

BACKGROUND AND THE CONTEXT

The experience of last two decades have taught us that it's easier to understand globalization by the impact rather than by its definitions. It has defied all its definitions. It has gone beyond every validation. It has belied all its promises of making the world a global oasis of opportunities and optimism. Well, if it ever was! All the oversold promises of globalization providing a better life today and future tomorrow have been broken. From a more fundamental point of view, it has definitely unified the world in hunger, in destitution, in anger, and in economic disarray.

ALREADY QUESTIONED A HUNDRED TIMES WHY, YET AGAIN

The idea of organizing the Consultation came from the concerns that are prominent by their absence in the national conscience at this crucial time. It's not that globalization has not been questioned in its essence and form, but similar efforts at this time need to be consolidated and strengthened rather than brushed under the carpet. Though globalization as a phenomenon is more about global processes however, it is equally about macroeconomic changes and domestic policies. The time is the most opportune one to reiterate just few concerns that should have priority in deciding the fate and future of the people and of the nation. We must return to question it each time when we should.

THEME OF THE CONSULTATION

Against the backdrop of globalization three specific and closely associated imperatives can be chosen which relate equally significantly to international, national and local. Social justice, livelihoods and labour; environment, agriculture and food security; and economic justice, fair trade, and international finance capital, to our mind clearly overwhelm array of concerns as critical themes that must be addressed while any exploration into globalization. Its implications have introduced some unidentifiable changes in these precepts, which must be confronted upfront.

Social justice, livelihoods and labour: Henry Kissinger in one of his lectures said "globalization is another term for US domination." That leaves us with little doubt as to the interrelatedness of globalization and social justice. Globalization and social justice have primarily been incompatible because it has left social justice beyond its scope. The ability of people to shape their lives and control their destinies, as the minimum precondition for the notion of social justice, makes the

contradiction between social justice and globalization still clearer. Global inequality has been rising undeterred, which has even forced one of prominent advocates of the globalization, the World Bank to admit that globalization has left millions behind. Thousands of jobs are being lost overnight, labour standards are far below they have ever been and social security of workers has nosedived. Governments are busy devising fat packages and tax holidays for corporates, but a worker working in one of the thousands of ubiquitous NREGA sites still gets compensation below minimum wages. Traditional labour relations have witnessed diverse changes invariably to the detriment of labour in dignity as well as in economic terms. It needs to be seen in its spectrum of impacts on poorer sections like scheduled tribes, dalits and women, and others having little ability to insulate themselves from such changes.

Environment, agriculture and food security: The policy response to environment, agriculture and food security has really been less than adequate. Proactive action on environment and climate change hold the key to future sustainability. With no definite action plan on the part of the government, the climate change missions have failed to take off. The impact of climate change on household, national and regional food security have started manifested themselves sooner than one would have imagined. It is not surprising that Agriculture's contribution to the economy has fallen drastically from 67% (1947) to 17% (2008). The recent food shortages and price rises have led to demands in developed and developing countries for increased protection of domestic agriculture and for greater domestic food sufficiency. However, there are no plans in sight to revive agriculture. On the contrary, SEZs and biofuel cultivation are leaving less and less agricultural lands and putting more pressure on agriculture. Food security has suffered disastrously as a mix of inappropriate policies at domestic front and neo-liberal and free trade onslaught beyond the frontiers. Distributional concerns posit challenges that we have failed to overcome yet. The recent interim budget has tried to give some importance to agriculture for understandable reasons; it needs to be ensured that it does not go back on its word later. We want to ask the question that when would India cease to become a country of maximum number of hungry people?

