

Accomplishing the world



Alternatives
within reach

Alternatives' 1998-1999 Activity Report
for the Annual General Meeting

January 2000

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...for a different
world

Introduction

In the early '90s, activists from all walks of life set out on the adventure of creating a new project to promote international solidarity. This initiative gave birth to **Alternatives**, a tool for awareness, support and action on behalf of grassroots organizations that struggle against exploitation and exclusion. One of the project's defining characteristics was to bridge North and South, foster ties between various organizations all over the world and, above all, create an immense network able to act and react in the face of neoliberal economic policies that impoverish a growing number of people on the planet.

We have won the wager, to a certain extent, but it has not been easy. Alternatives has scored some points at the political level. We have rooted ourselves in the social movement thanks to ceaseless activities, projects, conferences and publications, not to mention our fundraising campaigns that reach thousands of people all over the country. We have managed to make ourselves heard and influence decision-makers at all government levels on a number of issues, even though our stands often clash with official policy.

At the organizational level, we have also managed to strengthen our partnership with various grassroots groups here and around the world. Our dreamed-of network is in the process of being built, despite the many problems our partner organizations face on a regular basis. Internally, we were able to recruit a diverse and active membership and an increasingly professional work team. The struggle to raise funds for our activities and projects is a never-ending battle, but, there too, Alternatives has secured its place in the sun.

We are therefore progressing at a brisk pace, but we must not take anything for granted. After ten years, the world around us has changed, and we have changed too. The Annual general meeting gives us an opportunity to recap and begin an in-depth discussion on what we want to and can achieve in the coming years. This means taking into account outside constraints and the current political situation, as well as our political and organizational potential.

The following chapters give an overview of Alternatives' projects and activities in the past year. Based on this general picture, overall guidelines for thought and action aimed at directing or consolidating our work will be proposed at the Annual General Meeting.

This introduction would not be complete without mentioning the energy, reliability and generosity of all those who contribute in so many ways to building Alternatives. My heartfelt thanks go out to them.

Pleasant reading.

Pierre Beaudet, Director

1. Alternatives at a glance

Incorporation date: 1994

Offices: Montreal and Quebec City

General mission: Support grassroots organizations here and in developing countries that work to counter impoverishment, joblessness, exclusion and racism. Alternatives tries to make connections and build bridges between organizations that defend less fortunate populations here and around the world.

Main activities:

- Financial and logistic support for over 56 local NGOs that operate in 30 developing countries in the fields of communication, reconciliation and reconstruction, human rights including women rights, social and economic rights, and the environment.
- Awareness program for the general public via conferences, workshops, seminars, press publications, radio programs and a Web site.
- Organizing overseas internships that include lodging and training with partner organizations, for forty young people a year on average.
- Cooperation with a number of Canadian and Quebec organizations on the issues of globalization, immigration and social justice.

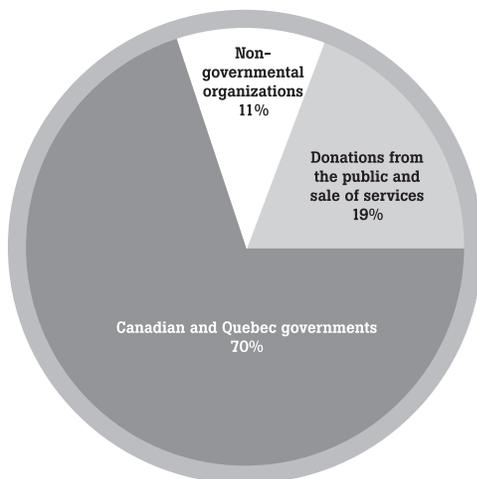
Membership: over 500 people (see organization chart, Appendix 1)

Donors: over 50 000 people across Canada

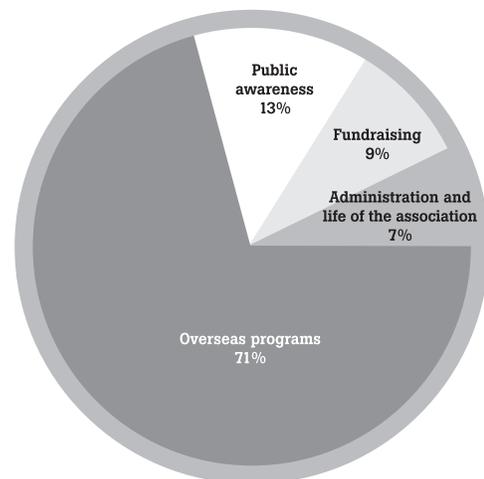
Work team: 26 people, of which 18 have permanent positions (see Appendix 2)

Gender equality: 53% of members and 14 employees out of 26 are women. Alternatives also has a gender policy (see Appendix 3)

Breakdown of revenue and expenses (1998-1999)



Revenue



Expenses

2. Programs

Informing the general public

Alternatives publishes a monthly national and international newsletter that is inserted in VOIR-Montréal magazine (circulation: 122 000 copies), a one-page insert in VOIR-Québec (circulation: 50 000 copies), a one-page insert in HOUR (circulation: 60 000 copies) and an information page in student newspapers. This "general public" approach gives us important visibility and raises awareness among a section of the population that would not otherwise be reached. A new and improved Web site and a weekly program on a Quebec City community radio station (CKIA) are additional communication tools that enable Alternatives to reach a broad cross-section of society.

War, conflict, famine and natural disasters are the standard fare of mass media international news reports. It gets to the point where we forget that these problems are often rooted in exploitation, exclusion and contemptible profit-seeking whatever the cost. Political and economic globalization lead to the worst excesses, which often degenerate into conflict or disruption of the fragile ecosystem of each country. Not much is said about that.

