

Alternatives Forum, Pune

Brief report of the 3rd meeting, 26/07/2013

Venue: Lokayat, Law College Road

Present: KJ Joy (SOPPECOM), Ashok Sreenivas (Parisar and Prayas), Suhas Kolhekar (NAPM/Mahila Arogya Hakka Parishad/Jeevanshala), Aparna Susarla and Vidhya Jadhav (SWaCH/KKPKP), Sharmila Deo, Meenal Tatpati, Shiba Desor & Ashish Kothari (all Kalpavriksh), Aditya Vikram (freelance writer), Mihir Mathur, Girish Jathar(WOTR), Avinash Madhale and Mukesh (CEE), Jinan K.B. (Sadhana School/Kumbham), Walter Mendoza, Gunjan Shukla, Rohit Bansal, Deepali Tendulkar & Gurpreet Luthra (all Thoughtworks), Arun Wakhlu and Wendy Burby (Poorna Pune-Pragati Foundation)

Key points

Several new persons have joined at this meeting, so the Alternatives Forum Pune was introduced again, and each organization or individual introduced themselves and their relevant work.

Ashish presented the key points from the report of the UN Secretary General's High Level Panel of Eminent Experts on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, and his critique. The report contains several positive elements, including a focus on eliminating extreme poverty, providing livelihoods, putting sustainability as a central concern, integrating all the development goals, and others. However, it does not deal with structural roots of poverty, destitution, hunger, malnutrition, unsustainability and inequities, and the recommendations are not transformative enough to achieve sustainability, equity, and well-being. Weaknesses or failures include:

- An inadequate focus on direct democratic governance
- Inability to recognize and act on the ecological limits of economic growth
- Continued subservience to private capital and dependence on market, technological, and financial solutions to socio-political problem
- Holding modern science and technology as panacea, and ignoring diverse forms of knowledge
- Highly biased attention to cities, ignoring the need to revitalize villages as equal centres of innovation, opportunity, and dignified livelihoods
- Completely ignoring cultural diversity, ethics, and spirituality nowhere in the picture
- Unwillingness to tackle unbridled consumerism head-on
- Local self-reliance, and wider relations built around ecological connections, underplayed
- No new vision of global governance in which citizens and communities can play central decision-making role

A lively discussion followed this, on issues like how we could plug into the post-2015 process globally and within India, the need to think of health more from preventive and alternative systems than only treatment of disease, the importance of diagnosing the structural reasons for poverty and exploitation.

One concrete suggestion was that we could work out a checklist of principles against which we can assess development related reports and activities, and our own work; these could be built on the set of principles in the paper on Sustainability Framework for India that was discussed at the last meeting (available at <http://www.oxfamindia.org/sites/default/files/Working%20paper%2016%20-%20Dr.%20Ashish%20Kothari.pdf>).

Another concrete follow up suggestion was to work out alternatives in the Pune context, with various groups coming together to envision and push for a sustainable, equitable city. Some ongoing initiatives such as *Purna Pune* and the attempt to map ongoing initiatives in Pune by Pragati Foundation, participatory budgeting by CEE, water and livelihoods around Pune, were mentioned.

Next meeting

Date: 20 August, 4-6 pm

Venue: Lokayat

Agenda:

- 1) Participatory budgeting in Pune (presentation by CEE)
- 2) Mapping of relevant initiatives in/around Pune (with some preparatory work before the meeting, pegged by Pragati Foundation and WOTR).