispute is not restricted to West Bengal or to CPI (M).



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<http://outlookindia.com/full.asp?fodname=20070212&fname=chinasez&sid=1>

[C.ELDOC1.0705/SEZs-farmers-wrong-model.html]

The introduction of Special Economic Zones (SEZ) would put India into flames everywhere when the poor 80 percent of the population now understand that they have no choice but to fight in order to survive

against the combined might of all political parties, who are now acting as agents of the India's true ruling class, the captains of Indian industry.

In India the land Acquisition Act of 1894, a colonial act of the British Raj to take over lands for public purposes, is now being used to take away lands from poor farmers to give these to mega rich private companies for their real estate business, which does not serve public interests.

For industrialization, land is needed; however, those who are losing their land must be compensated properly. A proper compensation implies at least compensation for lost home, lost assets (taking into account the possible appreciation over the next decade), lost profession and lost income. In Singur the government is paying a maximum of 1.3 times the value of the land, although the price of land is doubling every five years or less. There is no promise of a new job or regular monthly income or a new house. There are no provisions for lost education for the children of the farmers. Thus, the declared compensations are highly inadequate. That is the source of the dispute.

There is a second argument as well from the point of view of overall economic policy. Industrialization just for the sake of it is not justified. It is essential to look at the costs and benefits of setting up an industry. In Singur for example, about 14,000 families are being evicted from about 1000 acres of land, as per most newspapers. Out of those, 12,239 are landowners; the rest are landless tillers. If we assume only one person per family was gainfully employed in farming, the number of job losses are 14,000 minus those who are not dependent on farming for living. However, only about 4000 people, mainly from outside West Bengal, will be employed in the proposed Tata Motor Company in Singur. Even if we assume that another 2000 may be employed in motor-parts industry and the service sectors to support the industrial activity in Singur, the total number of job-losses would be huge. Thus, there is a net welfare loss in terms of net job destructions in Singur, which the government has not yet addressed.

Already 2,50,000 people were evicted in Narmada Valley, thousands if not millions will be evicted in Orissa, Jharkand and Chhatisgarh or Haryana in India to make room for the Special Economic Zones creating millions of destitute on the streets, just like in China where possibly 150 million people are now unemployed destitute.

To understand the issue, it is essential to examine what has happened to the SEZ (Special Economic Zones) in China and why Indian industrialists are so eager to follow the Chinese model.

### *Chinese SEZs and Exploitations of Workers*

Foreign direct investment in China is almost 10 times than in India. Indian ministry of labour supports strongly for the China model as one of the "doable options" for making the labour market more flexible and attractive. The purpose is to turn India into a "preferred FDI destination". The so-called experts say India needs to get rid of its prohibitive labour policies, which are designed to protect the weakest members of the society against unrestricted exploitation by the private-sector employers. Special Economic Zones where Indian labour laws and tax laws are not applicable is the answer, according to these



proponents of 'economic reforms'.

There are many restrictions on foreign investors in China. They must have a Chinese partner company; they have to export a substantial part of their production; they cannot raise finance from China; they in many cases supply defense-technology to China in return for permission to invest in China. Still the foreign companies are going to China as they can use the Chinese workers as they please. Chinese workers have no trade union rights or any basic human rights. Workers who have tried to form independent unions or lead labor protests have been imprisoned for many

years, and were severely punished or killed. Thus, China is not a socialist country but a fascist capitalist country with its economy driven by the foreign capitalists with an insignificant (less than 2 percent) private sector of its own. Increased foreign investments do not add to the social welfare of the people of China,

but to the economic welfare of a small minority of people in China who are connected to the government, army and above all the Chinese Communist Party.

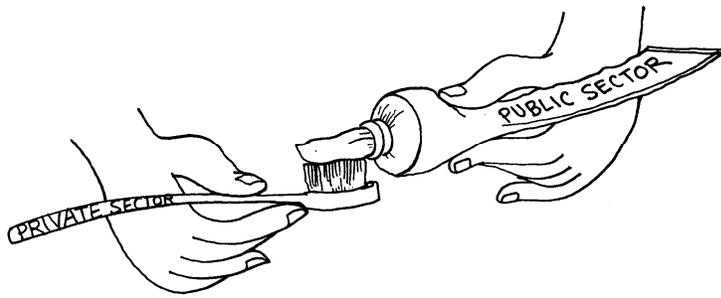
Should the people of India emulate China to increase economic growth, which would not benefit the people at large, but small elite of India?