Even less is said about the resistance, struggles and (small) victories of thousands of groups, born of the desire to improve the fate of the most vulnerable populations. Alternatives supports these groups that put up resistance, organize themselves and propose new means of countering impoverishment, exclusion and environmental deterioration.

The fate of people in the South is intimately linked to our own. Alternatives' overseas programs are therefore part of a series of activities (information, awareness raising, exchanges, lobbying) that are inextricably intertwined.

● ● ● **2.1 Latin America**

From a distance, it would seem that the countries of Latin America have experienced a democratization of their political institutions and a measure of economic renewal. A closer look shows that the democratic process masks the important place still occupied by military (Peru, Chile, Mexico, Guatemala) and paramilitary (Brazil, Colombia) groups, as well as the perpetuation of economic privileges for the governing class. This democratization is seldom accompanied by an improvement in the population's living conditions. On the contrary, we are witnessing the marked impoverishment of the majority of South Americans. Behind the economic resurgence is an increasingly wider gap between rich and poor.

Economic integration that breeds poverty

In Latin America, Alternatives backs a grassroots movement that must face new political and economic facts. Among others, an entire network of NGOs work to counter the devastating effects of economic integration in the Americas. Be it in Chile, Brazil or Mexico, Alternatives' partner organizations keep track of and act to contain the spillover effects of trade agreements on nations' societies and internal policies. In Quebec, Alternatives coordinates the activities of the Réseau québécois sur l'intégration continentale (RQIC) and is actively preparing the Popular Summit of the Americas scheduled to take place in Quebec City in the year 2001.

Reclaiming the land

In Brazil, the landless peasant movement is demanding agrarian reform that will take into account the needs and rights of the peasant population. Alternatives supports these efforts via exchanges and financial assistance. The exhibit of photos by Sebastiao Salgado chronicling some of the highlights of the landless peasants' struggle has already drawn over 3000 people. This is part of a broad awareness campaign (which includes articles and conferences) aimed at informing people in Quebec about this highly legitimate struggle.

Indigenous Communities

Over the last few months, Alternatives has carried out a program to support the indigenous communities of Panama, the Emberas in particular, whose villages have been greatly affected by the war raging in neighbouring Colombia. This project gave rise to the Darien Foundation, a community-oriented indigenous organization that is working to reforest the area and (re)build infrastructures to meet communities' basic needs.

We have also provided financial support to indigenous communities in Honduras and El Salvador to help mitigate the devastating effects of Hurricane Mitch.

Cuba, Si!

Cuba's isolation and the contradictions of political power caught between the desire to "open up" and the will to preserve the achievements of the revolution make this country a special case. Alternatives supports a network of Cuban organizations that attempt to foster a transition that will take the country's sociopolitical context into account.

Public activities



TERRA

Exhibit of photos by Sebastiao Salgado and conferences in Montreal on Brazil's Landless Peasant Movement (Montreal, Quebec)

DEVELOPING CITIES

A series of conferences in Montreal, Quebec City and Toronto on urban development and popular participation, with representatives from San Salvador and Mexico City, and with the Mayor of Porto Alegre (Brazil), Raoul Pont.

Main partners in Latin America

● Brazil

Landless Peasant Movement (MST)

Target areas: Basic needs, Communications

Goals: Promote socioeconomic rights, protect the environment and provide support to children

Activities: Building schools and homes, agricultural rehabilitation, environment training and cultural workshops for children

Federacao de Orgaos para Assistencia Social e Educacional (FASE)

Target areas: Communications, the environment, women

Goals: Strengthen the association movement in Brazil

Activities: Training, citizenship awareness campaign

Central Unica dos Trabalhadores (CUT)

Target areas: Communications, women, the environment

Goals: Promote socioeconomic rights, fight desertification

Activities: Socioeconomic rights awareness campaign, networking, training for women on environmental alternatives.

● Chile

Instituto de Ecologia Politica (RECHIP)

Target areas: Communications and the environment

Goals: Foster development and environment-oriented education

Activities: Research, training sessions, publications

● Cuba

Centro de investigaciones psicologicas y sociologicas (CIPS)

Target areas: Communications, environment

Goals: Increase civil society participation in social, political and economic development

Activities: Research, analysis, networking, training

Centro de recuperacion y difusion de la memoria historica del movimiento popular latinoamericano (MEPLA)

Target area: Communications

Goals: Increase civil society participation in social, political and economic development

Activities: Research, analysis, networking, training

Centro de estudios sobre America (CEA)

Target area: Communications

Goals: Build a civil society based on social justice and respect

Activities: Research, analysis, networking

Central de trabajadores de Cuba (CTC)

Target areas: Communications, education

Goals: Ensure worker training

Activities: Training session, videos, publications

Federation of Cuban Women

Target areas: Communications, women

Goals: Create a network of women's groups at both the national and international level

Activities: Conferences, seminars, training and publications

● Panama

Darien Foundation

Target areas: Basic needs, environment

Goals: Rebuild and relocate displaced indigenous communities

Activities: Logistical support for building villages, training, planting crops required for the populations' survival

● Mexico

Red Mexicana de Accion Frente al Libre Comercio (REMALC)

Target areas: Communications, education

Goals: Increase social society participation in socioeconomic development

Activities: Training, conferences, networking

● ● ● 2.2 Sub-Saharan Africa

Sub-Saharan Africa has not experienced such an acute crisis since the end of European colonialism. Armed conflict has proliferated in dozens of places from one end of the continent to the other (Angola, Rwanda, Burundi, Congo, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Sudan, etc.). The population is often marginalized, particularly in rural areas. The perpetuation of colonial practices has given rise to inefficient and corrupt state apparatus that are extremely vulnerable to the diktats of international financial institutions (IMF, World Bank). Faced with enormous difficulties and weighed down by serious constraints, a new African resistance is organizing itself via association networks set up to ensure the survival of urban and rural masses reduced to misery and violence.

