

PEOPLE-CENTERED DEVELOPMENT: A SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AGENDA FOR ASIA

THE VISION

Asia's hope for the future lies in a successful search for an alternative model of human progress. In contrast to the traditional prescriptive answers of the Western-based development model that Asian countries have embraced, this alternative paradigm listens to the inherent needs, natural roles and philosophies of peoples and communities.

The vision of people-centered development that has emerged from the Asian Development Forum departs from the growth-centered vision in many fundamental respects. These differences begin with its definition of development as:

a process by which the members of a society increase their personal and institutional capacities to mobilize and manage resources to produce sustainable and justly-distributed improvements in their quality of life consistent with their own aspirations.

People-centered development accepts only development that is just, sustainable and inclusive as authentic. Many of the increases in economic output considered as development by the proponents of the growth-centered vision produce only short-term, often illusory advances for a few at the expense of the long-term welfare of the larger society. Such development is radically different from that advocated by the people-centered perspective.

The underlying theory of people-centered development argues that underdevelopment is largely a consequence of the concentration of economic and political power in the hands of a small elite which lacks a true entrepreneurial orientation. Too often, this small elite is interested more in using the

monopoly powers of the corporation and the state to collect economic rents than in increasing the productivity of available resources.

Elites expropriate and sell natural resource endowments, consolidate lands in vast estates, exploit dependent labor, monopolize domestic and international trade, mortgage the country's future through international borrowing, and invest their own savings abroad. The economy may be booming, but the benefits to the larger society are marginal, even as the ecological resources on which the well-being of future generations will depend are squandered.

According to the people-centered vision, real human progress depends on restructuring social institutions to release society's true productive potentials based on the sustainable use of its social and natural resource endowments. This vision in turn depends on redistributing political and economic power, restoring environmental stewardship by the community, redistributing political and economic power and reducing wasteful consumerism. It redefines development in terms of transformation rather than growth.

People-centered development does not see a world divided between the developed and the underdeveloped. Rather, it sees a world divided between the over- and under-consumers of earth's natural bounty. It views the extravagant use of resources not as the sign of an advanced society, but rather as a wasteful and sociopathic squandering of the heritage of future generations in response to the condition of a spiritual and social deprivation brought about by a growing dominance of economic over non-economic values.

Overconsumption is a psychological dysfunction. Overconsumers are in some respects more underdeveloped and in greater need of

“development” than are the underconsumers. Reducing their consumption resources without consequential reduction of real well-being is a very high priority for overconsumers.

People-centered development is not anti-growth. It is pro-selective growth that enhances human well-being and ecosystem vitality. At the same time, it calls for a selective reduction of economic output and consumption in those areas that do not meet this standard. Preference in resource allocation is given to the needs of those deprived of the means of meeting their basic needs and to investments that preserve and enhance the productivity of earth’s environmental resources for the benefit of future generations. It calls for a basic reform of our measures of economic progress to take account of full social, environmental and economic costs.

Central to this vision is increasing equity as an essential foundation for authentic growth. Consequently, people-centered development calls for equity-led, rather than export-led growth.

Other principles that lead to policy choices quite different from those of growth-centered development include the following:

1. Encourage economic diversification; avoid over specialization.
2. Strengthen and broaden participation in the local ownership and control of productive resources.
3. Allocate local productive resources first to the production of goods and services that meet the basic needs of the local population.
4. Allocate to exports only surplus productive capacities - those not required to provide for local basic needs - and concentrate on exporting products with a high local value added.
5. Encourage development of dense networks of independent, politically-conscious and voluntary people’s organizations.
6. Devolve decision authority to autonomous, locally-elected and financed local governments.
7. Provide incentives that favor use of recycled over new materials.

8. Promote intensive, low-input agricultural practices that make use of natural ecological processes.
9. Limit the use of non-renewable natural resources and promote the development and application of technologies that enhance the regenerative powers of earth’s ecological systems.
10. Nurture reverence for life and a sense of stewardship responsibility for earth’s natural life forces.
11. Maintain international accounts in balance and avoid acquiring external debt.

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the ecology.***

The current demands of international agencies that local economies be oriented toward production for export to repay debts and finance imports are particularly counterproductive. Such acts legitimize the transfer of the control of local resources to large, unaccountable corporations and work in the interest of international banks over those of local people. They emphasize the earning of foreign exchange to satisfy the tastes of the affluent for imported goods over the enhancement of local incomes to meet basic needs.

Both the growth-centered and people-centered visions profess improvements in human well-being as their goal. In particular, people-centered development and the revisionist growth-with-equity version of growth-centered development share a concern for human resource development. However, the existence of common ground in the area of social services should not be allowed to obscure the fundamental nature of the differences involved between these two development visions.

