

REPORT

WSCF-AP'S STUDENT EMPOWERMENT FOR TRANSFORMATION (SET) 2002

“SEARCHING FOR ALTERNATIVES IN THE MIDST OF GLOBALISATION ”

This year's SET programme explored on issues surrounding alternatives to Globalisation. “Searching for Alternatives in the midst of Globalisation” focused on the need to seek to critique the true meaning of globalisation and find for ourselves viable alternatives in our respective social, political and economic orders. This workshop was held at the University of Philippines, Los Banos in the Philippines from June 16-30, 2002. Delegates from 12 SCM member movements in the Asia Pacific Region Attended. The student delegates came from SCMs being: Indonesia, Australia, Burma, Thailand, Philippines, Sri Lanka, New Zealand, Japan, Bangladesh, Korea, Taiwan and Hong Kong. Also in attendance were: 2 resource speakers, 4 Filipino host committee members, 2 WSCF-AP staff members and 2 Standing Committee members.

Keynote address I – General Analysis on Globalisation

The programme started with a keynote address by Antonio Tuhan who is a senior friend of SCM Philippines and who is currently working in a NGO for the issue of alternative education. Antonio shared that technology is developed in response to cyclical crises caused by capitalism. In a capitalist world there is an economic recession every 10 years, leading to overproduction. Excess products are then dumped in developing countries and investment occurs in new products and technologies, which then becomes a reason for developing new technology. The technological advances of the 1970s lead to cheaper transportation and communications, with it becoming economically viable to use cheap overseas labour.

Globalisation/Neo-Liberalism gives precedence to the corporations, privatisation, deregulation and foreign investors. Corporations need the trade barrier to be broken down and neo-liberalism has been used to force open markets. Much of what we hear about globalisation is myth, because it comes from advertisements or propaganda that have an intended message. Globalisation consists of 3 main elements that are Liberalisation, Deregulation and Privatisation.

1) Liberalisation :

- Removing import bans, reducing tariffs, removing tariffs, and removing quality restrictions
- Governments impose structural adjustment programmes on imposition from the WTO and imports are allowed to develop export/market access
- Corporations get the opportunity to export and dump excess product, and expand their profits. Local production is marginalised leading to unemployment and poverty.

2) Deregulation:

- Removes financial restrictions that are aimed at ensuring that the flow of money is beneficial to the big corporations. These do not automatically lead to foreign investments
- All investors should be given freedom, rights and protection. Natural resources, indigenous peoples, culture, schools, hospitals, basic industries, social protection and the environment become commodities to be exploited and are not protected. Public utilities are a monopoly.

3) Privatisation:

- That government down sizes and off load public utilities to private corporations.

Exposure

The delegates were divided into 4 groups in the exposure.

Group One: Happy Hollow:

Group One travelled to Happy Hollow in Benguet, Baguio. They visited an indigenous community of Igorot people, who were fighting relocation from their ancestral lands as the Government alleged that they did not have title to their lands and had sold their land to developers who were now going to use the land for tourist sites. The Igorot received no compensation for their lands and had not been provided with alternative accommodation.

Group Two: Mont Alban:

Group Two travelled to Mont Alban outside of Manila. The issues were that of land grabbing for so called 'forestation' that was occurring at Mont Alban. This was linked to a new dam which was proposed in the area. There was no fresh water or electricity in this community nor TV nor newspapers, but there was a real sense of community spirit amongst the people. But the children were the most affected as there were also no social services such as they had to walk one hour to get to school.

Group Three: Smoky Mountain:

Group 3 travelled to Smoky Mountain, which was a community living amongst the garbage of Manila. The people stayed in very small and basic houses with no proper sanitary facilities. There was no water, only a bucket of water for washing. The place was full of garbage and the residents risked their lives to scavenge things like recyclable plastics, glasses and metals, often in hazardous circumstances. This is evidenced by the collapse of the old Smoky Mountain a few years ago, leading to a few hundred deaths. The Government has said that they will relocate the residents but have not done so. The health of the people is very bad: they are breathing in toxic smoke all the time and it affects the growth of the children: they have no upper teeth and have skin rashes and there is no hospital in the area to treat any illnesses.