Rehabilitation and pacification

In Congo, Angola, Burundi and in the Sudan, Alternatives works with local organizations that have strong community roots in order to rebuild and consolidate peace in areas once plagued by the demons of ethnic cleansing and the resulting conflicts. In Angola, for instance, the war has been going on for over 25 years and has generated more than 3 million internal refugees. A number of projects in the cities of Luanda, Malange, Huambo, Cuito and Bengela are underway to build camps, de-mine the fields and rehabilitate communities that have lost everything. There is also a parallel process to consider prospects for peace, which involves many concerned parties. Examples include the Conference on the Great Lakes that took place in South Africa in February 1999 and the round table on Angola in Ottawa in November 1999.

Women on the front lines

A number of Alternatives projects are aimed at strengthening organizations of African women, who are on the front lines when it comes to rebuilding their communities. That is the case in Congo, where we support PAIF (Promotion et appui aux initiatives féminines), an organization that works to revitalize income-generating activities for women. In Rwanda, Pro-femmes fosters management training for women in rural areas who are often left to fend for their family's survival alone. In Senegal, the Palmarin organization has begun the struggle against desertification by building dams, undertaking reforestation and facilitating income-generating activities for women, particularly fishery-related activities.

Public activities

PEACE: UTOPIA OR REALITY?

Conference on the outlook for peace in Burundi with guests from Burundi, from the Nyerere Foundation in Tanzania and from Canada (Montreal, Quebec City, Ottawa)

SUPPORTING THE PEACE EFFORT IN ANGOLA

Round table in Ottawa on Canada's policy in Angola, with representatives of Angolan civil society, the Canadian government, the UN and a number of Canadian NGOs working in Angola (Ottawa).

Main partners in Sub-Saharan Africa

● Angola

Action pour le développement rural et l'environnement (ADRA)

Target areas: Basic needs (rural areas, displaced populations and women)

Goals: Help local communities, more specifically in rural areas, to rebuild their villages and mend the social fabric.

Activities: Building houses, rehabilitating fields, clearing mines, providing work tools and training

Development Workshop

Target areas: Sanitary infrastructure services (rural and urban)

Goals: With the local communities, provide and install an adequate sanitary system.

Activities: Building latrines, sewers, etc.

● Congo (Kin)

Groupe d'études et d'actions pour un développement bien défini (GEAD)

Target areas: Basic needs, democratization, women and young people

Goals: Oversee the rebuilding and reconciliation of communities, promote sustainable development

Activities: Agricultural rehabilitation, building houses and schools, peaceful cohabitation campaigns, income-generating activities for women, socioeconomic training for young people

Promotion et appui aux initiatives féminines (PAIF)

Target area: Women

Goals: Provide training and create a network for women's groups

Activities: Income-generating initiatives for women, peace campaign, training on the issue of rights

Conseils régionaux des ONG de développement (CRONG)

Target areas: Basic needs, pacification and reconciliation
Goals: See to community reconstruction and reconciliation, promote sustainable development

Activities: Agricultural rehabilitation, building houses and schools, peaceful cohabitation campaigns, income-generating activities for women, socioeconomic training for young people

● Nigeria

Labour Support Services

Target area: Human rights

Goals: Provide the population with training on the issue of rights, particularly workers' rights

Activities: Classes, seminars and publications on the issue of workers' rights

● Senegal

Palmarin

Target areas: The environment, women

Goals: Fight desertification

Activities: Building dams, planting trees, income-generating activities for women, particularly in the area of the fisheries

Forum Tiers-Monde

Target areas: Communications, networking

Goals: Set up a pan-African network of NGOs and grassroots organizations

Activities: Conferences, publications, seminars

● South Africa

CPS (Centre of Policy Studies)

Target areas: Communications

Goals: Spark socioeconomic dialogue between civil society and the state

Activities: Research, publications, seminars, conferences

● Mali

Réseau de communication Kayira

Target areas: Communications, health

Goals: Foster alternative information for the masses on public health, among other issues

Activities: Radio program

● Niger

Groupe Alternative

Target areas: Communications, human rights

Goals: Foster information on democracy and human rights

Activities: Newspaper publication

● Burundi

Africa Revival Ministries (ARM)

Target areas: Basic needs, democratization, women and young people

Goals: See to community reconstruction and reconciliation, promote sustainable development

Activities: Agricultural rehabilitation, building houses and schools, peaceful cohabitation campaigns, income-generating activities for women, socioeconomic training for young people

