Connecting the Local to the Global: Voices of the Poor

by

Deepa Narayan, Senior Advisor, PREM
and
Talat Shah, Consultant, PREM

Framework Paper

Prepared for 11–13 December 2000 Workshop on
Local to Global Connectivity for Voices of the Poor,
World Bank, Washington, D.C.

We are grateful to the participants of an internal World Bank workshop in June 2000 and the first International Workshop on Global Coalitions of Voices of the Poor, July 30–August 1, 2000 at the World Bank in Washington D.C., where these ideas were first shared and refined.
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I. Introduction

Nobody hears the poor. It is the rich who are being heard.
Participant in a discussion group of men and women, Egypt

Sometimes they do not even let you talk. They say they already know the problem and that they will solve it.
Discussion group participant, Brazil

When the rich and poor compete for services, the rich will always get priority.
A poor man, Kenya

In a globalizing world, an increasing number of decisions that affect poor people and their communities are being made at the global level, far away from local realities. Yet poor people have neither voice nor representation in global decision-making that affects their lives and the lives of their children. They represent almost half the world’s population—2.8 billion people who live on less than $2 per day. How can poor people’s concerns, knowledge, ideas, and leadership inform global decision-making? How can global knowledge, programs, and resources support grassroots initiative and entrepreneurship? How can connectivity between the local and global levels be supported?

There is a range of mechanisms for voice and representation of poor people at national and global levels. The central one is political delegation, through participation in the political and electoral process. Other forms include representation by proxy through nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and other autonomous organizations that work on poor people’s behalf but are not necessarily accountable to them; social delegation, in which poor people are represented by their own national and global networks and federations; and virtual networks, through emerging information technology and media. Here we focus on institutional innovations facilitating particularly the last two forms of representation — social delegation and virtual networks — that connect the local with the global level. The paper is about the search for new ways to channel poor people’s voices and concerns through direct citizen participation in a


2 These four mechanisms were articulated by William Reuben, manager of the NGO/Civil Society Unit of the World Bank, at the June 2000 workshop.

3 Many countries are going through democratization and radical decentralization of authority and resources to village and local government in an effort to achieve greater responsiveness to poor people’s priorities and interests at the local and national level. While this process lays the foundation for poor people’s participation in society, it is not the focus of this paper. Nor is more equitable representation of developing country governments in global decision-making, although this is also a critically important issue that needs to be addressed.
globalizing world, so that they can take full social and economic advantage of the opportunities created by global forces and new technology.

Institutional innovations are beginning to emerge in different parts of the world that promise to give voice and representation to poor people. This paper offers examples of such innovations from very different fields, drawing out the common features and the lessons that should guide the design of new mechanisms, and suggesting actions to close the large gap between the local and global level.

It first describes the nature of the gap, and then examines possible solutions from two perspectives: from local to global, and from global to local. Under the local to global heading, the paper identifies three factors that make it possible to close the gap — strong networks of poor people’s organizations; the vision and skills of social entrepreneurs; and the availability of information and communication technology, which has the power to decrease poor people’s social exclusion and create new economic opportunities for them even in the presence of structural inequities. Examples are given of organizations and programs that build on each of the three factors. Turning to the global to local perspective, the paper describes three other types of networks that help connect global resources to local initiative and issues — the emergence of transnational people’s movements, global policy networks, and the use of the Internet to connect grassroots producers to the global marketplace through e-commerce. Again, examples are given. Finally, the paper suggests strategies for action.
II. The Gap between the Local and Global Level

The authorities don’t seem to see poor people. Everything about the poor is despised, and above all poverty is despised.

A poor man, Brazil.

Poverty is humiliation, the sense of being dependent, and being forced to accept rudeness, insults, and indifference when we seek help.

A poor woman, Latvia

We give our voice to those closest to us.

Discussion group, El Gawaber, Egypt.

The common experience of powerlessness and voicelessness among poor people emerged from the discussions with 60,000 poor men and women in 60 countries around the world that formed the basis of Voices of the Poor. Although poor people have extensive contact with a range of formal and informal institutions, they feel largely excluded from decision-making by these institutions, which include the government as well as private sector, nongovernmental, and faith-based organizations. Even when asked to participate, poor people often exclude themselves because of their powerlessness and dependence on those who ask the questions, as well as their lack of time. In many places poor people say they are tired of being asked to participate when their opinions are ignored and nothing changes. Quite often they reserve their harshest criticism for elected politicians who visit and make promises during elections and then disappear until the next round.

Poor women and men do exercise agency, of course, but often in limited spheres. Hardship galvanizes people and brings them closer together. Through friends, family, and neighbors, poor people help each other overcome survival, safety, and social problems. Because they lack access to state resources, their informal networks become lifelines. While poor people are strong in bonding and solidarity relationships, they are disconnected from ties across communities or to government, NGOs, or other poor people’s associations whose agendas they may or may not share. This limits their access to resources, knowledge, and opportunities. Few poor people’s organizations have the bargaining power to negotiate with local elites or participate in local, national, or global governance and decisions.

There are three critical gaps dividing the rich and the poor within communities and countries and the local and global levels—knowledge and ideas; leadership; and resources and finances (figure 1).
Poor people know best their problems and priorities. Despite their limited power, they exercise leadership and organize to overcome their problems, and these initiatives sometimes give rise to social movements for change. Moreover, the poor have valuable resources and assets. But the knowledge, ideas, options, leadership, and resources at the local level are not connected – either to those of other poor people or to the larger global community. And the knowledge, ideas and resources available at the global level cannot reach or connect with the struggles of poor people. The challenge is to try to close these gaps so that poor people’s knowledge, ideas, and leadership inform global decision-making, and at the same time global resources and knowledge support poor people’s initiatives at the local level.
III. Connecting the Local to the Global

The well-off have telephones, cars...computers, access to services ...[they] live on the labor of others and have leisure.

A poor woman, Morro da Conceiçao, Brazil

Three key factors make it possible even to consider closing the gap between the local and global levels to support poor people’s global voice and representation. The first is the emergence of cross-national networks of poor people’s organizations, or globalization from below. The second is the presence of social entrepreneurs, women and men of vision who apply private sector skills and approaches to improve poor people’s access to assets. And the third is the rapid spread and falling cost of information and communication technology that make its possible to connect the poor and nonpoor across great distances.

1. Globalizing from below: People’s movements and networks

If we aren’t organized and don’t unite, we can’t ask for anything.

A poor woman, Florencia Varela, Argentina

One of the most important and most overlooked development assets is organization—the ability to mobilize and organize for collective action. It is precisely the gap in organizational ability that results in public policy choices that benefit the rich and special interest groups and not the poor.

People’s movements have long played an important role in bringing about systemic and structural change. In response to the forces of rapid globalization, two new kinds of people’s movements have emerged. The first includes transnational people’s movements that coalesce effectively around particular issues such as debt relief, landmines, or genetically engineered food, and broader protest movements such as those demonstrating against the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank.

The second is poor people’s own membership-based organizations and networks that work across countries. Some excluded groups of poor people who have organized locally have then reached out to similar groups across countries, recognizing both the power of numbers and the commonality of problems. Responding to the common needs of specific poor groups, such as plantation workers, home-based workers, slum dwellers, indigenous groups, and landless workers, as well as their exclusion from global decision-making, some groups have organized purposely to have their voices heard and represented in global forums, organizations, and decisions.

Without vibrant, representative poor people’s membership-based organizations such as those described below, linking poor people to global actors would be impossible.
A. Poor women in the informal sector

- **Self-Employed Women’s Association (SEWA).** In 1974 Ela Bhatt founded this association in Ahmedabad, India, along with the first micro-finance institution (SEWA Bank) and the first trade union to address the needs of poor women workers in the informal sector, working at home, or trading and vending in the streets. Any self-employed women worker in India can become a member of SEWA by paying an annual membership fee of 5 rupees (about US$0.12). Every three years SEWA members elect representatives to a new trade council made up of worker-leaders, and this committee then elects the executive committee.

SEWA has 212,000 members across India, with 84 cooperatives, 181 producer groups, 1,000 savings groups in nine districts of Gujarat, and about 100,000 women depositors in the SEWA Bank. About 30,000 poor women participate annually in the SEWA Academy, where they are made aware of their contribution to the national economy, their roles and responsibilities as women, their own organizations, and the values and vision behind their movement. SEWA also has a “barefoot managers” training program and health and life insurance programs. On behalf of its members it has won high court rulings to improve work conditions of urban vendors. SEWA is exploring options to access large loans and venture capital to finance its insurance, information technology, and banking activities. From its 20 years of experience, SEWA has reached out across countries and actively participated in the emergence of cross-country networks of common interest.

- **HomeNet, StreetNet, and WIEGO.** These networks of poor women working in the informal economy and their policy network to support women in the informal economy epitomize globalization from below. HomeNet and StreetNet were both created in the mid 1990s, inspired by SEWA and by various unions, grassroots organizations, and NGOs working with home-based workers and street vendors in both developing and industrial countries. They emerged in response to concerns about the negative impact of global trade policies and investment on the livelihood struggles of the many poor women (estimated at about 250 million worldwide) working in the unorganized informal economy, particularly in street trading and home-based manufacturing.

From its first meeting in 1994, HomeNet campaigned for international recognition of the rights of these workers through the adoption of an International Labour Organization (ILO) convention. After prolonged negotiations, Convention 177 was ratified by the ILO in 1996. The campaign was greatly assisted by an alliance of researchers at the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and Harvard University, who compiled statistics to make the informal economy visible.

The successful alliance of grassroots organizations, researchers, and international organizations gave birth to a third global research and policy network to promote better statistics, research, and policy in support of poor women in the informal.
Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO) was created in 1997 through a consultative planning process to work for social protection and supportive policies for street vendors, global trade and investment policies, and organization and representation of women in the informal economy in policymaking. Its members include NGOs as well as international organizations.

HomeNet now has active member organizations in over 25 countries and publishes a newsletter that reaches organizations in over 130 countries. One example of its effectiveness in building the local to global connection is its Threadlines workshop, which brought together women embroiderers from Bangladesh, India, Mexico, Pakistan, and Portugal and international design houses in the West world to share their knowledge and experience and form connections for later trade.

