



IDEX UPDATE

International Development Exchange

Fall 2010 • Another World is Possible

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Another World is Possible; Another U.S. is Necessary — A Report from The United States Social Forum



Prativa Subedi (left) and Rose Williams in Detroit. "The opportunity to share some of my experiences at the U.S. Social Forum gives me strength and hope," said Prativa. "The stories I bring of rural women in Nepal can teach other communities as well."

What happens when more than 15,000 community organizers and activists gather for five days and organize themselves into more than 1,000 workshops and panels, dozens of major assemblies, marches and late-night parties?

In June, IDEX staff members Katherine Zavala, Yeshica Weerasekera and Vini Bhansali found out when they traveled to the U.S. Social Forum in Detroit. Joining them were Rose Williams,

the director of new IDEX partner Biowatch in South Africa, and Prativa Subedi, the founder and director of long-time partner Women Awareness Center, Nepal (WACN).

The weeklong gathering brought together a diverse group of people from across the country and around the world with a common commitment to working for social justice.

"Having Rose and Prativa here together shows us that their work has much in common and there is much for us to learn from each other despite our geographical and cultural differences," said Yeshica, IDEX's Program Officer.

Presenting the work of their respective organizations and facilitating discussions, Rose and Prativa enjoyed a unique opportunity to both learn from U.S. social change makers and to share their own experiences.

The forum also gave Biowatch the opportunity to present its recent legal victory over the South African state and Monsanto. In an unprecedented ruling, the South African Constitutional Court not only granted Biowatch access to information regarding GMO production in South Africa, but also overturned an earlier ruling ordering Biowatch to pay for Monsanto's legal costs. **You can learn more about this by viewing Biowatch's video at idex.org/what-we-do/partners-biowatch.php**

In addition to advocating for farmer's rights, Biowatch also trains small-scale farmers in sustainable agriculture and raises awareness on the dangers of GMO seeds.

"I had an 'aha' moment listening to a discussion with Biowatch," Prativa noted. "My organization supports many women's cooperatives in Nepal working with sustainable agriculture. We can learn many lessons from Biowatch about eco-friendly development that puts farmers first."



The opening rally brought together activists from around the world

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“As in South Africa,” Prativa continued, “chemical fertilizers were introduced to Nepal without providing correct information to farmers. Now the quality of the soil has degraded and again farmers have poor yields. We are now trying to improve soil using traditional methods like composting.”

Both WACN and Biowatch use traditional, “low-input” methods of agriculture that do not require costly and toxic fertilizers or pesticides.

“It is important for us to leverage our grantees’ work by creating opportunities for collaboration,” said Yeshica. “And having them here at the Social Forum enhances their visibility and showcases their innovative work to different audiences. To effect real social change, organizations can’t work in isolation.”

Why Detroit?

Vini commented that Detroit was the perfect location for the Social Forum. “Detroit residents are making great social transformation happen in the midst of a depressed economy,” she noted.

“As Rose and I walked around the city, you cannot help but notice completely abandoned high-rises and empty stores,” observed Katherine. “But that’s not the true picture of Detroit – the true story is the amazing people living here who have built local initiatives to address the multiple crises they have been facing.”

Katherine also noted similarities between Detroit and communities IDEX partners work in. One workshop she participated in recalled the work of South African grantee South Durban Community Environmental Alliance (SDCEA).

Like SDCEA, East Michigan Environmental Action Council is training community members to test air quality. Similar to their South African counterparts, these communities also carry the burden of diesel pollution that exposes its citizens to an increased risk of asthma and cancer.

Next Stop: Dakar!

This year’s U.S. Social Forum was an outgrowth of the World Social Forum (WSF), which began some 10 years ago as a counterpoint to the World Economic Forum – the elite gathering of global capitalists in Davos, Switzerland.

IDEX will participate in the process leading up to the 2011 WSF in Dakar, Senegal. In Detroit, IDEX participated in a coalition of activist groups from the U.S. and Africa to discuss parallel issues facing both Detroit and Dakar.

“The two cities may seem literally worlds apart,” group members noted, “but in closer examination, many of the issues communities struggle for are similar – overcoming depressed economies, migration, better education, and a cleaner environment.”

We hope to attend the forum along with several of our partners alongside hundreds of grassroots and community-based organizations from around the world on the front lines of social justice.

As participants in a powerful global movement, IDEX, our partners, and our allies are all reminded that we are not alone in the struggle and that another world is indeed possible.

About IDEX

Our Mission

IDEX promotes sustainable solutions to poverty by providing long-term grants and access to resources to locally run organizations in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.



IDEX Staff from left to right: Katherine Zavala, Anne Mawdsley, Rajasvini Bhansali, Greg Hunt, Deborah Goldberg, Gillian Wilson. Yeshica Weerasekera not pictured.

Our Vision

We envision a global community that embraces economic, social and cultural rights in which all people may access resources, preserve their environment, and are empowered to live free from poverty and discrimination.

Our Values

- Equitable partnerships with our grantees;
- Transparency, accountability, and integrity in all our relationships;
- Open communication with the communities we support;
- Grassroots solutions, free from agendas imposed by governments, corporations, or funding agencies;
- Local knowledge and leadership that encourages sustained community development;
- Changing the power dynamic in international grantmaking

In Practice: Empowering women, building local economies, caring for the environment

IDEX works with partners and grantees in Guatemala, Mexico, India, Nepal, South Africa and Zimbabwe. IDEX values community initiatives that come from people who want to create change for themselves. We provide the financial support. Local leaders and community members do the rest.

IDEX Adds Four New Partners In South Africa

After a year of getting to know our six catalyst grantees in South Africa, we carefully evaluated their work and are excited to announce that we have selected four grantees to become IDEX Partners. This means IDEX is committed to working with and providing a grant to our new partners for at least three years. Visit idex.org/what-we-do/partner-selection-criteria.php to learn more about our criteria and process.

