

Exploring the Emerging Social Movements in Africa at the Third African Social Forum

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The African Social Forum was born out of the larger World Social Forum, which provides an annual open meeting place where groups and movements of civil society come together to dialogue and network towards collaborative action. The Third African Social Forum (ASF) took place in Lusaka, Zambia in mid-December 2004. This report includes notes and analysis of the African Social Forum and provides reflections on emerging social movements in Africa.

As a “forum” for deep dialogue on key justice issues, the African Social Forum was a great success. The quality of presentations and discussions in the conference rooms, corridors and cafés was exceptional. Economic justice issues were the most strongly represented at the ASF, with democracy, transparency and human rights following close behind. While there was not a formal and united statement or declaration that emerged, common themes included the call for 100% cancellation of Africa’s illegitimate debts and the need for reparations; critique of the Economic Partnership Agreements and Free Trade initiatives and a call for fair and just trade; criticism of the growing interest in the Millennium Development Goals (MDG); and calls for access to basic services including access to clean and safe water, health care, education, affordable housing, and universal treatment for those living with HIV/AIDS.

In addition to the vibrant discussions, strong critiques of the ASF emerged in Lusaka. Many participants would like to see the ASF unite social movements or come out with united statements or declarations. Others desire the forum to be a tool of popular education and mobilization, which implies the need for far greater attendance and a common focus for action. Critiques also included challenges to the leadership, frustration with the limited resources, and the make-up of the participants and the panels. Despite the fact that there were many concerns about the ASF, it remained a very helpful space for our purposes of meeting with colleagues across the continent, exploring African analysis and discussing collaborative work.

I came to the African Social Forum carrying a question that had been posed to the opening panel at the Africa Action 2004 Baraza. “What are the emerging social movements in Africa?” This document does not attempt to provide a comprehensive, or a definitive, answer to this expansive question, but instead to offer some initial conclusions that speak to this question. Despite the variety of definitions and understanding of the terms “social movements”, I often got very similar answers to the question. In all cases, the connections across issues are clearly identified. Many organizations and individuals are involved in more than one social movement and carry the broader analysis to each. The primary continent-wide social movements identified are the Anti-Corporate Globalization/ Economic Justice Movement, the movement for Democracy and Transparency, the movement to fight HIV/AIDS, the Women’s Movement and the Youth Movement. I have also included in this report a quick landscape survey of social movements in South Africa, Kenya, Zambia and Zimbabwe. A couple of people argued that there was really one dominant continent-wide movement that addresses both democracy/transparency and economic justice (including access to services and fighting AIDS).

The African Social Forum gave witness to the extensive and vibrant work for justice that grows despite limited financial resources and the challenges of building African movements across 54 nations and thousands of languages. The profound African analysis and vision expressed at the ASF challenges those of us working for justice in Africa to find greater opportunities for collaboration in message, analysis and campaign development.

Trip Objectives

The Third African Social Forum took place in Lusaka, Zambia in mid-December 2004, shortly after the conclusion of Africa Action's second annual Baraza. The purpose of my trip on behalf of Africa Action to the ASF was to build on existing relationships with African organizations and meet new potential colleagues in our common work for economic, political and social justice for Africa. It was also an opportunity to consult with African colleagues on potential campaigning and framing priorities for Africa Action (debt, treatment access etc.). Finally, it also allowed us to identify places of convergence for our work and the work happening on the African continent and the key colleagues with whom we can deepen this connection.

I traveled to the ASF carrying an overarching question that had been posed to the opening panel at the Africa Action 2004 Baraza. "What are the emerging social movements in Africa?" This is the type of question that could become a master's thesis, one that entire organizations, like the Centre for Civil Society in South Africa, attempt to answer. This question haunted me during the trip, and you will see from the notes below that I was able to gather some sense of the emerging social movements both at the Forum and in conversation with key African activists who have been engaged in movement building for decades. This document does not attempt to provide a comprehensive, or a definitive answer to this question; it simply is a starting point.

As my travel route was through Kenya, I took a couple of extra days in Nairobi to meet with a variety of Kenyan colleagues. The objectives for this portion of the trip were largely the same as those for the African Social Forum.

THE AFRICAN SOCIAL FORUM

General Observations

The number of people attending the third African Social Forum seemed to fluctuate around 500. Everyone was disappointed in this turnout. While it was higher than the second forum in Addis Ababa, it was much lower than expected. Many argued that the low attendance was partially because of a lack of resources to bring people and partially because of lack of publicity. Despite the fact that we were in Zambia, there was a relatively small Zambian delegation. This was clearly a result of insufficient publicity about the event. The largest delegation was from Zimbabwe. There were also a significant number of people from Malawi, South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya and Senegal. There were several North Africans, more than had attended previous forums. There were roughly equal numbers from East and West Africa, a smaller number of Central Africans and the largest group, naturally, was from Southern Africa.

There was more representation of people who are not affiliated with an organization, who are impoverished people working for change in their local community, than at the two previous forums. Unfortunately, because of difficulty with interpretation and the reality that most of these participants only spoke a specific ethnic language, they were only able to partially participate. Many participants offered the critique that the African Social Forum should be much bigger, with greater participation by the social movements, and with adequate translation to ensure their equal participation.