StreetNet was formed in 1995 in Bellagio, Italy, where vendors of 11 nations prepared the Bellagio Declaration of Vendor Rights. Based in South Africa, StreetNet has affiliates in a dozen countries. The city council of Durban, South Africa, has set in motion a consultative planning process to formulate urban policies in support of the informal economy. Together HomeNet, StreetNet, and WIEGO represent new institutional forms of alliances based on different strengths and mutual respect. Such alliances require long-term funding to be successful.

- **Grassroots Organisations Operating Together in Sisterhood (GROOTS).** Since its creation in 1985, GROOTS has touched and changed the lives of thousands of grassroots women worldwide from a variety of backgrounds through networking, peer exchanges, and partnership initiatives. This international network of social movements in 24 countries reaches more than 4 million poor women. As a global network of grassroots women's organizations, GROOTS undertakes activities to support grassroots women’s capacities and development approaches and networks across national borders to facilitate their participation in global events.

  GROOTS is at the forefront of supporting opportunities and methods for community leaders to function as peer technical assistants. An example was the exchange planned in 1997 by local network members in Kenya, Papua New Guinea, and North America to strengthen participants’ leadership and organizational capacity in economic development, leadership support, and mobilization and to help grassroots leaders see their local experience in a global, macro context.

  **B. Associations of slum dwellers**

  According to Homeless International, around 1.3 billion people around the world have inadequate housing. Many of these live in urban slums or settlements where they face inadequate services and profound insecurity on a constant basis. Half of the world’s population live in cities.
• **Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centres (SPARC).** Formed in Mumbai, India, in 1984 by Sheila Patel, SPARC aimed to form new partnerships between professionals committed to grassroots activism and communities of pavement dwellers in a search for equity and social justice. It provides support to Mahila Milan, a network of women’s collectives initially formed by women pavement dwellers, and to the National Slum Dwellers Federation, a network of leaders from slum settlements. Working with communities in 36 cities across India, SPARC is actively involved in regional and international networks of slum dwellers’ associations and a global campaign for secure tenure for poor people in urban areas. SPARC’s aim is to support the organization of communities and create physical, social, and emotional space for communities to pool their resources, learn from each other, and take action on their collective concerns.

SPARC has educated and trained pavement dwellers—mostly women with children—to collectively avert or deal with demolition or eviction, helping to break isolation and create solidarity. Through their intervention 600 families living on the pavement in Mumbai have been encouraged to save an average of 5,000 rupees for future permanent housing. In addition, 600 families have saved 1.6 million rupees in a savings fund that they use in times of crisis. About 1,800 people have received loans.

SPARC programs help the poor change policy, obtain land, design and construct homes, and manage their settlements. The alliance has convinced the government to provide alternative land for slum dwellers and stop mass demolitions of slums without notice. It has demonstrated new models of urban upgrading, including railway slum dweller resettlement in World Bank–financed projects. On a regional and global scale, SPARC is a lead member of Shack/Slum Dwellers International (SDI), which links federations and networks of the urban poor in 12 countries in Asia and Africa. Its work has inspired many poor people to participate in demanding shelter and put the issue on the public policy agenda.

• **Asian Coalition on Housing Rights (ACHR).** Inaugurated in 1988 and based in Bangkok, Thailand, ACHR is a regional network of grassroots community organizations, NGOs, and professionals actively involved with urban poor development processes in Asian cities. Its membership includes nearly 500 contact organizations and professionals throughout the region. ACHR embraces a new form of regional coalition and networking that aims to be more decentralized, action oriented, and clearly directed toward promoting changes and people’s initiatives. As a regional forum to support exchange of ideas among professionals and grassroots groups to tackle urban poverty, ACHR works in five areas: the Regional Eviction Watch Program, the Asian Women and Shelter Network, the Young Professionals Program, savings and credit activities, and community organizing and strengthening.

ACHR has contributed to the growth of people-to-people learning and organizing which has led to changes in government policies and programs for the homeless
poor. In partnership with the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS), ACHRs recently launched Secure Tenure Campaign that has resulted in:

- Commitment by the state government of Maharashtra, India, to pass a Land Tenure Bill.

- Commitment by the Indian Minister of State for Urban Development and Poverty Alleviation to enact a slum policy and finance upgraded housing for 200,000 households.

- A 15 million-peso check from the Philippines Housing Secretary to the Manila Homeless People’s Federation (with 3 million pesos contributed by savings groups) to establish an urban poor fund, and a promise to contribute a similar amount to the federation in six other cities.

- Reinforcement by the South African Minister of Housing of the Minister of Agriculture and Land Affairs’ announcement that the government will transfer ownership of 15 million hectares of land in the next five years to the poor.

- **Shack/Slum Dwellers International (SDI).** This global network of national slum dweller federations from 12 countries works to strengthen grassroots efforts against homelessness and negotiates with governments. SDI member federations support grassroots savings and credit schemes that bring poor people together to challenge the structure of poverty. Key to SDI’s success is exchange visits of slum and shack dweller to other villages, towns, and countries to share their experiences and ideas with people in similar situations but often different contexts. African savings schemes were kick started by one such exchange between South Africa and India. In South Africa 60,000 federation members are saving regularly and have amassed the equivalent of US$1.7 million. The model has spread to Zimbabwe, where 17,000 people are saving, and to Namibia, where 6,000 people are saving. In addition to knowledge sharing and learning, SDI also supports action by local members across countries. For example, an organized international solidarity effort led by SDI successfully supported local efforts to prevent railway slum demolitions in Mumbai, India, in February 2000.

- **Homeless International.** Based in the United Kingdom, this NGO supports community-led housing and infrastructure development in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. All the initiatives are designed, implemented, and managed by local communities themselves. Homeless International promotes savings and credit (revolving loan schemes, guarantees for larger loans), organizes community-led exchange programs among poor communities, supports information collection and community ownership of information, lobbies and negotiates with policy makers and institutions, and sponsors house model exhibitions.
Homeless International supports 13 partners in 10 countries. All of HI’s local work is implemented by local-level organizations. One of its current projects is to establish an international risk management and mitigation fund that can be used by poor people’s organizations to scale up their efforts. Its Guarantee Fund has secured loans for a large housing program in Andhra Pradesh, India, and for the first community-led slum rehabilitation project under the Slum Rehabilitation Authority in Mumbai. Homeless International uses funds from UK housing associations and funders to guarantee loans made by Indian financial agencies. House building loans were given to 675 Indian women who could not obtain them otherwise. The Fund is also securing home improvement loans in Bolivia.

C. Peasant federations and networks

- **Association of Central American Peasant Organizations (ASOCODE).** ASOCODE is a regional network of peasants, indigenous people, and organizations in Central America that emerged in 1991 in response to concerns about agricultural trade policy. Led by a charismatic young activist from Costa Rica, Wilson Campo, this network of rural groups includes more than 80 percent of Central America’s organized small farmers—about 4 million households—belonging to 86 member organizations. With high-level support from Europe and its strategic implementation strategy, ASOCODE achieved a high profile from the start and quickly became a key player at intergovernmental meetings in the region. It is well respected for its knowledge about regional agricultural issues and the impact of policies on small farmers. The association is a mechanism for groups with different national identities to forge a common agenda for sustainable development, economic opportunities, and political impact. With headquarters in Nicaragua, ASOCODE has members from Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama. It works with national governments to promote regional integration policies that benefit the region’s farmers, hosting a biannual people’s congress.

ASOCODE uses a range of tactics to gain attention and power to negotiate with national and international decision-makers. These include mass protests and demonstrations, lobbying ministers and presidents for policy change, and daylong workshops. Modern information technology is used to link with global partners to advance its agenda. Through computer conferencing and chat rooms, organizations representing campesinos (peasants) have prepared joint position papers, statements, and background documents for international discussions such as the December, 1994 Summit of the Americas, and the World Social Summit in Copenhagen in 1995.

- **National Ecuadorian Federation of Indigenous, Black, and Campesino Organizations (FENOCIN).** Formalized after 30 years of campesino mobilization, FENOCIN is a multiethnic organization of more than 1,200 local and regional unions throughout Ecuador. Communities, cooperatives, associations of rural workers, youth groups, black and indigenous organizations, and poor white and mestizo (mixed ancestry) campesino organizations participate in
FENOCIN. The organization focuses on access to land, water, and agricultural credit as well as the political, social, and economic rights of the poorest sectors of the rural Ecuador population.

In 1990 FENOCIN supported the first Campesino Indigenous Uprising, which forced Ecuadorian society to acknowledge the exclusion of campesinos and indigenous people from the political and social life of the country. FENOCIN played a key role in the 1994 popular mobilization for the right to sustainable holistic development in the countryside. When the Ecuadorian government passed the 1994 Agrarian Development Law calling for the selling of communal lands, FENOCIN organized with other groups a wave of marches, rallies, roadblocks, and boycotts of markets that shut down the country. The pressure exerted by these movements gained the campesino and indigenous population direct representation in the government through the National Council for the Development and Planning for Indigenous and Black Peoples (CONPLADEIN) created in 1997 and the National Institute for Agrarian Development (INDA). FENOCIN also has a permanent seat on the Committee of the Decade of Indigenous People. As a result of its efforts, in 1998 the government officially recognized Quechua, the indigenous language. The organizational work of the regional and local unions that make up FENOCIN has also opened up new local and export markets for banana products and extended basic services and infrastructure to the rural poor.

- **Oaxacan State Coffee Producers Network, Mexico (CEPCO).** CEPCO emerged in 1989 in response to a Mexican coffee industry crisis that affected over 20,000 small coffee producer families belonging to community and regional organizations throughout the state of Oaxaca. Its aims were to deal with the crisis collectively in the short run and to improve the production, processing, and marketing of members’ produce to increase sales in the long run. CEPCO social programs include women’s health initiatives, a cooperative credit union, pro-bono legal advice, microcredit program, and life insurance.

  CEPCO includes 45 regional organizations throughout the state. It is culturally diverse, and 30 percent of its members are women. CEPCO members own an average of 5 acres of land per family and harvest an average of 1,265 pounds of coffee per year. Over the past 10 years, collectively CEPCO has produced an average of 8.5 million pounds of coffee, one-third of it organic and two-thirds gourmet quality coffee. CEPCO practices fair trade with coffee producers by buying directly from farmers. Decision-making power rests in a directorate of six coffee producers elected from the membership.

