

**For Immediate Release**  
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**Who Wants the World Bank Anyway?**  
**Announcing the Independent People's Tribunal on the World Bank in India**

The scandal-ridden World Bank, recently in the headlines for a corruption scandal involving then-President Wolfowitz, will face deep scrutiny when the Independent People's Tribunal on the World Bank in India opens next month in New Delhi. More than 50 groups from around India will assemble before an international jury to present their grievances against World Bank projects and policies.

“Since Independence, the World Bank has been shaping India's development agenda. But there has never been a systematic attempt to evaluate it. Since the authorities work hand-in-glove with the Bank, it is we the people who must call the World Bank to account,” says Misha Singh of the Tribunal secretariat. “The Tribunal is an opportunity for people who have been impacted by the World Bank to express their grievances and propose alternatives.”

There are plenty of grievances. In addition to pushing well-known infrastructure projects like the Narmada dams, the World Bank has been instrumental, if less visible, in crafting many of today's controversial economic policies, such as the privatisation of water supplies. As Bhaskar Goswami says, “Food grain availability in India is at its lowest level since 1973. Farmers and adivasis are being driven off their lands. Everyone is losing access to water and basic services. In short, the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. The policies that create this situation can all be traced back to the World Bank. It is the WB recommendations to the government that laid the foundation for these ill-conceived policies.”

In an effort to broaden the debate in the country, the tribunal also aims to dispute the World Bank's self-appointed role as the source of all knowledge and expertise on development. “For too many years, the experts told us to take their bitter economic medicine, it will make the economy stronger. But people are losing livelihoods, land, rights, access to education and health care. It is time that we stopped listening to so-called experts and started listening to the common people,” said Deepika D'Souza of the Human Rights Law Network. The Tribunal will call on both academics and ordinary people who have been directly affected by World Bank policies and projects.

The Independent People's Tribunal on the World Bank in India will take place on the campus of Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, from 21-24 September 2007. For more information, contact:

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