STRATEGIC NETWORKING:

ASIAN EXPERIENCE

ANGOC

ASIAN NGO COALITION

FOR AGRARIAN REFORM & RURAL DEVELOPMENT

FOREWORD

In February 1986, ANGOC joined an international seminar on NGO management and development in Geneva. The seminar gave birth to an international NGO management network tasked with providing management services to NGOs worldwide. In 1988, ANGOC sponsored a workshop on NGO strategic management. It proved to be a landmark in NGO management training because it moved on to more fundamental issues those of NGO strategies and their impact on the national level.

As NGOs throughout the world become more involved in reshaping directions of national and international development, there will be a continuing need to experiment with new, effective approaches. Moreover, the world's deepening crises and the failure of established institutions to respond to them have pushed NGOs to reassess their priorities and shift from being peripheral actors to assuming real leadership in providing alternatives for development.

The pursuit of strategic objectives, however, is beyond the reach of any single NGO Hence, the trend will be towards formation of networks, especially on efforts involving policy advocacy and public education.

The ANGOC-sponsored workshop reflects the increasingly important role of networking in building developmental agenda. It is a component of ANGOC and IDR's collaboration on strategic networks.

The cases presented during the workshop provide information on the formation and facilitation of networks, their attendant problems and the challenges posed on them. Together with the insights and reflections elicited by the cases, the workshop outputs are a valuable source of information to advance our collective understanding on the networking process.

Today, more than ever, strategic networking requires all who work for social transformation to rethink their approaches in advocacy work. The slogan "think globally, act locally" is a call for such innovation in mobilizing social action, either in South-South, North-North or South-North linkages.

This workshop is one of the more insightful meetings ANGOC has co-organized. To the memory of Dioscoro L. Umali, former ANGOC chairperson, who graced the opening of the workshop, this report is lovingly dedicated.

My thanks go to all the participants and observers for their valuable contribution which enriched the workshop proceedings. I would also like to thank Dave Korten, Anwar Fazal, Antonio Quizon, Dave Ingles, Roel Ravanera, Faina Lucero, Nathaniel Don Marquez, Lalaine Angeles, Antonina Ducusın, Ma. Lourdes Salcedo, Conrad Tolentino and Arnel Orea.

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PREFACE

NGOs serve as society's primary agencies for organized voluntary action. They work as advocates, educators and catalysts of broad-based people's movements articulating a common agenda for change, building constituencies, and creating viable demonstrations of successful alternative practice.

The small size and limited resources of NGOs make them unlikely challengers of dominant economic and political systems controlled by governments and big corporations. Yet, the recent emergence and growth of environment, peace, human rights and women's movements provide convincing examples of the capacity for change of voluntary action. Power emerges from their ability to capture the public's imagination, and to coalesce the actions of thousands of citizens through constantly evolving networks that lack identifiable structures A distinguishing mark of such strategic networks has been their focus on clear, actionable outcomes.

Some leading-edge experiences, found in India and the Philippines, suggest that as strategic networking expands and gains a foothold, it then leads to a transformation of the NGO community itself from a collection of individuals and often competing organizations serving as conduits for donor funds, to a community of horizontally linked centers working in synergy to support mutually defined transformational agenda.

This book is a collection of some leading case experiences of strategic networking in Asia, as seen through the eyes of their leaders. As these cases were first presented and discussed at a Regional Workshop held in Bangkok in November 1990, many situations have changed and intervening events have unfolded since then. However, ANGOC believes that these cases continue to impart many valuable lessons and insights for field practitioners and advocates, as well as for future students of social change.

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INTRODUCTION

Sustainable development requires fundamental orientation in national development policies and possibly changes in the values and behavior of people at all levels of the society. The existing institutions of government and business are entrenched in the values, policies and modes of a growth-centered development vision that defines progress purely in terms of economic output without regard for the consequences on the people and the environment Reorientation of such policies and institutions depends on broadly based voluntary action grounded in a people-centered vision that draws resources to achieve economically just, environmentally sustainable, and socially inclusive improvements in human well-being.

As society's primary agencies for organized voluntary action, NGOs throughout the world are working as advocates, educators and catalysts of broadly based people's movements, setting the agenda for change, supporting political constituencies, and showcasing successful alternative practices

The limited financial resources of most NGOs make them unlikely challengers of economic and political systems sustained by interests of governments and big businesses. Yet, NGO movements on environment, peace, human rights and women's issues are convincing proofs of the power of voluntary action to change society. The power of voluntary action emanates not from the size and resources of individual voluntary organizations, but rather from their ability to coalesce the actions of millions of citizens through vast and constantly evolving networks. Although they lack identifiable structures and embrace conflicting tendencies, they can act in concert to create new political and institutional realities.

Few of the NGOs created as relief and development organizations have experience working in networks. Increasingly though, they recognize its importance, often in collaboration with NGOs from other social traditions that are steeped in such experiences. Still, there are few sources of guidance for these NGOS Little attention has been given to looking at the formation and facilitation of networks that seek major social reforms through collective, voluntary, and self-coordinated strategic action. Such efforts pose challenges to the managers of NGOs who are themselves barely acknowledged in the management literature.

Strategic networks are normally temporary groupings formed around specific tasks, actions or commitments that may sometimes require several years of resolution. Often, strategic networks are comprised of countless shifting subnetworks formed around agenda that broadly support a common goal. They involve alliances that reach beyond the NGO community to engage students, media, universities, agencies of government and responsible business organizations. Many link with local and national groups. With growing regularity, they reach beyond national boundaries. Participants may or may not be members of a formal consortium body, though one or more consortium bodies may be involved.

The past few years have seen a rapid upsurge in strategic networking initiatives among NGOs throughout Asia. Strategic networks of Indonesian NGOs, through the leadership of Indonesian Environmental Forum (WALHI) and Legal Aid Office (LBH), have won a legal stand for the environment when it pushed for the withdrawal of a multinational investment project that would have destroyed the vast tracts of tropical rainforest and displaced thousands of indigenous people. In Thailand, networks of grassroots organizations linked with urban intellectuals, students and the media to stop a major dam project that would have caused massive social and environmental displacement. A similar coalition is calling for a reorientation of Thailand's forest development policies to favor people and the environment In the Philippines, the Green Forum, a coalition of more than 500 NGOs and people's organizations is working to reorient national development policies, while another coalition seeks to rescue the government's abortive land reform efforts.

The Asia and Pacific Office of the International Organization of Consumer Unions had a leading role in the successful international campaign to restrict the promotion of infant formula at the expense of breastfeeding In Bangladesh, NGOs joined in a strategic coalition to ensure that the implementation of a government land reform program would benefit the landless. India is experiencing the emergence of a national movement involving thousands of NGOs that is challenging a pervasive pattern of government development projects that displace people and often destroy the environmental resources on which the livelihoods of groups such as tribals, subsistence fisherfolk, and landless agricultural laborers depend.

In the light of the growing global call to bring democratization and people's participation into the development mainstream, an understanding of how strategic networks emerge and operate is timely and extremely important. Documentation and experiences will strengthen understanding ng of strategic networks, particularly those that support sustainable development.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The workshop on Strategic Networking for Sustainable Development and Environmental Action was held on 26 to 30 November 1990 in Bangkok, Thailand, as a component of ANGOC's program on sustainable development and environmental action ANGOC and IDR worked together in selecting participants for the workshop, planning the agenda and identifying the cases to be presented. The workshop proper was conducted in collaboration with the People-Centered Development Forum and the Regional Office of the International Organization of Consumer Unions (IOCU) based in Penang, Malaysia.

The objectives of the workshop were to -

- share experiences in building strategic networks to achieve actionable outcomes for major policy and institutional changes;
- extract principles and lessons of broader relevance for NGOs in Asia and beyond,
- identify needs for further action to strengthen the strategic networking capability of NGOs in Asia, and
- strengthen linkages among participants to facilitate post-workshop exchange of information, resources and expertise in pursuit of strategic networking agenda.

The workshop involved twenty-nine participants and eight guests/observers from Bangladesh, Fiji, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and the United States. David Winder, Ford Foundation Representative for Southeast Asia, was among the guests.

The presentors, as well as the rest of the participants, are individuals at the forefront of the NGO movement in Asia. Majority of them are Chief Executive Officers of key NGOs in the region, each of whom has had significant experience in providing leadership in strategic networks. The list of participants is found in Annex A

Proceedings

Ten cases on country experience in strategic networking plus one international case were presented. They deal with the following themes environment, land reform, peace, women's rights, displacement and baby foods.

There was a common perception that much of the country experiences shared during the workshop were still in the formative stage. Hence, it was agreed that there would be no attempt to produce a conference consensus statement or conclusions Even the workshop process was designed to optimize reflections on the cases presented rather than scrutinize the cases themselves.

The breadth and richness of the region's experience were articulated in the vibrant exchange of ideas during workshop's plenary discussions which elicited the following key points:

- Strategic networking is a transformational process
- The failure of official development initiatives to effect the needed reforms shows the need for NGOs to articulate development alternatives.

- The dichotomy between NGOs in service delivery and those taking on the catalysts role is becoming more distinct, service provider NGOs are building dependence while preaching empowerment
- The more forward-looking NGOs are moving beyond protest actions toward proaction.
- There is a need to educate donors on the transformational initiatives of NGOs, donor's skepticism is evident on those who work on conventional funding modes.
- The unresponsiveness of conventional political processes to the real needs of the people suggests the need to search for nonpolitical modes of reaching and mobilizing people.

The synthesis on page 135 of this report provides a thorough discussion of the above ideas and summarizes other major issues addressed during the workshop.

THE PHILIPPINES EXPERIENCE

Situationer

The Philippines has a mainly agricultural economy with a population of 62 million as of 1990. Of this population, 49% live below the poverty line. The population has a young structure: 60% are below 16 years who are not legally employable. Meanwhile, out of the legally employable age, around 6 million are unemployed Several crises have plagued the country in recent years, such as a major coup attempt, drought, energy crisis, an earthquake and a super typhoon among others. These crises, both natural and man-made, had ravaged the economy econor at a cost of 100 billion pesos (US$ 4 billion). In 1989, growth rate dropped from 6.5% to a measly 2.4% per annum Because of this, government had to tighten its budget for services, but ironically, it allocated 46% of its national budget for the payment of foreign debt.

The common perception that poverty is both a cause and effect of environmental abuse applies to the Philippines.

In fisheries, for instance, about a million people, scattered in 10,000 villages, depend on the industry However, only 13% of the Philippine waters remain productive and are in fact overfished. The mangroves are in bad condition. The industry, just like many of the country's economic activities, is characterized by gross inequitable distribution of wealth to the disadvantage of poor fisherfolk. The situation is worsened by the intrusion of foreign poachers in Philippine waters.

In forestry, only about a million hectares (ha) remain virgin out of roughly 6.46 million ha of forest lands. The rate of deforestation is 100,000 ha per annum. Because of this alarming rate of denudation, there is now a growing concern to protect the forest resources and provide dwellers' rights to manage these areas.

The Networking Outlook

The repressive regime of the 1970s, the period of martial hastened the development of NGOs in the Philippines. The turning point, however, was in 1983 when a al rule, political leader was assassinated This incident brought about a massive mobilization for political change. While actions were directed at the ouster of the Marcos regime, the NGOs were at the same time aggressively addressing issues on human rights violation, graft and corruption, huge external debt and the foreign-controlled political and economic policies. Perhaps those common concerns primed the issue-character of present-day networking among NGOs in the country.

The 1986 EDSA revolt, perceived to have ushered in wider democratic space, furthered the opportunities for networking People power, or the joining of forces to achieve common goals, provided the impetus for NGOs to take coalesced action on various issues, transcending ideological and sectoral boundaries. Among others, these issues include environment, peace, human rights and agrarian reform

The entry of NGO members in government service has, to a certain extent, influenced some government agencies to solicit NGO participation in planning and policy making. Generally, however, NGOs found themselves involved in the implementation stage but left out of the planning and decision-making processes. Although not very effective, this government approach of getting NGOs involved in some of its activities presented a venue for NGO networking.

Another factor that helped networking efforts in the country is the influence of international movements, specially in such areas as peace and environment. The relationship built with these international bodies has resulted in the increase of available funding for networking purposes from foreign agencies.

Thus, it could be said that the stage has been set for networking in the country. However, the fact remains that most NGOs in the Philippines are still young and in the learning process. Most neither make the initiative to become part of a network nor attempt to build one. Meanwhile, NGO cooperation and networking remains an urgent need.

Searching for Peace

TERESITA QUINTOS-DELES

COALITION FOR PEACE

Half-Hearted Commitment

The political violence that prevails in the Philippines is a legacy of decades-old conflict over property and power by the different sectors of Philippine society. The present armed conflict is rooted in the basic structures of economic exploitation and political exclusion that can be traced back to the country's colonial history The escalation of this conflict led to the creation of the Coalition for Peace.