Nor should it obscure the fact that the growth-centered vision has an inherent appeal to the rich

BANGKOK DECLARATION

Thirty-four participants -- representing non-governmental organizations and people's movements from ten Asian countries of Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Thailand -- met in Bangkok on 28 February to 2 March 1996 for the Fifth Asian Development Forum. The Forum served as the culminating point of the five-year ADF process which involved over 200 groups meeting in regional fora and nearly a thousand organizations from ten countries meeting in local and national fora.

Food and Freedom, Jobs and Justice, Land and Labor, Peace and Prosperity

We, the participants of this Fifth Asian Development Forum, representing non-governmental organizations and people's movements from ten Asian countries of Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Thailand, after lengthy and intensive discussions on the overall theme of the Asian Development Forums I to V during a meeting in Bangkok, Thailand on 28 February to 2 March 1996, hereby adopt the following Declaration:

GENERAL PRINCIPLES:

1. We express our deep concern over the growing poverty, massive and unabated environmental destruction, and displacement of communities across Asia, which have been brought about by the dominant growth-led development paradigm that promotes the exploitation of labor and natural resources and the increased concentration of assets and power in the hands of a few;
2. We recognize that the dominant growth-led development paradigm has brought a rising tide of materialism and commercialism that has widened disparities and eroded our rich diversity, community spirit and cultural values, leading to the breakdown of Asian community life and thus, aggravating instances of communal violence;
3. We are concerned over the continued denial of basic needs, particularly food security, and of human rights to vulnerable groups, especially women, children and indigenous peoples;
4. We are disturbed at the continued build-up of armaments and other threats to peace and democracy in Asia and other regions; and
5. We reaffirm our solidarity with people's non-violent struggles and movements for survival, dignity and change across Asia.

AN ALTERNATIVE PEOPLE-CENTERED SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PARADIGM:

We resolve to work towards the promotion of an alternative people-centered sustainable development agenda that:

1. Builds upon the diversity of our cultures and spirituality whose roots lie at the core of our Asian identity and values;
2. Restores the rights of communities over their resources and livelihood;
3. Recognizes the autonomy of communities to design and realize their own development with gender equity and human development;
4. Restores and enhances the freedom and self-governance of grassroots communities and places them at the center of development; and
5. Enables people to achieve self-reliance and self-sufficiency in their basic needs, live in a culture of peace and harmony and organize themselves to deal with all forces that impede their empowerment.

ACTION AGENDA

Towards this end, and as we approach the 21st century, we commit ourselves to the following action agenda:

1. On Natural Resource Management, Sustainable Agriculture, and Agrarian Reform towards Food Security:

- 1.1 To engage in policy advocacy by participating actively in the World Food Summit 1996, the WCARRD process, and engaging FAO, APEC, WB, ADB and others in relevant undertakings;
- 1.2 To develop capacity-building programs in agrarian reform, consumer education and sustainable agriculture (SA) to upscale work being done, popularize the application of SA practices and increase the hectares covered;
- 1.3 To pursue systematic research on landlessness and agrarian reform in the Asian region and on comparable agrarian reform experiences, including models and verifiable indicators;
- 1.4 To scale up and replicate existing initiatives that have proved effective in attaining food security and sustainability; and
- 1.5 To utilize technology for improved communications and links among NGOs, people's movements and private and public agencies.

2. On Village - Centered/Community-based Development:

- 2.1 To enhance present capacities in village organizing, planning and self-management through innovative approaches in training, study tours, apprenticeship and information-sharing;
- 2.2 To disseminate case studies highlighting community initiatives and experiences in village/community savings and resource mobilization, micro-enterprise and marketing;
- 2.3 To document and facilitate the exchange of experiences of people's movements;
- 2.4 To further develop village technologies in herbal medicine, small-scale food industry and preservation, and traditional arts and crafts;

2.5 To disseminate information among NGOs and people's movements in the region through correspondence and publications exchange;

2.6 To develop a regional database - housed at and maintained by ANGOC - of village-centered community-based programs in various countries;

2.7 To convene regular gatherings of NGOs and people's movements to examine and validate lessons in village development and devise more appropriate and effective strategies; and

2.8 In all these, to affirm and cultivate indigenous culture and the spiritual life of the Asian village/community.

3. On Human Rights, Gender Equity, Social Justice and Peace:

3.1 To cultivate a culture of peace by, among others, the concrete and timely expression of our solidarity with specific people's struggles and human rights issues;

3.2 To develop training programs that heighten the advocacy skills and competence of NGOs, people's movements and villages/communities;

3.3 To establish a network of country focal points tasked to document, study and disseminate information on human rights violations and issues for purposes of policy advocacy;

3.4 To create a task force that will formulate policies and programs, design recommendations and monitor the implementation of gender equity programs within the ANGOC and ADF networks;

3.5 To constitute a task force that will study existing constitutional safeguards on human rights within the region and make policy recommendations regarding human rights issues (including transmigration, refugees, UN monitoring and others) and the application of human rights instrumentalities within the context of Asian culture; and

3.6 To develop collaborative linkages with existing women and human rights groups and maximize all available means of communication.

and powerful because it accepts existing power structures and legitimizes their use to confiscate and exploit resources for extravagant, luxury consumption, even honoring such actions as contributions to the collective good.