The Language Of Social Movements

The observation on social movement participation at the African Social Forum raises a larger general observation about the discourse of social movements in Africa. The first challenge in addressing the question of emerging social movements in Africa is how one defines "social movements". There are three dominant understandings of the term "social movements". The first use of the term "social movements" means the work for change on an issue by a broad section of society. For example, the international women's movement would be considered a "social movement" working towards the equal rights of women in which not only women but also men have participated. This definition allows for organizations to take part in the movement, but implies that there is not usually a head organization or individual. This type of definition holds for many in the African context, but it is not the exclusive definition.

A second definition for "social movements", as used above in describing attendance, refers not to an issue around which many work for change, but a grouping of people. These are people who are not paid activists or people

heavily involved in any organization. They are often rural people or the urban poor who are facing the reality of poverty and oppression in their every day lives. They might be farmers or slum-dwellers, men, women or youth. They are all, however, actively working for change. They might or might not be members of coalitions, trade unions, resource centers, or make up the “grassroots” of non-governmental organizations. This form of the term “social movements” was often used at the African Social Forum in contexts like, “We need more representation of the social movements. Most of the participants at this forum are non-governmental organizations and other civil society organizations.” All of the participants of the African Social Forum are working for change, and most of them would consider themselves a part of some type of “social movement” as it is described in the first version of the definition, but they are not the most impoverished or the most oppressed of African society.

A third definition of “social movements”, used frequently at the African Social Forum was in reference to particular organizations that have a strong representation of people who are oppressed, poor, or experiencing first hand the injustice of the issue. For example, when asked about the emerging social movements in South Africa, many mentioned specific organizations including the Treatment Access Campaign or the Anti-Privatization Forum. This is different than responding that the emerging social movements are on AIDS or anti-corporate globalization, or that the emerging social movements are people living with AIDS or people who have lost access to basic social services due to forced privatization of these services.

Gender

There was a gender imbalance both in terms of participation and more visibly in terms of leadership on panels and in the ASF overall. Even though Women for Change was the host organization, they were mostly working on logistics and as a result were not in visible leadership on the program. There were several sessions on women, “Gender and Trade”, “Feminist Dialogue” and an African’s Women’s Court, for example, but some of these sessions were scheduled at the same time, dividing the women among the sessions. At the times when there were specific sessions on women or gender, the other sessions at that time were almost exclusively attended by men.

Media/Publicity

Unlike in other forums, there was very little visibility of the ASF in Lusaka at large. The ASF was held in the Mulungushi International Conference Center, where there was a banner on the front gate, but there were no banners, posters or any other type of sign in other parts of Lusaka to draw attention to the ASF. There was little if any media coverage of the ASF in the papers on opening day, and there was very little coverage of the forum in the bigger papers or the TV news for the duration of the event. U.K. Prime Minister Tony Blair’s Commission on Africa had a consultation in Lusaka during one of the last days of the ASF, which got more local press than the forum got at any point. Of course, the Commission on Africa did not bother to consult with those at the ASF. There was a very good internal newspaper produced by people at the ASF, but it is not clear that it was circulated beyond the participants.

African Critiques

Much of the critique centered on the disappointment in the small numbers of attendance and the frustration about insufficient resources. Greater resources would have enabled greater participation and greater publicity of the ASF. Women and some of the men in attendance also raised the need for greater gender representation on the panels.

Many African participants, including some in the leadership structure, were highly critical of the leadership of the ASF. The argument was that the leadership structure has been too small in number and has not been transparent or participatory enough. This, some argued, was what resulted in the situation whereby many of the same people spoke several times over on the different panels. Participants would have preferred hearing from more voices. The leadership concerns also were connected to complaints about the forum’s logistics; the disappointments about decisions made that influenced the agenda of the forum; and about the lack of transparency about money and budget. It is important to note that the concerns on fiscal transparency were not accusations of corruption, but simply a lack of clarity in the larger group about how much money had been raised and how it had been spent. For example, some speculated that more money could have been spent to bus in more people from rural areas, as opposed to being spent on other parts of the ASF.

The concerns about the leadership and the decision making around the forum are best summed up in a paper produced and distributed by South African participants called, “Social Movements Indaba Statement”. The South

Africans feel especially excluded from the leadership. While the statement resonates with the critiques made throughout the ASF, the fact that the statement came from the South Africans who tend to be the most militant and vocal in their critique meant that the statement was less well received. Participants were also disappointed that there were not more conference perks (due to little funding) like coffee breaks, bags or other souvenirs, packets with papers etc. as there had been at the two previous Forums. There also were some logistical problems, and little or very late translation. There was a church service scheduled on two of the days (which lasted all day) that was very loud and better attended, perhaps, than the ASF, sparking discussion about the need for more faith-based outreach and questions about who the ASF attracts.

A True Forum

Despite the fact that there were many concerns and criticisms about the ASF, it remained a very helpful space for our purposes of meeting with people from around the continent, hearing the analysis and having discussions on our campaign priorities. If you see the African Social Forum as a “forum” where deep discussion and dialogue on key justice issues can be had, the ASF was a great success. The quality of presentations, discussions and dialogue in the conference rooms, the corridors and the cafés was all exceptional. The critiques become more powerful for those who would like to see the ASF unite social movements or come out with united statements or declarations, and to some extent for those who desire the forum to be a tool of popular education and mobilization.