During the period of martial law and the Marcos dictatorship, from 1972 to 1986, political conflict developed into brutal state policy on one hand, and widespread, organized, armed opposition, on the other. When Cory Aquino was installed as the President by the bloodless political uprising of 1986, she assumed governance of a country which was wracked with violence coming from an eighteen-year-old Communist insurgency, a Muslim separatist movement in the south, and an oversized military establishment conditioned to the exercise of power and civilian repression.

The change of government in 1986 did not wipe the causes of rampant political violence. While formal democratic structures were established and a new Constitution ratified, the agenda of social justice and political reforms mandated by the 1987 Constitution became increasingly sidetracked. The national leadership was still rıgıdly held by the traditional political and economic elite forces. Political participation by the majority of Filipinos continued to be obstructed. At the same time, military factions associated with the deposed order or those professing guardianship of national security were able to place the government under steady assault through successive coup attempts.

This led the civilian government to grant more concessions to its politicized military arm.

After a short-lived attempt at political settlement between the Philippine government and the Communist revolutionary forces which ended in January 1987, the government declared an all-out war against insurgency: This campaign was matched by the escalation of offensives by the New People's Army, including bringing the war into the cities.

The armed conflict has brought about encounters, ambushes. summary executions, forced taxation, and military abuses. With it also came an increasing suspicion and harassment of mass organizations, their supporting structures, nongovernmental organizations and cause onented groups. The costs are more graphic than bare numbers could suggest civilians including children and combatants killed or wounded, human rights and humanitarian mandates persistently violated, property and public infrastructures destroyed, resources underdeveloped or rendered unproductive; the environment further degraded; above-ground activists victimized by political intolerance, social institutions undermined, bitterness and enmity sown among families, communities and individuals.

The Coalition for Peace recognizes that in this war among fellow Filipinos, the civilian population, most especially the poor, suffers the most The Coalition forges a voice for the unarmed masses to bring about the cessation of hostilities and the creation of conditions for the peaceful, non-militaristic approaches to social change. It has articulated its mission:

"the search for, invention of, and insistence on viable means of

immediately ceasing all armed conflict in the short term, even

as it continuously organizes a constituency committed to the

social justice agenda"

How the Coalition Was Formed

One of the first steps taken by the Aquino government when it assumed power in 1986 was to call for peace talks with the communist insurgent forces such as the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), the National Democratic Front (NDF) and the New People's Army (NPA) as well as the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), a Muslim separatist group. In the transition from dictatorship to democracy, these peace initiatives constituted a critical move toward bringing the nation together by seeking a political settlement of the issues that have divided Philippine society.

In the observance of the Human Rights Day on 10 December 1986, an unprecedented 60-day ceasefire agreement took effect between the government forces and the NDF Even before the ceasefire agreement was concluded, however, the peace talks already appeared mired with controversy Both parties hurled accusations and countercharges of bad faith, especially with the discussions between the protagonist panels being played out.

Even the mass media was tempted to use the occasion to win points over each other instead of highlighting the potentials for dialogue and the bridging of adverse perspectives.

The problems that surfaced in the conduct of the peace talks motivated the formation of the Coalition for Peace. In December 1986, a gathering of representatives from cause-oriented and political movements voiced the concern that, in an effort to forge a settlement on national issues, the people, whom both sides claimed to represent, were not consulted and had no access to influence the directions of the peace talks. The group agreed to forge a voice for a "third party" to the talks in order to project the perspectives from other organized mass bases. The voice would insist on and assist in finding spaces for real dialogue and agreement between the two parties, distinct from the hardline positions which may serve as fodder for media headlines but poison for conflict resolution processes. Towards this end, an effort was made to identify a lineup of personalities from the mass movements, those who spanned the entire range of the democratic left spectrum and perceived to be able to talk to each other and transcend organizational differences for a common peace project.

The founding meeting of the Coalition was held in early January 1987. The men and women who first responded to the call for coalesced movement to forge people-initiated interventions for peace, represented a broad, organized mass base, with their combined reach encompassing the entire country and all sectors. They have a solid record of active struggles against the Marcos dictatorship and steadfast commitment to structural reform, social justice, and the empowerment of people and communities. One organization had become engaged in some form of armed opposition against Marcos but is now fully committed to open participation to and expansion of the democratic space opened up by the new government. They saw the success of the peace talks as meaningful protection and extension of the political space especially for progressive movements.

The basic framework for addressing the problem of peace was the consensus that the insurgency was rooted in the basic structures of inequality and injustice in Philippine society spawned by the country's colonial history. The group also upheld the need to plan and carry out the eradication of the structural causes of the armed conflict in incremental stages, if this was to be achieved through peaceful, nonmilitary methods of social change. After all, nonviolent approaches were always preferable to bloody and violent revolution in the sense that they alone guarantee the survival of democratic processes and the meaningful participation of people's organizations.

Accordingly, CFP proposed a phasing of the peace agenda to delineate (1) economic and political reforms that should be targeted on the short term through an executive agenda for 1987; (2) reforms that should wait for the reconvening of Congress, constituting medium-term targets through a legislative agenda covering the initial term of the new Congress (1987-1992), and (3) aspects of the problem that could not be realistically resolved within the term of office of the present government but would need a plan for the future the foundation of which should be set by the present leadership. The proposed agenda also indicated an immediate program of public consultations and hearings to allow diverse social and political forces to present their ideas on substantive issues which affect all people and not just the CPP-led forces.

To open the stage for the participation of all underground groups in the political arena, CFP also urged the government to undertake immediate political and military reforms. It presented an agenda to establish structures to ensure genuine political and ideological pluralism and debate On the other side, the call was made for the CPP/NPA/NDF to agree to utilize peaceful avenues for propagating its ideas, garnering adherents, and resolving conflicts, thereby foregoing the use of armed struggle as a principal means to attain its objectives.

The newly formed Coalition arranged to meet with the two panels separately to explore the possible spaces for enlarging common perspectives and interests. Its meeting with the NDF panel on 21 January 1987 was conducted under what were already tense conditions. Farmers picketing the then Ministry of Agrarian Reform were prepared to march to the presidential palace. Both panels also reported receiving warnings of imminent violence to halt the peace negotiations

The killing of several peasants during the 22 January march (dubbed by activists as the Mendiola massacre) provoked the suspension of the peace talks. It became clear that the government and insurgents could not find a common ground for the resolution of the conflict. While government expected the talks to invoke the virtual surrender of the rebels, the underground left presented an agenda for a comprehensive political settlement, including a role in the shaping of the national agenda for the National Democratic Front

While military rhetoric and actual operations regained ascendancy on both sides of the armed conflict, CFP decided that it was essential to continue its work. It stubbornly insisted that neither intensified guerrilla warfare nor military tactics were paths to the creation of a just society and a developed nation worthy of the promises of the EDSA revolution.

Evolution of the Network

Since its founding in January 1987, CFP has passed through four stages, each stage characterized by the adoption of a particular strategy, without it must be stressed completely dropping the primary strategy pursued during the preceding period. These stages respond to the changing climate of peace in our country, including the growth of a national peace constituency The strategies are in line with the difficult task which, according to CFP, is "constantly inventing, searching for, proposing and insisting on the normative primacy of peaceful political dialogue and negotiations over armed solutions."

Advocacy directed to the armed parties

When the Coalition was formed at the time of the peace negotiations between the government and the NDF, its members thought that they could pursue their peace agenda through direct advocacy with the two protagonist parties Its first actions were directed toward gaining an audience with each party separately in order to express support for the peace process and to explore and broaden the spaces for dialogue and agreement.

It could have been that its intervention came too late. With the early breakdown of the peace talks, direct, face-to-face advocacy with the negotiating panels was also aborted. Nevertheless, CFP continued to pursue a strategy which was focused on the armed parties. In the wake of the Mendiola massacre, the Lupao massacre, the news of the arming of paramilitary groups by government, and NDF's setting up of a revolutionary government, CFP issued strong statements through media calling on the two parties to heed the people's desire for peace and return to the negotiating table.

Neither party chose to seriously respond to these appeals. The feedback gathered by the Coalition was the projection that CFP is a small band of naive dreamers, a misled fringe of the cause-oriented movement. The futility of continuing its advocacy efforts finally emerged in the response given to the CFP proposal for a television simulcast that would recast the peace talks for the public and subject the process to the people's scrutiny and judgment. The intention was to jolt into action respected figures from different sectors.

The unique program format was conceived to break the impasse that seemed to have befallen the peace process. The live telecast was planned for Good Friday' projected to be a fitting observance of the occasion by enabling a serious, collective reflection of the problems of the nation and where it was going CFP sought the presence of representatives of the negotiating panels and requested government to provide safe conduct passes for the NDF The idea was quickly rejected by both parties; the response of President Aquino was especially telling. She told the representative of government media who was helping to plan the program, "Please tell them just to let it be. Let us just all pray on that day."

Developing a peace constituency

The clear thumbs-down response to the CFP's appeals (the television project, in particular) prompted the CFP to change its strategy. The Coalition realized that its advocacy efforts would not get anywhere if confined to the armed parties. Only the broad masses of the people, assuming a direct and active role on behalf of their own interests for peace, would be able to impose a nonviolent paradigm to the national struggle for structural transformation and social change CFP thus shifted its strategy to building and making visible a broad constituency for peace in all corners of the archipelago.

Towards this end, two modes of action were adopted. The first was through peace education, consultation, and consciousness-raising activities using all types of fora conducted around the country when needed, including the development of a basic orientation module for peace advocates (peace education and advocacy among children would in time develop to be a special concern). The second mode involved the initiation of actions and campaigns which would generate and promote the advocacy efforts of the people themselves.

The first mass action organized by CFP was the three-day Tent City for Peace, in time for the reopening of Congress in July 1987 The activity drew the participation of broad sectoral movements. They set up their tents in front of the House of Representatives building, taking turns in organizing a program of speeches and debates, dialogues with legislators and public officials, film-showings, games and contests for children, cultural presentations, even a market of community crafts, and a signature campaign to back the proposed Urgent Legislative Agenda on Behalf of Peace. The Tent City was designed to introduce the idea that anyone could do something to advance the cause of peace.

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[1] A Christian holiday, part of the Holy Week, commemorating the death of Jesus Christ on the cross.

The lineup of activities was deliberately varied. Mass media coverage helped to send out the message. On the third day, the Congress for a People's Agrarian Reform (CPAR), which had participated in the activity, asked to take over the tents for them to use as a medium to push their legislative agenda.

During the final quarter of the year, the level of violence arising from the armed conflict had grown virulent. In Manila, the NPAs took the war to the streets, with almost daily killings of police officers on or off duty. At the same time, several popular movement leaders (including a CFP convenor) and human rights workers in different parts of the country were subjected to harassment if not wounded or killed in attacks carried out by unidentified agents. The spiral of violence seemed to have been completely let loose. As the Christmas season drew near, CFP made an unprecedented call for peace through the People's Christmas Ceasefire

The People's Christmas Ceasefire constituted a unilateral declaration by the people to halt war for the entire duration of the yuletide season. Once again, the people's intervention was needed to interrupt and hopefully break the escalation of violence: The call was not just for a suspension ension of military offensives, but for all to take the space and time offered by the ceasefire to review the options for the nation and reflect the impact of the armed conflict on their personal lives. For the peace advocates, it was an active season of recruitment of ordinary Filipinos to join the search and rally support for a peaceful path for the country. The beginning and the end of the ceasefire campaign was marked by the introduction of the mass action known as the Bigkis Kapayapaan, or human chain for peace, wherein the participants held hands to encircle or mark off an area as a symbol of the intent to safeguard the space from violence.

The Christmas ceasefire gained for the people only two brief 48-hour periods when both sides unilaterally declared a suspension of hostilities, the duration of which was short of the people's call by eighteen days. During the entire Christmas season, however, the peace agenda regained public attention and concern, featured and editorialized by mass media. The ceasefire campaign, very important for the growth of a national peace constituency, put the Coalition in touch with local and regional aggrupations in different parts of the country in its call for a halt of hostilities. One of these, the Hearts of Peace or HOPE-Naga (based in the Southern Luzon city of Naga), which had been organized with the participation of a CFP convenor, was able to win a nine-day ceasefire from the local NPA force.

When CFP decided to launch the Christmas campaign, questions were raised "How can you convince the armies to observe a ceasefire) Will you be able to make combatants see the feasibility of such an action?" Also, "What will you do if they reject your call?" The Coalition decided that it did not matter what was feasible, negotiable or achievable. What was important was that the people were weary of their lives, hence it was time it was the right thing to do - to stop, even for a short period, the escalation of the violence that increasingly victimized Filipinos by fellow Filipinos. In the end, the popular campaign asserted, for the first time, the stance that the peace movement would be upheld vis-a-vis the armed parties.