The people-centered vision poses a direct challenge to such privilege, exposes its underlying hypocrisy and calls for its elimination. At the top of the list of wasteful uses of resources targeted for elimination are military expenditures, which in Southern countries have the primary purpose of suppressing popular discontent and protecting existing privilege.

The more vigorously the growth-centered vision is pursued, the more rapidly the global environmental crisis accelerates. In the end, the lives of all, rich and poor, depend on protecting the ecology. The force of arms can protect privilege for only so long in the face of a disintegrating social fabric and escalating violence. Those who live behind guarded walls find themselves increasingly imprisoned by their own privilege - all the while awaiting in fear the day when their walls will be breached. However, by accepting the need for change, they may anticipate a less privileged, but on the whole, far more satisfying future.

Five elements of this people-centered development vision have been articulated in the meetings of the Asian Development Forum: **stewardship** through community-based natural resource management; **ecological and food security** through the promotion of sustainable agriculture; **equity** through the promotion of community social enterprises; **spirituality** as the basis of the Asian community; and **decentralization and democratization** as the guiding principles towards re-defining political accountability and security.

STEWARDSHIP: Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM)

Community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) is not a novel, NGO brainchild. Indeed the operative word is restoration. Almost all pre-colonial societies have a

tradition of community stewardship of land, fisheries, forests and other natural resources. Allowing for variations across countries, CBNRM in pre-colonial South and Southeast Asia had a number of distinct features. The community was the village. Land was the main form of economic wealth. Individual members of the village owned parcels of it, apportioned by the head according to need. Ownership, in this sense, though, did not imply rights of disposition for whatever reason; private holdings were handed down through generations to be worked by the clans for their livelihood.

There was also communally-owned land, usually found in the periphery of the village, which was cultivated by a designated group. The produce was used to pay for articles of clothing, pottery, implements and other items made by village artisans assigned to such work; to provide for the needs of the village head; and to barter goods with other villages. Certain areas of the forest were also marked off for community use. This community forest supplied individual member's fuelwood, food, medicinal and other needs. There were, however, clear stipulations as to how much could be harvested by every member - as well as the kind of penalty reserved for those who got too greedy. The communities were self-sufficient economic units, producing almost everything they needed. These societies also had a highly-developed sense of equity and set up rigorous measures to ensure that no one had too much or too little.

Alas, we all know that these self-sufficient villages have long since disintegrated, crushed underfoot in the capitalist stampede for colonies. These pre-colonial republics, which flourished with hardly any need for foreign relations, are now barely sustained by total integration into the global market system. Fortunately, NGO efforts to revive the spirit of the CBNRM are slowly bearing fruit. Skeptics who dismiss CBNRM as a throwback to a romanticized former way of life are mistaken; so are those who theorize that CBNRM would reduce the country to a patchwork of communities set up as fiefdoms going their own uncoordinated ways. Neither does CBNRM require a country to do a Maoist China - shutting its doors to the world in a fit of xenophobia. CBNRM involves the restoration and effective management of the natural resource base.

ADF Regional Action Plans for Community-Based Natural Resource Management

At the Asian Development Forum in 1992, the participants stated that the proper role for NGOs is to create the environment and conditions whereby people can regenerate their capacity for self-determination and their self-respect. Only then will the people have the confidence and the courage to take hold of their lives and pursue the kind of development that is based on their aspirations. The participants further agreed to implement the following action plans to promote Community-Based Natural Resource Management:

1. Build Viable People's Organizations
 - 1.1 As a minimum requirement, communities need to be financially self-reliant. Without this financial independence, the communities' demand for autonomy loses much of its persuasion. Self-reliance requires the mobilization of their own resources, thereby reducing dependence on external interest groups.
 - 1.2 Just as importantly, communities that take on the task of sustainably managing local resources - which requires short-term but painful sacrifices in exchange for long-term benefits - must be prepared for the long haul.
 - 1.3 Organizing communities also requires values formation to reinforce communal ties and the traditional respect for nature.
 - 1.4 Capacity-building is another important component. This involves more than training the people in sustainable resource management methods; it also calls for the preparation of people to manage the organization by themselves and to deal with governments and other agencies confidently.
 - 1.5 Equally important in building a viable organization is community goal-setting, which must be facilitated by the NGOs in such a way that the people themselves, based on their perceived needs, are able to identify their objectives and the programs necessary to fulfill them.
2. Create a Favorable Policy Environment for Community Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM)
 - 2.1 This involves efforts to ensure that agrarian reform, urban land reform, aquatic resources reform and similar programs are implemented speedily and effectively.
 - 2.2 At the same time, NGOs must initiate programs to obtain whatever benefits are available to people under the existing policy framework in order to lay the groundwork for more genuine people-oriented policies.
 - 2.3 NGOs should also undertake research into the legal basis of community land claims which derives from customary rights and laws.
 - 2.4 NGOs should also step up the campaign against illegal logging, conversion of prime agricultural land into industrial estates and other such uses, destruction of mangroves, dynamiting and trawling in territorial waters, and other environmentally-destructive activities involving vested interest groups.
3. Form Partnerships with Government
 - 3.1 Notwithstanding the obvious difficulties and pitfalls in working with government, NGOs promoting CBNRM need the resources that governments control. Also, in certain situations, the government has even proven itself to be a useful ally.
4. Build a movement for CBNRM
 - 4.1 NGOs must take the back seat and let the momentum be sustained by the people themselves. However, NGOs should help communities to network with one another and provide opportunities for their integration.
 - 4.2 At the same time, NGOs should generate wider mass support for CBNRM, not just among marginalized groups but also among other sectors of society.

Conscious efforts to revive the spirit of community-based natural resource management are slowly gaining momentum in Asian countries. Resource management initiatives, which correspond with the local ecological system, the cultural environment and indigenous knowledge are most successful when the people themselves have a central role in their own development and respond to a felt need of the community.

As an alternative paradigm, Community-Based Natural Resource Management is based on the following key principles:

1. Recognition of community stewardship of the land, fisheries, forest and other natural resources;
2. Recognition of the people's role as guardians of an environmental stewardship ethic;
3. Recognition that religion provides a useable framework for the resurgence of this common tradition of environmental stewardship;
4. Promotion of self-sufficiency;
5. Recognition of security of land tenure as a basic precondition of sustainable land resource use;
6. Cultivation of a highly developed sense of social equity; and,
7. Elimination of a ruling class whose power is based on wealth.

ECOLOGICAL AND FOOD SECURITY: Sustainable Agriculture

NGOs involved in sustainable agriculture are working to reaffirm a basic but little recognized truth about food. As stated so eloquently by the late Dr. Dioscoro L. Umali, "Man has a right to adequate food. This right is the bedrock for other human freedoms. Therefore, what we are experiencing is a massive infraction of this human right."

At the Second Asian Development Forum in 1993, sustainable agriculture (SA) was presented as an alternative model to the Green Revolution. To be

sustainable, agricultural systems must have the following attributes: (i) based on an integrative and holistic science, (ii) supports development of human potential, (iii) culturally sensitive, (iv) founded in the use of appropriate technologies, (v) ecologically sound, (vi) socially just and equitable, and (vii) economically viable.

Many strategies to mainstream sustainable agriculture were explored at the forum, but at the heart of every one of these seemingly divergent approaches is a recognition of this basic right and a commitment to preserve it. The participants of the Second Asian Development Forum arrived at the following consensus on the features of sustainable agriculture as an alternative paradigm to Green Revolution agriculture:

1. Sustainable Agriculture (SA) presupposes a holistic, systems-approach to agriculture that accounts reliably for and responds effectively to all factors relevant to the farming system.
2. SA entails a deep understanding of biological cycles. Traditional agricultural practices are an enormous storehouse of knowledge of these cycles accumulated through thousands of years of experience. SA practitioners should develop these indigenous knowledge systems, adapting them to existing conditions and supplementing them with modern science.
3. SA is not limited to alternative regenerative agricultural techniques. It is equally concerned with cultural sensitivity and social justice issues and recognizes the need for economic and political restructuring by advocating a bottom-up, participatory approach to development.
4. SA advocates should recognize the crucial role of women in agricultural production, and **must** make their liberation from gender oppression a prime concern.
5. The transition from conventional HYV agriculture to SA is not a painless, worry-free undertaking. NGOs and sympathetic government units must be prepared to help supply adequate social safety nets to ease the transition and prevent farmers from being discouraged by the move.

ADF Regional Action Plans for the Promotion of Sustainable Agriculture

At the second ADForum in 1993, the participants agreed on the following action plans for the further promotion of sustainable agriculture in the Asian region:

1. *Research.* NGOs should strengthen their research capacity as follows:
 - 1.1 pilot sustainable agriculture;
 - 1.2 set up ethical standards for SA practitioners;
 - 1.3 develop SA research methodologies for NGOs;
 - 1.4 produce resource maps of specific areas;
 - 1.5 conduct research on different eco-systems.
2. *Training.* This is required by both practitioners and the general public and may be accomplished by:
 - 2.1 setting up an SA Adult Education Institute;
 - 2.2 developing and conducting consumer education seminars.
3. *Policy Advocacy.* NGOs and national research institutes should try to influence the policies of governments and international bodies by:
 - 3.1 initiating a review of the UN system, the Consultative Group in International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), the Asian Development Bank (ADB), World Bank (WB) and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT);
 - 3.2 campaigning for a ban on hazardous pesticides;
 - 3.3 studying and monitoring SA-related policies;
 - 3.4 undertaking follow-up action on developments concerning intellectual property rights (IPRs) and biological technology.
4. *Information Base and Documentation.* This should include such projects as:
 - 4.1 developing certification standards for SA products;
 - 4.2 preparing a directory of SA practitioners and practices;
 - 4.3 using ANGOC newsletters and those of other organizations to disseminate SA-related information.
5. *Regional Strategy for SA.* NGOs should work synergistically towards:
 - 5.1 a common SA agenda;
 - 5.2 consensus on an SA framework;
 - 5.3 region-wide networking;
 - 5.4 an NGO position on botanical pesticides and organic and rapid composting;
 - 5.5 alternative marketing schemes (e.g., international, regional and national SA fairs).
6. *Mainstreaming SA.* Efforts should be made along the following lines:
 - 6.1 giving recognition and awards to SA innovators;
 - 6.2 initiating a review of the UN System;
 - 6.3 lobbying for a "UN Decade for Sustainable Agriculture;"
 - 6.4 deepening the discussion on food security, gender, energy and lifestyle transformation as they affect Sustainable Agriculture.

6. SA is a knowledge-intensive system, unlike Green Revolution agriculture where research is concentrated in well-endowed research centers, government extension units, universities and laboratories of agricultural inputs manufacturers. SA requires a farmer to be a research scientist in order to tailor SA techniques to particular farm conditions.
7. The knowledge-intensive nature of SA requires farmers to be informed and educated so that they can understand the myriad issues related to sustainable agriculture.
8. Powerful vested interests - landlords, agricultural inputs manufacturers and others - stand behind Green Revolution agriculture. SA advocates should understand the workings of these groups in order to better deal with them.
9. The more highly-distributed character of sustainable agriculture does not preclude the need for alternative centers of research excellence. NGOs should lobby governments to create such centers while setting up their own research centers.
10. To respond to the need for quick and ready access to market and technical information, SA practitioners should make use of traditional media (newsletters, books, magazines and radio) and more modern systems (microcomputers and telecommunications networks). Training of committed and knowledgeable SA extensionists should likewise be given priority.
11. Farmers should be the co-creators of knowledge and lead implementors of SA programs. They should not occupy inferior positions in hierarchical management structures.
12. Local people's organizations should serve as the leading force in the spread of sustainable agriculture, i.e., share common costs, exchange information, provide mutual help and build a political force capable of defending the people's welfare and standing up to vested interests.
13. To ensure the permanence of SA's success, meaningful local autonomy must be vested in the village, the most basic political unit. The village government and council must have the power to decide on crucial local issues, such as, watershed and forest management, education, irrigation, public works, agricultural extension and health care.
14. Networking - to secure the support of professionals, unions, the academic community and government officials - is crucial for lobbying efforts and to build up an economically and politically potent force for the adoption of sustainable agriculture.
15. SA advocates should facilitate cooperation between peoples' organizations, NGOs and government, for the latter's resource capability remains unmatched. Working with government need not mean cooptation by the elite. Instead, NGOs should strive to make the state more responsive to the people's needs and more representative of their interests.
16. Because of the scarcity of affordable credit in the rural areas, the establishment of accessible rural credit facilities should be a major SA undertaking. NGOs should lobby governments and private banks to offer more loan programs to benefit the rural poor and, at the same time, assist in the development of rural credit cooperatives that can enter into collaborative ventures with established financial institutions.

SPIRITUALITY: The Basis of Community

All life is an expression of a single spiritual unity and the spiritual growth of the individual consists of advancement towards the full, conscious realization of this unity. Spirituality, community and a bonding to place or habitat are central values that have unified Asian cultures over the centuries.

These values remain strong in many traditional societies. They are basic to the Asian belief that balance and harmony should govern relations among humans, with the individual interest subordinated to the community interest. The same values of balance and harmony governed relationships between humans and nature in traditional Asian societies.

This was manifest in countless cultural norms, such as the injunction that, when a tree is harvested, two must be planted. Where nature has been scarred, it must be given time and opportunity to heal. Where large-scale technologies are invoked, as they were in massive Asian irrigation systems, they must work in harmony with natural forces.

A balanced and harmonious relationship between human communities and their natural environment is strongly associated with a reverence for the spiritual unity of life and a strong bonding to community and place. It is a symbiotic relationship in which the individual exists and functions as integral to the whole. The related sense of social and spiritual union is likely to be most fully developed within communities that share a strong link to the regenerative gifts of their natural habitat. Such communities almost universally develop cultural values that maintain a sense of continuity linking both past and future generations to physical place. The traditional expression of this spiritual relationship remains powerfully manifest in the villages of the island of Bali in Indonesia. It finds more contemporary expression in the experience of the Swadaya Movement in India. It remains central to the Asian sense of identity and purpose.