OPENING SESSION: "ANOTHER AFRICA IS POSSIBLE"

The opening session was very interesting. The framework for “Another Africa” was identified as, “Creating a poverty free and just world.” According to the presenters, this can be done by:

Total debt cancellation

No exploitation of natural resources

Fair trade

Ensuring human and social rights for all (health, education, water)

Ending HIV/AIDS

Addressing natural disasters and conflict

Addressing gender inequality

The challenges identified by the presenters were:

Africans need a mass movement to put people first and profit last

Africans need alternatives to neo-liberalism and a movement to challenge neo-liberalism

Africans must create a resistance against violence

Africans need democratic alternatives.

After this framework was identified, speakers from each country or region that had hosted a national or regional social forum got up to speak. They each identified priority issues that had come out of their social forum and many offered their analysis or gave speeches about their deepest concerns.

Kenya: Focus on debt cancellation, celebrated a history of resisting colonialism, had a special focus on youth.

Egypt: Focus on corruption and dictatorships – the need for democratic and civil states that respect human rights. Egypt’s forum challenged NGOs to be democratic themselves and to strengthen civil society.

Senegal: Focus on NEPAD/globalization/debt. Senegalese forum emphasized the need to develop African solutions Africa's main challenges.

Tunisia: Focus on globalization and violence; and the building of social movements that develop alternatives and new political patterns.

Zimbabwe: Focus on the need to resist ALL forms of oppression, and build social movements from the ground up.

Cote D'Ivoire: Focus on conflicts, not only in Cote D'Ivoire but also in Sierra Leone, Senegal, Liberia and the fear that there will be others soon. Within this focus, they addressed child soldiers, violence against women. and the impact on access to social services and economic growth. "When there is no peace we cannot talk about economics."

Malawi: Forum was launched with the government's participation (very unique). Focus was on HIV/AIDS and issues like debt that fuel HIV/AIDS and the lack of access to education and health care.

Nigeria: 2,000 participants. Focus on debt cancellation as a first priority to eradicate poverty, HIV/AIDS and corruption.

Morocco: Focus on colonialism, trade, and the myth that Sub-Saharan Africans are Africans and North Africans are Arabs. "North Africans are ready to collaborate."

Gambia: Focus on the need for new strategies and action plans that can create change at the national and international level and to build stronger mobilizations of people at the grassroots.

West African Social Forum: Africans must move from statements to action. Focus on Globalization, especially debt, trade and women's rights.

Regional and Continent-Wide Groups/Movements Highlighted:

Third World Network spoke about economic re-colonization.

Third World Forum spoke about debt, need for reparations.

Anti-Privatization Forum spoke about challenging neo-liberalism by standing up in solidarity with clear agendas (e.g. no NEPAD, no IMF/WB/WTO).

DEBT
(2 parts – each part a ½ day)

WORKSHOP

These notes are brief overviews as Demba Dembele from the Forum of African Alternatives has prepared a full report on the outcomes of this workshop. His report is available on request at dembuss@hotmail.com.

African Continental Perspective

The presentation was given by Jack Jones Zulu of Jubilee Zambia. He gave a compelling overview of the debt crisis on the African continent that was full of statistics. He called for 100% unconditional debt cancellation of all unpayable, odious, illegitimate and ecological debts. He said we must work to abolish harmful conditions that keep countries in bondage. Jubilee Zambia is also asking for an open process for loan contractions and debt management.

Country Campaign Updates

Updates were given by campaigns from Malawi, South Africa, Egypt, Zimbabwe, Mali and the U.S. and there was an overview of the broader work of Jubilee South.

Discussion Outcomes

There was an emphasis on the demand as initially articulated by Jack Jones Zulu. There was some debate about conditionality, but all agreed any transparency conditions should come from the South, not the North. There was some discussion about the need for repudiation, reparations etc. There was a lot of skepticism that the Group of Eight wealthy nations (G8) would produce anything helpful for Africa on this question. There was some debate about Iraqi debt cancellation and how to discuss the debt relief agreement for Iraq. People were clear on the importance of addressing the political expediency of that decision. There was a discussion on the need for alternative sources of financing for African countries. There was a great deal of interest in the Jubilee South plans for audits to identify “who owes what to whom” as a tool to strengthen the case for debt cancellation. There was an agreement to better connect the issue of debt with issues of HIV/AIDS, trade, child rights, etc. Events identified for further action were the World Social Forum, G8, AU Summit, UN Summit and Regional Economic Summits.

MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS WORKSHOP

All agreed that MDGs fell short of what was needed. Few had much to expect from the goals as they are now. Some argued that there could still be a lot done on the MDG platform. It became quickly clear that those that are actively working on these issues are either working with the All African Conference of Churches, with a mainstream Christian denomination or for international organizations or with organizations that get funding from the World Bank. At the forum ALL groups working on MDGs were being paid to do so by the Northern churches, organizations or institutions.

Those in favor of engaging in the MDG discussion argued that the goals are a confession that the free market economy has failed as a paradigm. They argue that there is no harm in using the principles as another opportunity to push the priorities that make up the body of the work of social movements in Africa. They point out, however, that the agency to “make poverty history” is with those who know the experience of poverty and how to eradicate it, not simply those who just say, “make poverty history.”