● Rwanda

Pro-femmes

Target areas: Women, education

Goals: Strengthen women's skills in the field of management

Activities: Training session

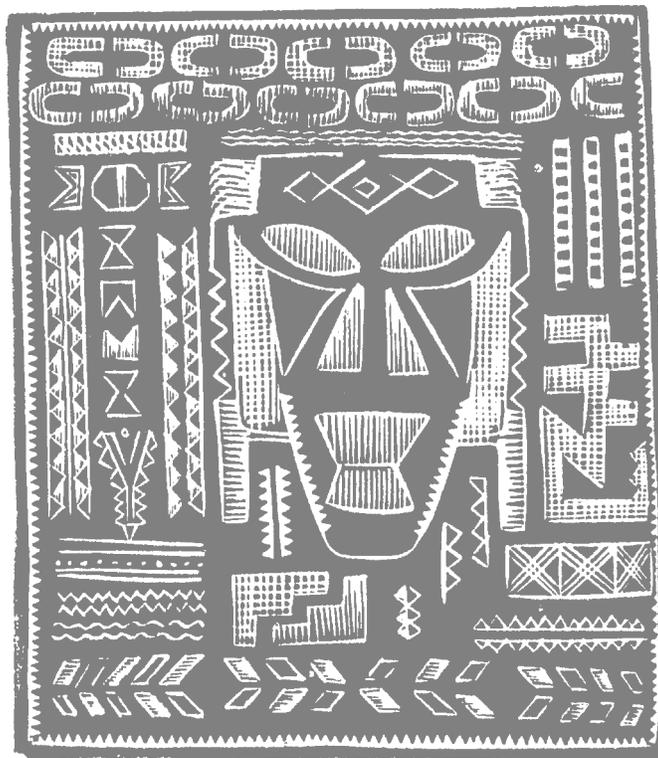
● Sudan

Amal Trust

Target areas: Basic needs, the environment

Goals: Strengthen communities' agricultural potential

Activities: Training, research and agricultural rehabilitation



● ● ● 2.3 Middle East and North Africa

Generally speaking, the space occupied by democracy in Arab countries is very limited. There is a kind of “low intensity” democracy for certain middle classes and the economic elite, but which excludes all real participation in political power by the majority of the population. The anger of those who are excluded is often channeled by fundamentalist movements that are profoundly reactionary, particularly with regard to women’s rights.

Human rights

In the Arab world (Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, Yemen, Morocco, Palestine), Alternatives has a number of projects underway to increase its partner organizations’ ability to defend human rights, including economic rights. Financial assistance, training, organizing conferences and, above all, creating a network of these organizations are some of the activities foreseen as part of these projects.

Equal rights for women

There are women’s organizations throughout the Arab world that fight for equal rights and against political, economic or cultural discrimination in an extremely difficult context. For many years, we have supported the Forum des femmes égyptiennes, a network of several organizations aimed at increasing women’s participation at all levels of society. A smaller project is also underway in Algeria with the Femmes en mouvement group.

Giving young people a place

In general, over 60% of the population of Arab countries is under 30 years of age. Alternatives therefore puts an emphasis on young people, particularly in Morocco, where we support a project to improve the living conditions children who live on the street in Casablanca. The program includes socioprofessional reintegration and social assimilation of young people by teaching them the carpenter’s trade.

Public activities



WOMEN’S MOVEMENT IN EGYPT

A meeting with representatives of the Forum of Egyptian Women for Development (Montreal)

DEMOCRACY AND TRANSITION IN MOROCCO

A meeting with three Moroccan guests from Espace associatif (NGO groupings), the Association démocratique des femmes marocaines and Chantiers Jeunesse (Montreal)

CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE ARAB WORLD

A conference on the place and work of grassroots organizations in the Arab world with guests from Palestine, Jordan, Morocco and Egypt (Montreal)

PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

A conference on the peace process between Israel and Palestine, with Israeli and Palestinian guests from grassroots movements (Montreal, Ottawa)

Main partners in Middle East and North Africa

● Algeria

Rassemblement Action Jeunesse (RAJ)

Target area: Human rights

Goals: Increase young people's participation in development

Activities: Citizenship awareness campaign, training

Femmes en mouvement

Target areas: Human rights and women

Goals: Increase the participation of women in development

Activities: training and information for women

● Egypt

Cairo Institute for Human Rights

Target areas: Human rights

Goals: Promote human rights

Activities: Networking, training, human rights awareness campaign

Forum des femmes égyptiennes

Target areas: basic needs, human rights, women

Goals: Increase women's participation in development

Activities: Workshops, training, publications, basic services

Jeel Youth Center

Target areas: Basic needs, young people

Goals: Work for the social reintegration of street kids

Activities: Workshops, training, trade teaching, awareness campaign on child labour

Arab Program for Human Rights

Target area: Human rights

Goals: Promote human rights

Activities: Networking, training, human rights awareness campaign

● Lebanon

Najdeh

Target areas: Basic needs, human rights

Goals: Offer services for the rehabilitation of refugees

Activities: Training, health-care center for refugee women and children in southern Lebanon

● Morocco

Espace associatif

Target areas: Human rights, communications, women

Goals: Increase civil society participation in socioeconomic and political development

Activities: Electronic networking, conference, training, human rights awareness campaign

Bayti Center

Target areas: Basic needs, young people

Goals: Work on the social reintegration of street kids

Activities: Workshops, training, trade teaching, shelter and transition center

● Palestine

Alternative Information Center

Target areas: Communications, human rights

Goals: Foster dialogue and reconciliation between Palestinians and Israelis

Activities: Networking, training, human rights awareness campaign

Teacher Creativity Center

Target area: Human rights

Goals: Develop the issue of human rights with teaching staff

Activities: Workshops, training, publications

Badil

Target areas: Basic needs, human rights
Goals: Provide refugee rehabilitation services
Activities: Awareness campaign on health, housing and education

PNGO

Target area: Communications
Goals: Increase civil society participation in development
Activities: Electronic networking

● **Yemen**

Yemen 2000

Target areas: Basic needs, young people
Goals: Increase young people's participation in development
Activities: Training on micro-loans, citizenship awareness campaign

Vocational Rehabilitation Center for People with Special Needs

Target area: Basic needs
Goals: See to the reintegration of persons disabled by anti-personnel mines
Activities: Strengthening the capacity to treat and rehabilitate antipersonnel-mine victims, training for doctors, victims and grassroots communities

Human Rights Information and Training Center

Target areas: Human rights and democracy
Goals: Promote human rights
Activities: Training, documentation

● ● ● **2.4 South Asia**

Long years of conflict pit India and Pakistan against each other, particularly in Kashmir, where both countries are bogged down by parochial nationalism against a backdrop of nuclear armament and a hate campaign against the Indian Muslim minority. In India, the government is ruled by an aggressive and militarist right wing that is in real danger of veering off into fascism. Nevertheless, a vast social movement has emerged over the last few years, particularly among the landless peasants, the dalits (untouchables), national minorities and women.