In addition to the gift of life shared by all of nature, the human species was endowed with the special gift of self-awareness. With this powerful gift, our species set out on a unique evolutionary course of social, material and spiritual advancement as we consciously reshaped our relationship with the living earth. Yet, as with all powerful abilities, this gift conveyed both creative and destructive potentials.

The path of Western development has produced many material and technological advances. But it has also alienated us from the most fundamental truth of our own nature, our spiritual oneness with the living universe.

The misuse of our collective gift has turned life against itself. Even more than anti-people, contemporary development practice is anti-life. If allowed to play themselves out to their ultimate extreme, the alienating forces that an obsessive commitment to economic growth has unleashed will result in our mutual self-destruction as surely as if

we unleashed the long-feared nuclear holocaust.

In his book, *The Dream of the Earth*, Thomas Berry refers to the dynamics of our consumer society as the supreme pathology of all history, a pathology in which humanity has virtually defined consumption as the highest human purpose. He suggests that we have lost our way due to a lack of a story that gives meaning to our existence that a dedication to consumption can never provide. That story must give us a sense of our special role and purpose in life's evolutionary journey.

The gift of awareness conveys an awesome responsibility not shared by other species. Unless we accept and act on that responsibility, our species will surely perish along with the countless others our prodigal behavior has sentenced to extinction.

To accept responsibility for life does not imply rejecting modern technology or returning to the lifestyles of those groups that continue to live untouched by the modern world. We are poised to reach for new levels of social, intellectual and spiritual advancement far beyond the reach of previous generations specifically because of our current potential to meld both ancient and modern wisdom to this end. However, to prepare the way, we must restore the social, spiritual and economic connections of the individual to nature, place and community that "development" has disrupted.

To become truly people-centered, our social practice must become life-centered. We must replace an anti-life development practice with a life-affirming social practice. An important starting point will be to replace the prevailing economics of alienation with its antithesis, an economics of community.

EQUITY: Community/Social Enterprise

The relentless pursuit of economic growth and the unhampered intrusion of capital into investment areas tend to uproot Asian peoples from their livelihood and communities. As a result, there is a breakdown in community life as traditional bonds are replaced by consumerist values.

ADF Regional Action Plans for the Promotion of Community Social Enterprises

At the third ADF Forum in 1994, the participants agreed on the following action plans for the further promotion of community social enterprises in the Asian region:

1. As communities get organized, NGOs will have to take on additional roles. They must begin to engage in the larger policy debates on economic policy and on the true state of poverty - through public awareness campaigns and direct discussions with governments and external institutions.
2. NGOs should develop tools by which they can better analyze the true net worth of community resources and can put forward arguments and data in the form of economic analysis. One such tool is the community-based accounting system.
3. NGOs and local communities must address the lack of access to credit in the countryside. They must recognize the innate capacities of the poor to generate savings, honor their debts and build-up local capital. They must start from where the people are and build on what they have.
4. Training for social entrepreneurship within the communities must be promoted actively. Social entrepreneurs are those who are able to combine a hard-nosed business approach with the delivery of basic needs and services to a community.
5. Special attention must be paid to the needs and capacities of rural women, given the various socio-economic and cultural burdens that impinge on their lives.
6. NGOs must break out of their isolation and strengthen collaborative efforts with other NGOs as well as the government for the delivery of services.
7. Area-based networking efforts should be promoted among NGOs and people's organizations (POs) for knowledge-sharing, provision of mutual protection and support, lobbying and building up a politically and economically potent force.
8. Multi-level tripartite mechanisms among NGOs, local governments and the central government should be organized to promote larger-scale community projects and to access central government resources to meet community needs.
9. NGOs must continue to advocate for policies that effectively decentralize and devolve state power and resources to the village.
10. To expand voluntary action, NGOs must seek reform in existing laws that restrict their democratic space, including infringements on basic human rights such as the freedom of association, speech, and assembly, as well as official regulations on their registration, funding and mobility.
11. Finally, NGOs must strengthen their own systems of accountability and avoid creating community dependence on their external assistance. They must expand beyond the scope of their immediate circles to create strategic working alliances with other sectors of civil society.

In the light of the above, citizens are re-examining a new path, one that operates within the economic framework of community and places people at the center of its efforts. This new path takes the form of an alternative development paradigm, known as "Community Social Enterprise," which involves the implementation of sustainable livelihoods in the village. Sustainable livelihood refers to the means by which a community meets its basic needs for food, shelter, clothing, security, recreation and spiritual upliftment, as well as management of its resources.