From that time on, CFP no longer attempted to argue with militarist agenda, CFP's peace campaigns could hardly ever be feasible from the perspective of combat strategies. The peace movement would simply have to stand by the people's agenda and aspiration for peace. And if the armed parties rejected the people's call, then the peace movement just had to keep on pushing it. People set the parameters for the agenda, but not be expected to fit them into the plans of war strategists. Having made the assertion that people should define and demand their path to peace, CFP would be ready when the time came to take up the strategy of people's community-based action and direct intervention for peace

People-initiated, community-based peace imitiatives

Visible peace constituency continued to grow, especially in the regions where local peace organizations had gathered. People were fed up with military adventurism as demonstrated in the failed coup attempts Meanwhile, the armed parties continued to be deaf to the accelerated calls for a halt to the war and the resumption of dialogue at all levels. Midway through 1988, stray bullets and other spill-overs of the violent conflict were claiming and dislocating more lives among the civilian population. CFP grew anxious to evolve a new form of peace action that would concretely influence the trajectory of military offensives. The search focused on possible initiatives in the grassroots.

The new strategy would be vitalized in the peace zones. The concept of peace zones was inspired by the experience of one town which was reported in the newspapers to have driven the NPA from the locality and was seeking to bar the plans of the military to establish a detachment in the town.

CFP thus conceived peace zones as geographical areas, ranging in size from the area covered by a purok or neighborhood to a province. Community residents declared these areas as off-limits to armed conflict in the building.

Recognition of the zone was an important objective to be won, but sustained declaration by the people would uphold an area as a peace zone. Each peace zone defines its particular agenda and characteristics, and may even go by different names.

The news report that inspired the peace zone concept came out in May 1980 In the following months, CFP sought to identify communities that were interested to pilot test the concept. Attempts to establish direct contact with the original town featured in the news report were unsuccessful. Finally, in September 1988, HOPE-Naga, an active CFP partner since the first Christmas ceasefire, declared the city as the first peace zone, designated as a Zone of Peace, Freedom And Neutrality (ZOPFAN). The declaration coincided with the annual town fiesta, the previous year's celebration of which was destroyed by a bombing. As a result of the aggressive advocacy of HOPE, the ZOPFAN declaration was joined by the city mayor in February 1989 and endorsed by the provincial governor.

In February 1988, the town of Sagada in Mountain Province, issued its Plea for the Democratization of Sagada. It addressed all contending armed parties, following a series of armed encounters in the town center, which resulted in several civilian casualties, including children. The municipal resolution was signed by 27 local leaders, led by the town mayor.

Three other peace zones have been declared and are being maintained with the active participation of local government officials and religious leaders. These are (1) the town of Tabuk in Kalinga-Apayao declared in October 1989 as an amatago-an or zone of life in accordance with the indigenous Kalinga concept, prompted by the severely deteriorated peace and order situation in this provincial capital accompanied by the weakening of the indigenous peace pact situation, (2) Sitio Cantomanyog, Candoni in Negros Occidental, declared in June 1989 in the wake of the massive military operations carried out by government forces in the province, and (3) Barangay Bituan, Tulunan in North Cotabato, declared by a community of internal refugees in November 1989, in an effort to protect themselves from further dislocation from their newly claimed land. At least twelve more communities are known to CFP to be in the process of laying the groundwork for their own peace promulgation.

While CFP was not directly involved in the declaration of all peace zones, the existing ones were assisted through advocacy of their concerns with the national government, especially the Office of the Peace Commissioner and the mass media. CFP also provided the

opportunity to meet and discuss with other peace zone builders and dialogue with national and international peace advocates. Some zones linkage with relevant resource groups and more declaration. In all cases, CFP simply responded to the request made by the concerned community.

Two years after the concept was developed, peace zones effectively captured the imagination of communities nationwide, especially those weary of the war. Sadly, the initiatives stimulated harsh responses from the combatant forces to devalue and discredit the existing zones.

In Sagada, the steadfast commitment of community proponents to their peace zone declaration through intermittent dialogues and negotiations between the armed parties resulted in a fragile de facto ceasefire where the detachment of government troops were withdrawn and the local police force carried out their functions without guns

Peace zone communities have actively contributed to the defusion of potentially explosive situations involving the combat parties. Side by side with the demilitarization agenda, peace zones have also afforded communities to explore alternative development thrusts for their people. Based on their own priorities and management structures, Sagada, for instance, witnessed the spread of livelihood and infrastructure projects with support from both the government and NGOs. Tabuk proponents, on the other hand, are laying the groundwork for a definition of "ancestral domain" which will set the parameters for government programs on environment and agrarian reform in the province

The advocacy of peace zone action enabled the CFP to generate a network of communities with a determined peace constituency. The effort has resulted in more serious attention paid to the Coalition by the combatant parties, both at the national and local levels. As envisioned, peace zone initiatives have become the primary focus of a popular and grassroots-based ground seeking the cessation of the armed conflict and the nurturing of concrete alternatives to the war system.

National dialogues and convergence for peace

CFP currently supports the expansion of peace zones as a primary concern. The occasion also brings into centerstage the strategy of pursuing national dialogues for peace based on a convergence of national movements and social institutions for a national peace agenda. The opening of a national-level peace strategy was promoted in part by events directly linked with the CFP and by other relevant initiatives launched by other parties.

The major push for CFP in this direction came from the International Conference on Conflict Resolution in the Philippines (ICCRP) which was held in December 1988. The International Conference brought together participants from the broadest range of political perspectives, as well as of sociocultural, ethno-linguistic, and religious backgrounds. The International Alert (IA) which helped to subsidize the forum as well as invited resource persons with experience in armed conflict resolution in other parts of the globe, provided the international component. Together with a CFP convenor as one of the initiators of the conference, CFP served as the organizing committee and provided conference secretariat. At the end of the conference, the organizing committee transmitted to the Coalition the mandate to serve as the locus for ICCRP follow-up activities.

ICCRP was an important development for CFP to enrich its awareness and perspectives on conflict resolution in ways that excited the mind and the spirit. Of more concrete significance, ICRP issued a strong endorsement of peace zone action at a time when the concept was still struggling into reality This move affirmed CFP's commitment to develop this untested mode for community-based peace action, especially in the insurgency-troubled Cordillera regions.

In terms of consolidating or expanding the space for national peace dialogues, however, the initiative did not advance beyond the plan to hold a national conference to review and assess developments on the ICCRP agenda, held a year later, in December 1989 After the most serious coup attempt carried out in December, the national meeting was postponed. The IA representative still arrived in the country as originally scheduled and, as the meeting would not push through until February, he spent the next two months visiting peace zone communities and holding meetings and consultations with a wide range of political organizations, including the armed parties

These consultations and discussions resulted in a proposal for IA and CFP to establish a forum to discuss the agenda of peace zones with the NDF through the international office based in Europe. The proposal evolved into a plan to hold a multilateral, informal meeting outside of the country that would include multi-sectoral peace advocates and IA partners held separately with representatives of government and the NDF The meetings opened the space for ongoing discussions with the national government through a committee of the Cabinet cluster in charge of political and security affairs, under the direct mandate of the President. At the same time, a more discreet liaison was maintained with the NDE.

Through these national-level discussions, CFP attempts to build a framework for a comprehensive peace process, targeted at a political settlement of the conflict that is acceptable to all the warring parties The process remains fragile, slow-paced, and time-consuming. Bur already a measure of progress has been achieved when the government agreed to a minimum agenda that will look into adherence to International Humanitarian Law, the recognition of peace zones and the implementation of the suspension of military offensives in calamity areas The natural calamities notwithstanding (the July killer earthquake and then the more recent typhoon), the attempt is being made to turn national tragedies into challenges to expand the grounds for peace action.

A more concrete and solid gain can be found in the consolidation of the Multi-Sectoral Peace Advocates (MPA), as a viable and effective forum for transmitting the peace agenda emanating from the popular movements to the national government and the NDF In the MPA, the voices of church and base sector representatives, human rights advocates and legislators join the CFP advocacy The MPA also involves representatives from two major groups, the National Peace Conference and the People's Caucus, to draw up a national peace agenda. The last one leads current efforts in the country to forge a consensus on national issues, with the proposal that the points of consensus set the basis for the popular movements and serve as the bases for determining the agenda of any future peace talks between the antagonistic parties.

Aside from its involvement with the NPA, CFP was directly involved with the holding of the National Peace Conference. It sat as one of the organizations that convened the Conference with fifteen participating sectors, each of which had undergone a preconference process to identify their peace concerns and commitments. Based on the agenda drawn up during the conference, CFP continues to link with the grassroots. On the national level, meanwhile, the convergence of major social institutions and national social change networks echoes a stronger voice, on behalf of the people's aspirations, for peace.

Bio-Politics as a Common Future

MAXIMO KALAW, JR.

GREEN FORUM

Borrowed Model of Development

The Philippine government has adopted the sustained-growth model from Western industrial societies for over 40 years now. The model employs development strategies which put primacy on production. It treats man and nature as factors of production, and views human welfare and conservation as requisites for sustained production.

With its emphasis on the business enterprise and the individual as units of economic analysis, this model has only aggravated poverty, violent social conflicts and environmental decline at alarming proportions

Democratic space in the Philippines is said to have widened after the Marcos era. However, existing economic planning and policymaking have proven to be similar to those of the Marcos regime. The government largely subscribe to Western development strategies as evidenced by the economic thinking that spun the 1987-1992 Medium Term Economic Plan of the National Economic Development Authority (NEDA), the Memorandum of Economic Policy which was the basis for the Philippine Letter of Commitment to the International Monetary Fund (IMF); and the Philippine Agenda for Sustained Growth and Development, a document submitted to the meeting of donors to the Philippines under the Multi-Lateral Aid Initiative of the Philippine Aid Program (PAP).

The government defines the national strategic goal as the transformation of the Philippine economy and its elevation to the ranks of the newly industrialized countries before the end of this century "with better sharing of the wealth to be created by greater efficiency of production." It seeks the establishment of a pattern of sustained growth that will achieve the following:

☐ allow for an equitable distribution of income and a reduced poverty and unemployment,

☐ enhance the climate for private sector activities while limiting public sector involvement to the regulation of private economic activities or the attainment of social goals:

☐ ensure equitable distribution of the benefits of growth within and among the different regions of the country, and

☐ restore access to voluntary credit in the international capital markets.

As government sees it, private enterprise given appropriate bur will by otherwise free rein in a playing field cleared of obstacles interposed by monopolies and inappropriate government interventions itself promote the desired economic activities, ensure equitable distribution of livelihood, and balance harvest of natural resources with conservation measures Government would just concentrate on building infrastructure, enforcing the laws and suppressing insurgency by military action

What this prescription ignores are the realities of the existing structure distribution of economic and political power among social classes, configuration of present control over resources, balance of bargaining powers among different sectors, classes and geographical regions in the country, proliferation of organizations, and the distribution of allegiance of professional, technical and managerial manpower and members of the governmental bureaucracy.

On the whole, the government's principal focus is on production and trade. Even as it espouses integrated area development, it does not mention environment. It uses the term sustainable development that does not necessarily include resource and environmental conservation and poverty elimination as prerequisites. Clearly, the government is not genuinely concerned on the protection of ecological and cultural integrity, community heritage, and proprietary claims to communal domain which are essential to self-governance. It would even appear that the country's most strategic goal is to increase its capacity to export and to repay its international obligations.

Sustainable Development: The Green Forum Perspective

Green Forum sees the Philippine problem within the framework of sustainable development, a concept that has grown out of the global environment. The concept, however, was expanded beyond physical sustainability to include all other related dimensions of the entire global community.

As demonstrated in a series of workshops involving nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), people's organizations (POS) and government organizations (GOs) in early 1990, there was already an appreciation of the adverse implications of ecological crisis on development. Issues such as how deforestation and siltation affect the supply of irrigation water or how the destruction of mangroves and coral reefs impact on fish production the survival of the next generation. were already viewed against

Green Forum, however, stresses that where the flow of sustainable development to the primary beneficiary is constricted, or impeded, there is basically no development Alternatively, where it proceeds freely or circulates throughout a system, genuine development takes place, and where it reaches only a segment, as what often happens, it creates a pathological condition

Sustainable development, therefore, begins with an affirmation of the identity of the community within an ecosystem. The identity includes a culture that the members of the community share a distinct history and common resources that enable them to sustain and improve themselves.

Sustainable development, is the process of empowerment, whereby all, including those who have been marginalized, are given the right to participate in the decisions that affect their lives and, thus, attain self-governance or self-development. Ultimately, it is when the people are able to own what they have or have not done that the process of community transformation begins.