Peace and democracy

Alternatives supports a number of organizations that fight religious intolerance and economic inequality. These include the *Pakistan-India People's Forum for Peace and Democracy*, a vast network of Pakistani and Indian organizations that join forces to bring peace to the region. Other projects to promote networking among various organizations (literacy, communication, work, women) that try to counter inter-community violence are also underway.

Public activities

WOMEN OF PAKISTAN

Conference on the place and rights of Pakistani women with Asma Jahangir, President of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (Montreal)

PEACE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

A North-American conference on the outlook for peace and democratization in South Asia, with a number of guests from India and Pakistan, as well as French Researcher Christophe Jaffrelot (Montréal)

Women and children's rights

An information and training project on women's rights, particularly those of women workers, covers a number of women's organizations in Pakistan, India and Bangladesh. There is also a huge effort to establish links between these organizations and organizations here at home to form a lobby against the forced sterilization of South-Asian women.

An awareness campaign on child labour gave rise to a project involving training camps for child workers in the province of Andhra Pradesh, India.

Main partners in South Asia

● India

South Asian Network for Alternative Media

Target areas: Communications, human rights

Goals: Promote laity, peace and human rights

Activities: Electronic networking, cultural exchange programs throughout the country, gathering and disseminating information

Communalism Combat

Target areas: Communications, human rights

Goals: Promote laity, peace and human rights

Activities: Monthly publication, workshops with elementary-school children, research and analysis, exchanges at the elementary school level between India and Pakistan

Confederation of Voluntary Associations

Target areas: Basic needs, young people

Goals: Oppose child labour

Activities: Summer camps for children, training for community organizations

Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad

Target areas: Basic needs, communications, the environment

Goals: Promote literacy and protection of the environment

Activities: Literacy campaign, socioeconomic and alternative agriculture training workshops, the application of environmentally conscious technology, health awareness camps, the publication of science books that are accessible to communities

● India/Pakistan

Pakistan-India Peoples Forum for Peace and Democracy

Target areas: Communications, human rights

Goals: Promote peace, human rights and dialogue between the grassroots organizations of India and Pakistan

Activities: Networking of various organizations, conference and discussion workshops, information for the general public, lobbying

● Pakistan

Human Rights Commission of Pakistan

Target areas: Human rights and democracy

Goals: Promote human rights, particularly those of women

Activities: Research and publications, legal aid for women and minorities, lobbying

Journalist Resource Center

Target areas: Communications, democracy

Goals: Promote peace and democracy

Activities: Training workshops, networking, creating a coalition of journalists to promote peace-related activities

● Nepal

South Asia Forum for Human Rights

Target areas: Communications, human rights

Goals: Promote peace and human rights

Activities: Conference, publications and awareness campaigns

● ● ● 2.5 East Asia

There are important social forces at work in East Asia, particularly in China where a marked shift toward capitalism is eroding the social and economic achievements of the revolution. The financial crisis that hit South Korea, Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand seriously undermined their economic capacities, enslaving them to the big international financial institutions without improving the populations' living conditions.

Market globalization

Alternatives has made timid overtures to the large and complex region of East Asia. We have entered into contact with organizations that campaign on behalf of including popular demands in broad economic agreements such as the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation agreement (APEC). There have also been exchanges with Chinese organizations concerned about the rights of workers, particularly in the free zones.

Battling natural disasters

In Vietnam, Alternatives joins Development Workshop in supporting the population's efforts to fight the disastrous effects of typhoons. Initiatives include teaching new building techniques that should lessen the impact of these terrible storms on the population.

Public activities



FLOODS IN VIETNAM

A public appeal to collect funds for the victims of devastating floods in the central provinces of Vietnam

A VISIT FROM CHINA

Organization of a tour by a Chinese delegation dealing with the issue of social economy (Montreal, Quebec City, Ottawa, Toronto)

Main partners in East Asia

● Philippines

IBON

Target areas: Communications, human rights
Goals: Provide education on development and human rights
Activities: Research, training session, publications

● China

Asia Monitoring Resource Center

Target areas: Communications, human rights
Goals: Promote human rights, particularly those of workers
Activities: Research, training session, publications

● Vietnam

Development Workshop/Enda

Target area: The environment
Goals: Prevent natural disasters
Activities: Logistical support and environment-related training

● ● ● 2.6 Eastern Europe

Central and Eastern Europe constitute a main target of US imperialism. The point is to reduce Russia's military power, which means dismantling its army and eventually fragmenting its territory. Above all, it means ushering in the country's "econocide", i.e.: bringing the majority of the population's living conditions down to third-world levels. The "ripping apart of Yugoslavia" is another facet of this offensive. While it is not a strategic region in and of itself, it is a crossroads between Western Europe, Northern Asia and the Near East, which the foremost military power of this era wants to control.

Support for the peace process in former Yugoslavia

In former Yugoslavia, the development of a democratic and pacifist movement has been slowed down by NATO intervention but continues to be significant despite these very difficult conditions. Among other initiatives, Alternatives supports the efforts of the *Tuzla Citizens' Forum*, *Media Plan* and the *Belgrade Circle* to promote peace and ethnic cohabitation in the region.

Union training

In Russia, in conjunction with the *Institut québécois pour la recherche et l'éducation internationale*, Alternatives is carrying out a training and exchange project with Russian trade union organizations to adapt the trade union movement to the country's new situation and foster the creation of a strong civil society.