Community Enterprises are organizational entities that provide economic and social benefits for a group of beneficiaries through livelihood undertakings. They differ from mainstream business enterprises, not so much in their search for operating profits and gains to the disadvantaged and poorer sectors of society. At the same time, they give equal importance to the ecological soundness of their chosen livelihood as well as to their contribution to the quality of life and well-being of the community as a whole.

Community enterprises are also exercises in restructuring the community economy in terms of the internal relationships and bargaining power not only among members of the community but also between the community and external economic forces, such as companies and financial institutions.

Hand in hand with the implementation of community enterprises, an alternative economic accounting system should also be adopted, one that takes in the totality of human productive activities, i.e., household, firm and other forms of productive activities. This village-centered economic accounting system should examine a community unit that includes both the citizenry and the habitat with the definable characteristics of land, water, soil, cover, vegetation, marine resources, among others. In effect, this alternative accounting system captures a more realistic picture of human activity.

This alternative paradigm of Community Social Enterprise is based on the following principles:

1. *Equity with Growth.* People-centered development is not anti-growth; it calls for a selective kind of growth that emphasizes equity

and overall increases in community well-being, gives preferences to dispossessed people, and restores the environment.

2. *Full Accountability.* A community-based development model recognizes the capacities of people to manage their resources and surroundings in a sustainable way. It reaffirms the kind of community life where people observe greater accountability for their actions. Therefore, the community accounting system takes into account the aggregate human productive activities over a given area, where the household, firm and other entities are subsumed. Unlike conventional GDP accounting, a community accounting model uses the household as its basic unit, assigns variables to all community resources and takes into account the social and environmental costs of production.
3. *Holistic and self-sustaining.* Community enterprises seek to redefine the development agenda in terms of the pursuit of transformation, rather than the search for growth. Development is defined as equity-led growth, while the path towards equitable growth is holistic, self-sustaining, participatory and people-centered.
4. *Participatory, Bottom-Up Decision-making.* In developing sustainable livelihoods, communities should formulate plans with broad participation. They should focus on consistency with basic needs, preservation of their resource base, use of environment-friendly technology, wide distribution of benefits and harmony with cultural and religious values.
5. *Productivity Linked with People's Well-being.* A community-based economy links productivity with the well-being of households, and not of corporations; it values livelihoods for their true income, rather than as mere "labor" or an expense of production. It seeks to restore balance in the community environment as a life-support system rather than as a free resource of nature to be exploited.
6. *Emphasis on Agriculture.* Livelihood programs should be tied closely to agriculture, since this continues to be a major contributor to many local economies and the main source of livelihood for

ADF Regional Action Plans to Promote Decentralization and Democratization

At the fourth ADForum in 1995, the participants agreed on the following action plans to re-define the accountability of international financial institutions and Asian governments to rural communities using the principles of decentralization and democratization:

1. *Information-Sharing.* This involves the active and timely exchange of information among NGOs on current developments at the regional and national levels, e.g., the legal and policy environment for NGOs.
 - 1.1 Examine existing NGO publications as possible channels of information.
 - 1.2 Utilize and maximize all available communications and resources to supplement existing publications of NGOs. Strengthen linkages with local community media.
 - 1.3 Publish a "Tool Kit" or a primer on information on such institutions as the WB, IMF, WTO, etc. and the issues associated with each.
 - 1.4 Develop a mechanism, e.g., a newsletter, through which information from focal point NGOs can be disseminated to NGOs and other tactical allies. ANGOC can serve as a clearinghouse for this purpose, e.g., by compiling all electronic mail addresses and facsimile numbers.
 - 1.5 Formulate a common format for documentation of project experiences to identify strengths and weaknesses related to the following issues: relevance, community participation, sustainability, cost-effectiveness and impact.
2. *Solidarity-Building.* This involves providing proactive support to grassroots struggles in transforming institutions.
 - 2.1 Devise a system through which NGOs can respond quickly to issues that involve other NGOs, e.g., through letter barrages to heads of state.
 - The focal point should be alert in informing other countries about these issues to initiate such influence.
 - 2.2 Determine a list of priority issues on which efforts and resources can be concentrated. This "hit list" should be updated constantly by the focal organizations. At the same time, the positive efforts of NGOs in empowering communities should be promoted.
3. *Capability-Building and Institution-Building.* The organizational capacities of NGOs and local communities should be developed to engage in policy advocacy with institutions. Training should be provided to individual NGO staff and community leaders who work directly on the issues. Given the multiplicity of existing training institutes, the possibility of setting up an exchange program or region-wide training activity should be explored. For example:
 - 3.1 NGOs are welcome to seek assistance from the People's Management School, which specializes in grassroots management and in identifying management concepts that would enable communities to interface with the environment and take responsibility for their development.
 - 3.2 The Technical Cooperation in Developing Countries (TCDC) group in Indonesia can link up with other institutions in the region that specialize in institution-building.
 - 3.3 NGOs seeking to participate in the campaign for reforms in multilateral development banks, such as the ADB, are welcome to join a month long ADB Campaign Internship being sponsored by ANGOC.
 - 3.4 NGOs are welcome to submit applications for the six-month training program for rural development workers at the South East Asia Rural Social Leadership Institute.

rural poor populations. However, a similar emphasis should be given to non-farming rural activities as a source of alternative livelihood.