Economic justice, trade and finance capital: The impact of globalization on economic justice and trade aided by finance capital also needs to be questioned. They have much more major influence on our economic institutions than the national governments. Globalization accompanied by trade and investment, market reforms and privatization has created conditions leading up to concentration of wealth, marginalization of interests of the resource poor, and subjugation of sovereign power. The interests of powerful nations

and corporations are shaping the terms of world trade. In democratic countries, they are affecting the ability of elected leaders to make decisions in the interests of their people. The costs of the economic globalization are being socialized while the profits are privatized. While people aspire for true internationalism and fair global trade, the hegemonization of globalization by rich countries has produced exactly the opposite. The triumvirate of World Bank, IMF and the WTO, has led the government to take steps for increased opening of market and capital flows having profound effects on our society and economy. The civil society must take the responsibility of reclaiming national institutions as instruments of being change rather than being swept away by changes.

EXPECTATIONS FROM THE CONSULTATION

These issues, which seems to be entirely inconsequential in the mainstream political debates, household discussions and media, must be most important determinants of national priorities. The voice of the civil society too, has been not so resounding enough to make the governments hear. The recently held WSF though succeeded in attracting a number of heads of government, however, its force in bringing about deep seated changes remains questioned.

The National Consultation workshop hopes to generate a collective effort to sustained engagement with the state, multilateral organizations and fellow civil society organizations on the issues above. The coming elections provide the most opportune moment to reiterate them on national conscience. We understand that it would be practically impossible to do justice with the entire range of issue in a one day Consultation, we request and expect the participants to arrive at a common understanding to develop a long term strategy to address all the issues adequately.

PARTICIPATION

The participants will represent a cross section of civil society, practitioners, voluntary organization, academia, policymakers, independent individuals and the media. We hope to build a partnership that has a space for all sorts of opinion. People who wish to participate should register by writing to contact persons.

DATE AND VENUE

The Consultation will take place on the 20th March 2009 at India Islamic Cultural Centre, New Delhi from 10 a.m.

ORGANIZERS

Institute of Development Studies, Jaipur (IDSJ): The Institute of Development Studies, Jaipur was established in 1981 on the initiative of a group of academics, scholars and administrators of Rajasthan. The Institute is a multi-disciplinary research organisation. It takes cognizance of the macro environment, planning processes and strategies including their socio-economic dimensions and attempts to make timely interventions through research and dialogues.

Gene Campaign: Gene Campaign, a grassroots level organisation with a presence in 17 states of India, was started in 1993 by Dr. Suman Sahai and a group of people concerned about food and livelihood security. Gene Campaign is recognized as a leading research and advocacy organisation working in the field of bioresources, farmers' and community rights, intellectual property rights and indigenous knowledge, biopiracy, issues related with GE food and crops.

Food, Trade and Nutrition Coalition – Asia (FTN-Asia): FTN Asia is a partner led network which seeks to secure food sovereignty in the Asia region and especially in developing, least developed and transition economies in Asia through advocating and promoting pro people legal policy framework, just and fair trade policies and building civil society capacity to resist onslaught of imperialist globalization, liberalization and marginalization of farmers and consumers interests.

CECOEDECON: Centre for Community Economics and Development Consultants Society is a non-profit and non-governmental organization, engaged in a variety of development, research and advocacy activities. Its mission is to facilitate the processes of empowerment of partner communities-dalits, indigenous people, the landless, small and marginal farmers, deprived women and children-through both direct and indirect interventions, so that they are able to take action independently and effectively to secure their long-term well being.

PAIRVI: Public Advocacy Initiatives for Rights & Values in India (PAIRVI) is a non-profit Advocacy Support Organization, which seeks to facilitate and strengthen social advocacy in North and Central India. PAIRVI goal is to promote peoples agenda by creating a supportive climate for advocacy efforts across the region. PAIRVI believes in facilitating positive Social Change through non-violent means, informing both the public and those who frame public policy. It is committed to enhance capacity of grassroots organization in human rights practice and advocacy with the objective of strengthening human rights infrastructure.



For registration, confirmation or other queries please contact

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National Consultation on Questioning Globalization;

Assessing Democratic Deficits and People's Alternatives

20th March 2009

India Islamic Cultural Centre,
New Delhi