The Green Forum Objectives

In a series of regional workshop-consultations conducted by Green Forum between May and September 1990, the following objectives were set

- to enrich Green Forum's vision of sustainable development,
- to flesh out an area-based vision of sustainable development,
- to come up with area-based assessment of resource access, control and utilization in the province/region within the framework of sustainable development;
- to assess current initiatives and identify gaps with respect to resource access, control and utilization within the framework of sustainable development,
- to come up with an area-based plan of action for sustainable development which focuses on constituency building, advocacy and resource transfer, renewal and regeneration, and
- to establish mechanisms to implement the plan of action.

The workshop consultations covered eleven regions (Regions I to X and XII) with participants coming from various sectors- farmers, fisherfolk, upland dwellers, labor, youth and church leaders. There was also a deliberate effort to involve participants of different political persuasions to better convey the message that environmental cause transcends all political boundaries.

The Workshop-Consultation Process

The task of organizing the workshop-consultations necessitated the establishment of a Manila-based secretariat and a team of area coordinators. The coordinators spread to the regions and met with NGO leaders, forming a pre-conference committee in the process. This pre-conference committee laid the groundwork for the workshop-consultation proper. The NGO members of the Green Forum network helped identify the prospective participants.

Early on, Green Forum commissioned the preparation of provincial and regional economic and environmental data. These were meant to be planning inputs to the participants. Other documents which articulated and put into context Green Forum's national and global strategies for sustainable development were likewise given to the participants to serve as framework and stimulus in the analysis of their experiences.

The workshops were designed to tackle a more detailed and grounded assessment of the life-support system within an area. The discussions were guided by a loose set of questions that were meant to focus the people on the symptoms of environmental decline in their respective areas on a day-to-day basis.

During each workshop, the resolutions were synthesized in the form of a vision, thus enabling the participants to actually sketch the desired outcomes. Personal and collective visions were properly identified. This was followed by reflections on the value systems appropriate to the realization of such visions. Institutional commitments toward program-level cooperation and institution-building were then solicited. The plenary session involved the presentation of each sector's projects and programs.

The Program Framework Document

For the consultations, Green Forum prepared a program-framework document for possible validation or critiquing. Following the workshop process, each sectoral grouping provided inputs for each of the strategic thrusts discussed in the Green Forum's document.

The reaction to the Forum's document ranged from actual validation during the first consultation for Region IV, to initial consternation in the next consultation for Regions I, II and III. Some even perceived the consultation as an imposition on an otherwise democratic process. These reactions highlighted the differences among the regions.

Some Lessons from the Consultation Process

Based on the first two consultations, Green Forum found it helpful to focus the opening session on the meaning of sustainable development. However, it was always difficult to find an exact translation of the term in the vernacular Clarifying the concept itself was time-consuming, hence the topic was incorporated in the individual workshop groups during the third consultation. It was also during this period when the organizers decided to distribute in advance the handouts on area assessments or regional situationers on environment and socioeconomic development. This way, the resource person could make more detailed presentations and the participants could have lively discussions.

Speaking in Filipino, the resource person discussed the following

- the government employs dubious analytical tools in its analysis of poverty,
- the more rigorous development framework must consider the diverse ecosystems with which human communities enjoy symbiotic relationship. This relationship is disrupted by the entry of the business enterprise, and
- it is possible for the communities to be the primary units of organization, management, planning, resource administration and even resource accounting Networking must be done through participatory processes

The facilitators employed new ideas of communication techniques during each consultation. For instance, it was found useful to distinguish three different connotations of the word *green* namely *neophyte, risque, and verdant*. There was also a need to identify similarities to such key concepts as *open systems, lifeflow, biodiversity* and interdependence and to be familiar with the organic process surrounding the traditional communities.

In the third consultation, the participants were taught how to prepare project feasibility studies. They also had a chance to dialogue with the governor of the host province, who affirmed his commitment to the cause of environment. The succeeding consultations saw more intense awareness on the subject matter and interaction from the participants.

Workshop Breakthroughs

The outputs of the eight workshop-consultations include an exhaustive inventory of the perceived resources in an area including an account of the abuse done to them. These also articulated the visIONS, strategies, programs and projects of the participants as well as illustrated the organized structure of Green Forum chapters and provincial/regional committees which are able to realize arca-based plans of action through networking.

The visions were consistent expressions of a desire for economic self-reliance, ecological balance, social justice and empowerment

The strategies were firmly focused on the issue of governance (with a premium on community organizing), environmental information and action campaigns (with reforestation as a popular first choice) and economic productivity projects.

The action plans complemented the strategies but were more politically inclined as emphasized by the need for community .organizing wok.

To summarize, the following breakthroughs were achieved

- focus on bio-regional economic systems and lifeflow as basic parameters in planning and as beneficiaries of development,
- affirmation of the role of indigenous groups, upland dwellers, farmers and fishermen as private sector "engines of development" in their respective communities,
- recognition of the importance of existing cultural, political and spiritual organizations and the possibility of their coming together, despite ideological differences, to protect and enhance their common life-source,
- ability of participants to analyze problems and forge programs through consensus building given the necessary information and space where they may be exposed to competing interests,
- ability of participants to organize themselves democratically into committees for project implementation and make decisions for their own interests without being constrained by traditional political patronage, and
- emergence of a constituency for sustainable development.

Dramatizing Through Songs and Dances

As each consultation drew to a close, the organizers sought symbolic gestures from the participants. From Los Baños, it was a ritual offering by the Bataks, an indigenous group threatened with extinction like the rainforest which they had always considered their home.

From Baguio City, a short lyric about creation was specially composed for the occasion, translated into all the dialects spoken by the participants, and then sang in a display of harmony and diversity. From Naga, an image of the region's Mother Protector was witness to individual expressions of commitment. From Tacloban, a Manobo community driven to Leyte from Mindanao by the politics of violence performed a courtship dance much loved by the native Warays called the kuracha. From Cagayan de Oro, what participants elsewhere simply expressed as a "rainbow coalition" translated into a crescendo of ethnicity From Davao, workshop groups chose different natural elements ents - soil, water, a leaf, a tree, a stone to express the nature of their insights. And from Cebu as in Iloilo, a keen sense for satire in the development theater saw everyone through.

Stepping Stones to Institutionalization

There were poignant moments during the consultation. A fisherman, for example, admitted that he had confronted a peer who had rationalized the use of dynamite for he would rather that the fish died ahead of his children. Such dilemma only reinforces the need to continue the consultation process many of the participants said they would settle for a seminar down to the district and barangay levels as a first step.

After the Cagayan de Oro consultation, Green Forum conducted one such seminar in Manila for a select group of national leaders (with some members of Congress among them) Quite unexpectedly, their response reinforced the impression that the Green Forum development model strikes a sympathetic chord among the elite as well as the grassroots. The seminar output called Green Forum Peace Program, was presented to a national Peace Conference designed by key church and political personnel of the government, partly to ease escalating labor problems brought about by energy crisis as an outcome of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait.

The eight workshop-consultations demonstrated an urgent need for the continuous refinement of data including the need for translation of information into different dialects. Information should be readily accessible to all users including those who did not have the chance to participate in the consultation.

Such information should include sustainable development technologies like the Integrated Protected Areas System earlier developed for Palawan and technologies in sustainable agriculture, forestry and marine resource development. These are admittedly best transmitted within the framework of a recognized educational

transmitted within the framework of a recognized educational institution such as an Academy for Sustainable Development, now a Green Forum project.

The workshop-consultation also pointed out that strong and professionalized committee organizations are preconditions for successful transfer of technologies. They must also be well-equipped with a developed communication network for its advocacy work, lobby and legal protection services.

An Alternative Medium-Term Development Plan

Having identified the basic issues, Green Forum tried to formulate an economic model that embodies its institutional emphasis on life. flow, the community and the bio-region. It is an alternative model to that used by the government planning body The model shares and enriched by David Korten's vision of transformation that is just, sustainable and inclusive. However, the model goes beyond it by emphasizing the cultural and spiritual roots of human development and in posting lifeflow as the ultimate beneficiary. Green Forum is confident that indigenous spirituality can resolve the polarities promoted by all forms of rigidity and authoritarianism.

Green Forum has simultaneously initiated a series of workshops with various sectors of Philippine society with the objective of translating the issues and agenda identified by the consultations into framework policies in labor, agriculture, industrialization, science and technology, indigenous peoples and foreign relations. Since the conclusion of the consultations, three such workshops were conducted with two of the most active sectors, ie, labor and youth.

Global Cooperation

Along with these local initiatives, Green Forum has strengthened its linkages with the global network of sustainable development workers through the formation of the Philippine Development Forum in Washington, D.C. (bringing together NGOs in environment, human rights, and development previously divided politically) and a Philippine Sustainable Development Council based in Amsterdam to monitor official development assistance, multilateral development banks and trade policies through the General Agreements on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and bilateral trade agreements.

Green Forum has also delineated the frontlines of an Eco-Zone Project in its attempt to pilot, demonstrate and support a model of sustainable development in at least four different regions of the world: Mexico and Vermont in North America, the Alti mountains in the

former Soviet Union, mainland China, and the Philippine Cordillera in Southeast Asia. The Eco-Zone Project initially envisions the linking of economic zones for the following purposes: sharing of information, experiences and support, exchange of technologies, promotion of alternative trade, promotion of reciprocal investments; and establishment of a common alternative market.

On the occasion of the World Bank meeting with NGOs held in Washington recently, Green Forum submitted a proposal for an "alternative world bank" geared towards NGO projects. The response to the proposal would be a measure of the effectivity of the NGOs as facilitators of empowerment on the radical scale on which the World Bank itself operates.

Green Forum's participation in the ANGOC workshop underscores the need to look at development not as a goal but a set of relationship patterns or structures that have to be corrected within particular cultural and historical contexts. The change must be facilitated by a critical mass of development activists and empowered communities whose timeframe is the lifespan of entire generations and who are able to resist co-optation by governments while sharing information.

Social Creativity as Ultimate Freedom

For far too long now, development has been set to make it big but has actually ended up achieving little. The winds of change are blowing hard, particularly on the proliferation of state mechanisms which have estranged governments from communities and cast them off even farther from each other. The new forms of NGO work that evolved over the past decade speak of a social creativity that may be the ultimate freedom, for it goes beyond the rigid confines of the dominant paradigm and partakes of the changing participatory processes that constitute a true integration of democracy and ecosystem.

Land To The-Tiller Struggle Continues

CORAZON J. SOLIMAN and FELIPE S. RAMIRO, JR.

CONGRESS FOR A PEOPLE'S AGRARIAN REFORM

The Congress for a People's Agrarian Reform (CPAR) un precedentedly united 12 major farmers', fisherfolk's, and rural women's organizations behind an eight-point agrarian reform program more widely known as the People's Agrarian Reform Code (PARCODE).

Formally organized in May 1987, CPAR represented a dynamic case of a peasant coalition, earnestly advocating a unified position on matters relating to agrarian reform and rural development in an effort to improve worsening conditions in the countryside. It operated in a system where the government has consistently ignored several opportunities to implement much-needed reforms to empower millions of marginalized farmers, subsistence fisherfolk and rural women who make up the majority of the population. As the leading peasant pressure group, CPAR sought out changes in land tenure and a fair share of the fruits of the peasants' labor. As a rule, it used democratic yet unconventional methods and strategies. CPAR gained major wins as well as losses, which both decisively shaped CPAR into once a vibrant network.

Skewed Landholdings

The Philippines is a predominantly agricultural country. Of the country's total land area of 30 million ha, almost one-third (9.67 million ha to be exact) is estimated to be cultivated, mostly to rice, corn and coconut. These three crops alone comprise about 85% of the country's agricultural crop area, a condition attesting to the almost monocrop nature of Philippine agriculture.

A major problem that agrarian reform must address is the highly skewed distribution of landholdings in the Philippines. The average farm size may be small (2.36 ha), yet the bigger farms still occupy a relatively large area.

It is estimated that there are 2.9 million small farms (below 5 ha) that occupy slightly over one half of the total farm area; 13,681 upper medium-sized and large farms (above 25 ha), meanwhile hold 11.49% of the total farmland Some of the other lands are under multinational agribusiness corporations (MNCs), mostly situated in Mindanao. It was during the Marcos administration that these modern plantations rose rapidly in number. By 1985, about 58 out of the 124 MNCs operating in the Philippines were directly engaged in the cultivation of cash crops using plantation systems in Mindanao

In all croplands, tenancy is widespread, contrary to official government claims that tenancy covers only 25% of farms Independent survey data reveal that the tenancy rate in the countryside is between 50% to 70% Just like other marginal farmers, tenants-whether sharecropping or leasehold have to contend with the rural elite who not only enjoys a monopoly over land, but also single-handedly controls technological inputs, credit and finance, farm implements, as well as the storage, transportation, processing and marketing of the farm produce Taken as a whole, marginal farmers, tenants and farm workers total 10 2 million, at least 70% of whom are landless.