Public activities

THE BALKANS ON FIRE

Two meetings to understand the crisis in former Yugoslavia, with sociologist André Gunther Frank and former Yugoslavian Ambassador to Canada, Goran Kapetonovic, among others (Montreal, Quebec City)

STRENGTHENING TIES

Tour by a Russian, Bielorussian and Ukrainian delegation on labour and union training issues (Montreal, Toronto, Ottawa)

Main partners in Eastern Europe

● Bosnia-Herzegovina

Tuzla Citizens' Forum

Target areas: Democracy, human rights
Goals: Initiate dialogue for peace and reconciliation
Activities: Training, conference, networking

Mediaplan

Target areas: Communications, human rights
Goals: Provide journalists with training on the issue of human rights
Activities: Publication, workshops, conference

● Russia

Institute on the Country's Outlook and Problems (IP)

Target areas: Communications, right to work
Goals: Educate people on their socioeconomic rights
Activities: Research, training session, publications

● Yugoslavia

Belgrade Circle

Target areas: Democracy, human rights
Goals: Initiate dialogue for peace and reconciliation
Activities: Training, conference, networking

● ● ● 2.7 International networking

Today, North is South and South is North, with social and national polarization affecting all societies. A number of initiatives are underway to extend various types of resistance to the regional and international levels, thus buttressing the work of social movements throughout the world. Alternatives organizes or participates actively in various forums that channel international progressive tendencies, to name a few:

- Sao Paulo Forum
- Réseau québécois sur l'intégration continentale (RQIC)
- Conference on the outlook for peace in the Great Lakes region
- World Forum for Alternatives
- Pakistan-India People's Forum for Peace et Democracy
- SalAmi Operation
- Popular Summit of the Americas

The opening of an Alternatives office in Quebec City, along with a greater number of public activities (publication in VOIR-Québec, radio programs, conferences) made it possible to bring together several activist groups in the capital. Efforts included the coordination of a number organizations against anti-personnel mines, and participation in several local initiatives. In the future, Alternatives intends to bolster its action in the region and multiply its public activities outside large urban centers.

Public activities



COMMISSION OF ENQUIRY ON MIA

A meeting on the effects of the Multilateral Investment Agreement (MIA), with Maude Barlow, Warren Allmand, Judy Rebick and Buz Hargrove (Montreal)

GLOBALIZATION AND POVERTY

Two conferences on the connection between economic and political globalization on the one hand, and the general impoverishment of the population on the other hand, with Michel Chossudovsky, economist (Montreal, Quebec City)

ENDETTÉS JUSQU'AU COU (UP TO THEIR EYEBALLS IN DEBT)

Conference organized in conjunction with a number of NGOs on the impact of globalization, with Susan George, President of the Observatoire de la mondialisation de Paris (Montreal)

Canadian and Quebec partner groups

AmiEs de la Terre de Québec	ALPA	Radio Centre Ville
AELIES (Association des étudiantEs de Laval inscritEs aux études supérieures)	AMPE	Radio CIBL
Antitube	SANQI	Head and Hands
Comités de citoyens (St-Sauveur and St-Jean Baptiste)	CARI Saint-Laurent.	Action-Re-Buts
Tam-Tam Café	CLAM	Centre québécois du droit de l'environnement (CQDE)
Centre Jacques Cartier	La Maisonnée	Réseau québécois des groupes écologiques
Ligue des droits et libertés	Hirondelle	Regroupement de solidarité avec les Autochtones
Carrefour Tiers-Monde	CIMOI	Equiterre
Radio Basse-Ville	CACI Cartierville	Recto Verso
Amnesty International	Centre Champagnat Service d'orientation et d'intégration au travail de Québec (SOIT)	Action Réfugiés Montréal
SalAMI Operation	Collectif des femmes immigrantes	Focus Montréal
Plan Nagua	Centre des femmes	Comité chômage Sud-Ouest de Montréal
Université Laval	Service à la famille chinoise	Réseau québécois sur l'intégration continentale (RQIC)
CDEC Centre Sud	AQOCI	AMARC
Table de concertation des organismes de Montréal au service des réfugiés (TCMR)	Angola Development Coalition	L'itinéraire
Regroupement des organismes de services aux nouveaux arrivants du Québec (ROSNA)	Canadian Labour Congress	Solidarité Canada-Sahel
Comité d'adaptation de la main-d'oeuvre pour personnes immigrantes (CAMO)	Canadian Arab Federation	Bunker/Dans la rue
Comité consultatif national sur l'accueil et l'établissement et l'insertion en emploi des nouveaux immigrants (COCONAT)	Canadian Autoworkers Social Justice Fund	Monde à bicyclette
Conseil des relations interculturelles	Cardinal Leger et ses oeuvres	Action solidarité Grand-Plateau
Carrefour jeunesse emploi de l'Outaouais, Centre Sud, and Ahuntsic-Cartierville	ICCAF	Projet Accompagnement Guatemala
Alliance des communautés culturelles pour l'égalité dans la santé et les services sociaux (ACCESS)	COCAMO	Lettres en mains
	CSN	Centre des femmes de Montréal
	FTQ	Fédération des femmes du Québec
	CEQ	UTTAM
	Inter Pares	Club 2/3
	SAP	Enjeu
	Oxfam Canada	Nous tous un soleil
	PAC	Solidarité populaire Québec
	SAP	
	CIDPDD	
	Development and Peace	
	Mennonite Central Committee	
	YMCA	
	Fédération autonome du collégial	
	Syndicat des professeurs de l'Université du Québec à Montréal	
	United Church	
	QPIRG Concordia	
	Radio CKUT	

and many more

● ● ● 2.8 Young people

Here and abroad, young people face an enormous challenge. They must thwart the exclusion process and defend their right to education, health, a job and decent living conditions. They must also set themselves against all forms of racism, xenophobia and fundamentalism.