DECENTRALIZATION AND DEMOCRATIZATION: Redefining Political Accountability and Security

People are sovereign over institutions. Institutions are created and mandated by the people to administer laws and regulations, promote the common weal and preserve peace and order in civil society.

However, conflicts now exist between the people and their vision of development and the policies of governments and international assistance agencies. Unrepresentative governments have wielded police power, often bordering on state terrorism, to foist harsh economic development designs on hapless populations and to quell dissent.

The dominant paradigm of external institutions that impinge on the Asian village may be summarized as follows:

1. Imposition of political restrictions on people's countervailing power
 - 1.1 the national interest is equated with the interests of the state and the ruling classes
 - 1.2 an increasing number of regulations is imposed by governments to restrict NGO activities
2. Advocacy for centralized planning and decision-making
 - 2.1 institutions decide and plan from the center
 - 2.2 faceless bureaucrats run public institutions
 - 2.3 too much attention is paid to tradition or compliance
 - 2.4 institutions are guided by the credo "no retreat, no surrender"
3. Withholding of development activities from public knowledge

4. Promotion of total integration of Third World countries into the global market economy
 - 4.1 diminishing political space among governments
 - 4.2 promotion of a culture of consumerism and materialism

In response to these impositions, people have become more active in challenging the policies of the government and have started advocating alternatives that are more consistent with a people-centered development vision. The people have decided to pursue development by themselves based on their social, cultural and local identity.

People's actions take different tracks. One track is monitoring projects of the World Bank, Asian Development Bank and international financial institutions. Mobilizations and media campaigns are launched to call attention to failed projects and to change destructive and inappropriate policies.

A second track is implementing large-scale service programs to reach wider areas and more

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beneficiaries. This is in keeping with the NGOs' long-term commitment to develop self-reliant communities that improve the quality of life of the poor. One project is the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee's oral rehydration training program that has benefited 90% of the poor households in Bangladesh.

A third track involves people from the voluntary sector entering official resource institutions to bring in the agenda of the poor and effect changes from within. In the Philippines, NGO leaders have occupied and are occupying key cabinet portfolios of



government, e.g. in the Departments of Health and Agrarian Reform.

Such actions are initiatives towards decentralization and democratization. They enable individuals and communities to actualize their human potential by contributing to social undertakings. After all, one has to think, believe, and act in favor of the community because one's interests - indeed, one's loftiest aspirations - are served and secured that way.

Finally, when people mobilize to take control of different areas of community life, they replace the need for various governmental functions and, thus, lessen the control of resources by the government.

At the fourth ADF in 1995, the participants outlined the following principles of an alternative development paradigm to transform institutions for the empowerment of grassroots communities:

1. Political decentralization and democratization:
 - 1.1 allows local communities more participation in decision-making
 - 1.2 allows recourse to non-violent means in resolving conflicts
 - 1.3 restores and enhances the freedom and self-governance of grassroots communities
 - 1.4 considers people to be at the center of development
 - 1.5 enables communities to achieve self-reliance and self-sufficiency

2. Transparent, rational and democratic decision-making by the state.
3. Decentralized economic decision-making and management of communities and regions.

CONCLUSION:

People-Centered Development as a Vision for Transformation

The people-centered vision calls for a radical restructuring of political and economic institutions to allow the full flowering of society's productive potential, based on the sustainable use of its social and natural endowments.

Even now, the positive contributions of the alternative paradigm can already be acknowledged. The emphasis on the mobilization of the poor into groups, effective decentralization of administration, installation of local-level planning processes, development of mechanisms for popular participation through formal institutions and informal groups, formulation of policies for the decentralization of industries - all these owe direct inspiration to the rising concern about poverty in rural Asia and to a significant shift in policy.

The emergence of NGO initiatives working toward the creation of a just, sustainable and inclusive society will unfold in ways that will create a new organizational reality. It is only appropriate that the leadership in this creative process will come from private citizens and grassroots organizations.

Grassroots citizen support for this alternative vision is rapidly gaining support in many quarters around the world. While the NGO community provides important leadership, NGOs are only one element of this emerging movement. Growing numbers of economists are leaving the fold of orthodoxy and joining the search for new models of economic analysis consistent with life on a finite planet. Similarly, elements of the movement for peace, human rights, women's rights, environmental and consumer rights are coming to recognize the centrality of the people-centered vision to their agendas and are melding their forces into a larger transformation movement. ■