- **Via Campesina.** This international movement, whose name means “the peasant way,” is based on Honduras and coordinates more than 50 peasant organizations of small and middle-scale producers, agricultural workers, rural women, and indigenous communities from Asia, Africa, the Americas, and Europe. Its objective is to develop solidarity and unity in diversity among small farmer organizations for economic and social justice. It also aims to strengthen women’s participation in formulating proposals to improve livelihoods.
The organization began in April 1992 when several peasant leaders from Central America, North America, and Europe gathered in Managua, Nicaragua, at the Congress of the National Union of Farmers and Livestock Owners. In 1999 Via Campesina launched its Global Campaign for Agrarian Reform. In Toledo, Philippines, peasant families had started to benefit from agrarian reform by receiving land previously belonging to a huge estate. But armed struggle with the landlords, who tried to get their land back, resulted in the burning of some peasant houses, eviction of peasants, and killings of members of peasant organizations. An international campaign in support of the Toledo families was mounted through hundreds of letters sent to the Ministry for Agrarian Reform. Confronted with this international pressure, officials forced the landlords to turn over the land to the peasants.

Another global action by Via Campesina is the International Solidarity and Resistance Caravan. More than 450 farmers from India, Brazil, and Europe came together in 1999 in an international caravan that made its way through 12 European countries. The purpose was to confront the most powerful countries of the world to demand a new framework for international economic relations, one in which the world’s wealth was not concentrated in a small group of transnational corporations. Via Campesina has also been a major mobilizer against the World Trade Organization. In Seattle in 2000 members from several continents protested against transnational companies and announced their decision to fight genetically modified food.

These and many other membership-based networks of poor people’s organizations in Africa, East Asia, and Eastern Europe are a valuable development resource that could lay the foundation for connecting the local and global levels. Many of these networks share key features:

- All poor people’s networks that have achieved some scale focus on a clearly identified problem affecting large number of poor people that either has not been addressed or has been excluded by existing institutional arrangements.
- All work to build members’ skills in community organizing, mobilizing, and peer learning, even when their movements have become global movements.
- All the global networks are rooted in local initiative, local leadership, and local community membership. Even after 15–25 years of evolution and expansion they have not lost their membership-driven decision-making and membership-based leadership.
- Over time all have formed strategic alliances and engaged strategically in public action with their governments and later with international organization to bring about changes in public policy.
• While the organizations have successfully developed strategies to scale up and reach out to other communities, further expansion is limited by their inability to access formal capital markets.

• To some extent, all use information and communication technology, including cellular telephones, to connect more efficiently with each other and gain direct access to information about prices and markets, and are beginning to see the business potential of investing in information technology.

2. Practical visionaries: Social entrepreneurs

The artist communicates the problem, the manager solves the problem, the social worker addresses the problem at a community level, but the social entrepreneur solves the problem on a large scale: first by changing the system, then by spreading the solution.”

Bill Drayton, Ashoka founder

Often the vision of one person with the creativity and determination to solve social problems on a large scale can give poor people the tools to take the first steps to improve their lives and make their voices heard. Like business entrepreneurs, social entrepreneurs have innovative ideas for change and the drive to realize them. These exceptional leaders, found across the world and from many social backgrounds, share with business entrepreneurs a unique quality—relentless pursuit of their vision until it becomes a society-wide reality. While social entrepreneurs act on principles that promote profit, growth, and financial viability, they are committed to systemic social change rather than motivated by profit. This is entrepreneurship with a social end, giving the poor access to credit, education, and markets to change the power relations in society.

Social entrepreneurs play a vital role in development by creating commercially viable enterprises to engage and connect the poor, in the process achieving significant social change and transforming power relations. Their work is as critical to areas of human need—the environment, health, training of young people—as the work of business entrepreneurs is to industry and technology. Successful self-sustaining initiatives promoted by social entrepreneurs have helped reshape the charity approach to helping the poor and changed the perception of business as their enemy. Today development entrepreneurs such as Grameen Bank founder Mohammad Yunus, Ela Bhatt of SEWA, and Brazil’s Rodrigo Baggio are putting information technology into the hands of poor people in rural areas and in urban slums. Their work is evident in many of the examples cited in this paper. A number of programs are modeled specifically on the concept of social entrepreneurship, including the following:

• The Ashoka Foundation. A nonprofit organization that invests in leading social entrepreneurs around the world, Ashoka searches for new ideas championed by capable, innovative social entrepreneurs, whom it selects as Ashoka Fellows. These fellows are given a living stipend (based on local salary level and typically
for three years) to enable them to work full-time on their models and spread their solutions. Ashoka also offers its fellows services, contacts, and study programs through the Global Fellowship network of leading social entrepreneurs. About 150 new fellows are elected each year; more than 1,100 have been elected in 38 countries since 1982. Fellows work in education, health, human rights, the environment, civic participation, and economic development. Ashoka accepts no government funds, only funds from private individuals and foundations.

- **SeaChange (Social Entrepreneurs Alliance for Change)**. Another network that supports the activities of social entrepreneurs, SeaChange emerged from the May 1998 Wingspread Summit at which 50 leaders identified a need for a bridging network to enable social entrepreneurs to share ideas and resources across existing networks. SeaChange is a learning community of social entrepreneurs and the marketplace that provides access to colleagues, collaboration, and capital. It maintains a database of 40,000 social entrepreneurs and their business and funding partners that allow social entrepreneurs to use information and communication technology to organize among themselves. Key partners include American Online and Microsoft. The network was envisioned as a platform to open local chapters to bring together social entrepreneurs, businesses, foundations, and philanthropists.

- **The Social Venture Network**. Set up in 1987, this international network of socially and environmentally engaged entrepreneurs and business leaders is dedicated to advocating business standards to enhance the relationship between commercial activity and social good. The goal is to integrate the values of a socially and environmentally sustainable society into day-to-day business practice. 70% of its members are owners or senior managers of large enterprises. The network includes over 100 companies, foundations, and NGOs, mostly in the United States: 70 percent of its members are owners or senior managers of large enterprises. Members include Ashoka, Co-Op America, and the Kellogg Foundation, and over 400 individual CEOs. The Social Venture Institute, an offshoot established in 1996, provides a forum for discussions and mentoring.

### 3. Tools for empowerment: Information and communication technology

_I live quite far from other people…By the time I hear about things, the opportunity has passed._

A poor woman, Ha Tinh, Vietnam

_They ranked telephones as more important [than roads] because they believe these will provide income opportunities and a faster response time to health or other emergencies that may arise in the community._

Discussion group, Millbank, Jamaica.
I decided to get a telephone of my own from my own savings. Earlier I used my savings to buy gold ornaments...I am illiterate but I have arithmetic skills. I keep full accounts for the group. I have mastered the sequential numbers on the phone and that is how I dial.

SEWA member Puriben, India

Information is power. Poor people lack information about opportunities, jobs, markets, prices, exchange rates, doctors, veterinarians, libraries, schools and universities, and family and kin living far away. Yet most poor people are isolated from the new information revolution. As the following figures show, there is a digital divide not only between rich and poor countries, but also between the rich and the poor within developing countries:

- Globally, there are 275.5 million people online: 49% North America; 20% Asia/pacific; 26% Europe; 3% Latin America; 0.9% Africa; 0.4% Middle East.\(^4\)

- Forty percent of people in the United States now use the Internet, compared with 1.6 percent in Asia and 0.3 percent in Africa.\(^5\)

- Over 80 percent of Web pages and 90 percent of documents on the Web are in English, a language most of the world does not speak.\(^6\)

- Global electronic commerce is expected to reach S$7 trillion by 2004.\(^7\)

- Internet use in Latin America is growing faster than in any other region, with 15 million people now connected. The average user is white, male, and university educated.\(^8\)

- In Africa, there are less than 100,000 dialup Internet accounts for over 700 million people.\(^9\)

- In India, where the $8.6 billion information technology industry has a global reputation, a quarter of a million villages do not yet have telephone access.\(^10\)


\(^6\) Ibid.

\(^7\) Industry Standard, February 21, 2000.


\(^9\) Cisse 2000.

Are Internet access and cellular telephones important when people are hungry? Yes. Experience shows that hunger is not a problem of availability of food but rather of distribution and access. As Amartya Sen has reminded us so many times, no major famines have occurred in democracies, because of information flow.

Information technology should be viewed as a valuable asset that poor people can accumulate. It has the potential to change poor people’s powerlessness and voicelessness even while structural inequities exist in the distribution of traditional assets such as education, land, and finance. The connectivity provided by information technology means that the voices of even the most marginal and excluded can be heard and echo in distant places. These voices can create greater responsiveness in action by governments, the private sector, NGOs, and international organizations. Moreover, information technology can be a source of income generation through charges for telephone, computer, or Internet use.

Direct and independent access to information about prices for goods and exchange rates transforms the relationship between middlemen or intermediaries and poor people as buyers and sellers. An indigenous tribe checks on the Internet the cost of fruit in Lima 200 miles away before settling on a price for and increasing profits on its organically grown oranges; a carpet weaver in Morocco sells to buyers in New York; a farmer in India does not have to cringe, beg, and bribe the local keeper of land records because the computerized records are available for 25 cents; a 15-year-old teaches computer skills in a barrio in Rio de Janeiro—all this is happening right now, creating unimaginable new economic, social, and political empowerment opportunities for poor people.

The new connectivity that information and communication technology makes possible is already changing poor people’s bargaining power with traders and their access to local national and global decision-makers, as these examples show:

_I always sell eggs to middlemen. Before, whatever prices they offered I accepted because I had no idea about the going prices. Last week the middleman came and wanted to pay me 12 taka for 1 hali (four units). Keeping him waiting, I rushed to check the prices on the village phone—a hali was selling for 14 taka in nearby markets. I came back and refused to sell, and after some haggling we agreed on 13 taka a hali._

_Halima Khatuun, village woman, Bangladesh_

If you want to hear poor women’s voices in Stockholm, in London, in New York, in Washington, our phone ladies just have to dial a number and you will hear from them directly.