One presenter made the comment that he is excited about the broad coalition working on the MDGs and wanted the group to recognize that “advanced” civil society drives the MDG campaign. (Imagine the offense this statement caused!) Critics of the MDGs argue that they are “a symptom of the lies in the world.” Others mentioned that they are a distraction. Some said they find it hard to transcribe them for people in rural areas.

Actions around MDGs include:

People wearing white arm bands

Global Actions on the third week of April for trade justice

The G8 mobilization in the UK

Mobilizations around the WTO Ministerial in Hong Kong

ZIMBABWE WORKSHOP

The workshop on the Zimbabwe crisis focused on the conflict as a regional problem, not just a national problem. The crisis has many elements that are seen in other countries in the region. Within a suffocating political framework there are issues of governance and economic policies that benefit the few not the majority. Discussants argued that the white elite have just been replaced with the black elite. Presenters argued that the struggle in Zimbabwe is no longer a struggle between black and white but between the black elite and the black poor. This analysis was echoed by others from nations across the continent.

The movement building in Zimbabwe is not new – it is centered on struggles for both democracy and social justice and is played out in campaigns for jobs, the vote etc. Young people are the base of the emerging social movements in Zimbabwe.

The critique of Mugabe is both of his dictatorship, but also his commitment to market reforms that set in place the neo-liberal agenda. 50% of the budget goes to debt service, and 25% to corruption. There is a huge brain drain as 3 million Zimbabweans now live outside Zimbabwe – searching for security and better paying jobs.

IMF/WB CIVIL SOCIETY ENGAGEMENT WORKSHOP

This workshop was lead by CIVICUS. There was a presentation on three types of relationships with the institutions: non-engagement, selective engagement and comprehensive engagement. These can be on policy or governance issues. There was a plug for the World Bank/NGO Committee and their annual Global Policy Forum in April in Washington, DC where Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs are required as a part of debt relief and loan arrangements with the International Financial Institutions) will be the hot topic. It was noted that in this committee, civil society is no longer a co-convenor but can still engage.

The presentation was not well accepted by the audience. In fact, not a single person spoke up in favor of engagement on any level. Most saw engagement as being co-opted by the Bank which turns around to use their \$20 million/year public relations budget to tout how well they work with civil society. There were several attacks on CIVICUS directly, asking where they get their funding (some comes from World Bank) and challenging them on their claim to be using this as a way to gather critiques of the institutions which will then be presented to the institutions in April. Some argued that by even having such a discussion at the ASF, the World Bank will be able to argue that they “consulted” (through CIVICUS) with the African Social Forum and that it might be perceived as giving legitimacy to the World Bank.

My personal favorite quote was on what it was like to participate with the World Bank and governments in writing a PRSP, “You write your own poverty plan. It is like building your own cage and then locking yourself into it.”

TREATMENT WORKSHOP

The workshop was chaired by Davie Malungisa of ZIMCODD (Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development) and had participants of PATAM (Pan African Treatment Access Movement), Action Aid International, GALZ (Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe), ZAHA (Zimbabwean Activists on HIV/AIDS) and SIPO (National Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS).

The workshop framed the HIV/AIDS crisis within the context of human rights and economic justice. The stated goal is to achieve universal, accessible, comprehensive treatment and care for all who live with HIV/AIDS.

There were presentations on the impact and prevalence of HIV/AIDS in Zimbabwe, testimonies to the experience of working to fight HIV/AIDS among women, children, those with disabilities etc.

There was an overview of the Zimbabwean government’s response. In 1999, Zimbabwe’s Government declared that AIDS was a national disaster and created a commission on AIDS – the National AIDS Council. There are no representatives of civil society or those living with HIV/AIDS on this council. The National AIDS Council developed AIDS policy; there is an AIDS levy as a part of the payroll tax which goes to an AIDS trust fund. Soon afterwards, Zimbabwe started receiving grants and loans from donors including the International Monetary Fund and World Bank to buy TB and other essential drugs. Zimbabwe started importing generics in May 2002. It was noted that the International Financial Institutions have now broken relationships with the government. Zimbabwe’s proposal to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria was rejected. There have been a variety of policies created around HIV/AIDS, including policies on home based care, AIDS and nutrition and education, guidelines for the police force and workplace intervention policies, mental health guidelines and guidelines for delivery of anti-retroviral medicines (ARV).

Action Aid’s Mutapola project was highlighted. It is a program that demonstrates the fact that women are at the forefront of the HIV/AIDS crisis. It does this by describing “Mutapola” as the face of the HIV/AIDS crisis; a woman that represents all women impacted. The project recognizes that not only are women the most impacted by the crisis, but men dominate the leadership in the HIV/AIDS communities, coalitions and organizations. (A man gave the presentation.) The Mutapola campaign focuses on the fact that women who live with AIDS have a lot of differences, but they are all poor, black and female. It frames women with HIV/AIDS as being strong, proud, loving and in need of treatment and comprehensive healthcare (not a victim).