It is correctly argued that landlessness is a major factor behind rural poverty In the Philippines, the incidence of poverty is highest among the landless workers in the regions of Bicol, Western and Eastern Visayas. Among farming households, rice farmers are the most well-to-do and the corn farmers, the poorest. The state of agricultural laborers is even more inferior relative to farming households, with the exception only of corn farmers. Furthermore, the rural-urban income ratio of 0.48 in 1983 (from 0.75 in 1975) demonstrates that the percentage of families below the poverty threshold remains higher in rural areas.

The Aquino Government and Missed Opportunities

The response of the Aquino government to the problems confronting Philippine agriculture and the peasant sector initially surfaced from the debate on agrarian reform between 1987 to 1988. President Aquino's government was said to have had a "rare opportunity to reform the countryside" in the beginning of its term but lost it by default.

The failure by the executive leadership to seize "rare opportunities" to initiate changes beneficial to the peasant sector was to characterize Mrs. Aquino's attitude toward agrarian-related problems that would

arise during her term The latest of these problems concerned the government policy on land conversion This was seen in the debate between her two Cabinet secretaries. Trade and Industry Secretary Jose Concepcion who approved the conversion of some 230 ha of prime agricultural lands in Bgy Langkaan, Cavite for industrial purposes and then-Agrarian Reform Secretary Florencio "Butch" Abad who opposed it. Mrs. Aquino unfortunately sided with the former In effect, the case set a precedent and opened the floodgates for more land conversion cases of prime agricultural lands.

CPAR further argued --

"Land conversion puts into question the kind of development the government is pursuing.

With an import-dependent and export-oriented development strategy, the food security,

not just of the peasant sector but of the entire nation, is threatened. Unless this is properly

checked, the nation risks losing too much prime agricultural land which is a scarc

resource vital to the maintenance of the nation's food supply"

The bias against agrarian reform and rural development was not the executive branch's work alone. From the beginning until today, the legislative branch has consistently displayed the same bias Hayami's analysis of the agrarian reform bills introduced in Congress clearly demonstrates this -

"The Philippine legislature was formally convened in June 1987, after almost 14 years of inaction. It took about a year for both Houses to formulate their respective agrarian reform bill Senate Bill (SB) No. 249 and House Bill (HB) No. 400. A bicameral conference committee comprised of representatives from both Houses was then created to consolidate the two bills into one.

Their output, Republic Act (RA) No. 6657, otherwise known as the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law, was submitted to the President for approval on 10 June 1988."

"A closer examination of the provisions specified in the two bills reveal further that the Upper and the Lower Houses tended to be biased toward particular factions of the rural propertied class. In the case of the Lower House, its proposed HB 400 insulated the interests of locally owned plantations from the redistributive effects of the reform. The Upper House, on the other hand, tended to accord preferential treatment to plantations operated and managed by multinational corporations."

To date, the same bias exists. In the past six months, CPAR noted with concern a number of moves by the Lower House to further weaken an already loophole-laden and weak Republic Act No 6657 Last May 1990, the brother of President Aquino, Rep. Jose Cojuangco (LDP-Tarlac), proposed to decentralize the implementation of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) which is tantamount to leaving agrarian reform at the mercy of the local landlord-warlords. Before this, there were bills pending in the Lower House such as HB 16211 which sought to exclude from CARP coverage all commercial livestock, poultry and swine raising, aquaculture, including saltbeds, fishponds and prawn farms. Similarly, HB 23472 sought even further to exclude fruit tree plantations and high value agricultural export products from CARP Finally, HB 24910 called for the exemption of all lands classified by the Housing and Land Use Regulatory Board as nonagricultural land (like the estate in Langkaan) from the jurisdiction of the Department of Agrarian Reform.

CPAR's Response: A Study in Contrast

CPAR as a major peasant coalition in the past three years has not allowed itself to be dampened by the dismal performance of the government leadership and the inadequacies of its much-vaunted centerpiece program in the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law (CARL). CPAR's 12 member-organizations instead focused on the initial unity forged until the bonds that linked the groups together evolved from fragile to strong, and until CPAR's character as a coalition turned from loose to principled. Over the years, concrete policy proposals were crafted by the CPAR leaders through consensus. CPAR's central program came to be known as the PARCODE. A massive campaign was launched to popularize this, especially within its membership.

Legislative lobby

CPAR's approach to the problems and challenges manifested a passion for democracy (aside from the cause of equality, of course, which can be gleaned from its many proposals). The popular EDSA uprising in 1986 argued well for the people's participation in national affairs. It was in this spirit that CPAR pursued and sustained nearly a year's lobby for genuine agrarian reform.

Initially, CPAR presented its proposals to Malacañang and then in the newly convened Congress. In Congress, innumerable ideas on lobbying were crystallized, from the conventional to the unique Among the unusual lobby techniques adopted were a vigil called Tent City, ambush dialogues and a voting scoreboard on agrarian reform for the legislators. In the beginning, CPAR scored a major victory when a group of Representatives sympathetic to its interests, sponsored HB 400, whose original form was based on the draft proposal by CPAR During the deliberations, however, HB 400 underwent major revisions due to the pressure exerted by the pro-landlord members of the lower chamber. Once approved, the bill bore little resemblance to the original, CPAR-based HB 400, prompting the original sponsors, Representative Bonifacio Gillego and then-Representative Florencio Abad and others, to withdraw their support for it

CPAR's lobbying activities culminated in a week-long caravan all over Luzon called the Agrarian Reform Express It brought the agrarian reform debate to the provinces and gathered one of the broadest rallies since the EDSA Revolution in 1986. This historic undertaking likewise marked the shift in the strategy CPAR used -from legal (lobby work) to extralegal On June 25 to 26, 1988, CPAR ripened by a yearlong lobby and education campaign on agrarian reform, churned out another innovation: the PARCODE Two weeks after RA 6657 was signed into law, CPAR organized a multisectoral conference to take a common stand against RA 6657 and unite for PARCODE. The conference resolved to support and protect all forms of peasant initiatives to render PARCODE effective as soon as possible. It also supported an immediate economic and political signature campaign based on the right of legislative initiative enshrined in Section 32, Article VI of the Philippine Constitution. The signature campaign gathered three million signatures.

Melinda Quintos de Jesus, a columnist in a national daily,

Philippine Daily Inquirer, presented an account of the said conference in her bi-weekly column, "The Human Factor":

> "Over the weekend, the proper rejoinder to Senator Rene Saguisag's ebullient defense of CARP came from the peasants themselves. At the two-day conference in Miriam College in Quezon City, some 600 farmer-delegates issued a sharp response to the self-congratulatory statements mouthed by smiling officials on their "historic legislation
>
> The convening of the assembly evidenced impressive organizational skills. This was state-of-the-art mass political action involving no less than the 12 member-organizations of the Congress for a People's Agrarian Reform (CPAR), the lead organization that has audaciously pushed the peasant lobby for agrarian reform on a number of critical fronts.
>
> With delegations coming from as far as Mindanao, the grassroots caucus signalled the farmers' decision to have the final say on land reform. From the opening program, through the workshops and the vigorous exchange of views in the plenary session, they asserted their confidence in their own power to bring about genuine agrarian reform in this country.
>
> The two-day exercise reflects stunningly the political maturity of the peasant sector The conference unfolded, phase by phase, as a compelling demonstration of parliamentary savvy, of a participatory process which blended both style and substance"

Pursuing PARCODE in the villages

While CPAR affiliates were gathering signatures as a legislative initiative, peasant movements were also being undertaken. Peasant organizations in the provinces made idle and abandoned lands productive again, organized cooperatives in their villages, engaged in mangrove reforestation, and developed appropriate technologies of production for sustainable development.

To protect and defend these initiatives, CPAR took the lead in organizing a People's Fact Finding Commission on Agrarian Reform. This body studied cases which were agrarian reform-related and worked to resolve them with the proper government bodies. The

body is composed of well-known peasant advocates and peasant leaders. Resolutions on the cases oftentimes have resulted in reprene from harassments and protection of life.

Addressing agricultural issues

Land transfer is one component of agrarian reform. Another component is agricultural productivity CPAR had actively lobbied, together with two other peasant federations in the Philippines, for a package which would make the peasantry economically viable One concrete result of the actions was on palay (unhusked rice). It brought together the three biggest peasant federations into a Peasants Forum. This served as a common front for the organized peasantry in relating with government.

Peasant voice in other national issues

CPAR developed into a vibrant strategic network which took on the role of articulating the organized peasantry's position in other issues confronting the nation. It rallied on issues like the foreign debt, US military bases, human rights, and destruction of environment. It also linked up with the other sectoral coalitions such as the urban poor and labor, and supported them in their just demands for their right to survive and live a decent life.

It was also active in pursuing the peace process because most of the victims of the civil strife are peasant families in the countryside where the insurgency thrives

Thus CPAR was not just a strategic coalition which worked on a sectoral issue genuine agrarian reform but also a strategic model for coalition building effort in the country since it actively participated in the process of crafting a consensus on a people's agenda for genuine development and just peace.

Factors Contributing to CPAR's Staying Power

Land is life

The agrarian problem has long existed in the Philippines. It catalyzed the Philippine revolution of the 1800s and has persisted as a central issue of all the succeeding revolutionary actions up to the current CPP-NDF agenda. Thus, the struggle for land has forged a bond between and among the peasantry. The land-to-the-tiller principle is a call which no farmer, woman peasant nor fisherfolk can deny.

 This principle was one of the strongest pillars of CPAR. The issue

of landlessness causing hunger and poverty in the countryside pushed the leaders to look for ways and means to unite the rural folk so that one voice would be heard from the sector. Corollary to this was the painstaking process of clarifying the principles which continued to guide the coalition in the course of its action. Several consultations and caucuses were held before a formal declaration of principles was made. These principles were conscientiously examined and analyzed so that they could be further deepened and enriched

"We won the coalition"

One of the most crucial factors of CPAR's viability is its involvement in the decisionmaking process. The National Consultative Council (NCC) became the decisionmaking body for policies and programs. It was composed of national leaders representing the 12 national organizations. It was joined by an expanded secretariat composed of 14 nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that discussed the implementation programs based on the policies set by the NCC. The expanded secretariat was served by a full-time staff-secretariat which contracted and expanded on the basis of workload and campaign projects.

There were two key processes which nurtured the unity of CPAR One was the use of the caucus discussions before an important decision was made. Since they came from different political leanings, it was important that the different formations see space and flexibility to project their own political line. The sharing of ideas and tentative positions regarding the issue to be discussed allowed the leaders to further consult with their base groups as they get a first reading of the situation. It also minimized stalemate situations because the leaders were then able to craft several realistic options guided by the caucus discussions.

The other factor that united CPAR was the building of consensus before making decisions. If there was no consensus, no action was taken. If a NCC member wanted to take action, he sought ways to convince and persuade colleagues. Otherwise, the issue stayed inactive. It was also imperative that each member of the coalition knew its political line and negotiate from a position of strength. This ensured that the consensus had meaning and can be enforced.

Unity in diversity

A coalition is the coming together of different organizations carrying particular political perspectives and strategies on how to operationalize their beliefs. CPAR had a broad range of views on

politics and strategies for change. A very real power play existed within the NCC which led to a creative tension between and among the organizations. Each tried to respond implement a genuine agrarian reform to members' needs to

A constant and open discussion of differences was therefore important. Luckily the members of the NCC articulated their differences in straightforward discussions Admission of differences of vision paved the way for a true understanding Genuine respect was cultivated because each one understood the other's standpoint. Manipulation and maneuvering were minimized because an open and honest discussion was set as a norm for clarifying and setting issues or disputes.

Political allies as companions and friends in the struggle

In the assessment done by the NCC of CPAR's performance, one significant realization was the unity nurtured and enriched by the bonds of friendship which had grown as they discovered each other not just as political allies but as persons committed to the struggle for a genuine agrarian reform. Slowly, the NCC achieved a level of trust which allowed the leaders to transcend biases and prejudices and even actual negative experiences. They knew that, given the current socio-political situation, the cause of a genuine agrarian reform was bigger than each of their political agenda or organizational prerogatives.

Coalition builders, a major factor in strengthening CPAR

A dominant player in the coalition building effort were the coalition builders themselves. There are two sets of players the peasant leaders in the NCC of CPAR and the NGO workers and full time staff in the expanded secretariat.

The NCC of CPAR is a dynamic and seasoned group of leaders who have led the coalition to its present stage of growth, skillfully crafting positions on agrarian reform issues which embody the thoughts of all the constituencies within the coalition.

