

Two steps forward...

From Porto Alegre to Bombay

Saturday 8 September 2007, by [MEHDI Feroz](#) (Date first published: 12 June 2003).

The process reaches its fourth year. As the world watched the baby grow, there came a giant leap across oceans. And when peoples social movements makes that leap, earth trembles, dollars turn white, oceans churn. The road towards universal social justice continues to be paved by millions of struggling people all over the world. The word is Hope, the word is Confidence. The evil empire will die its death.

Contents

- [WSF in India](#)
- [Choice of Venue and dates](#)
- [Mobilization for the Forum](#)

It had to begin somewhere amongst concerned souls, amongst disillusioned minds, amongst the people of planet Earth. Porto Alegre took the lead four years ago. The baton has been passed over to the people of India, a challenge which is as huge as the planet Earth, as beautiful and as charming as the universe.

The World Social Forum as a process and a platform is the civil society's response to the global capital and its neo-liberal and imperialist agendas. The international, financial and trade institutions like World Bank, International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organisations' policies have deep impact on people's lives and majority of people are forced to grapple with its negative impact on their lives. World Social Forum is conceived as an international platform to contest the formulations put forward by the neo-liberal economic policies and capitalist led globalization. With the slogan "Another World is Possible", it has provided a strong basis for alliances amongst various social movements, unions of working people, non-governmental organizations etc. The basic idea is the creation of a space for everyone to come together with a respect and sharing of different perspectives.

The first WSF was held in Porto Alegre in Brazil in 2001. Since then three World Social Forums have taken place in Porto Alegre with growing number of people and movements participating from all over the world. The first WSF saw participation of about 20,000 persons from over 500 national and international organizations but by the third WSF the numbers have grown significantly. The decision to hold the Forum in Brazil has been significant. The richness of grass root organizations in Brazil has provided tremendous inspiration to the social movement across the globe. Brazilian committee consisting of 8 major networks hosted and organized these three events with the help of International Committee.

WSF in India

The International Committee of the World Social Forum and the Brazil Organizing Committee felt

strongly that this process has to be carried out in other regions and thus Asia and specifically India has been chosen as the next host country for the WSF 2004. This confidence is based on successful hosting of the Asian Social Forum in Hyderabad in January 2003 by the alliance of many organizations in India. This process and event brought together more than 1000 number of organizations, social movements and had participation of 25,000 persons, majority from India. In the organizations of ASF more than 100 organizations were involved.

The proposal to build a WSF process in India is a great opportunity for people's movements and to all civil and political movements and organizations in the country. It is beginning of a process of bringing together those affected by and resisting the impacts of neo-liberal, capitalist globalization in the country and linking them with similar movements in rest of Asia and the world. It is also a challenge to bring diverse sectors and forces into a space where a process of dialogue and mutual understanding can begin. An opportunity to respect differences, and recognizes the need to come together. The process to create an all-inclusive platform in India has been taken up since ASF and will be expanded during the WSF process.

The WSF India process keeping in mind the recent events and threats they constitute in the unity and democratic space for people will not only focus on imperialist globalization but also focus on the issue of sectarian violence/Communalism, castism and patriarchy. The WSF process in India would make space for all sections of society to come together and articulate their struggles and visions, individually and collectively, against the threat of neo-liberal, capitalist globalisation on one hand and upheld the secular, plural and gender sensitive framework. The only limitation to this is that all those who take part in the World Social Forum - in India, as elsewhere in the world - should be at least in broad agreement with the Charter of Principles of the WSF, which have been reinterpreted in India to address social and political reality, as it exists in the country today. The process in India makes space available for all sections, but most importantly, it makes space for all those in society that remain less visible, marginalized, unrecognised, and oppressed. This entails the opening of dialogue with different political parties and groups, social movements across a broad spectrum, and organisations of all kinds, and the formation of WSF committees in different states. The WSF-India this process is visualized to be more widespread and inclusive.

It is visualized that the activities taken up in the WSF Process in India would be modest and simultaneously will be internationalist. Another basic and underlying organising principle would be that each and every activity to be taken up would strive to be both serious and purposeful, addressing the hard ground realities that we live and struggle with, and - simultaneously - also be vibrant celebrations of life, of alternatives, of possible other worlds.

In the four national consultations have been held since February [in Delhi -14-16th February, in Nagpur -21-22nd March and in Delhi- 7-8th April and in Mumbai- 19-20th April 2003] have initiated a very promising process and creations of structures at national level across various sectors and perspectives and bringing in more organizations and platforms in the process. Diverse organizations and movements have been part of this process including dalit organisations, indigenous people organisations, agricultural workers, fishworkers organizations, progressive cultural groups, representing the diversity of Indian movements and cultures. Almost all the trade unions in the county are on board as also a large number of peoples' movements. Also the event would bring together the independent as well as party led mass organisations, new social movements and NGOs on one platform, for the first time in recent Indian history.

Choice of Venue and dates

The India process has chosen Mumbai as the venue after a lot of discussion as it provides a possible vantage point to challenge the neo-liberal globalization agenda as well as the opposition to the right wing ideology. Mumbai also provides an opportunity for various sectors, and various perspectives to work together. The final dates for the event are 16-21st January 2004. The first and last days are for the opening and closing ceremony. The process of finalisation of exact venues is under way and the attempt is to create a creative atmosphere which will take the process beyond what has been experienced in Brazil. We are trying to get a space in Mumbai where most of the events happen in close proximity to reduce travel and for more intensive interaction. The Youth camp will also be close by so that youth can participate more effectively. The attempt is also to organize many cultural spaces, film festival, book fairs and many food stalls. The opening and closing are visualized in open spaces with a lot more local people from the city joining in too.

Mobilization for the Forum

There is an expectation of about 1,00,000 delegates to participate in the WSF 2004, out of which about 15,000 would be from outside India. The range of accommodation would have to be sought and good camping facilities have been provided to the majority activists from India. The Youth camp too will require accommodation as well as separate space in keeping with the traditions in Porto Alegre.

For International mobilization, we will work closely with the Brazilian secretariat and International Council for international mobilization and will invite Asian groups to begin a process of setting up of Asian Solidarity committee which will be involved in decision making at all levels in the process and in mobilizing the Asian delegates.

P.S.

* Published by Alternatives.