_Grameen Bank founder Mohammad Yunus_

- **Grameen Telecom.** Grameen Telecom provides commercial phone service in rural areas through local entrepreneurs, usually poor women, who own and operate cellular phones that typically serve an entire village. Grameen Bank loans finance Grameen members who buy the phones and pay for them by charging
villagers by the minute for calls. The phones cost about US$420 at 22 percent interest, and are typically paid for within a year. High and so far secure returns have led many women to label the telephones their “modern cows.” About 60,000 users now use about 2,000 of the phones.

The village phones generate revenues of US$1,200 a year per phone. This is three times more than the average for Grameen’s urban phones (and more than three times the per capita income of Bangladesh). Each village phone serves about 70 customers. The average income of the “phone ladies” is estimated at more than US$700 equivalent a year after covering all costs, more than twice the country’s annual per capita income. In larger villages, individual phone revenues reach more than US$12,000 per year, although revenues are falling in areas with multiple telephones. Phone charges are decided by the providers, taking into account local market conditions.

Grameen Telecom is 51 percent owned by Telenor, a Norwegian company and 35 percent by Grameen Bank. The rest of the shares are owned by a Japanese trading house, Marubenu, and a group of Bangladeshis settled in the United States. The International Finance Corporation has signed an agreement to lend US$16.67 million and invest US$1.57 million in equity toward expanding Grameen Telecom, the largest cellular phone operator in Bangladesh. The Asian Development Bank and Commonwealth Corporation will provide parallel financing in the form of loan and equity investments.

Grameen Telecom’s goal is to install 40,000 phones by December 2002. The goal is to scale up to finance 50,000 Grameen Bank members to provide village pay phone service to reach up to 100 million rural inhabitants in 68,000 villages, and to add fax, email, and other value-added services. There are also plans to set up cyber kiosks in the villages. “The cell phone will be followed by the Internet, faxing, and worldwide networking,” says Grameen Bank’s Mohammed Yunus,11 who hopes that telecommunications will revolutionize the mental world of the villagers.

The Grameen Telecom experience has shattered many myths about the capabilities of poor rural women. Even illiterate women in rural areas who have never seen a telephone have mastered the skills quickly, gained confidence, and raised their status in the communities as owners of a powerful and desirable asset. Forty percent of the users are women. “The telephone owners have greater freedom to move in the villages than before as they deliver messages or take the phones to users, charging a higher fee for the service. The women learn medical information and the status of markets in Dhaka by overhearing conversations. Some have developed a sophisticated functional knowledge of international

currency markets. “She used to cook for the elites,” said the neighbor of one of these phone ladies, “now she is invited by them.”

Users call relatives and friends, often overseas for remittances and for medical help. Farmers and traders call city markets to find out the prices of agricultural produce. About 50 percent of the calls were made for economic reasons, mainly by poor people. In villages with phones, eggs and poultry sold for higher prices, the cost of information was much lower (17 Taka as opposed to 72 Taka the cost of a trip to town), cost of feed was lower, and diesel prices were more stable. Prices paid by traders for raw materials and crafted goods have risen because the sellers have more pricing information. Exchange rates for currency from expatriates have improved.

Inspired by this record, Bharati Enterprises, an initiative by the state government of Andhra Pradesh, India, has arranged for the telecom company AirTel to launch its cellular services network in the state to connect 4 million women members of 300,000 rural self-help groups to each other and to the outside world through cellular telephones and eventually through the Internet. The groups have already mobilized the equivalent of US$133 million in revolving funds for their businesses and to market their products to the best bidders in India and abroad. The women hope to multiply the revolving fund tenfold in the next five years.

I asked for the price of apples at the Dhar wholesale market. The coordinator pressed some buttons, and there it was on the screen. I cannot read, but he told me it was 50 rupees cheaper per crate than the rate in the village market. Next morning, I traveled to Dhar to buy fruits.

Rural man, Madhya Pradesh, India

- **Gyandoot.** This government-owned computer network is creating new relationships among tribal people, traders, and government by making prices of goods and some government services available at the push of a button. Set up by the government of the Indian state of Madhya Pradesh in 1999, Gyandoot connects 21 cyber cafes (soochanalayas) reaching half a million people. The soochnalayas are located at block headquarters, marketplaces, and bus depots, and each of them provides services to 10–15 gram panchayats, covering 20–30 villages and 20,000–30,000 people. Services offered include commodity marketing information; maps and land records; online registration of applications for income, domicile, and caste certificates and landholder passbooks of land rights and loans; a public complaint line for reporting broken pumps, unfair prices, and absentee teachers; and email in Hindi. By linking with the public Internet, the site also provides information on business opportunities.

Gyandoot Net is the external website of Gyandoot and is available to everyone. It is owned and run by the panchayats (councils), with the Dhar zila panchayat in Madhya Pradesh as the coordinator. The whole district was wired for as little as US$55,000 in less than a year. The net connects from a closed “Intranet” within a
district to the World Wide Web and offers information about Dhar district to people who pay US$22 as a deposit to open an account.

Digitally stored land records are one example of how Gyandoot makes possible lower transaction costs, less corruption, and securer land, particularly for the poor, who have few resources to fight fraudulent land claims by more powerful people. “The farmers needs these [land] records every season to get crop loans, and the patwari (keeper of the land records) extracts a heavy price every season,” reported one villager. “Bribe him and he will redraw your map at your neighbor’s expense. Ask him for old records and he will tell you they are lost, burnt, or damaged for good. In the digital database we can retrieve the land records for Rs. 15 instead of the minimum bribe of Rs. 200 plus transport costs, depending on the patwari’s mood—too stiff for a person who earns Rs. 50 a day.” The state government is expanding the program, inviting the private sector to set up such information kiosks throughout the state.

- **TARAHaat.** India’s rural economy is virtually untouched by modern technology. While it contributes more than 50 percent of the national income, rural villagers’ purchasing power is limited by the lack of year-around jobs. In mid-2000 the Indian NGO Development Alternatives and its marketing arm, Technology and Action for Rural Advancement (TARA), launched a pilot Web-based service in Bundelkhand, Madhya Pradesh. Called TARAHaat (after the *haat,* a festive weekly village market), the service aims to connect the underserved rural market to information services, government agencies, and markets through the Internet. TARAHaat hopes to create rural jobs and encourage microbusinesses set up by local entrepreneurs by connecting people to markets. It was launched with funds from TARA, Development Alternatives, corporations, and government agencies, and hopes to raise funds from public sources and private investors. Many of its shares are vested in the Sustainable Livelihoods Foundation created to support civil society and community-based action.

The computers display information in local languages using animated pictures, diagrams, and voiceover to make it accessible even to illiterate people. Pilots have shown that even young children learn to navigate the Web page and access information quickly. TARAhaat.com is mainly a horizontal portal, but domains in medical services, commodity trade, and distance education will have vertical elements. Villagers will pay a few rupees to access commodity prices, health facilities, land records, farm development programs, jobs and matrimonial announcements, and to shop for farm inputs, bicycles, and refrigerators.

A subsidiary portal, TARBazaar.com, will provide urban and overseas consumers with access to village craftspeople. Food processing companies will be able to negotiate directly with farmers to buy produce. TARAHaat and the National Youth Cooperative, representing 2000 youth clubs, will franchise local businesses to set up cyber kiosks. The kiosks will also offer television entertainment and public telephones to attract customers and generate revenue.
The 20-year-old National Dairy Development Cooperative in India serves 600,000 households daily. Milk production has grown from 20 to 60 million tons. Dairy products are marketed in 500 towns, and the milk is collected from 75,000 villages in 60,000 milk collection societies involving 10 million members, making this the largest cooperative in the world. Dairy farmers deliver their milk at the cooperative's collection centers every morning and evening. Taking advantage of the robust organization of the cooperatives, the Indian Institute of Management in Ahmedabad introduced a computerized system with integrated electronic weights, electronic fat testing machines, and plastic readers at 3,000 collection centers. This has increased transparency, led to faster processing, shorter queues, and immediate payment to farmers. The Indian Institute of Management is now connecting the computers to the Internet and creating a dairy portal through which producers can transact business, order supplies, access information and government documents, and exchange information with each other.

Committee for Democracy in Information Technology (CDI). Building on Paulo Freire’s revolutionary pedagogy—the idea that underprivileged people with opportunities to reflect on their social and economic realities will build barriers to resist oppression—Rodrigo Baggio, a 32-year-old former teacher, is practicing digital citizenship for the urban poor in Brazil’s most crowded urban slums, or favelas. CDI invests in communities’ capacity to organize their own economic and educational programs through citizenship education and computer training.

The vision of CDI, says Baggio, “has emerged from the strong belief that computer literacy can be used to promote democracy and social equity.” The organization has established 145 Information Technology and Citizenship Schools in 130 slums in 14 states in Brazil to teach civic participation, environmental awareness, formal education, health, human rights, literacy, and nonviolence along with computer skills. Intranet connectivity allows trainees to access information about jobs and engage the government in dialogue about local needs. Communities have total ownership of the schools, including the space and staffing, management, and maintenance. CDI provides computer hardware and software donated by local businesses and individuals, teacher training, management training, and other technical support. Students pay about US$10 equivalent a month. CDI has established partnerships with international, philanthropic, and private organizations, including AVINA, Exxon, Global Partnerships, Microsoft, SSI Server, Starmedia Foundation, and UNESCO.

More than 38,000 children and youth have been trained in the schools over the past four years. Many graduates have found well-paid jobs, developed renewed

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12 We are grateful to Subhash Bhatnagar for sharing this information.
13 Rodrigo Baggio, Valor Económico 1, 2000.
interest in formal schooling, resisted joining gangs, and gained self-esteem. Some are putting their computer skills to work in community activities such as AIDS awareness and health education and starting high-tech cottage industries that employ other favela dwellers. Schools are also being set up in other marginalized communities of Brazil. In the coastal jungle of Angra dos Reis, CDI has established the first computer school in an indigenous community, helping the young people create their own history on generator-powered computers, share their story with outsiders, and communicate with other Guaraní speakers. In the Benjamín Constant School for the Blind, CDI uses specialized software to train computer science teachers with voice recognition and magnification software; and at the Lemos de Britto State Penitentiary in Rio, inmates are learning computer job skills for rehabilitation. The CDI model is being tried in Colombia, Japan, Mexico, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, and Uruguay.