Group 4: Baguio City, Vital Farm

Group 4 visited the Vital Organic Farm and Mushroom Farm in Benguet, outside Baguio City. The Vital Farmers grew Chinese vegetables solely for the Chinese restaurant market in Manila. They did this because they could get a better price for their product, however they themselves did not have a good or balanced diet and they struggled to survive. Their children were affected by advertising and expected to get products from McDonalds even though their families did not have enough to live on. However, there was a strong sense of community in this region and the group could see the value of having a union.

Student Forum

Instead of the normal practice of each delegate presenting his/her own report, they were divided into 3 groups when to make the presentation. The groups were asked to be creative in their presentations, they could make use of creative methods such as games, drama, or oral presentation.

Glenda Rocas, Ex-Co member then lead a Synthesis session after the Forum, which can be summarised as follows:

The Dominant Features of Globalisation in the Region are:

1. Selling of Public Assets- Privatisation, even in the more developed countries such as NZ, costs are rising in healthcare, education and services. The effect is that some people cannot go

to university now, and the education curriculum has been changed to suit the needs of the market economy i.e. there are no more social sciences and subjects on humanities are devalued. Education is now geared towards technology. The interests of profit serve the international financial institutions such as IMF, World Bank and the transnational companies' interests, and these are even supported by the governments and the judiciary.

2. Job lay offs and unemployment
3. Destruction of Culture, Westernisation of Culture
4. Police/Use of Force to stop people's protests. Police should protect the rights of people, but do not.

Keynote Address II – Alternatives to Globalisation

Ms. Rita Baustica, an officer from a NGO called 'Bayan' which is a multi-sector organisation working with workers and peasants, spoke about genuine alternatives to globalisation. She stressed that any alternatives to globalisation should benefit grassroots people not the privileged, since the globalisation has served only few privileged countries and people.

Bible Study

The Bible Study was led by Norma Dollaya, from Kasim Bayan which is a collective for women. She challenged the delegates in the reason for a need to have an alternative society. Norma presented biblical verses from 1. Deut 15: 7-11, Leviticus 25: 1-17 on The Jubilee: An Alternative Legislation; 2. Deut 5:15, Deut 24:19-22 on Alternative Community by Remembering; 3. Acts 4:32-35, Gal 3:28 on Alternative Community by Commitment.

Action Plan

The students came up with the following action plans for themselves as well as their own SCMs:

Individual Level:

- Think more carefully, pay more attention when using products or going to fast-food places such as Mcdonald's
- To wear/use local products where possible and be proud of your own culture and revive local crafts
- Share with family and friends and groups about our feelings and experiences
- Organise local community in university
- Research issues of globalisation, put information on websites (each SCM website, and invite other SCM members to contribute and reflect)
- Study Communism/Socialism more deeply to understand other options than the current dominant ideology of capitalism
- Research where things come from

National SCM Level:

- Start a workshop in each country's SCM_e.g. Summer Seminar or a local version of SET that always include a study on local history
- Study Groups in local units: connect with other groups which are concerned on similar issues e.g. urban poor, women, children.
- Organise groups to live with farmers, urban poor, indigenous people, refugees, factory workers etc. to understand more about issues affecting them.
- Training for SCMer's re becoming a community organiser
- Build alliances with other sectors of society and international linkage in solidarity with masses and issue of globalisation, terrorism and militarisation
- Write to newspapers/other media/ SCM publications re: globalisation

- Creative actions e.g. meet in McDonalds for meeting re globalisation but don't eat anything
- Solidarity Links between AP Countries e.g. Australia/Philippines

Recommendations to WSCF A/P

- Encourage SCMs to discuss the issue through internet/website/email
- Ask participants to write reflection after the programme
- Request IRO to make a website on issues of globalisation
- International Level SET Programme
- Subregional SET Programme
- More comprehensive integration programme
- Internship Programme
- Open Letter to IMF/WTO
- Facilitate links between countries including exchanges
- Make the SCM an example of an alternative community e.g. by group decision making, supporter of local products, critical of the hegemonic attitudes of the big corporations etc.

