

Globalization Monitor

Hong Kong

A Brief Introduction

Our Work

Globalization Monitor is a non-profit organization based in Hong Kong. It was founded shortly before the big Seattle protest against the WTO in 1999. Its editorial board members are activists from trade unions, green movement, regional group and other grassroots organizations. It has been the chief organization in HK which devote itself in promoting awareness on the negative effects of globalization.

- In the past five years, Globalization Monitor put out 16 issues of its journal, sounding the first alarm on the negative impacts of ‘free trade’, privatization, liberalization of capital flow, WTO etc among social movement in HK.
- We have given numerous talks and held many workshops among college students and grassroots organizations.
- In 2000, we worked with the CTU (Confederation of Trade Unions) in a year round educational project funded by Oxfam on globalization among union members.
- In 2001, we initiated a coalition of more than 20 local groups and launched a campaign against the WEF when it held its conference in HK, including a conference with 100 participants to discuss globalization, trade issues and civil responses.
- Beginning from 2004, Globalization Monitor, along with CTU and many local trade unions and NGOs, founded the Hong Kong People’s Alliance on WTO in the preparation of the campaign against the Sixth Ministerial Meeting of the WTO which is planned to be held in HK in 2005. The Globalization Monitor is chiefly responsible for preparing workshops, conferences leading up to the event.
- We promote solidarity campaign with Chinese workers’ action in defending basic labor rights. The first successful case is the Gold Peak case. The GP Group is a Hong Kong based TNC. In 2004 its several batteries plants in Mainland poisoned 400 workers and the latter forced to go to strikes in order to get proper treatment. Globalization Monitor has launched a year long solidarity campaign against the company. Eventually the company announced the founding of a 10 million HK dollars medical fund for workers. GM is still following up the case as the fund is far from enough.

Our goal

1. Promote public awareness of the adverse effects of globalization, neo-liberalism and corporate monopoly;
2. For legislative regulation against Corporate in the endeavor of protection of the rights of workers, women, consumers, marginal groups and also the protection of environment;
3. Promote an autonomous social movement in the fight for political and economic democracy and the just distribution of social resources.

The Hong Kong Context

In HK the campaign for the needs of market regulation and control over free trade and free capital flow encounters immense difficulties, simply because HK has always been a free port and has enjoyed prosperity for decades, which nurtures a pro-market and pro-free trade mentality not only among middle classes but also among common working people. The opening of China's market to HK investors brings about similar result. Yet things are reaching a new stage. Since the Asian crisis, the notion that free market is good for everyone begins to face challenges from the social movement. Within a few years a serious economic recession set in, budget deficit becomes a regular thing, and even when there is some recovery, jobs growth is still lagging behind. The government and the corporate are quick in shifting the burden to the grassroots, resulting in budget cuts, large-scale privatization, loss of jobs, and the lowering of living standard among large sections of the population. The further monopolization of the commanding heights of the economy makes any talk of free market more and more look like mockery. It is against this background that today there is more people begin to question the myth of free market. We will take this opportunity to promote new thinking and resistance among social activists in HK.

Monitoring China

The economic integration between HK and China has now reached a new stage, where quasi-free flow of capital between the two sides has already been securely put in place, but the free movement of living human from the Mainland to HK is still banned. And the ban is chiefly targeted at Chinese working people, because the rich and powerful could always buy their way into HK. The Chinese working people not only being denied the full freedom of moving in and out of the borders, they are being robbed of the right to association. Rural migrant workers are further denied full freedom of residence and movement in the cities. This implies that HK (and all foreign) capital could freely exploit the unfree labour in China, which gives Chinese export (half of which is from foreign capital) an advantage over all other countries

which are in greater or smaller degree respect the legal rights of labour. This is why China becomes the favorite of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), and half of all workers working in the Export Processing Zones (EPZs) in the world locate in China. China and HK's place in the world in this age of global assembly line is something like this: at the top there are the big western or Japanese corporations which swallow the biggest share of the valued added, at the middle there are HK and Taiwan capital which act as sub-contractors of the first tier, with Chinese workers occupying the lowest tier, bonded hands and feet, could find little escape from the terrible working conditions of sweatshops in the EPZs.

China's accession to WTO will hit hard the small farmers, forcing more young people to migrate to cities to look for a job, which further depresses wages as long as these workers could not organize among themselves. Accession to WTO also brings about a tremendous restructuring of the State Owned Enterprises (SOEs), resulting in the firing of more than 15 million SOEs workers. One of our objectives will be close monitoring on the effects of WTO accession on Chinese working people.

The super exploitation of Chinese workers (and also the environment) should be a concern not only of HK people but also of the global civil society, because it turns China into a huge engine of the race to the bottom, not only among Asian countries but also across the world. Globalization Monitor is keen to cooperate with other organizations in helping to monitor the development in China and in looking for ways to reverse the tide and help to promote a better Chinese society.

For further informations please visit our website: <http://globalmon.org.hk/>

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