Experiments with public access rural and urban telecenters are spreading across the world. In Mali, 701 telecenters will be developed in each of the newly created local governments. In Uganda women farmers regularly access information about market prices at the Nabweru telecenter. The International Fund for Agricultural Development is linking 1.2 million households around the world to the Internet through 76 ongoing projects to foster grassroots information exchange and e-commerce opportunities. Other programs to connect citizens with each other, markets, or governments include the U.S. Agency for International Development’s LearnLink program, Women’sNet, OneWorld, PEOPLink, and Virtual Souk, to name a few. And for skeptics who think computer literacy is still a luxury for poor and often uneducated people, the following account shows that learning to use information technology can literally be child’s play.

- **The “hole in the wall” experiment.** Sugata Mitra, head of research at NIIT, a software and education company on the campus of the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) in New Delhi, believes that information technology can be the great equalizer between the rich and the poor. To explore whether poor children with minimum education could acquire functional computer literacy with no instruction, in 1999 Mitra embedded a personal computer connected to a high-speed data connection in a concrete wall separating IIT’s headquarters from an adjacent slum area. The computer was left on, connected to the Internet, for any passerby to play with, while Mitra monitored activity with a remote computer and a video camera mounted on a nearby tree.

Within days, 6–12-year-old children from the slum with little knowledge of English had taught themselves to draw on the computer and browse the Internet with no instruction at all. They acquired base level computer literacy almost immediately, creating their own interpretations of the hourglass symbol indicating “please wait” (they named it *damru*, or Shiva’s drum) and the cursor (which they named *sui*, or needle). A journalist asked one of the children how he had learned so much about computers. The response was, “What is a computer?” As for the language problem, Mitra was surprised that the children shut down the Hindi interface he had provided and went back to Internet Explorer. Realizing the
importance of closing the growing information gap between the rich and the poor, the Delhi government is installing computer kiosks in slums and in 150 government schools attended primarily by poor children, in collaboration with the private sector and the Indian Institute of Technology.
IV. Connecting the Global to the Local

Thus far the paper has concentrated on “upward” links, from the local to the global level. This section focuses on “downward” connections, from the global to the local level. Three types of global networks have emerged in the last decade that either facilitate or have the potential for linking global leadership and grassroots leadership, and help transmit global knowledge and resources to the local level: transnational people’s movements; global policy networks; and global Web portals that connect local buyers with the global marketplace.

1. Transnational people’s movements

Concerned citizens around the world have increasingly organized and mobilized around specific issues—seizing political opportunities, building alliances, and using the power of telephones, fax, the Internet, and the media to draw attention to a wide range of public policy issues linked to equity, social justice, and the environment. These movements play critical roles in raising awareness, familiarizing other citizens, the private sector, international organizations, and governments with these issues and with the power of collective action. Three such movements are described below.

- The International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL). In 1991 several NGOs and individuals concerned about the dire effects of landmines on civilians began to discuss the need to coordinate their activities. Formalized as a coalition of interested organizations in October 1992, ICBL is a flexible network of national and regional groups with a common objective: national, regional, and international measures to ban antipersonnel landmines.

Filling a global void, ICBL quickly became the source of reliable information and documentation on landmines. Its coalition building was made possible by non-bureaucratic civil society networking. There was no secretariat or central office—ICBL belonged to all the members. But a clear, consistent, and constant communications strategy allowed isolated people working on the same issue to share successes and empowerment. ICBL regularly faxed bulletins to members, keeping them up to date. Later email became the movement’s major tool.

ICBL slowly built relationships with governments and ultimately formed a pro-ban bloc that met in Geneva in 1996. At the end of the meeting, the Canadian government offered to host a governmental meeting with NGO participation. As a result of the Ottawa Process the landmine ban treaty was generated and signed in December 1997. Canada challenged other governments to sign on, and Jody Williams won the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize for her leadership at ICBL.

The campaign’s work has had a profound impact on the world. The call for a comprehensive ban on landmines is now endorsed by some 1,200 NGOs in more than 80 countries. Through its aggressive communications style, ICBL has built
broad public awareness about the landmines issue. In addition to helping to create a new international norm against landmines, the organization has set an international standard for support of humanitarian concerns. Its website is an outstanding source of information and action. The 1997 Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production, and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and On their Destruction, has been signed by 139 governments and ratified by over 60. The treaty went into force on March 1, 1999, and an ICBL study reports that as of December 2000, 25 States Parties to the 1997 Treaty have completed destruction of their stockpiled antipersonnel mines. At the local level, civil society groups have emerged to press for comprehensive landmine clearance in post-conflict areas.

- **Jubilee 2000 Coalition.** Founded on a Biblical principle that all debts should be forgiven every 50 years, this civil society movement includes faith-based organizations, NGOs, journalists, trade unions, academics, and individuals. It began in 1990 when the All African Council of Churches called for a Jubilee year to cancel Africa’s debts. By October 1997 Jubilee 2000 U.K. was formalized as a coalition of national organizations with an elected board. It is made up of more than 100 organizations from over 70 countries, collectively advocating a debt-free start to the millennium for a billion people.

All Jubilee 2000 costs are met by voluntary contributions from coalition members and partners. Focusing on the single issue of debt relief for highly indebted countries and using mass mobilization and mass investment in a communication strategy, Jubilee 2000 has been one of the most successful campaigns in recent history. By January 2000 it had collected more than 18 million petition signatures from 120 countries and established campaign groups in more than 60 countries worldwide.

Jubilee 2000’s communication strategies have ranged from the mundane to the dramatic—national campaigns, including in OECD countries, sponsorship by large civil society organizations such as the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions representing 124 million workers, and staging demonstrations such as the human chain of 70,000 people around the G8 Summit in Birmingham, England. Even more creative tactics were used to get the word out in June 1999, when rock star Bono went online to talk about debt in the world’s largest chat room. The campaign’s accomplishments include:

- June 1999—world leaders promised $100 billion of debt relief at the Cologne, Germany G8 Summit.

- September 1999—U.S. President Clinton agreed to cancel 100 percent of bilateral debt owed to the United States by certain countries.

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December 1999—British Chancellor Gordon Brown announced 100 percent bilateral debt cancellation for 26 countries.

April 2000—Japan, Germany and France announce 100 percent debt cancellation for the poorest countries, bringing all G7 countries—Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United States, and the United Kingdom—into line.

April 2000—Bolivia, Mauritania, Mozambique, Tanzania, and Uganda received debt relief.

December 2000—Jubilee 2000 campaigned for debt relief for 52 countries owing a total of $376 billion. So far, creditors have committed to cancel $110 billion of the debts of 41 countries, but only $12 billion has been cancelled.

Jubilee 2000 will cease to exist at the end of 2000 and be replaced by three new initiatives: Jubilee Plus, a long-term support unit for global campaigns on international debt and finance; Drop the Debt, a short-term campaign for a new debt deal at the next G8 summit; and the Debt Network of aid agencies and advocacy groups to share information and coordinate policy.

**Transparency International.** Transparency International (TI) is a Berlin-based civil society organization dedicated to curbing both international and national corruption. It is active as an international movement in more than 100 countries and has already had a world-wide impact, by forcing serious public discussion and action on the issue of corruption in public affairs.

The mobilizing force of TI in 1995 initially derived from creating a corruption index and actively disseminating the information world wide. The success of these indices is apparent from the world wide media coverage of these data and the national debate they generate around the ranking of countries by corruption. From this initial success, TI has expanded its activities to address sources of corruption among givers of bribes and takers of bribes. A growing number of national chapters currently active in more than 60 countries are at the heart of the global anti-corruption movement and are actively designing national anti-corruption strategies and action plans.

*The TI Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI)* ranks countries in terms of the degree to which corruption is perceived to exist among public officials and politicians. The 1999 CPI ranked 99 countries. It is a composite index, drawing on 17 different polls and surveys from 10 independent institutions carried out among business people, the general public and country analysts.

The CPI Score qualifies the perceptions of the degree of corruption as seen by business people, risk analysts and the general public, and ranges between 10 (highly clean) and 0 (highly corrupt). In general, many very poor countries have
the lowest CPI scores. This does not mean they are the most corrupt in the world, as there are more than 80 other countries with insufficient data and therefore cannot be ranked. Out of 99 countries ranked, Denmark is at the high end with a score of 10.0 and Cameroon is the lowest with a score of 1.5. Some other scores include: USA 7.5, Botswana 6.1, Estonia 5.7, South Africa 5.0, Philippines 3.6, Bulgaria 3.3, Pakistan 2.2, Uzbekistan 1.8, Indonesia 1.7.

The Transparency International Bribe Payers Index (BPI) is a new index started in 1999 that ranks extent to which the 19 leading exporting countries are perceived to be paying bribes abroad. The BPI is the result of a special international survey conducted for Transparency International by the Gallup International Association in 14 leading emerging market economies. The survey involved detailed questions to more than 770 senior executives at major companies, chartered accountancies, chambers of commerce, major commercial banks and law firms. The BPI shows that companies from many leading exporting nations are widely seen by leading emerging market countries as using bribes to get business.

The BPI goes from a scale of 0 - 10, with 10 representing a corrupt-free exporting country. The best score among 19 leading exporting countries was Sweden at 8.3, with Australia and Canada not far behind at 8.1. The worst score, representing a great use of bribes, was China (including Hong Kong) at 3.1. Other countries with a “great propensity” to pay bribes were South Korea 3.4, Taiwan 3.5, Italy 3.7 and Malaysia 3.9.