On the last day of the SET 2002, the SET 2002 participants issued the following statement to declare their position on the globalisation.

SET 2002 Statement

We, the student leaders of the Student Christian Movements in the Asia-Pacific Region who gathered at the Students Empowerment for Transformation 2002 from June 16-30, 2002 in the University of the Philippines, Los Banos Laguna, Philippines, are united in vehemently opposing “globalization” as an economic order imposed by global capitalism and its instruments.

Globalization with its policies of liberalization, privatization and deregulation only seeks to optimize profits of foreign monopoly-capitalists while violating the basic human rights and dignity of the people who suffer as victims of the economic plunder.

As students, we feel the adverse impact of the privatization in our education system as it becomes commercialized and inaccessible for most of the youth with its increasingly high cost. Moreover, subjects like Humanities, History and Social Sciences are deleted in our curriculum and are replaced by market-oriented courses like Information Technology, Biotechnology, Engineering etc. Youth are the most affected by governmental subsidy reductions to social services, which should be delivered to its citizens.

The economic inequalities that are caused by globalization have become persistent and have aggravated the impoverishment of the toiling masses. Land tillers, farm workers and indigenous peoples are displaced from their farms and ancestral domains to give way to mining, golf courses, subdivisions and Eco-tourism ventures of the government and big businesses. The farmers struggle to survive, as the local market is flooded with cheap imported agricultural products brought about by trade liberalization.

As the capitalists reduce production costs to achieve maximum profit, industrial workers are denied of “living wages”, and are forced to work on a contractual basis, and are victimized through massive retrenchment. The government assures capitalists of unrestricted movement of

capital; tariff reduction; tax-free status; profit repatriation; and that the capitalists will have “favorable industrial conditions”(no-union, non-strike atmosphere)- all at the expense of the rights of the working class.

Patriarchy is sustained by globalization and has even worsened the lot of women, children and the elderly. Women and children are driven to work in the most unsecured and inhumane conditions as domestic helpers in foreign lands, entertainers and mail-order brides. Economic exploitation perpetrated by the few has made women and children most vulnerable to prostitution.

We condemn globalization for the depletion of our natural resources in the name of “development” as capitalists wantonly use the resources without benefiting the majority of the people.

The surging protests against globalization are being met with force and repression of civil and political rights through the use of state apparatuses like jails, laws, police, military and paramilitary forces. Thus, as we challenge and raise our voices against globalization, we condemn in the strongest terms the monopoly capitalists, their local cohorts and the client states for their brutal repression.

Globalization has brought about a world system that is completely the opposite of our envisioned just and peaceful world. Globalization dehumanizes and robs the essential human dignity of a person. Peoples’ dignity is violated and no longer does a person fulfill their fullest potential as the culture of “objectification and commodification” proliferates. Our cultural heritage is being eroded by the imposition of a mono-cultural attitude by the very multi-national corporations who push their products into our market.

In conclusion, we as Christian students maintain our opposition to the sufferings caused by Globalization as we refer to our Saviour Lord Jesus Christ who had come to bring peace, justice, freedom and fullness of life for all. Globalization is contrary to the teachings of Jesus Christ as it has robbed human beings of their rights to live a fulfilling life. We strongly demand that the unequal, unfair and degrading treatment created by Globalization should be eliminated. We as members of the Student Christian Movement, are resolved to commit ourselves to the betterment of lives in our own societies as we continue our struggles with the people.

June 30, 2002

SET 2002 Participants