



Judgement delayed and Justice denied

Defying the Supreme court 2-1 majority verdict on the Narmada case, is a matter of daily life for the people in the Narmada Valley. The morning after the verdict was announced, the tribal villagers of Domkhedi who relaxed after harvesting Ambadi leaves and catching fish, were not in "difficulty and desperate hardship" as the verdict described tribal life to be. Hundreds of children taking exams in the Jeevanshalas were not illiterate as Justice Kirpal opined. Oustees of Bhakra Nangal, Pong, and Tehri are not living wonderful lives thanks to displacement, nor have the dams caused an environmental upgradation, despite Their Lordship's pronouncements.

The Madhya Pradesh government has officially declared its inability to compensate the oustees with land. Flood levels regularly exceed the computer simulated levels trusted by Narmada Valley Development Authority. Lakhs of oustees, of whom only a fraction are recognized as Project Affected, dread the thought of displacement. And yet, the court decrees that "the re-settlement and rehabilitation of people whose habitat and environment makes living difficult does not pose any problems."

Cost-benefit analyses use 28 MAF (million acre feet) as the annual Narmada flow, while the official number is only 23 MAF. Ignoring an overwhelming body of scientific evidence, the court dismisses the "so-called environmental problems" associated with large dams. Further, the court has given a free reign to the government by stating that "there is absolutely no reason to assume that the government will not function properly." Even the Gujarat govt., as it plans the Kalpasar project, defies the court's reasoning that Sardar Sarovar Project is the "only solution" for providing water to Kutch and Saurashtra.

The judgement states that "... the decision to undertake a project, if challenged after its execution has commenced, should be thrown out at the very threshold on the ground of latches ... ". Does it mean that whoever has money and political power to begin a project can avoid any later challenge by the people on the grounds of money already spent? Surely the Supreme court in the world's largest democracy could hardly have meant that money rules and people had better put up or shut up!

The judgment - in short - is as unscientific as it is undemocratic, and a huge step back in Indian civilization. Arguments such as "the imperative need to encourage sturdy peasants to live in border areas" (how come they are so sturdy if village life is so terrible?) would make one (other than a sturdy peasant) laugh if they weren't ordered by the Supreme court.

Aravinda (AID Mumbai)

Did they Deliver?

Ensuring food security for the people has been one of the major objectives of India's development policy. 1971 - 1990 was an era of large-scale dam building, when 2256 out of the total 4291 dams were constructed. 73% of them are situated in three western states, Maharashtra, MP and Gujarat - a highly uneven regional distribution.

Irrigation is one of the primary objectives in 96% of the 4291 dams in India. Only 4.2% of the dams have hydropower as an objective. During the entire plan period (till 1997), major and medium projects accounted for 57% of the total investment (about Rs. 919 billion) in irrigation.

So how have the dams performed for India? Did they live up to the promise?

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Key Findings - India Country Study, World Commission on Dams *

Irrigation - The understanding is that minor irrigation sources constitute a higher proportion of total irrigation potential created. According to Central Water Commission (CWC) estimates, 63.5% of the increase in food production can be attributed to productivity increase measures like introduction of High Yield Varieties, increased use of fertilizer, extension education, credit supply, price support etc. The **marginal** contribution of **major and medium dams** may be about **11%** of the total addition.

Hydropower - The total installed capacity in India was estimated to be 89,000 MW till March 1998, hydropower constitutes approximately 25% at 21891 MW. An estimated **2/3rd** of this hydropower capacity is attributed to **storage projects** and **1/3rd** from run of the **river schemes**. (Note: Storage projects do not require large dams) The cost of unit hydropower is low because in multi-purpose projects the bulk of costs are apportioned to irrigation from where benefits are notional and actual financial returns negligible.

Floods - According to the five-year moving average of areas affected by flood, the first few years show a decline, following which there is a considerable increase. There is reason to believe that dams in fulfilling irrigation and power generation objectives have **introduced floods in hitherto secure areas**.

Drinking water - While drinking water requirements of many urban areas are met from reservoirs of irrigation and multipurpose projects, an estimated 90% of the country's drinking water supply comes from groundwater sources.

Social Aspect - The estimates of the number of people displaced by large dams in India range from 21-40 million.