In October 2000, TI convened a group of the world's largest banks who agreed to a set of global anti-money laundering guidelines for international private banks. These Global Anti-Money-Laundering Guidelines for Private Banking known as the Wolfsberg AML Principles were jointly announced by 11 banks and by Transparency International. The participating institutions are ABN AMRO Bank, Barclays Bank, Banco Santander Central Hispano, S.A., The Chase Manhattan Private Bank, Citibank, N.A., Credit Suisse Group, Deutsche Bank AG, HSBC, J.P. Morgan, Inc., Société Générale, and UBS AG. The new guidelines state: "Bank policy will be to prevent the use of its world-wide operations for criminal purposes. The bank will endeavor to accept only those clients whose source of wealth and funds can be reasonably established to be legitimate."¹⁵

Other accomplishments of Transparency International include:

- Worked successfully in support of the OECD Convention on Combating Bribery of Foreign Public Officials in International Business; Successfully lobbied for the ending of tax deductibility of bribe payments in almost all countries throughout the OECD

¹⁵ For more detailed information, please visit see http://www.wolfsberg-principles.com/index.html.
National Integrity Workshops organized by Transparency International chapters have in two cases led directly to presidents voluntarily making public disclosures of their assets, Tanzania and Mauritius.

Helped move the World Bank from a position where it refused to accept that its basic constitution permitted it to act against corruption to one in which President Jim Wolfensohn is acknowledged as a leader of the global movement to contain corruption.

At the national level, National Transparency International Chapters brings together people from civil society, business and government to work as coalitions for systemic reforms that combat corruption. National Chapters are financially and institutionally independent but observe TIs guiding principles of non-investigative work and independence from government, commercial and partisan political interests.

TI-South Africa is instituting an anti-corruption monitor database containing information on corruption and anti-corruption measures and actions. It is also involved in analyses of trends in South Africa and is developing a corruption/anti-corruption index of South Africa. In Yugoslavia, four weeks after the toppling of the Milosevic regime, Transparency International’s partner organization in Yugoslavia has launched an anti-corruption programme in the cities of Nis, Kikinda and Cukarica. Starting in November 2000, the project will focus on increasing the transparency of budgeting and public procurement at the local government level.

In Italy, following the proposal made by TI Italy, the mayors of the cities of Genoa and Milan have agreed to implement the TI Integrity Pacts as part of the tender documents of their public tenders. This step is designed to send a strong message of commitment to the principles of transparency and fair competition on the occasion of the G8 Meeting, which will be hosted by the Municipality of Genoa in June 2001.

All three examples of people’s movements improve lives of all citizens including poor people. All three movements have worked with civil society group in different countries. Having demonstrated their success, all now have the potential for deepening their roots at the local level to engage directly with poor people to ensure direct improvement in poor people’s lives and creating space for poor people’s engagement with local governance issues.

2. Policy networks

A variety of global public policy and action networks have emerged in recent years to share knowledge, reach agreement, and take joint action on sensitive global issues that cannot be solved without explicit agreement across a range of stakeholders. Global networks have emerged to address issues as wide ranging as river blindness, large dams,
HIV/AIDS, urban improvement, and the environment. Three different kinds of policy networks are described below:

- **Cities Alliance.** Launched in 1999 by the World Bank and the United Nations Center for Human Settlements (UNCHS), this global coalition of cities and their development partners is designed to achieve the promise of well-managed cities. The visionary Cities Without Slums Action Plan, a major initiative of the Cities Alliance, calls for improving the living conditions of 100 million poor people over the next 20 years. Membership of the Cities Alliance includes the G7 countries plus the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden, and is likely to expand to include Denmark, Finland and Spain, along with the Asian Development Bank, UNDP, ILO, and UNICEF as associate members.

The alliance aims to improve the efficiency and impact of urban development cooperation in two key areas. First, to expand the resources reaching the urban poor by coordinating ongoing urban programs, catalyzing partners’ efforts in ways that go beyond their individual programs, and directly linking grant-funded urban development cooperation with investment follow up. Second, the alliance serves as a global public policy forum to advance collective knowledge and share lessons learned across regions and through networks of local authorities and their associations.

- **World Commission on Dams (WCD).** WCD was established in May 1998. The independent commission’s two-year mandate was to research and make recommendations on tough social, environmental, economic, and institutional questions surrounding large dams in the context of sustainable development. WCD was a collaborative effort to develop and integrate assessment of when, how, and why dams succeed or fail in meeting development objectives. After this pioneering global public policy initiative to bring government, private sector and civil society together published its report in November 2000, the WCD disbanded, “handing the baton back to the interest groups that set it up.”

The WCD consisted of 12 commissioners who are leaders in their fields and a consultative group, the WCD Forum, of 70 individuals representing diverse perspectives and interest groups. The forum was seen as a sounding board for the work of the commission, with representatives from 68 institutions in 36 countries. In addition to these primary participants, WCD invited public contributions through its Web site, regular newsletter, and stakeholder consultation process. It pioneered a new funding model, with its activities financed by 53 public, private, and civil society organizations.

The commission’s final report distills more than two years of intense study, dialogue, and reflection. It is the first comprehensive global and independent review of the performance and impacts of large dams. The WCD framework now has wide legitimacy and is expected to reduce cost, save time, avoid conflicts, and deliver more equitable development outcomes through eliminating “bad” dams at an early stage based on societal consensus.
• **The Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR).**

CGIAR was established in 1971, and is the world's largest agricultural research network. An informal association of 58 public and private sector members, 20 of them from developing countries, CGIAR supports a network of 16 international research centers and 10,000 staff in more than 100 countries. Its annual budget is about $340 million.

CGIAR is globally recognized for its major contributions to fighting poverty and hunger through research. Its centers made major contributions to the successes of the green revolution — the development and distribution of high-yielding varieties of wheat and rice that reduced the threat of famine in Asia in the 1960s and 1970s.

CGIAR is increasingly designing research and projects that work with poor people and farmers to improve both agricultural production and marketing as well as natural resource management, with the goal of reducing hunger and poverty.

3. **E-commerce to support grassroots entrepreneurs**

Organizations dedicated to helping micro producers from developing countries market their products internationally are not new. Since 1976 Aid to Artisans, for example, has been an effective intermediary between artisans and buyers, facilitating their direct access to buyers and providing assistance in product development, business training, market research, sales, and long-term sustainability. In Peru an Aid to Artisans program achieved $9.9 million in annual export sales and created thousands of jobs in micro and small enterprises. Another project with Armenian knitters created more than 600 jobs producing for the export market.

But the unparalleled capacity of the Internet to connect producers to buyers has exponentially increased the commercial possibilities for microproducers in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. According to shop.org, business-to-consumer sales reached $14–18 billion in 1998 with 20 million people shopping online. E-commerce sites are benefiting producers and buyers alike. While such sites aimed specifically at grassroots entrepreneurs are few, they have the possibility to open up unprecedented economic opportunities even in remote areas of the world. By cutting out layers of middlemen, e-commerce increases the income of poor producers by giving them a greater share of the final sale price, sometimes 10 times what they get in traditional trade.

Buying direct, increased access to markets, and larger sales volumes raise incomes, as well as preserving traditional crafts and skills that otherwise might disappear. Producers can also benefit from training and technical assistance available through e-commerce sites. Buyers gain access to greater variety and learn about artisans and their products online. They are drawn to the “fair trade” appeal of e-commerce artisan sites that enable them to buy authentic products directly from the producers. Through online sales, the artisans can better assess which product sell, and tailor production accordingly.
E-commerce innovations benefiting micro producers and artisans fall into two distinct categories. Business-to-consumer (B2C, or business2consumer) electronic marketplaces focus on sales to new markets. For example, Tortasperu, an e-business based in Lima, Peru, was started in 1996 by Maria del Carmen Vucetich and her husband to sell homemade tortas, or cakes to the 2 million expatriate Peruvians, who order the cakes online and send them as surprises to their family and friends back in Peru. The cakes are prepared and delivered by a network of housewives, trained by Tortasperu.

Another category of e-commerce is business-to-business (B2B, or business2business) sites that market traditional crafts and products to retail outlets in the industrial world. The larger scale of this second generation of e-commerce sites has even greater potential to help artisans and poor producers achieve sustainable livelihoods. Artisans benefit from market information, increased incomes, and capacity building training while preserving their traditional arts. Large portal sites such as the two described below have established a global brand name, selling products from artisan “partners” to buyers all over the world.

- **PEOPLELink.** PEOPLELink works with more than 105 trading partners and local organizations in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. It was formed in 1995 by Marijke Velzeboer and Daniel Salcedo, who had launched the successful mail order catalogue “Pueblo to People” in the 1980s. Their aim was to build a global network of trading partners that can in turn provide services to community-based artisan producer groups. PEOPLELink not only connects poor producers to customers through the Internet, but acts as a B2B broker and escrow agent for wholesale opportunities, connecting producers with firms in industrial countries. It still depends on donor funding to supplement its online sales, but aims to be financially self-sufficient by 2001. PEOPLELink equips trading partners—local NGOs that have relationships with grassroots groups such as craft cooperatives and peasant leagues—with digital cameras and trains them to photograph artisan products and place them on the PEOPLELink Web site. Trading partners are also helped to build their own Web sites and online catalogues through online training and product development support.

The livelihood benefits of e-commerce to local communities can come very quickly, as Helen Mutono, a Ugandan basket weaver, relates:

_I know that I would never have been able to sell the number of baskets that I have sold over the Internet locally here in Uganda. And I know that the women who have been making baskets for me would have not sold as many baskets. I actually saw differences in the weeks that we [went to] buy baskets from them, I could see that their faces were cleaner and they had nice new clothes; the children were better dressed and they started to send their children to school because they were able to sell more baskets because we had a market out there for them. And you can imagine trying to sell a basket that everybody can make locally. They probably wouldn’t_
be able to sell very many baskets, but to be able to market it worldwide is the greatest thing that could have happened for them.

- **Virtual Souk.** This is another pioneer in connecting local artisans in developing countries to global markets through the Internet. Founded by Susan Schaefer Davis, an anthropologist specializing in the study of Moroccan women and culture, and Azedine Ouerghi of the World Bank’s Economic Development Institute, Virtual Souk was originally an experiment to connect women weavers in isolated villagers with the world market. In a decentralized model, the Virtual Souk partners with local NGOs that are responsible for maintaining artisans’ online catalogues and doing capacity building training with the artisans. Participation in the Virtual Souk is growing rapidly. In 1999 it involved 50 artisans from Morocco, 25 from Tunisia, and 700 from Lebanon, with Egypt, Jordan and Palestine joining the network in March 2000. Sales in 1999 amounted to $500,000. With an innovation grant of $50,000 from the International Finance Corporation, the Virtual Souk is hoping to replicate its model in Asia and Latin America.