All of the selected groups work in underserved communities across South Africa. We are excited to announce the following partners:

Angus Gillis Foundation (AGF)

AGF builds self-sufficiency in communities that have faced poverty and ill health. AGF runs a health program and works with communities on food gardens, income-generating activities, and leadership development and self-reliance.



Biowatch community member Mrs. Mncube in her household garden that Biowatch has helped her cultivate

Biowatch

Biowatch strives to prevent biological diversity from being privatized for corporate gain. Biowatch trains community groups to grow their own food in organic and sustainable ways that allow people to control their food supply. Earlier this year *Biowatch won a huge court victory over Monsanto – watch their video that highlights this story here: idex.org/what-we-do/partners-biowatch.php*

South Durban Community Environmental Alliance (SDCEA)

SDCEA is a coalition of communities that are seeking to end pollution caused by large industry in South Durban. SDCEA trains people how to measure pollution and advocate for greater environmental protections.

Whole World Women Association (WWWA)

Founded by African refugee women in Cape Town, WWWW works to empower refugee women and children. WWWW organizes leadership and societal integration training, promotes HIV/AIDS awareness, provides legal assistance for refugees, and protects their rights. WWWW also educates South Africans about refugees.

IDEX is currently visiting and evaluating NGOs in India to identify possible catalyst grantees there. Our hope is to find up to six catalyst grantee organizations in India by the end of 2010.

IDEX Welcomes Yeshica Weerasekera to the role of Program Officer and four new board members.

IDEX is pleased to announce Yeshica Weerasekera joined our team as a Program Officer at the start of summer. Yeshica has worked for more than two decades in support of grassroots-led social change with a diverse number of philanthropic and non-profit organizations in Europe, Africa and the U.S.

Born and partly raised in Sri Lanka, Yeshica migrated with her family to the U.K., where she received a B.A. in International Development Studies from the University of East Anglia. After earning a Masters degree in Africa Area Studies from UCLA, Yeshica worked for 6 years in the West African region as the local Sahel Representative for Ashoka: Innovators for the Public, as well as with Oxfam America, and RADI-APEC, a community-based non-profit organization in Senegal.



Yeshica Weerasekera, IDEX's Program Officer

She has worked at several social change organizations based in California, including USA for Africa, the Tides Center, Changemakers, and most recently as a deputy director at the International Forum on Globalization, a North-South research and educational institution.

No stranger to IDEX, Yeshica first worked at IDEX in the later 1990s when she coordinated the Africa program, and helped to

formulate the early stages of IDEX's own partnership approach. She is delighted to be renewing her ties to the organization, and becoming part of IDEX's dynamic efforts promoting sustainable solutions around the world.

In spring 2010 four new board members joined the IDEX team. Paula Morris, Ken Tamura, Paula Vlamings, and Aaron Zukoski all add to the skills and richness of our board. *You can read more about them, and all of IDEX's Board Members at idex.org/about-us/board-of-directors.php*

Tropical Storm Hits IDEX Partners in Guatemala

IDEX's Guatemalan partners –AFEDES, APROSADSE, and ISMU—have all reported serious damage and some deaths in their areas in the wake of Tropical Storm Agatha. The storm, which made landfall on the Pacific Coast of Guatemala on May 29th, dumped more than 400 mm of rain in a short period



The storm caused a lot of flooding and swept away trees, buildings, bridges and roads

of time and the areas where IDEX's Guatemalan partners work were among the hardest hit in the country.

The storm followed the eruption of the Pacaya Volcano a few days earlier. In Guatemala alone, the death toll from the two natural disasters is reaching in the hundreds. Tens of thousands more people have been displaced from their homes or are without food and water, and even more severe food shortages are expected in the coming months.

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IDEX News Update

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During this critical time, our local partners in Guatemala are well positioned to reach those families in need of immediate assistance. They are requesting support to assess the impact of this disaster in their communities and respond to emergency needs: staple foods (beans, rice, sugar), basic necessities (soap, bedding, and clothing), and building materials to repair or rebuild homes.

Please donate to IDEX today, and support our partners as they recover from this disaster. Click on the 'Donate' button on our website, idex.org state your donation is for **Guatemala Emergency Relief** in the notes.

IDEX is Turning 25

To mark our 25th Birthday, IDEX is planning a year of celebration that acknowledges our achievements and those of our partners. We'd love to have your help.

Perhaps you were a volunteer back in the '80s, '90s or more recently. Maybe you visited one of our grantees many years ago. Or maybe you are a long-time donor. Please share with us your stories of IDEX.

Email us at IDEXis25@idex.org or post your story to our Facebook page: facebook.com/idex.org

Upcoming Events

*Missed an event? Have IDEX news emailed to you!
Sign up for our email newsletters and event invitations
on our website, idex.org/events*

The IMF and its Policy Impact on Public Health and the Fight against HIV/AIDS in Developing Countries: A Book Presentation and Discussion

What: Bay Area local and expert on IMF policies, Rick Rowden, returns to San Francisco to discuss his new book, with an introduction by Patrick Bond.

When: Tuesday, September 14, 2010 from 6:00 – 7:30pm

Where: World Affairs Council, 312 Sutter Street, San Francisco

RSVP: RSVP by emailing priorityafrica@yahoo.com, everyone is welcome.

IDEX Film Night: *Taking Root*

What: Join us for this special documentary screening that tells the story of the Wangari Maathai and the Green Belt Movement in Kenya.

When: Wednesday, November 3, 2010 from 7:00 – 8:30pm

Where: The Roxie, 3117 16th Street, San Francisco.
Tickets available at the door.