The campaign pillars are:

Right to comprehensive treatment and care

Right to secure livelihood and food (including the right to income and land)

Strengthening the capacity of organizations that focus on women and HIV/AIDS

Advocacy for policies that prioritize rights of women and girls

The testimony on women and HIV/AIDS emphasized the relationship between women's rights and HIV/AIDS and gender violence and HIV/AIDS. The focus was on women's experiences as care givers, home based care providers, getting access to health and education and land.

The testimony on disabilities focused on the double stigma and discrimination of people with disabilities and HIV/AIDS. There was also an emphasis on the isolation of people with disabilities, and thus the increased difficulty for them to get the correct information on how to protect themselves from HIV/AIDS. There was the desire to see this issue highlighted in policy.

There were several testimonies about programs, support groups and other projects that are happening in different countries. ZNNP+ (Zimbabwe Network of People living with AIDS) and others have fostered support groups, networking, health education and ways to lobby for the rights of people living with HIV/AIDS. Their tactics range from marches to insider lobby strategies. They also provide services including home based care and counseling. Martha Tholanah from GALZ gave a great presentation addressing the larger economic connections to AIDS, treatment access etc.

The biggest challenges identified were:

Donors are pulling out of countries mostly because of donor apathy, but in some countries, like Zimbabwe, because of political problems. "Are sanctions on HIV+ people or on Zimbabwe?"

Public personalities need to step up to help fight discrimination and stigma.

Governments are prioritizing home based care over helping people who are still capable of working.

Prioritization by the West of their big pharmaceutical companies with expensive drugs and patents over generics.

NOT ENOUGH RESOURCES for organizations to do what they need to do. Even basic things like getting transport to rural areas and translating materials into local languages can't happen because of insufficient funding.

There are challenges of local healers talking about "cures" and of fake ARVs. People are making easy money on other people's suffering.

Favorite quotes, "On top of all that women do, they now have to carry hospitals on their heads." On the topic of the "origin" of AIDS, "There is no use jumping around about spilled water, because water won't go back into the container. Same with AIDS. The question is, 'What do we do now?'"

WORKSHOP ON SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND ECONOMIC ALTERNATIVES

The "alternatives" section of this workshop was focused on the need for locally grown alternatives. While it was clear that there needed to be work at all levels, alternatives that come from "above" were regarded as "dangerous". The participants were encouraged to keep the past and the present in mind when exploring alternatives. On social movements, there was some discussion about the experience of South Africa, where there was an expectation of liberation after 1994, but "nothing changed." Instead there was GEAR (Growth Employment and Redistribution), and the new South African government adopted the neo-liberal agenda.

Social movements were discussed as movements informed by the struggles of workers and the poor. This was illustrated by the anti-privatization struggles and land struggles. Collins Magalasi from Malawi described frustration of going to a community and engaging people in protest of the World Bank, only to have the World Bank come in shortly afterwards with a check for a school, tempting people away from the movement. Many expressed frustration with meetings and were looking for action. All expressed a need for a groundswell.

There was discussion of how to link grassroots with governments to influence change, and how to use information as a tool of empowerment. Some questioned if it is possible to create change without governments.

The group divided into several smaller groups to discuss movements in their contexts. In my group people were quiet for some time when asked what social movements exist in their context. When one person asked if an anti-privatization movement existed in their country, the response from South Africans, Zambians and Zimbabweans was, "Oh, yes!" There was a realization that a lot of people have different understandings on what a social movement is. Some associate the term with people who are not connected to an organization, others with people who act together towards a specific goal for change. The movements that are easiest to identify are ones that have organizations involved with paid staff.

There were lots of examples of pockets of resistance on issues like land, water etc., though people were hesitant to call them social movements. The critique about these efforts was that there is not a lot of coordination among these pockets of resistance.

There are a lot of stop gap measures, but not much in the way of social movements developing alternatives. The question was posed at one point, "Do social movements have the intellectual capacity to develop alternatives?" It was agreed that more needs to be done to empower grassroots and to network the pockets of resistance.

People who came from rural areas spoke about the challenges of contextualizing global macro-economic issues for mothers in a village.

Social movements identified by the group included:

Youth movements

Anti-corporate globalization/anti-privatization (identified as having been fueled especially by the World Summit on Sustainable Development)

Democracy and Governance

Jubilee/Debt

Land Rights

Movement fighting AIDS (and for access to health)

Environmental movement

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS BEYOND THE WORKSHOP

Despite the variety of definitions and understanding of the terms "social movements", I often got very similar answers to the questions, and some issues, groups of people and organizations rose to the top of the list in each discussion. Which issue, group or organization was the first to be mentioned varied on the nationality and issue focus of the person being questioned, but most respondents would end up listing all of the movements highlighted below. For purposes of simplicity, the movements are listed first by issue, then by organizations that are taking leadership and finally with an analysis of the groups of people most involved in social movements.

Continent-wide Movements

It is important to note that for most civil society involved in social movements, the connections across issues are clearly identified. Many organizations and individuals are involved in more than one social movement and carry the broader analysis to each. A couple of people argued that there was really one dominant continent-wide movement that addresses economic justice and democracy/transparency and embraces a broad range of demands, for example, access to services and HIV/AIDS treatment. This was not a universal analysis among respondents.