Public activity

YOUNG PEOPLE'S POPULAR AGORA

Many months of meetings, exchanges and pondering gave rise to a conference organized by and for Alternatives' youth that brought together young people from various walks of life in Quebec and young people from Brazil, Chile, Egypt, Israel, Lebanon, Morocco, Mexico, Mozambique and Palestine. The meeting was an opportunity for these young people to take stands, speak out, weave ties of solidarity and take action for a

Many of Alternatives's projects support young people and their struggle against exclusion in many ways, through organizations that fight for street kids' right to education (Brazil, Morocco) or for the participation of young people in all sectors of society (Chile, Palestine).

The internship programs that Alternatives has been organizing for at least thirty years are part of this context. Last year, forty or so interns committed themselves to various grassroots organizations here and abroad to create awareness about and make connections between different situations. There was special emphasis on electronic communications

(training, the creation of Web sites) in order to better equip our young people and the organizations with which they cooperated.

● ● ● 2.9 Cultural communities

The pluralism of our society sometimes leads to culture shock both for new arrivals and the host population. Alternatives organizes a number of cultural activities in conjunction with its member groups, the Center of Studies and Research on South Asia (CERAS) and the Center of Arabic Studies for Development (CEAD). These activities include concerts of Indian, Arab and African music as a way of fighting prejudice and discrimination and creating awareness about the contribution cultural communities make to the development of our society. There are also a number of meetings on the subject of citizenship and the rights of new immigrants, and we participated in the consultation process for the draft bill on citizenship, as well as in the discussions on academic qualifications. These exchanges with the federal-provincial task force on access to professions and trades led to the formulation of a new equivalency notice (to be issued in January 2000) that should open up the job market to new immigrants.

As part of a program to provide support and access to jobs with the provincial government, the CEAD provides services aimed at facilitating the transition and promoting job integration by making it possible for new immigrants to acquire work experience and take advantage of collective services in this area.

Public activities

IMAGES DU MONDE ARABE (IMAGES OF THE ARAB WORLD)

The 5th installment of this Festival of Arab music, films and painting was held in Montreal and Quebec City, on the theme of the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

CITIZENS IN THEIR OWN RIGHT

A meeting on the struggle against exclusion with Omar Aktouf, professor at the HEC and Norman Cook of CIDA (Montreal)

● ● ● 2.10 Women

Women are on the front lines when it comes to dealing with conflict fallout, social service budget cuts and mending the social fabric of their communities. Alternatives has several projects to bolster women's capacity to take charge of their community's development, occupy the place they deserve in the decision-making process and participate fully in economic and social policies. Via its activities, Alternatives' women's committee fosters ties, networks and exchanges among women at the local, national and international level. In addition to actively ensuring gender equality throughout Alternatives' decision-making bodies, committees and staff, the women's committee has also made a commitment to immigrant women to support their struggles and raise awareness about their cause.

Public activities

FEMMES SAGES (WISE WOMEN)

A meeting on the work of midwives in the Amazon Jungle, with Janette Capiberibe, Amapa deputy from Brazil.

WOMEN'S MARCH OF THE YEAR 2000

Several meetings and exchanges with women from the South as part of preparation for the Women's March of the Year 2000.

IS THERE A PLACE FOR IMMIGRANT WOMEN IN QUEBEC?

A meeting on the integration of immigrant women in our society, with Rachida Azdouz, Nancy Perron, Saleha Bahig and Farida Osmani.

● ● ● 2.11 Fundraising

With the slashing of budgets for international cooperation, the last few years have seen concerted efforts to provide Alternatives with an independent source of funding: direct-mail solicitation, benefit shows, sale of goods and services, solicitation of funds from private foundations.

All of these activities fit in with general programming. Direct-mail solicitation, for instance, reaches thousands of people throughout Canada and Quebec. The themes this year were: the struggle against poverty, Peace in India and Pakistan, the indigenous populations affected by Hurricane Mitch, the political and economic situation in Chile following the arrest of Pinochet, and the consequences of bombing in Kosovo. The generosity and support of the general public has never failed us over the years, and the donor loyalty program (monthly donations) has been a success.

Conclusion

From its very inception, Alternatives has been recognized for its action, both overseas and here in our own society. This link between what goes on here and abroad, these bridges between North and South and the bringing together of various organizations are major assets. Our action in developing countries cannot be separated from the work and activities we organize here, be it conferences, networking, publications, support for social struggles, links with the grassroots movement or lobbying decision-makers.

This is even more important since the financial support we provide to certain partners adds up to very little money given the immense range of needs they must meet. Let's not fool ourselves, the support that Alternatives has traditionally given its partners has often had greater political than monetary significance. Be it in Palestine, Cuba or South Africa, to name a few, Alternatives' most useful contribution has really been through lobbying, exchanges, networking and raising awareness among the general public.

In the coming year, Alternatives intends to pursue its work of strengthening grassroots organizations (women's organizations, youth organizations, unions, human rights, education/housing, communications) throughout the world in order to counter globalization's disastrous effects at the root of inequality, impoverishment, conflict and environmental deterioration. We also wish to participate actively in the Quebec and pan-Canadian networks against neoliberal policies, and support the organizations here at home that strive to change the economic, political and social situation of the most vulnerable populations.

We will continue our efforts to build effective networks both at the national and international level. Since the field of information is key, we will try to add to our communication tools and those of our partners. Initiatives in this direction include continuing the electronic communications and journalism internship for forty or so young people, as well as meetings, exchanges and cultural activities, both in Montreal and Quebec City.