The exit policy or the right of the employers to retrench is a part of the so-called 'flexible labour market policy'. The flexible labour market includes some other characteristics as well: temporary job contracts instead of permanent job, outsourcing of most of the activities, contract labourers, hiring of home based workers and so on. The idea is to save money by not paying pensions, medical benefits, leave entitlements, and complete freedom of the employers not to take any responsibility for the workers. Employers also do not need to have office facilities or factory premises if they can contract out most of the activities. As the employees do not know each other and suffer from the chronic fear of being unemployed, organized trade union activities cannot take place. The employers are at the mercy of the employers and the market forces.

### **Effects of Labour Market Reforms in China**

Economic reforms in China mean large-scale unemployment among the workers in state industries, which no longer receive public subsidies, investments, or even orders from the public procurements. The result is increasing bankruptcy of the public sector. In spite of the fact that there is no trade union and any rights for the workers to protest, Chinese workers are defying the threat of arrest and persecutions to protest against growing miseries and extreme inequalities in the new Chinese s

ociety. Today, the peasantry is one of the most rebellious social layers in China.



According to U.N. statistics, the poorest 20 percent of China's 1.3 billion citizens account for only 4.7 percent of total income, while the richest 20 percent account for more than half. Moreover, that gap has been widening steadily over the last few years. It is China's most serious social problem. India is trying to adopt the Chinese style labour market in the SEZs to impress the foreign investors and Indian industrialists. Is there no alternative?

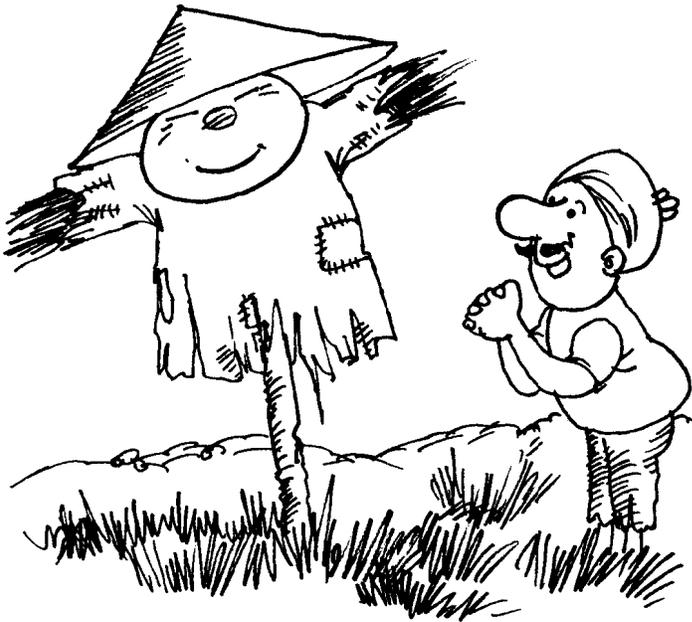
### *Analysis*

The decision to establish Special Economic Zones to allow 'hire and fire' policy by evicting farmers from their home and land is a journey in the wrong direction. In a fascist state like China, it is possible to suppress dissent, protests, and the truth. In a democratic country like India, it would mean increasing miseries, gross inequality, mass unemployment, and conflicts.

China's record of high economic growth cannot be taken very seriously either. According to the official statistics of China from 1951 to 1986, for most of the years, average annual rate of growth of China's national income was about 10 percent; for India it was 3.86 percent per year. Yet in 1986 China's per-head national income in US\$ was just the same as that of India. The average annual growth rate of China's national income between 1991 to 2001 was also about 10 percent. That would mean, the economic reform policy and the flexible labour market with increased foreign investments in China had no effects on its economic growth.

About 10 million people in China died in famines in 1959-61, which was never reported until after the death of Mao. Growing unemployment and miseries of the Chinese people do not correspond to the high

economic growth propagated by the Chinese government. Thus, India is trying to emulate a false hero.



Foreign investments are neither necessary nor sufficient for economic development. Both Japan and the Soviet Union have achieved spectacular economic development with very little or no foreign investment. Indonesia and Thailand have received massive amounts of foreign investment but they are still very poor.

Privatization and downsizing may not lead to economic revival but the result can be just the opposite. A country cannot be considered a great economic power if the people are unemployed and destitute and children are without education.

India should learn from the mistakes of China. In the Special Economic Zones, the government must retain ownership of the land and rent out lands to the companies. The government must pay at least double the current price of the land as compensation for asset destruction. Every evicted family should receive appropriate accommodation, houses or apartments, to compensate for the loss of housing. The government must pay regular income to the evicted families or jobs to compensate for loss of profession. The rental cost of the land to the companies should reflect these costs of rehabilitations. The evicted people also would have priority in employment in the Special Economic Zones. Rights of the work force cannot be violated either by the companies in the SEZ. That can be achieved if the government can

maintain share ownership in the new companies in the SEZ. Pure private ownerships in the SEZ would spell disaster for both the workers and the evicted peasants, as it is the case in China. ▶

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