* The WCD India Country Study report is available in 'pdf' format at www.dams.org. It was prepared by a panel of experts on water and energy policy under the auspices of Madras Institute of Development Studies (MIDS), Chennai; and Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA).

*We have more degrees, but less sense
More knowledge, but less judgment
More medicine, but less wellness
We have multiplied our possessions, but reduced our values
We talk too much, love too seldom, and hate too often
We've learned how to make a living, but not a life
We've added years to life, not life to years
We've been all the way to the moon and back
But have trouble crossing the street to meet the new neighbor*

- Anonymous

In 1978, for the first time all the governments of the world came together to sign the Alma Ata declaration "Health for All by 2000"!



The promised year 2000 has come! But the governments have failed their word.

Throughout the world, the lure of prosperity that "globalization" claims to bring has led to systematic exploitation of the economically weak so that the powerful few may reap the profits. By no means can there be Health for All while the rich get richer and the poor get poorer!

In India alone more than 2000 organizations are actively involved in the campaign. In various states and districts, campaign committees have organized workshops, protest rallies, cycle marches and seminars. Nationally, the people's health assembly campaign is directly reaching out to more than 30,000 villages!

On November 30th, four trains carrying 2000 delegates will converge in Calcutta for the National Health Assembly. As a follow up to this massive mobilization, community-level intervention programs will be initiated all over the country.

The PHA Charter condemns the iniquitous system that, under the garb of "globalization" heaps unprecedented misery and destitution on the overwhelming majority of the people on this globe. It envisions a decentralized health care system that is locally governed and is responsive to the people's needs. It reaffirms the people's inalienable right to comprehensive health care - the right to Health For All!

- Sreelakshmi (AID Cincinnati)

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Enron: A scam too costly to ignore

On October 10, AID-Boston co-sponsored a visit and talk by Abhay Mehta at MIT. Titled "Economic Liberalization: What they said and What they did: The Enron Example" the talk was aimed at educating the community about the controversial Enron Power Project in Dabhol, Maharashtra and its implications. Abhay was instrumental in documenting evidence and bringing a civil action against the Enron project. He has compiled a fact-based account of his struggle in the book *Power Play*.

Abhay's talk delivered in his "let facts speak for themselves" style was an eye-opener. It exposed a face of liberalization which in the name of privatization allows big transnational corporations (and opportunistic power holders) to not only exploit India's natural resources and critical infrastructure but also to alter laws that make it almost impossible for concerned citizens to fight such blatant plunder. The specter that now haunts the state of Maharashtra is most frightening. Not only does it have to pay enormous bills to Enron (nearly Rs. 200 crore/month) for a fraction of its power, but also the steep hikes in tariff, will adversely affect industrial production. Abhay envisages that if the deal with Enron is not terminated, Maharashtra, now the most industrialized state, will soon become the least industrialized state in the country.

The public interest litigation filed by Abhay and others has been put in limbo by the Supreme Court. There are very few other legal means. A concerted grassroots effort in Maharashtra, along with an effort to target Enron for its misdeeds is the only solution. His talks in Seattle, Madison and Washington D.C. have enlightened more people. An Enron Action group has been formed. If you wish to be part of this group and/or get a copy of *Power Play*, please write to Abhijit Sarkar asarkar@microsoft.com or Om Damani damani@akamai.com

- Vinay (AID Boston)



Women's Savings Group organized by the NBA in Nimgaon - one of the many tribal villages that will be submerged as part of the Sardar Sarovar Project. Photograph by Savita Kini (AID Bay Area)

LIVE ... from the Golden Corridor

I had many reasons, ranging from personal to professional, for wanting to spend a year in India. Personally, being a second generation Indian American, I wanted to understand my parents' perspective at a deeper level and to nourish that instinctive "Indian" part of myself that has never quite felt at home in the States. Secondly, having an environmental science degree, I am always seeking opportunities to use science to assist and empower communities.

I chose to volunteer for *Paryavaran Suraksha Samiti* (PSS), a network of activists based in Baruch district, Gujarat. Toxic effluents from this rapidly industrializing area, named the *Golden Corridor*, adversely impact the local communities by polluting both drinking and irrigation water.