A significant development benefit of e-commerce sites such as Virtual Souk is the ability of women from cultures that restrict their public presence to put their products up for sale on the Internet. This serves them as an empowerment tool for self-development as well as a business tool connecting them to markets. Public knowledge that their rugs are being sold internationally also boosts local sale prices and the status of the artisans.

- **VIATRU.** Viatru has evolved from an online crafts retailer into a leading site linking artisans in developing countries with large retailers in developed countries. Its previous incarnation, World2Market.com, started in the spring of 2000 and by Christmas was running 20 percent ahead of initial sales projections. Through the site artisans made profits of up to 40 percent of the final selling price—more than 10 times their usual rates.

The company predicts that focusing on the wholesale market will give it an even greater impact on empowering poor artisans than its retail sales. Charo, a self-taught potter and founder of Keramics, a woman-owned ceramics business based in a poor ghetto of Lima, Peru, can’t argue with this logic. VIATRU commissioned a new line of ceramic coffee mugs, creamers, and sugar bowls from Keramics for Tully’s Coffee in Seattle, Washington. VIATRU helped design the products, coordinate shipment, and broker the deal between Keramics and Tully’s. The products are selling so well that Tully’s has reordered twice in three months. Keramics now employs 25 people, many of whom migrated to the city empty-handed during the Shining Path’s terror in the mid-1980s.

Virtual Souk, PEOPLink, and VIATRU have all received international attention for their innovations in e-commerce and inspired other initiatives:
• **African Crafts Online (ACO).** This group’s mission is both commercial and educative. It helps African artisans connect with each other, showcase their products through the Internet, and chronicle their culture. For example, ACO helped fund a weaver from Ghana to open a school to teach Kente weaving. The site is designed as a global bulletin board so that all visitors can contribute information about traditional African crafts. Running since April 1999, African Crafts Online now receives 5,000—25,000 hits a month. Five artists are profiled on the site, with about 30 to be added.

• **eZiba.com.** Founded by Amber Chand, an employee of the Williams College Museum of Art and Dick Sabot, a professor of economics at Williams College and Internet entrepreneur, eZiba.com was launched even more recently, in November 1999. The site offers authentic handcrafts made by artisans from around the world, providing information about each item and craft tradition. eZiba plans to start the eZiba Foundation to help improve living conditions in artisan communities. eZiba has already secured more than $70 million in financing. Through links with Amazon.com and its 17 million customers, eZiba is in a strong position to create a new worldwide market.

These and other examples identified in the annex demonstrate that e-commerce can be an effective tool for generating income, preserving culture, and promoting development—benefiting both producer and consumer. But many developing countries lack financing, infrastructure, and policies that could make the Internet available to broader groups of people. Virtual organizations such as Digital Partners, a nonprofit research institute initiated by executives of top Internet companies including Microsoft and America Online are tackling some of the larger policy, technical, and language issues that will help bridge the digital divide between developed and developing countries and ultimately enable e-commerce to flourish worldwide.
V. Strategies for Action

*Only God listens to us.*—Participant in a discussion group, Egypt.

*A person doesn’t have the strength or power to change anything, but if the overall system changed, things would be better.*—A poor man, Sarajevo, Bosnia.

*We all know that if you are at the bottom, you will always be the object of aggression, and we are afraid of those on the top. The people cannot gather together and put them in their place.*—Discussion group of men and women, Etropole, Bulgaria.

*If we aren’t organized and we don’t unite, we can’t ask for anything.* Participant, women’s discussion group, Florencio Varela, Argentina.

More and more decisions that affect poor people's lives are made at the global level. It is therefore vital to create mechanisms that enable poor people's voices to be heard and inform decision making at the global level. It is equally important to connect global resources and knowledge to the local level to support poor people’s initiatives, and to ensure that they are not further excluded from opportunities in a rapidly changing world. Innovative solutions, like those described earlier in this paper, are needed to increase poor people's connectivity to each other and to global decision makers.

Globalization presents great opportunities as well as great risks for the poor. The availability of information technology alone has the potential of moving poor people from exclusion to inclusion in social and economic development on a scale and at a pace inconceivable so far.

However, new opportunities for the 2.8 billion poor people around the world will not open automatically. It is not inevitable. Opportunities for the poor will only open up if social entrepreneurs from governments, civil society, private corporations and international organizations, commit to action and build new institutional mechanisms and relationships to reach out to poor people. This concluding section outlines one major precondition, and five elements of an action strategy for promoting this outcome.

1. *Mindset shifts*

Perhaps the most important underlying change necessary is a shift in mindset. Global actors must think it normal and essential to be directly informed by and learn from the experiences of poor men and women who will be affected or are expected to benefit from global actions. This requires a major shift in attitudes towards the poor, who they are and why they are poor.
Voices of the Poor establishes once more that the problem is not the culture of poverty nor poor people themselves. Poor people are a development resource. Poor people are entrepreneurs. Poor people work hard, show remarkable tenacity and resilience in the face of seemingly unending obstacles. Poor people’s access to opportunities and resources are limited mostly by an institutional climate which favor those with more power, influence and education.

Changes in mindset are not easy to bring about. But they can be facilitated through dialogue, experiential learning and direct, even though brief, exposure to poor people in their own settings. Participation in poverty immersion programs in villages or urban slums for a week, supporting systematic listening to poor people in all programs, and participating in participatory analyses with poor people could transform the perspectives of global decision-makers, and begin to close the gap between local and global actors.

2. Elements of a strategy for action

Experience with innovations in many different fields suggests that five elements need to be combined to scale up pilot efforts and support social entrepreneurs to engage in poverty reduction efforts:

A. Poor people’s membership-based organizations
B. Information and communications technology
C. Franchising success through local entrepreneurs
D. Venture capital and loans
E. Grant funds for capacity building

A. Poor people’s membership-based organizations

Poor people’s membership-based organizations are a critical development asset, a resource that usually requires between 10 to 20 years of investment. Large organizations, whether they are governments, private firms or international agencies, cannot reach out to individual communities or households. Hence representative, membership-based poor people’s organizations that have strong horizontal linkages become key in any effort at large-scale poverty reduction.

This will require new relationships to be established, and any new relationship must be based on trust. There are three important pre-conditions in establishing such relationships that will serve poor people, given the usual unequal distribution of power between poor people’s organizations and those with money and other resources. To serve the interests of poor people, partnership has to be based on a common or shared interest; a two-way flow of information; and strong horizontal linkages.

Participation is not a free good, it takes time, effort and often creates risks for those who mobilize and organize. In consequence, organizations and groups interested in urban land tenure issues will not mobilize for trade reform. Hence unless an issue is of primary
interest to a poor people’s network, potential partnerships will fail. An issue of mutual interest has to be clearly specified and central to partners if a coalition around it is to work. By the same token, the flow of information has to run in both directions, between equal partners. The rules of engagement have to be clearly specified to build trust between two partners who are inherently unlike each other. Most representative poor people’s organizations are democratic and work by consensus. The tradition of consultation with members and consensus decision-making within such organizations takes time and cannot be hurried.

Policy partnerships and dialogues for action can be formed around specific policy issues, for example urban land tenure security for the urban poor. This can for example include electronic discussion, using the gateway as a tool. Existing policy networks can include representatives of poor people’s organizations on their decision-making boards and engage with poor people’s organizations on a regular basis to ensure demand responsiveness.

B. Information and communications technology

As the examples in the paper demonstrate, the power of information technology to transform poor people’s lives is tremendous and as yet unrealized. Information and communication technology is an asset with productive returns. For poor people it can be a source of direct income, through selling access to the technology such as telephone; it can be a source of information and knowledge about market prices or medical advice that increases income directly or indirectly (for example by speeding recovery from injury, saving money by avoiding trips into town); and finally it can open new avenues to markets and e-commerce.

Once people are connected, telecenters and kiosks also serve as important means of connecting poor people to each other and to governments, thus making it possible to organize and engage in governance issues. Increasing use of IT by governments themselves is also reducing transactions costs for all but particularly poor people, whose labor and time is often their only asset.

C. Franchising success through local entrepreneurs

The world’s 2.8 billion people cannot be reached with a range of development information, government services, and connection to markets through charity. Rather, innovations in telecenters and web portals that use some combination of public access and fee-for-use and franchise rights through local entrepreneurs are critical to ensure their rapid spread through rural areas as well as poor urban areas.

The private sector learned the secret of franchising many years ago and has proceeded to dot the world with McDonalds. The underlying business model needs to be transferred to achieve financially sustainable solutions to some aspects of the challenge of poverty reduction.
D. Venture capital and loans

Poor people and poor people’s organizations cannot raise large amounts of funding through loans or equity from capital markets. They do not fit the traditional profile of a credit-worthy customer and hence fail the risk assessment test. Innovations are needed to finance poor people’s ventures to enable them to participate in opening of new markets and the new economic opportunities created by globalization. IFC could play an important pioneering role by demonstrating that these new customers, poor people’s organizations and social entrepreneurs are viable profit making customers, and that serving them brings the additional advantage of directly benefitting the poor.

Several of the larger grassroots organizations have reached a point where to further expand they need access to capital that goes beyond microcredit. Demonstrating the viability of financing poor people’s entrepreneurship, including e-commerce on a large scale can begin with assistance in developing business plans, mentoring and piloting activities before further expansion. Some groups and social entrepreneurs however are ready for larger loans or equity capital.

E. Grant funds for capacity building

The ability to organize and mobilize people and resources is an asset that requires investment. It is, however, a public good with benefits apparent only in the long term, and hence it is usually under-financed. Investing in education is investing in individuals. Investing in building organizational capacity is investing in the collective and collective action, and has similarly important benefits. There is need for a multi-stakeholder grant facility to support local capacity building to strengthen the local global connection.

Raising small amounts of money for large number of groups is time consuming and ultimately unproductive given the number strings often attached to grant financing. Grant funds are needed to support long term capacity building, south-south learning and strengthening of existing networks independent of project processing timetables of large lending institutions such as the World Bank. When properly done, on-going community-driven projects financed by the World Bank and others can help significantly in building local organizational capacity.
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"What is a Social Entrepreneur?" ASHOKA.