What were the characteristics found in the CPAR leaders that were significant to the development of the coalition?

- A clear and good grasp of a political line or ideology for change. The commitment of the members of the NCC-CPAR was rooted in a firm grasp of the problems that beset the Philippine society today and their proposed agenda for change. Each one was clear about the ideology he or she promoted and was also knowledgeable about the other platform for change.

This allowed for lively exchange of methods for action and a healthy respect for each other's position.

- **A common class consciousness.** Everyone in CPAR is of peasant blood. They earn from farm produce. While a number of them are based in the National Capital Region because they run their national offices, all of them constantly travel to consult and meet with their members in the provinces. Thus, they are in tune with the current thinking of their constituencies. They understand each other when they speak of their care for the plant, when to harvest, and what methods to use to arrest infestation, how to withstand the heat of the sun and the cold of the monsoon rains, among others.

- **A creative and irreverent mind**. Many of the NCC members have been local organizers before they were elected to their current national positions. They have been seasoned by local and provincial campaigns, negotiations and pressure actions or organizational and material gains in local struggle. These helped them to develop a wellspring of creative tactics based on inquisitive mindsets, even uncanny antics for some of them

- **A good sense of humor.** There were many instances when the long and winded discussions on plans and courses of action seemed like it was going to lead to walkouts and stalemate situations. The leaders' keen sense of humor almost always saved the day.

The members of the expanded secretariat are fully committed to coalition work. They believe at this conjuncture, that it serves everyone's interest that joint actions be undertaken toward genuine agrarian reform. They are determined to pursue and craft consensus on the different plans of action so that justice and development can be achieved.

Some Problems and Prospects

CPAR is widely known in the national level, however, it still has to be felt in the provincial and regional levels. Coalition building still has to take roots in the villages.

CPAR thus began its regionalization program this year There are CPAR provincial coalitions/alliances in 10 provinces. It proved difficult to forge consensus organizationally because questions of turn and expansion areas come into play, but the urgency of the issue wins out in the equation.

Another area of concern is the deteriorating economic conditions in the countryside. This led the member-affiliates to question their own capacity to respond to their members plight. CPAR has still to develop a framework for responding to the socioeconomic needs of its member-affiliates, yet it is cautious that it will not compete with its member-affiliates.

CPAR is also aware of the continuous harassment of the peasant organizations and the threat to the survival of the local organizations In response, it strengthens its linkages in the provinces so that national level would be able to promptly respond to the situation.

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(On 29 July 1993, the CPAR National Consultative Council decided to discontinue CPAR as a coalition, and for member-federations to carry on the struggle on individual basis, towards the overall objective of securing land to the tillers.)

Reflections on Philippines Experience

Sustaining the Network

The Philippines, together with India, is acknowledged as having provided the leading edge in networking experience. The three networks presented CPAR, CFP and Green Forum - show that growth and development both entail a continuing process of searching for the common ground.

The rallying point of any coalition is the particular issue it addresses. It encompasses a broad range of socioeconomic and political tendencies among NGOs. The quest for peace, in the case of CFP, is something that all members of the coalition must uphold Genuine agrarian reform, on the other hand, made CPAR members stick together. The Green Forum demonstrates, too, that it is the issue that builds the coalition and not any dominant personality

Respect for Differences

Members of the coalition come from different organizations. Naturally, they carry particular perspectives and strategies which may differ from the other members. Members, however, resolve their differences through straightforward discussions. Rather than treat their differences as hindrances to consensus, members instead derive inspiration from each other. The process of recognizing differences and living with them cultivates a deep sense of respect and understanding among the members of the network.

Decisionmaking

The process of making decisions within a network is the single most important factor in keeping it viable and united. All decisions are made by consensus, and leaders are required to consult their base groups prior to making decisions. CPAR, in particular, has institutionalized this decisionmaking process through its circular command of responsibility. Under this setup, the network members are accountable to their massbase, the massbase interacts with their leaders who represent them in the National Consultative Council. Thus, decisions made in the

NCC carry the weight of the massbase since consultations are made with them before the NCC arrives at a decision.

Beyond Protest Action

All of the three networks have moved beyond mere protest actions in pushing forward their agenda. While there was no intention at the beginning to get involved in power politics, the network members found that the present setup with power and resources at the hands of government serves as a stumbling block to many of the NGO initiatives

Cognizant of the government's failure in many development endeavors, the networks have decided that they should negotiate directly with the people. The shift in audience stems from a realization that people should take the position where they are able to make policies and programs for them

Donor-Donee Relationship

The networks are not exempt from economic realities. They, too, rely on donor agencies or foreign partners to support their programs and activities. The networks, however, refuse to look at the relationship as a donor-donee affair which to them is an unequal partnership. They would rather view it as a relationship of solidarity, wherein the donor believes in the cause of the donee and does not impose its views on it.

The uneasy situation wherein the donor and donce (network) disagree on certain principles must not lead to a compromise of principles The Green Forum experience, for instance, shows that being upfront to the donor about its development values at the early stages of the negotiation may lead to a building of mutual trust and confidence

The inflow of funds from foreign partners may sometimes divert the network away from its own direction. If it happens, it should require constant assessment to check whether the network is operating within its development framework or that of the donor's. There is a need from time to time to remind the network members about its direction vis-a-vis the money being sent to them

Role of Women

The vision of people-centered development is recognized as an expression of feminist values. The old development paradigm, on the other hand, is viewed as a conventional masculine orientation. With this hindsight, there is an urgent need to mobilize women especially

when leadership opportunities are at stake. The NGO community in the Philippines is lucky enough to have males who allow women to come forward and be heard.

Generating Successors

The development goals of NGOs call for a transformational struggle that would not be concluded in one to five years. Given this, the youth should prepare to become NGO leaders in the future.

The present crop of NGO leaders in the Philippines came from a distinct period known as the First Quarter Storm (FQS). FQS is that time in the country's political history when Martial Law was proclaimed. Many leaders with organizing experience joined the opposition sector against the Marcos regime

The coming together of NGOs to form coalitions has rallied them behind a common set of goals. One of these goals is to make the next generation of NGO leaders relevant to the times, hence a common formation program has been adopted. This formation program is designed based on experience. The youth are brought to the villages where they could get into program development and coalition work.

Another part of the formation program is the ongoing work with college students who start out as volunteers. The volunteer phase is actually a transition period for the volunteers to become permanent social development workers

Challenges

Sustainable development, according to Green Forum, has three dimensions

- a goal which can be realized if it has a vision of getting as much people committed to it,
- a set of relationship patterns that has to be corrected; and
- a transformation for the individual on his own initiative

Green Forum would also look at the possibility of institutionalizing an endowment fund to make resources available to NGOs and people's organizations (POs), and to help define the people's agenda within an aggregate term and dimension.

The continuing redefinition of people's interest poses a problem of interpretation, thereby defying conventional categories. The challenge now to NGOs is how to find the appropriate terminology

Meanwhile, the seemingly complex work of CPAR is one whole package of training, organizing and delivery of services. For its members, the work is actually a "web of life."

Among its challenges are

- making the POs self-sustaining in terms of funding, training and direction following its independence from the NGOs
- strengthening the coalition at the base level where very real organizational boundaries exist, and ,
- addressing urgent issues external to the coalition's agenda. An example of these issues is the country's foreign debt where strong pressures for its resolution are at work.

For the CFP, the challenges are

- working for political and military reforms that would assure democratic space beyond 1992;
- paving the grounds for negotiated settlement to convince the underground movement in trying out the democratic process; and
- building confidence to sustain the peace zones. Gaining protection from international humanitarian law is one way.

For the whole NGO community, the challenge is how to make independent NGOs link up with each other to push their agenda and forge a national consensus.

Finally, because of overwork in addressing local concerns, regional networking is being sidetracked. Efforts in building a coalition at this level should be expanded.

THE INDONESIA EXPERIENCE

Situationer

An Overview of Strategic Networking in Indonesia

People's movement in Indonesia is divided into three broad categories, namely, social welfare, development work and political action Political action involves mass rallies, parliamentary hearings, organizing committees and other activities that facilitate expression of opinions

Networking started in the 1920s, pioneered by nationalist and religious movements in Java and Sumatra. It could be described as a coming together of diverse cultures at a time when the country was still divided up until 1938. Religious movements to support the fight for freedom could actually be considered strategic networking. In fact, there were several linkages among different religious movements which gave support to nationalist aspirations. The 1950s saw the transformation of the religious movements into agencies focusing on nongovernmental concerns. Educational institutions and hospitals flourished. Other organizations were more politically inclined, such as those pursuing women's and students' rights. These were transformed into women's education and social welfare agencies

During the 1970s, the movements of farmers and workers developed into workers' organizations, while students' movements were transformed into a national council through governmental efforts. Both groups were given seats in the government, a depoliticizing strategy which proved successful, as evidenced by the trend of people moving into social welfare and charity activities. There onwards, the trend was into development work, slowly giving rise to NGOs formation. During this era, the NGOs worked intensely on what they believed in, and networking was not seen as a priority Human rights, legal aid, appropriate technology, and primary health care were concerns that formed the core of big NGOs or business NGOs.

Then in 1978, environmental concern became a priority. Ten organizations with concerns ranging from consumerism, love for animals, birds and others, formed the Indonesian Environmental Forum or WALHI Initially, WALHPS concerns were antipollution and preservation of endangered species. As it expanded further, WALHI began addressing other concerns, eg, appropriate technology and rural/slum development, among others.

WALHI's membership grew to some 800 NGOs, a proof of its acceptability. It is now composed of three autonomous networks: the pollution network, the forest network and the pesticide action network

In the course of its development, WALHI had to face basic issues such as choosing between quality and quantity. Some quarters contend that WALHI is spreading itself thinly Others question the commitment of the 800 member NGOs. The basic issue, however, is how to sustain the 800 NGOs while assuring the quality of their performance. In addressing this problem, WALHI conducted an extensive survey to reidentify and focus mutual interests. Those NGOs found with mutual interests were encouraged to form their own networks, at the same time, support WALHI as the mother network.

The following cases on the Scott-Astra Paper Company Plan and the Indorayon Pulp and Rayon Factory are advocacies of WALHI in cooperation with the Indonesian Legal Aid Foundation (YLBHI).

The Campaign for a Participatory Amdal¹ : Case of the Scott-Astra Paper Company

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The Scott Paper Co. of the United States and the Indonesian local partner of Astra Co. Ltd. intended to convert some 200,000 ha (500,000 acres) of natural forest into an eucalyptus plantation. These companies wanted to build a paper factory in Merauke, Irian Jaya On a 550,000 ha plot set aside by the Government of Indonesia for the project, Scott-Astra planned to cultivate eucalyprus trees on some 10,000 to 12,000 ha each year It was also envisioned that in 1998, a pulp mill with a 1,000-ton/day output would be in operation

The feasibility study for the project was conducted in 1988 by the Forestry Department of Gadjah Mada University with the assistance of a Canadian consulting firm, Lavalın International Local people, NGOs and other interested groups had no knowledge of the activities or the result of the feasibility study.

Since April 1988, the Indonesian NGO Network for Forest Conservation (SKEPHI), the local NGO-Irian Jaya Rural Community Development Foundation (YPMD) and the Indonesian Environmental Forum (WALHI) started their information gathering and discovered many facts about the Scott Paper Co including the consulting firms which conducted the feasibility studies. Since then, letters were sent by the NGOs to the Indonesian government, the Scott-US Headquarters in Philadelpia and other International NGOs (such as International Rain Forest Network), alerting them that the plan couldbe socially and environmentally unsound. The objections, doubts and questions that Indonesian NGOs raised are

- Where would Scott-Astra obtain the labor force? Will they

Amdal is an Indonesian term for an assessment of the impact on the enviroment of a proposed project.

- employ local people or will they "import" labor from Irian Jayal ☐ How will the companies acquire the 200,000 ha of land

- without infringing upon the customary lands of indigenous groups including the Marind, Yah-Ray, Auwyn and Mandobo peoples who live there for thousands of years? In other words, how would Scott-Astra obtain land without creating animosity with the local tribes?

- Will they simply harvest the existing communally-owned eucalyptus be the ecological and social impacts of depleting the natural eucalyptus from the Merauke?