Anti-Corporate Globalization/Economic Justice Movements

One of the most visible of the continent-wide movements is the economic justice movement, which is often referred to as the “Anti-Corporate Globalization” movement and in some countries as the “Anti-Capitalist” movement. This is seen clearly at the African Social Forum, which gives more time to these issues than any other theme. Some of the strongest organizations that have representatives continent-wide are the Jubilee Campaigns and Debt and Development groups like AFRODAD, which work primarily on debt cancellation, trade and foreign aid but are engaged with the interconnected issues of access to services. There are also a series of anti-privatization organizations and campaigns that take strong leadership in this social movement. Political organizations or think tanks, many of them anti-capitalist in orientation also engage vibrantly in this social movement. Trade unions and other forms of organized labor also engage with this movement at varying levels, and there is often articulated a need for greater cooperation between organized labor and organizations and individuals working for broader economic justice issues.

The movement varies in its approaches to official bodies like the IMF/World Bank/WTO or governmental bodies like the African Union. Some are willing to engage these officials more than others. This level of willingness to engage varies by region, with the Southern Africans, especially the South Africans, with a strong non-engagement policy. West Africans seem to have the most organizations willing to engage with the African Union in some way, and willingness to consider varying approaches to the International Financial Institutions. Engagement, however, seems to be one of the most contentious issues within the movement.

Democracy/Transparency

There is a continuing emphasis on greater democracy and transparency. In some regions this is a stand-alone social movement and in other regions it seems to be integrated into the economic justice movement. In many cases democracy and transparency are focused around human rights. This movement has a greater involvement of journalists who advocate for greater freedom of the press. While some in this movement would argue that foreign relations with African governments should be conditioned on African governments work towards greater democracy and transparency, most believe that democracy, transparency and accountability will only come from movements within African countries.

HIV/AIDS

The HIV/AIDS crisis has naturally become a focal point for social movements on issues as well as for social movements made up of groups of people. In some regions, the HIV/AIDS crisis is being addressed within the economic justice movement and in other regions it is a part of the women’s movement. In some cases it seems to be standing alone as its own social movement. The movement to fight HIV/AIDS is populated predominantly by women, but the leadership both in terms of organizations and figureheads seems to be primarily male. The movement involves a diversity of players that range from health care and/or home based care providers, people living with HIV/AIDS, educators, professionals, the gay, lesbian and bi-sexual communities, trade unions and some faith based communities. Organizations that seem to be taking a lead are NAP+, NAPWA and PATAM.

Women

African women’s movements continue to grow across the continent and seem to vary in strength and interconnection with other movements based on region and country. There is a growing push to connect the work on HIV/AIDS with the work for women’s rights. Not only does AIDS have an African woman’s face, but violence against women, women’s access to education, land rights and employment all have a direct relationship to the pandemic. FEMNET is a prominent continent-wide organization.

Youth

There has been a lot of excitement and interest in the youth movement, which seems to be emerging more strongly in recent years. School fees, access to education, HIV/AIDS and debt seem to be high on the agenda for youth movements in different nations. There was a Youth Forum at the African Social Forum and there is the hope that there will be a strong African youth presence at the World Social Forum this year and in years to come.

National Movements

Most respondents to the question, “What are the emerging social movements in Africa?” immediately acknowledged that South Africa was the leader in the social movements department. The fact that some of the movements in South Africa exist continent-wide was often an afterthought, and many were not sure exactly how successful or broad these movements were in other countries.

South Africa

There were two primary issue focused movements that were repeatedly addressed in the formal program of the African Social Forum and were often the first to be mentioned by respondents to the question on emerging social movements. The first is the Anti-Corporate Globalization Movement, which is sometimes interchangeably referred to as the Anti-Capitalist movement. This movement focuses most on issues of privatization and debt and the two leading organizations are the Anti-Privatization Forum and Jubilee South Africa, which brings together a coalition of groups and churches working for debt cancellation and reparations for apartheid debt. The Anti-Privatization Forum has a strong grassroots base that is made up of people in impoverished areas who are losing access to essential services. The Jubilee South Africa is more of a coalition of organizations and churches and it is less clear how much they have mobilized a grassroots network.

The second primary movement is on the HIV/AIDS crisis. In this case, the organization that is most often mentioned is the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC), though the movement is much broader and includes NAPWA, support groups, networks of home-based care groups etc. While TAC initially was a very popular movement filled with groups of people directly impacted by the AIDS crisis, as it has grown and received greater international attention and financing, it has developed into more of an organization. TAC in South Africa helped spur the creation of PATAM (Pan African Treatment Access Movement), which is attempting to engage those working on the HIV/AIDS crisis continent-wide.