VII. Resource Annex

1. CONNECTING THE LOCAL TO THE GLOBAL

A. People’s Movements and Networks

Self-Employed Women’s Association (SEWA) http://www.sewa-international.org.uk/ organizes, trains, and serves poor self-employed women in India to become empowered and self-sufficient. It uses modern information and communication technology to reach many more communities of women through distance classroom training.

International Network of Homebased Workers (HomeNET) http://www.homenetww.org.uk/ is an international membership association that has lobbied internationally for policies on street vendors, global trade and investment policies, social protection, and organization of women in the informal economy and their representation in policymaking. HomeNET has members in over 25 countries and publishes a newsletter that reaches organizations in over 130 countries.

StreetNet (The International Alliance of Street Vendors) http://www.streetnet.org.za/ is an international network of homeworkers’ and street vendor’s organizations that includes organizations or support groups in 11 countries. It was founded in 1995 and adopted the same year as the “Declaration of Bellagio” on the rights of street vendors.

Women in Informal Employment, Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO) http://www.wiego.org/ is a worldwide coalition of institutions and individuals concerned with improving statistics, research, programs, and policies in support of women in the informal sector of the economy.

Grassroots Organizations Operating Together in Sisterhood (GROOTS) http://www.groots.org/ is an international movement giving voice and power to grassroots women’s initiatives for eradication of poverty, through policy change and development partnerships. GROOTS shares resources, information, and experiences to inject a grassroots women’s perspective in national and international policy arenas.

B. Associations of Slum Dwellers

Asian Coalition for Housing Rights http://www.achr.net/ is a regional coalition of professionals and activists promoting horizontal exchange and learning opportunities for national federations of poor communities on housing and livelihood issues. Formed in 1988, ACHA is now the main regional network that United Nations agencies contact on human settlement and urban issues.

Slumdwellers’ International http://www.dialogue.org.za/sdi/SDI%20Main%20Page.htm is a people’s process for strengthening grassroots savings and credit schemes as a critical tool for the urban poor in their struggle against poverty and socioeconomic injustice. Called Shackdwellers’ International in Africa and Slumdwellers’ International in Asia, this is a people’s network for local-level collective organizing, problem solving, and solution sharing that empowers the urban poor.

Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centres (SPARC) http://www.sparcindia.org/ is an Indian NGO that creates new and innovative partnerships
with poor communities and professionals who want to work with them on issues of social justice and equity. It is inspired many poor people to demand shelter, credit, and other services.

**Homeless International** [http://www.homeless-international.org/](http://www.homeless-international.org/) is an international NGO coalition that supports community-led housing and infrastructure development in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

### C. Peasant Federations and Networks

**Association of Central American Peasant Organizations (ASOCODE)**
http://par.sicanet.org.sv/asocode/ is a regional network of peasants, indigenous people, and organizations in Central America advocating for the rights of small farmers and peasants, both nationally and globally.

**Federación Nacional de Organizaciones Campesinas, Indígenas y Negras (FENOCIN)**
http://fenocin.nativeweb.org/ is a network of more than 1,200 grassroots indigenous organizations in Ecuador working together to fight poverty and get poor people’s voices heard in global policy dialogues.

**Oaxacan State Coffee Producers Network, Mexico (CEPCO)**
http://www.oxfamamerica.org/students/coffee/cepcomex.html includes 45 regional organizations throughout the state of Oaxaca, Mexico that practice fair trade with coffee producers by buying directly from farmers who are CEPCO members.

**Via Campesina** [http://ns.sdnhon.org.hn/miembros/via/](http://ns.sdnhon.org.hn/miembros/via/) is an international peasant movement based in Honduras and coordinates more than 50 peasant organizations from Asia, Africa, the Americas and Europe. It seeks to build solidarity among small farmers organizations so that they can collectively fight for social and economic justice and improve their livelihoods.

### D. Social Entrepreneurship

**Ashoka** [www.ashoka.org](http://www.ashoka.org) is a global nonprofit social venture capital organization that identifies and invests in leading social entrepreneurs who apply creativity and determination to solving social problems on a large scale. Ashoka searches for new ideas championed by capable, innovative social entrepreneurs, whom it selects as Ashoka Fellows to receive stipends to enable them to work on their ideas.

**SeaChange—Social Entrepreneurs Alliance for Change** [http://www.sea-change.org](http://www.sea-change.org) is an on-line learning community and marketplace that provides members access to colleagues, collaboration, and capital.

**Social Venture Network** [http://www.svn.org/home.html](http://www.svn.org/home.html) is a community of leading business and social entrepreneurs engaged in building a socially just and environmentally sustainable economy through their enterprises.

### E. Information and Communication Technology

**Grameen Telecom’s Village Pay Phone (VPP) Model**
http://www.grameenphone.com/village/htm provides commercial phone service in rural
areas through local entrepreneurs, usually poor women, who own and operate cellular phones that typically serve an entire village. Begun on a small scale, it is likely to become the largest wireless pay phone project in the world. There are currently about 2,000 phones with about 60,000 users and Grameen Telecom’s target is to install 40,000 phones by December 2002.

Gyandoot http://www.gyandoot.net/ is a community-based, state-of-the-art information technology center project located in the Dhar District of Madhya Pradesh in central India. By making information and government services available to the public, it is forging new and productive relationships among half a million tribal people, traders, and government.

LearnLink Community Learning Centers http://www.aed.org/learnlink/ is a project of the U.S. Agency for International Development conducted by the Academy for Educational Development. LearnLink uses information, education, and communication technologies to strengthen learning systems for sustainable development and applies these technologies to link individuals, groups, and organizations and improve their capacity to meet learning needs, especially in basic education.

Committee for Democracy in Information Technology (CDI) www.cdi.org.br is a Brazilian NGO providing slum children and residents access to computer skills and technology through community-managed Computer Science and Citizenship Schools. CDI operates in 14 Brazilian states, has trained 32,000 young people and is expanding globally.

Strategic Partnership to Harness the Internet for Sustainable Development www.oneworld.net is a partnership between OneWorld and the Dutch aid agency Hivos will help organizations in developing countries use the Internet for sustainable development and human rights.

Technology and Action for Rural Advancement (TARAhaat) http://www.tarahaat.com/ brings information, products, and services via the Internet to the underserved rural market in the district of Bundelkhand region of Central India.

Women’s Net http://www2.womensnet.org.za/ Started by SANGONet and the Commission on Gender Equality in South Africa, Women’sNet provides gender-sensitive training and support, and links projects, people, tools, and resources through the Internet. Its Web site contains a wealth of information about health, human rights, new communications technologies, and violence against women.

2. CONNECTING GLOBAL TO THE LOCAL

A. Transnational People’s Movements

International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) http://www.icbl.org/ is a global coalition of more than 1,000 interested organizations working to ban landmines. The coalition is an innovator using the internet to organize and network to pursue the campaign, lobby national governments, and ratify the Land Mine Treaty.

Jubilee 2000 Coalition http://www.jubilee2000uk.org/ is an international movement calling for cancellation of the unpayable debt of the world’s poorest countries by the year 2000 under a fair and transparent process. Campaign members in over 65 countries advocated a debt-free start to the new millennium for a billion people.
Transparency International [http://www.transparency.org/press_moni.html] and [http://www.transparency.de/] is a civil society organization dedicated to curbing international and national corruption. Working to ensure that the agendas of international organizations give high priority to curbing corruption, Transparency International promotes new intergovernmental agreements to fight corruption, posting daily corruption news from around the world.

**B. Global Policy Networks**

**Cities Alliance** [http://www.citiesalliance.org] was launched in 1999 by the World Bank and Habitat International and is creating a coalition of community-based organizations involved in slum upgrading in partnership with existing networks of local authorities, private sector agencies, and national and international development organizations to provide affordable community-based solutions to urban poverty.

**World Commission on Dams** [http://www.dams.org/] facilitates debate on the complex issue of the development effectiveness of dams. The 70 members of the consultative body, the WCD Forum, include stakeholders and interest groups representing diverse perspectives. The commission invites submissions on various aspects of dams and their alternatives through its Web site and regular newsletters to maintain a dialogue between its work and the respective constituencies of the forum members.

**The Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR)** [http://www.cgiar.org/] contributes to food security and poverty eradication in developing countries through research, partnership, capacity building, and policy support. The CGIAR promotes sustainable agricultural development based on the environmentally sound management of natural resources.

**C. E-Commerce to Support Grassroots Entrepreneurs**

**VIATRU** (formerly known as World2Market) [http://www.viatru.com/home.htm] is building an infrastructure to allow talented artisans in developing communities around the world to gain access to the global marketplace. VIATRU provides artisans with much needed market information and business resources as well as a forum for discovering buying trends in US and European markets.

**The Virtual Souk** [http://www.elsouk.com/] is an internet commerce site that cuts out the middleman and sells crafts and products made by artisans of the Middle East and North Africa who do not otherwise have access to the international market.

**PEOPLink** [http://www.globaltechcorps.org/about.html] is a nonprofit organization that helps producers in remote communities all over the world market their products on the Internet. PEOPLink operates through a global network of nonprofit Trading Partners.

**African Crafts Online (ACO)** [http://www.africancrafts.com/] helps African artisans connect with each other, showcase their products through the Internet and use the Net as a resource to chronicle and preserve their culture.

**Tortasperu**, an e-business based in Lima, Peru ([http://www.tortasperu.com.pe]), sells homemade cakes to expatriate Peruvians who order the cakes on line and send them as surprises to their family and friends back in Peru.
Aid to Artisans. [http://www.aid2artisans.org](http://www.aid2artisans.org) is a nonprofit organization that creates economic opportunities for craftspeople in communities around the world. ATA provides design consultation, on-site workshops, business training, and the vital link to markets where the craft products are sold, helping artisan groups to become self-sustaining in the local and global marketplace.

eZiba.com is an online catalog and global bazaar that offers authentic handcrafted items created by artisans from around world. The forthcoming eZiba Foundation will be dedicated to improving living conditions in the artisans’ communities around the world.