- Will the Scott-Astra use "dioxin" (as is usually done by the Scott Co. in North America) to get rid of unwanted tree species? Basic research has supported the findings that dioxin is likely to cause human cancer, birth defects and damage to the immune system, liver, skin and neuromuscular system

Scott-Astra and the government also debated the issues for more than six months. The Ministry of Environment and Population (KLH) invited the concerned NGOs, representatives of Scott-Astra, the Ministry of Forestry and the Capital Investment Coordinating Board (BKPM) to a consultation meeting in January 1989. It was agreed during the meeting that Irian Jaya's local NGOs as well as SKEPHI and WALHI would be involved in drafting the terms of reference (TOR) for conducting the environmental and social impact analysis and what the companies called an "Infrastructure Development Plan and Test Plantation" (which was already underway) The Minister of Environment and Population gave the NGOs two months from the date of the consultation meeting in which to complete their own study

In order to meet the request of the Ministry of Environment and Population and the proponent, the Irian Jaya Rural Community Development (YPMD) set up a team to conduct the study which involved the Awyn, Marind, Yah-ray and Mandobo peoples and social activists from the local churches in Jayapura (the capital city of Irian Jaya) and Merauke, where the project would be located. The YPMD, which was established in the beginning of 1980s, had already some experience in working with the local people through their community development programs. The churches in Irian Jaya have also been very active working with the local people.

Letter of the Minister of Environment and Population (KLH) to cavironmental NGOs, No. B-53/MENKLH/1/1989, January 7, 1989

In their feasibility study, the three NGOs submitted important recommendations to Scott-Astra, the Ministry of Forestry and KLH regarding, among other things, the proposal of study location boundary, ecological and social components that should be included in the environmental impact assessment (EIA) study and the impact management system that should be established if the proposed activities were to proceed

Besides the study conducted by YPMD, similar studies were also conducted by the Indonesian NGO Network for Forest Conservation (SKEPHI) and the Indonesian Environmental Forum (WALHI) The SKEPHI study gave emphasis to the diversity and sensitivity of the natural condition and resources in Merauke, which would be affected by the Scott-Astra. Also, the SKEPHI study included a highlight of characteristics of the various tribes who live in the surroundings of the proposed area. WALHI's study, on the other hand, emphasized the methodology in conducting what they called a "participatory environmental and social impact assessment study"

Although the studies conducted were not in-depth, it provided valuable information to the government and the proponent The study made by YPMD was particularly useful as it reflected the genuine local conditions. The YPMD's experience in working with the local people provided useful background and a relevant perspective reflecting local people's needs.

One good thing that resulted out of the KLH and Scott-Astra case was the incorporation of the participatory element in the conduct of EIAs in Indonesia. These initiatives and efforts have raised hopes because they involve the local people or NGOs while the terms of reference for the EIA are still being drafted. The Amdal regulation provides for citizens' participation only after the study is done by the consultant. The regulation does not oblige the proponent to consult the public properly while the Amdal's study is still in progress. This provision, as stipulated in Article 31 of the Amdal regulation, is indeed a serious weakness and a barrier to achieving meaningful participation

Pressures from environmental groups, either domestic or international, have pushed for the inclusion of people's participation in Scott-Astra's impact assessment process. Such initiative can be used as

Sec (1) the Iran Jaya Rural Community Development Foundation's Study Report (March, 1989), (2) Introduction to the Environmental and Social Analysis Impast Study on the Pulp Industry in Edera, Merauke, Irian Jaya, which was made by the Indonesian Network for Forest Conservation (SKEPHI), March 1989, and (3) the Proposal of the Participative Amdal of the Scott-Astra., which was prepared by the coalition of several NGOs coordinated by the Indonesian Environmental Forum (WALHI), March 1989.

A model for the new Amdal approach. It is best, however, that prior to submitting the results of the EIA study to the concerned authorities concerned NGOs should once again be given an opportunity to review the final study. The opportunity for this final review is significant because it would give the public a chance to ensure that their suggestions were taken into account by the project proponent Furthermore, a final review may do away with a token participation or participation for the purpose of a "public relations" exercise only.

However, as long as it is not statutorily mandatory to involve the public in the early stages of the study, proponents of projects will have very little incentive to consult the public. In general, proponents (particularly private companies) take the position that it is simply uneconomical to do something beyond the regulatory requirement. Consequently, if there is no such pressure from the concerned NGOs nor the public, there may be little involvement of the concerned NGOs in the EIA study preparation stage Scott and the Indonesian government's willingness to negotiate with the NGOs and local people through their involvement in Amdal process could not have been further implemented.

Scott decided to pull out from Irian Jaya's project in October 1989 It is still unclear why Scott pulled out. Barry Kotek, President of Scott-Astra insists that the decision was based purely on economic factors and that the threat of an international boycott by Scott's consumers had no influence on their decision

As the Director General of Reforestration and Land Rehabilitation, of the Department of Forestry told the media, the Government of Indonesia would offer the project to other investors. At least six foreign companies from Japan, South Korea and Indonesian conglomerates were ready to invest

The reaction of Indonesian NGOs to Scott's withdrawal was focused on the fear that Astra's new partner, if there is one, may be less accommodating than Scott

WALHI Friends of the Earth Indonesia, Development Refugees An Indonesian Studies with Twelve Case Studies Presentation materials for the South East Asia. Regional Consultation on People's Participation in Environmentally Sustainable Development, Puncak Pass, Indonesia, 20 22 March 1990 (p.60)

Scc, Far Eastern Economie Review 2 November, 1989 (p.51)

Taking Environmental Action in the Public Interest: The Indorayon Campaign

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Inti Indorayon Utama (IIU) is a pulp and viscose rayon factory on the Asahan river near Lake Toba in North Sumatera.

From the government's point of view, the existence of this factory is very important because it produces high wet modules (HWM) of rayon and polyester fibers which substitute cotton fiber About 95% of the latter are imported from other countries. The raw materials used are supplied from 86,000 ha of pinus merkusu (needle leaf species). In 1984, IIU was granted 100,000 ha of forestland by the Minister of Forestry. In 1986, this area was extended to 150,000 ha.

The IIU forest area consists of two districts, ie, the District of Simalungun (Sibatuloting forest) and the District of North Tapanuli (Parsoburan, Habinsaran, Silaen and Siborongborong forests).

The deforestation of Sibatuloting in the Simalungun District has caused a drop in water level, thus affecting rice irrigation. The Sibatuloting area serves as a catchment or watershed area for many rivers located in Simalungun District one of the 3 regions of North Sumatera which is a major area for rice production

Based on the survey made by the Department of Public Works/PU (see letter of the Minister of Public Works to the Minister of Forestry dated 17 March 1987), deforestation has had the following impact:

- The water level has decreased in the riverstreams Bah Bolon (Sibatuloting forest is located in the upstream area of Bah Bolon). Ninety percent (90%) of Bah Bolon water is used to irrigate the 760 ha of paddy ricefields. According to a Department of Public Works report, about 210 ha of paddy rice-fields could not be irrigated. Therefore, rice stock in the region was greatly affected.irrigation is covered by mud according to the Minister's letter This is an indication that deforestation has contributed to the erosion and sedimentation of fields

Deforestation of the Sibatuloting area is not the only issue. IIU has also caused pollution in the Asahan River. The local people found out that IIU built an artificial lagoon to contain the industrial waste of the factory The lagoon burst in September 1988 after only a few months of operation The lagoon, which costs US$5 million, spilled some 400.000 cu mof toxic waste into the Asahan River which is close to Lake Toba When the toxic waste was spilled, an obnoxious odor was inhaled from a radius of 40 km to the downstream Asahan River. The color of the river also dramatically turned to black. The spill brought about the dwindling of the incomes of the majority of inhabitants who live along the river and rely on it for fishing and farming

The disaster was brought to the attention of the local government and the media by the local inhabitants The IIU fiasco was often publicized in local and national newspapers Incessant media reporting, pressures from NGOs, the Minister of Department Public Works and the Head of the Simalungun District compelled four top Cabinet Ministers (Industry, Environment, Political and Security Affairs and Public Works) to visit the factory site and the areas of deforestation. It is unusual in Indonesia to have four ministers visit a disaster area together After the visit, the ministers created a fact finding team

Unfortunately, however, only one gain could be noted from such a prestigious visit the appointment of the fact-finding team which did not even involve NGOs nor the local people Despite the wide media exposure, the ministerial visit and the forming of the fact-finding team, which happened to be chaired by the Governor of North Sumatra, there was no concrete solution offered. It seemed that the pollution and deforestation in the Sibatuloting area could not be alleviated.

The inaction triggered Wahana Lingkungan Hidup Indonesia (WALHI) to take legal action against the IIU and government for violation of the environmental rights.A meeting to discuss the campaign strategy was then held on 15 November 1988. This was attended by members of WALHI and the Legal Aid Foundation (YLBHI). It was agreed that

- The lawsuit against IIU and five government offices should be expedited. Lawsuits were divided into two categories regarding

+ the implementation of the EIA (Amdal) policy which would be brought by WALHI and YLBHI to Jakarta's Court; and

+ the compensation for the people's loss which would be brought to Medan's Court, North Sumatera by YLBHI's branch (Medan's Legal Aid Office) and which was to represent the affected people.

▪ Support from the media and other sympathetic groups, including government representatives who showed concern, should be mobilized and widened.

▪ Friends from North Sumatera and NGOs should be motivated to strengthen the WALHI-YLBHI advocacy. The role of regional NGOs in North Sumatera was useful to

+ collect the field data/information to support the lawsuit, and

+ maintain or enhance the sense of cohesiveness of the affected communities and help them organize citizens' action and inform the affected people of their relevant legal rights.

Using Legal Channels

WALHI-YLBHI lawsuit was directed against the National Investment Coordination Board (BKPM), Minister of Industry, Minister of Forestry, Minister of Environment of Population, Governor of North Sumatera, and Inti Indorayon (IIU) Company The purposes of this lawsuit were to

▪ obtain the demands stipulated in the petition (civil lawsuit);
▪ push the government bodies and the company responsible for the disaster to do something concrete to alleviate the problem,
▪ educate the public at large that the violation of environmental rights is punishable;
▪ create the "deterrent effect" for other prospective polluters, and
▪ recognize WALHI's standing and that of the NGOs in court.

In the lawsuit's petition, WALHI accused the BKPM as the fourth defendant who issued the licenses needed to make the IIU's activities operational; the Minister of Environment as the fifth defendant who agreed to and recommended the project's implementation; the IIU as

the sixth defendant who executed all the licenses unlawfully (as the issuance of licenses were not based on the Government Regulation No. 29/1986 pertaining to analysis of impacts upon the environment or what is called Amdal) The plaintiff, therefore, asked the court to rescind all licenses. In addition, WALHI also asked the court to punish the defendants and to give all Amdal documents regarding the IIU to the plaintiff and compensate for the cost of restoring the damaged environment.

Eight months later, on 19 August 1989, the Central Jakarta District Court decided to deny all the plaintiff's accusation. However, WALHI's standing in the court was recognized and accepted although it had no proprietary and economic interest which was traditionally required by the existing Indonesian civil law.

The court's recognition of WALHI's legal standing was based on two articles in the Indonesian Environment Management Act (Act No. 4 of 1982)

- the right and obligation of every person to participate in the management of the environment (article 6); and
- the right of the environmental NGOs to perform a supporting role in the management of the environment (article 19). The development of the law of standing in the other countries also inspired the judges to recognize WALHI's standing to sue (see the Central Jakarta Court's Decision No. 820/PDTG/1980 PN JKT PST)

WALHI and YLBHI accepted the first level court decision and they restrained themselves from appealing the decision to the Court of Appeals Both organizations considered that it was important to maintain the standing recognition clauses. Although the Indonesian legal system does not follow the "judge made law" system, the decision on standing locus standi will hopefully inspire future court decisions. More importantly, by socializing the court decision on standing, it was hoped that the bureaucrats perception on how the NGOs should play their role in defending public interest in general and environment in particular would be changed.

The prevailing attitude of the bureaucrats toward NGOs is far from appropriate they often perceive the involvement of NGOs in voicing the interest of the public as "meddling" in government business. NGOs are, therefore, often treated with suspicion and resentment

Furthermore, the court decision on standing can be seen as the perception of one segment of decisionmakers that the environment is a common property.

Simultaneously, the lawsuit on compensation of the people's loss was brought to the Legal Aid Office in North Sumatera (LBH Medan). Nine affected fishermen initiated the lawsuit against the IIU They argued that the pollution which was caused by the defendant has hampered their livelihood and, therefore, they demanded damages.

The lawsuit has also been denied based on a jurisdictional consideration. It was reported by LBH Medan that the affected people who acted as plaintiffs were intimidated by the IIU's people and they were forced not to appeal to the high court.