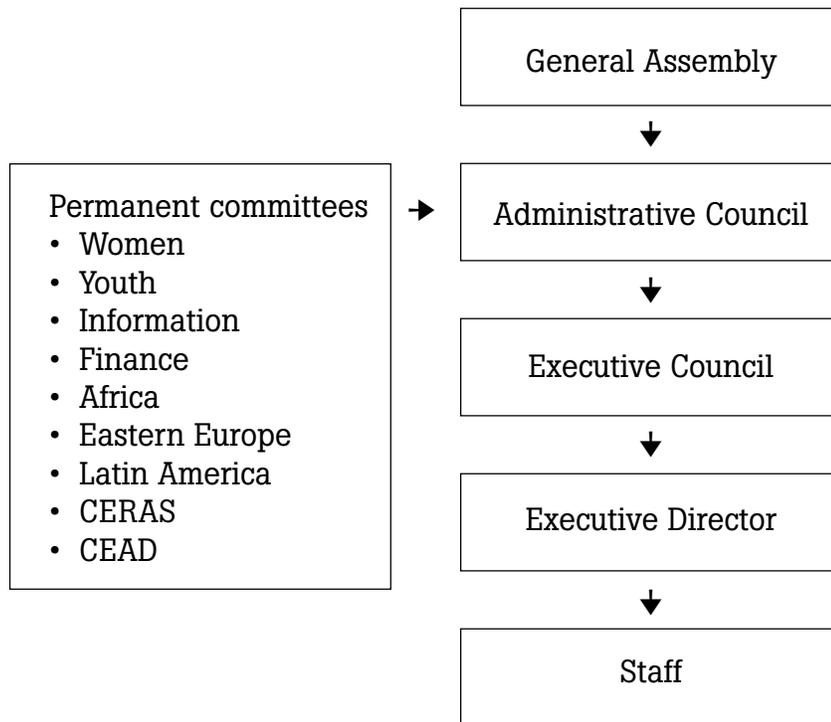
At the level of the organization, we shall have to manage our growth properly by consolidating the activities of our decision-making bodies (Board of Directors and Executive Committee), committees and work team. We also want to energize and increase our membership to ensure more participatory commitment and more collective action.

A set of proposals on Alternatives' prospects for action and upcoming activities will be discussed at the Annual general meeting. There is a new, important step ahead for our organization. It is becoming increasingly urgent to support democratic development all over the world and to back the efforts of grassroots organizations that strive for better social, economic and environmental conditions for individuals and communities. The century ahead must be the century of social justice, and Alternatives, in conjunction with its partners and its membership, wants to help make it happen.

Appendix

Appendix 1

Organizational Chart



Appendix 2

1998-1999 work team

Nathalie Albertini.....	Support person, youth programs
Pierre Beaudet	Executive Director
Yamina Bessar	Accounting Officer
Carole Boucher.....	Administrative Director
Sylvain Camirand	Information Technology Officer
Samir Chamaa	Intercultural Officer
Stéphan Corriveau	Fundraising Officer
Robert David	Project officer, Eastern Europe
Abdelkrim Debbih.....	CEAD coordination
Josée Desharnais	Person in charge of the Quebec City office
Marcela Escribano	Project officer, Latin America
Marjorie Gagnon	Accountant
Marilou Grégoire-Blais	Support person for education
Ralph Hage	Images of the Arab world
Lara Karazivan	Person in charge of the women's committee/education
Karine Lacasse	Person in charge of the youth programs
Michel Lambert	Project officer, East Asia/Education
France-Isabelle Langlois	Information Officer
Yves Lavallée	Reception
Feroz Mehdi	Project officer, South Asia
Yasmina Moudda Azzem	Fundraising clerk
Khadija Mounib	Person in charge of employability for immigrants
Charles Muguraneza	Project officer, Africa
Kathy Poulin	Support person youth programs
Hamouda Soubhi	Project officer, Maghreb and Near-East
Tania Vachon.....	Support person for education/youth programs

In Memoriam

We remember, with fond memories, colleagues we lost over the course of the last year.

Vincent Paquin Electronic Communication Intern in South Africa (1970-1999)

Stéphane Tourangeau Information Technology Officer (1962-1999)

Appendix 3

Policy regarding women

(document presented by Alternatives' Women's Committee and adopted
at the 1997 Annual General Meeting)

Objectives

1. To encourage and foster the development of solidarity between women here and abroad via exchanges of experience, internships, meetings, publications;
2. Support the struggles waged by women's organizations in the countries where Alternatives is active, as well as in other areas of the world;
3. Make a commitment to immigrant women living in Quebec and Canada to support their struggle and raise awareness about their cause;
4. Become a forum of exchange and debate on the various issues and stakes related to women's movements in different regions of the world. This means encouraging international and regional meetings, circulating information, publishing;
5. Promote gender equality and fairness throughout all of Alternatives' decision-making bodies, committees and staff;
6. Generate and support women's participation at all levels of Alternatives.

A feminist solidarity approach

Developing and adopting a feminist approach to international solidarity means developing issues and action based on the identification of points that act as a common denominator to bring women together wherever they may be on the planet, while capturing the specific characteristics that make them distinct. This means developing in-depth knowledge of the issues and experiences that specifically concern women by sharing information, participating in the main debates via involvement in various networks of women's groups and entering into partnerships with groups for which we have the strongest affinity.

This approach implies analyzing and developing critical thought about the neoliberal and liberal feminist discourse. It must not, however, hide or gloss over differences in class, generation and living environment (urban/rural).

There must be an attempt to grasp the common points and diverse realities of the daily life of women who have come as immigrants or refugees to Quebec and Canada. It is not a question of supposing that, since we are all women, we all experience similar situations, but rather a question of recognizing that, although we have a diverse past, our present now constitutes the meeting point for our solidarity and our future.

ALTERNATIVES

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