In addition to these primary movements, there are many other organizations and campaigns that are interconnected including:

The Anti-Eviction Campaign (AEC, Western Cape)

The Concerned Citizens' Forum (CCF), Greater Durban

The Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU)

Environmental groups

Gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intergender (GLBTI) groups

The Homeless People's Federation (HPF)

The Landless People's Movement (LPM)

The Mapogo-A-Mathamaga vigilante organization

Refugee groups

The Self-Employed Women's Union (SEWU)

The Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee (SECC)

The South African National Civics Organization (SANCO)

The women's movement

Zambia

In Zambia, there seems to be one large movement for democracy, good governance, economic justice and access to health and human services that have many head organizations and communities. The most visible seems to be the Jubilee movement for debt cancellation that is run out of the Jesuit Center for Debt and Development. Complete with organizers across the country, this is a movement that has both organizational leadership and grassroots engagement. They connect the issue of debt to broader issues of globalization and access to services including health and particularly the HIV/AIDS crisis. They also are very involved in issues of democracy, transparency, and human rights. All of these wing issues also have many organizations and groups of people that are working for change, which lead the observer to wonder if these are separate but connected movements or one large social movement. While not as integrated with the rest, there also seems to be a strong women's movement in Zambia. They were less visible at the African Social Forum, though Women for Change hosted the forum.

Zimbabwe

Like in Zambia, there seems to be a strong cohesion among organizations and groups of people who are working towards democracy and economic justice with an emphasis on debt and access to health (focusing on the AIDS crisis.) In the case of Zimbabwe this seems to be largely out of necessity, in light of the political climate. The other social movement that has been strong in Zimbabwe, but less connected to the first, is the Land Movement. This movement was not well represented at the African Social Forum, but was mentioned by many as an example of a strong movement.

Meeting With Aids Activists From Zimbabwe

Some of the biggest challenges AIDS activists face is the stringent control of drugs which becomes even tighter when the drugs are generics. This is limiting the amount and type of drugs which can get into the country in the first places. It also means that it takes years for companies to get approval to try to produce ARVs themselves. They are looking for people/organizations that can purchase drugs from overseas and get them directly to the providers in Zimbabwe. They really liked Africa Action's idea of focusing a treatment access campaign on pharmaceuticals. Their pick on the pharmaceutical to target was GlaxoSmithKline. They asked if we could also challenge USAID, and specifically JSI (John Snow, Inc. which gets USAID funding).

They are really angry about PEPFAR. They are frustrated that so few countries are even eligible. Those that are eligible are not necessarily the same countries that have the best infrastructure to get out the drugs, and the people with the most in-country expertise are, of course, not in control of the process.

KENYA TRIP

The movements around democracy and human rights have been strong in Kenya historically. They remain very active as the Kibaki administration enjoys its first term. There is an emerging land movement that is often associated with the organization Kenyan Land Alliance. There are also emerging actions and organizing in the slum areas, especially those around Nairobi, where the residents are starting to become more engaged on poverty issues including access to water, health, education and housing.

Farmers and fisher people have become more active and engaged on issues of subsidies and international trade agreements. While they are not yet working across sectors, there is hope that this will emerge as a very strong movement addressing Economic Partnership Agreements and other Free Trade Agreements.

Kenya has an environmental movement and a debt movement, but there was some debate among respondents as to the success of these movements. Some argued that they are growing - the Greenbelt Movement for sustainable development that has a strong environmental component, for example, has just gotten a boost as Wangari Maathai won the Nobel Peace Prize. Others fear that they are fizzling and have not been able to make much progress.

KENWA targets the poorest of the poor.

KENWA has 3100 members, 23 of them are men, 1400 are kids and the rest are women. They provide care and support including clinics, feeding programs, income-generating programs, counseling, reading programs for orphans, home-based care and treatment. They have 150 people on ARVs and 1200 that need them desperately.

KENWA sees 600 patients a day who are bed-ridden and need food support. They help 700 orphans a year. Unfortunately, often people come to KENWA when they are already too far along in the disease. They lose on average 3-4 people a week, and most of these are people who have come to them when it is too late.

KENWA is also engaged in advocacy, both in terms of building public awareness and engaging public policy. They focus their lobbying efforts on issues of human rights (especially women's rights), treatment access, stigma, reproductive rights, access to credit, insurance and mortgages.

KENWA has a weekly news article in the weekend edition of the primary newspapers on education about the HIV/AIDS crisis and what you need to do to protect yourself and others. The biggest challenges Asunta sees are access to water, raising enough money to cover the school fees for the orphans and children of the women who are no longer able to generate an income for themselves, and food security.

KENWA struggles raising enough money to keep operating at the level of the need. For example, Asunta has 110 staff and 200 volunteers, but she only has funding this year for 38 staff.

KENWA is able to access some generics. It costs \$100 for tests and the procedures. They get the generics from an Indian drug company. She said that the Global Fund money is the most popular because it is comprehensive and they work with the ideas of the people who are working on the ground. She advocates that all government spending on HIV/AIDS should go through the Global Fund. She commented that the children know about the Global Fund, not USAID or the UN.

KENWA has found PEPFAR “impenetrable”. She knows of a Coptic hospital that gets PEPFAR money, but it costs \$180 for the drugs – which makes it inaccessible to the KENWA members.

“We work, we bury, we work, we bury.” Asunta Wagura on the reality of working on AIDS in Kenya.

Action Aid Kenya

I had an informal meeting with Njeri Mwangi of Action Aid in Kenya. They had a recent meeting on focusing more directly on IMF/World Bank policies that fuel the HIV/AIDS crisis – including user fees, budget caps due to inflation targets etc. She is somewhat involved in the “Mutapola Project” that had been presented in Lusaka – but that is more of an Action Aid International initiative.