In the past three months, I have been involved in various activities of PSS, such as, tromping through industrial dumpsites, participating in a citizen demonstration against industrial pollution, attending village meetings and public hearings. I will be conducting a survey of heavy metal contamination near industrial estates. Quantifying heavy metals - commonly found in industrial waste - is important because they persist in the environment for long periods of time, are highly toxic, and tend to biomagnify up the food chain. This research will benefit local citizens and strengthen the ongoing campaign against haphazard industrialization in Gujarat.

Next fall, when I go back to school to obtain my Masters in Environmental Health, I will have with me not only the relevant practical experience, but more importantly, a new perspective. In the increasing face of globalization, one comes to realize that our world is like one large society, and we are all fighting the same struggle.

- Ami Zota (AID Raleigh)

Rebuilding India: block by block

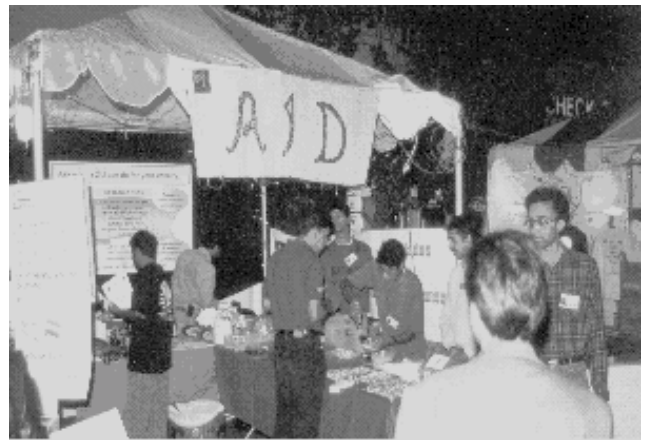
AID is a key participant in the Hundred Block Plan (HBP) - a people's movement initiated by the All India People's Science Network (AIPSN). It aims to eradicate poverty through simultaneous local initiatives in 100 blocks (8000 villages) and thus build up a movement for social change in India. The HBP will comprise a number of smaller programs. Some of the important programs are *Health*: training the villagers on matters of health; *Literacy*: ensuring basic education for the villagers; *Savings*: organizing cooperative savings societies to foster women's empowerment; *Enterprise*: agricultural and enterprise interventions to foster self-sustenance.

All these interventions are geared towards grassroots empowerment. The project, while being commitment intensive is not cost-intensive. AIPSN plans to spend Rs. 5,000 (\$114) per village per year for training volunteers. However, the total cost for all the 8000 villages adds up to Rs. 4.5 crore (\$ 1 million) per year.

AID is committed to this movement and all the chapters are enthusiastically working towards creating awareness and raising funds for this mass movement. AID has raised only a fraction of this year's target so far. We have a long way to go. It is not too late to join the movement! Your generous donations and participation can make this movement a success!

For more details visit: www.aidindia.org/aipsn

- Rajesh Veeraghavan (AID Bay Area)



AID booth at San Diego's Diwali Mela featuring food, mehndi, and handicrafts.

Photograph by Arvind Raghavan

Cricket Hungama!!

On an overcast Saturday morning of October 28th, AID Austin organized a double wicket cricket tournament. A total of twelve teams participated with the top two teams raking in the *moolah*. Everyone had a wonderful time! Organized primarily as part of an initiative to create AID awareness by regularly hosting small events, the event epitomized AID's theme that active participation in the well being of the society is a joy in itself! It has helped us gain confidence and credibility, which will be useful when we organize larger fund-raising events.

- THE AUSTIN TEAM

Conference in India

AID-India is participating in the National conference, organized by over a hundred groups, addressing the issues of human rights, environment, globalization and the law. We invite all AID volunteers who are in India at this year-end to attend this conference, in Panchgani (near Pune) from Dec 26- 31, 2000.

- Interested? Contact Aravinda (aid@vsnl.com)

Tell your Friends and Family about AID! When you see a good movie, don't you talk to your friends about it? Chances are they will be as eager as you to take part in a good cause!

Projects Update

A few new projects approved in the last quarter:

- Pedal power project - Alternative Energy, Narmada Valley - AID Maryland.
- Kajla Jan Kalyan Samiti - Literacy, Midnapur, West Bengal - AID Cincinnati
- SAADOW project - Vocational Training, Tamil Nadu - AID San Francisco Bay Area.
- SPADE - West Bengal Flood Relief - AID Maryland

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