Njeri is pretty discouraged about the financial drain towards the MDGs – she would like to see the tremendous amount of money that is going into gathering people to support the MDGs to go to the ongoing work on economic justice issues. She cited the fact that several key activists could not raise enough money to support their work and thus have agreed to work on MDGs in order to have access to desperately needed funding.

We spent a lot of time chatting about the African Social Forum itself and the challenges that the forum is facing. She is invested in this because she is a part of the group of people who have been advocating that the World Social Forum in 2007 be held in East Africa. The assumption is that, if this is approved, it would be in Kenya.

Econews

I had a lunch with Karen Gregow of EcoNews. EcoNews prioritizes trade issues, since KENDREN is located in the same office space and is working on debt. EcoNews has been especially focused on Economic Partnership

Agreements and launched a campaign on this topic. They are interested in learning more about SACU/FTA but have not had the time or the resources to get into the details.

Karen also cited tight resources as their biggest challenged and connected that to some of the North/South tensions on international coalition building on trade issues. There simply are fewer staff trying to fight on a larger number of issues in Kenyan organizations. Larger international organizations are able to pump out materials quickly with their larger staff focused only on trade, and then are impatient with the slower time-frame of Kenyans working on trade. Karen was frustrated with this in terms of where the analysis and framing on economic issues for progressives is coming from. She would like to see Africans providing the bulk of this analysis instead of it coming from the North.

On social movements, she sees African social movements to be fragmented. She sees the strongest of the social movements to be in South Africa with the anti-privatization movement and TAC. She also has been impressed on the regional level with economic justice, AIDS and democracy movements. In Kenya, she thinks that the democracy and human rights movements are the strongest.

SEATINI (Southern and Eastern African Trade Information and Negotiations Institute)

Oduor Ong'wen and I had a good and productive conversation about social movements in Kenya and across the continent that influenced my summary above. We spent most of our time talking about trade.

SEATINI's priorities are, first, to work on Economic Partnership Agreements, moving now from analysis to campaigning. He is looking forward to engaging with the fisher people, sugar farmers etc. and is hopeful that having a target like the EPAs might help to bring some of these communities together in common action.

The next priority is the Hong Kong ministerial conference. He is hoping that they will build momentum post Cancun etc. After the conference he hopes to turn his energy to the Southern African Custom Union (SACU) in recognition that SACU is just the beginning for Africans – and Kenya will likely see a similar agreement if SACU is successful.

CONCLUSION

It was very helpful to reconnect with people Africa Action has been in relationship with and to re-affirm that Africa Action is interested in continuing our work with their organizations. I was also able to meet several new people who I hope will become key contacts for Africa Action in the future.

The most exciting elements of the Forum were the few times when I was able to sit down to consult with colleagues on our campaign priorities and hear their interest and vision. I would have liked to have more of the conversations. People loved the Africa's Right to Health language in our general brochure and the Global Apartheid poster and at one point I was asked to speak to a workshop about how we frame the issues of debt, treatment access etc. in the Africa's Right to Health framework.

In discussing our work on HIV/AIDS there was a desire for us to work for greater funding for the Global Fund, there was a need for more information about PEPFAR, and the most excitement was around targeting pharmaceuticals in a treatment access campaign.

On debt, the discussion focused more on messages and framing than on mobilizing campaigns, but the desire was there for continuing to push for recognition of the illegitimate nature of the debt, for 100% unconditional cancellation for all countries in the Global South.

There are some who are interested in the Fair and Transparent Arbitration Process and the Apartheid suit in the U.S. Africa Action might reflect on what sort of supportive role we can take as our partners work to convince their leadership to repudiate the debts. While it has not been identified as one of our primary campaigns, there was a lot of interest in Economic Partnership Agreements and many people wanted to know if I had any intelligence or analysis on the SACU-FTA agreement. Also, aside from our campaign priorities, there was a lot of debate about the Millennium Development Goals and a continuing debate on the appropriate level of engagement between civil society and the African Union.

There are clear places of convergence in our work on HIV/AIDS and debt as a part of our Africa's Right to Health framework. I did not find as much convergence on the work on Sudan. Almost all of the discussion on conflict was focused on conflict mediation, not on questions of sources of conflict or debates on what forms of intervention are necessary in crises like the current genocide in Darfur.

STRENGTHENING SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN AFRICA

In almost every conversation about social movements, the point was made that social movements are often weak and fragmented and those who seek change would like to see a greater investment in growing and strengthening African social movements – especially those that are regional or continent-wide. The two primary needs identified were more resources and the need for greater communication and coordination.

Many also expressed the frustration that outside funding, from large international organizations, Northern governments and even International Financial Institutions can distract and detract from movement building. One example often cited is the funding for organizations working on debt to participate in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper process which took energy away from the campaigning for 100% debt cancellation and caused debate and division among Jubilee groups across the continent. Another example is the current influx of funding for organizations to focus on the Millennium Development Goals that has forced groups to put other projects and priorities on hold while human resources go towards producing campaigns, analysis and programs around the MDGs. The common request was for there to be greater resources mobilized for social movements without Northern agendas attached.

To learn more about African social movements, the Centre For Civil Society in South Africa is producing some of the most comprehensive analysis of social movements for Civil Society. Most of their papers can be found online at: www.ukzn.ac.za/ccs