Mobilizing Support from Sympathetic Groups

Support was obtained from different groups, 1.c., media, experts,government circles, NGOs, studentry and funding agencies. The media had a significant role in highlighting the case and, thus, largely influenced public opinion. The level of understanding of technical matters from the WALHI-YLBHI team was also obtained from the experts. Several experts meetings were conducted. Their assistance, however, became limited as they refused to be involved in court hearings. As civil servants, the experts were not free to air their opinions. (In Indonesia, one is usually perceived as an expert when holding office in government.) Similarly, NGOs all over Indonesia willingly participated in the survey conducted by WALHI. More than 60% of the NGOs in Indonesia affirmed their support for WALHI's legal action

Motivating NGOs in North Sumatera

Four NGOs were responsible for coordinating the IIU advocacy in North Sumatera: Wahana Informası Masyarakat (WIM), LBH Medan, KSSPM, and Sintesa Forum Studi (SFS)

LBH Medan's task was to prepare the lawsuit and compensation against the IIU and organize the "barefoot" EIAs' training for the community leaders of the affected community

WIM acted as forum for information exchange among NGOs all over North Sumatera. KSPPM's role was to organize the affected communities and also to coordinate the training of barefoot EIAS. The fishermen who brought the lawsuit to the Medan District Court were graduates of this training program.

The advocacy of IIU case is not over yet. The process of bringing IIU to court has taught much of the importance of close cooperation between NGOs and government at the local and national level in creating an effective campaign However, the campaign must be examined from two levels.

1. On the macro level, the advocacy of IIU case was successful in challenging enforcement and in restructuring BAPEDAL or Indonesian Environmental Protection Agency which has now been set up to oversee the implementation of Amdal (environmental impact assessment). The environmental legislative drafts were also prepared by the government. For example, the regulation on "strict liability" gives people parity in court. This parity enables the people to alleviate the burden of proof of their polluted environment. The recognition of NGOs in the court has also impacted mostly the bureaucratic perception of environmental NGOs

2. On the micro level, the people learned that the development of a sense of solidarity and cohesiveness is an important factor in advocacy work. Community action is a legal recourse which should be done simultaneously with legal advocacy. The combined efforts of state level action and people empowerment have inspired Indonesian NGOs. Strategic networking with regional groups working on similar problems will certainly be more efficient and effective.

Reflections on Indonesia Experience

Indorayon and Scott-Astra Cases: Headstarts

Although the advocacy of the Indorayon case is far from being won with respect to getting relief from the adverse environmental effects of the factory's production, the legal standing obtained by NGOs is held as an unprecedented gain in itself. Despite having no proprietary and economic interest in the case, which was traditionally required by the Indonesian civil law, WALHI's standing as having the right to sue was accepted and recognized by the Indonesian court. The recognition of the NGOs to become party to the case is perceived as a stimulus for changing the bureaucrats' unpleasant perception of NGOs about defending the public interest In the United States and Canada, getting legal standing for NGOs was difficult as it took five to seven years to obtain it from the courts.

Meanwhile, what has been achieved in the Scott-Astra case inspires hope for more effective participation of NGOs and local people in preparing studies on proposed commercial activities affecting communities. The extent of NGOs' and local people's participation went beyond the Amdal regulation, which unfortunately allowed consultation only after the study has been done by technical experts/consultants. Even this, however, is now changing in favor of the people

A Basis for Regional Exchange

There is a common observation that in the evolution of legal systems in many countries in the region, customary laws are marginalized and the resulting court system is patterned after Western Jurisprudence. Nevertheless, there are still instances when law is applied favorably to specific NGO advocacies such that NGOs could form grounds for issue-based exchanges. In fact, there are many precedents in the court system sometimes parallel cases that could sow the seed for sharing and exchange and would even lead to exploring the formation of a pressure coalition in the South Asian region.

An example is the gas leak case in Delhi. The judgment obtained in the case is considered very progressive, and it was suggested that documents pertaining to this case be circulated all over the region. By sharing this kind of information, NGOs in the region may be inspired in making companies criminally liable for their offenses against communities and the environment. Corollary to this, the creation of an Asean Court of Justice was suggested as a second-level approach. This court will try corporations that have damaging investments in the region

Assessing North-South Collaborations

The cases of the Indorayon and Scott-Astra have gained support from international NGOs, particularly those from the North. During the workshop, the participants focused on the role of Northern organizations with respect to those from the South on various aspects

Support system. NGOs operating under repressive regimes need support from the outside. It is under this situation where NGOs from the North could be very useful, given their better access to information, media and their government resources which NGOS from the South might not have. As what has been shown by the Scott-Astra case, the open information in the North has served as an early warning or alert system for the Indonesian NGOs. Moreover, the information obtained from their foreign partners helped build up their campaign

Backlash of perceptions. Experience has, however, shown that partnership with Northern NGOs could militate against the image of the Southern NGOs, especially when the NGO is perceived as a tool of foreign intervention. When a group like an NGO is seen as anti-nationalist, it is likely to risk its credibility before its own government, people and even its friends. Some NGOs in Indonesia are into this situation, and this has prompted them to be very cautious in accepting funding support from foreign organizations

Non-synchronization of actions. The involvement of a lot of groups, both local and international, in the Scott-Astra campaign demonstrates how local initiatives could be short-circuited from the outside. The sudden pullout of the Scott-Astra project from Irian Jaya purportedly because of an increased campaign by US-based NGOs to boycott Scott products, is viewed by WALHI neither as a success nor a failure. In the first place, WALHI did not want to simply stop the

project, bat wanted likewise to build a mechanism by which to deal with similar future problems This is most cogent considering that a number of other foreign companies are interested to replace Scott One can never be sure if such companies are as sensitive to boycott, just like Scott.

WALHI sees that despite having common objectives, the lack of uming of the international NGOs campaign in relation with the local movement denied the local NGOs their opportunity to set in place, much less perfect, a process of relating and being heard

The failure to give equal emphasis to action and process was admitted as an important learning by both the participants from the North and South.

Grappling with the Solidarity Issues

A number of anecdotes were shared by the participants on how the local NGOs and their foreign partners grapple with solidarity issues. While both parties are zealous to respond to cach other, the differences in their situations and perspectives make it difficult to do so. To sympathize is one thing, to empathize is another

During the 1980s, for instance, several other networks were formed. A group of ten big NGOs was asked by a donor agency to manage a fund. This group, together with another group and the donor agency, formed a foundation. WALHI was not into this foundation because it wanted to stay as a loose nerwork, a principle which donors found difficult to understand Through this experience, WALHI has shown that networking is like a forest where diversity should be maintained, big NGOs coexist with small, activist NGOs, each one maintains its own program of agenda Any move to push the network to monoculture would only cause problems.

The WALHI Lesson

The breadth and scope of WALHI's concerns show that networking means simultaneous action we could not fight poverty first, and pursue social justice later Networking is doing things simultaneously or doing several things at the same time The challenge is how to orchestrate the different interests and to understand the roles of groups within the network Activist organizations, for instance, are criticized for only making noises. On the other hand, activist organizations criticize the development workers of perpetuating the established system. This should not be the case because some could do lobbying effectively, while others could do the

critiquing through media. Still others could do very well in working with the grassroots recognizing the different roles for everybody, networking may therefore imply heterogeneity. Linkages need not only be with NGOs but also with media, universities, artists' and religious groups. It is both horizontal and vertical WALHI approximates these traits. If one were to visualize WALHI, it can be seen as an animal with two heads, three tails and many faces.

Problems and Challenges

The official development strategy being adopted by the government in eastern Indonesia compromises the integrity of the environment and the right of the indigenous people. Every square inch of Irian Jaya, for instance, is laid out like a grid with state agriculture, mining and deforestation projects intended. The challenge now for the Indonesian NGOs is how to strengthen their linkages so that they can appropriately address the issues and problems in the arca There is now a need to get more NGOs to move to castern Indonesia, but NGOs it seems, could not keep pace with government and business interests.

In an effort to become more proactive, WALHI intends to conduct seminars on the subject of development in East Indonesia to educate the people on the potential problems, courses of action and the legal resources that may be obtained. Environmental impact assessment (EIA) are conducted in the villages and monitored in Jakarta.

On the networking process, the major problem is diversity. If the network would like to make an impact, it should organize especially when there is a change in leadership. On the other hand, there is a real danger of losing effectiveness when the network gets institutionalized for effectiveness derives its strength from diversity How to arrive at a balance, 1.c., transform diversity into action and, at the same time, increase the quality of their work remains a big challenge.

THE PAKISTAN EXPERIENCE

Situationer

The Women's Issue

As in many other third world countries, the status of women in Pakistan has always been dismally low. Sociocultural traditions, customary and tribal laws, the feudal system and the manipulation of religion have all contributed toward giving women of a second class status and keeping them backward.

The tragedy of the majority of women begins at birth. A baby girl is generally not welcome. Boys are given preference in care, nutrition and attention. This is reflected in higher mortality rates among girls during infancy. The sex ratio is 111 male to 100 female (90 to 105 is considered a normal range by demographers).

Those who survive face a difficult life ahead. Married off at a young age, they get involved in rigorous housework and childrearing The crude birthrate of 3.5% is inordinately high. And then out of every thousand infants born, 100 die in the first few months. Women not just suffer the ill effects of childbearing: 60% of young mothers in Pakistan face the trauma of losing at least one baby before it is a year old. Eight out of a thousand women die during childbirth and 90% of mothers suffer from anemia. The average life expectancy for women is 54 years as compared to men which is 55 years.

The low level of literacy (16% as compared to men's 35%) makes them ready victims as they are not aware of their legal rights. The women in rural areas with 7% literacy are worse off (Population Census, 1981)

Even where women have been given legal rights, the lack of lulled women not to make significant strides to strengthen their support systems and the lack of will to effectively implement laws have position. In a country beset with poverty and illiteracy, the government is more concerned with power struggle between the bureaucracy, the army and the feudals. The concerns of the common man have rarely been reflected in the policies of the government. And

women, being among the weakest sector of the society, have always received the lowest priority. In fact, women in Pakistan have been, by and large, a non-issue

Culturally, women in Pakistan are not seen as individuals but in their family relationship as mothers, sisters, daughters and wives Though the Islamic value system considers women as individuals in their own right to own and dispose property, acquire education, seek an occupation and make decisions about marriage and divorce, they are still, however, treated as dependent entities. This dependence is cultural, social and economic Even when she works outside her home, her earnings are under the control of the male head of the household

The job situation is no better The social prejudices are strong against women taking up a paid job. Lack of training and education also handicap them Although women could work everywhere, in both rural and urban sectors, their labor is usually unpaid, hence, there is no recognition. In the 1981 census, only 2% of the women are recognized as members of the organized labor force. They hold less than 3% of civil service jobs and less than 1% of top executive positions in government service, business or any other profession Female unemployment is 5.2% compared with 2.3% for men.

But the low status of women in Pakistanı society cannot be reduced to statistics only sometimes data is not available or deliberately withheld or tampered with. But the fact is Pakistan retrogresses in granting women their rights.

Why Pakistani Women are Oppressed and Repressed

To fully understand the current status of Pakistanı women, many aspects in the Pakıstanı society should be analyzed. Can something be done to alleviate women's status in a male-dominated patriarchal society? What can political parties do to involve women? Have women asserted themselves at critical periods? Did the fundamentalists/religious orthodoxists play a significant role in maintaining a low regard for women?

Perhaps, the answer to all of these are more glaring than trực And yet, all these factors put together would have not led to the emergence of Women's Action Forum (WAF) if not for a particular twist in the political history of Pakistan, making it not only inevitable but also imperative

At the time when Pakistan was created, Muslim women had some significant rights under their personal law (dissolution of Muslim)

Marriages Act, Guardians and Wards Act, etc), something obtained for them by the leaders of the Muslim League prior to partition. They received the rights to vote and participate in political affairs of the country on equal terms with men, these rights being guaranteed constitutionally The subsequent constitution expressed this most comprehensively:

Article 25: "There shall be no discrimination on the basis of sex alone."

Article 34: "Steps shall be taken to ensure the full participation of women in all spheres of life."

Women are also provided reserved seats in the National and Provincial Assemblies to ensure their participation in the political process. This is the only country in the world where such measures exist. Many may strongly disagree with the manner in which women come to those reserved seats, it nevertheless ensured their presence in the legislative assemblies. (The provision expired in 1990 and efforts are being exerted to revise it).

In 1961, the administration of President Abbe Khan promulgated the Family Laws Ordinance (FLO) which remains the only reform law relating to the rights of women. The ordinance made no significant changes in the substantive law of the land, yet it was considered as a major step in the right direction. With all its gaps and loopholes, it gave the women of Pakistan possibilities for a brighter future. While no further laws favorable to women were made until 1977, the status of women in Pakistan was never threatened.

Some significant moves were made during the People's Party regime of Bhutto, which could have resulted in more benefits for women. Pakistan participated actively in the Mexico conference in 1975 and thereafter, a Commission on Women's Rights was set up. The commission suggested drastic changes in the law and administrative policies, and recommended the setting up of a women's division in the government. However, martial law was declared in July 1977. All these efforts came to an end

Pakistan's History

When the independence movement was going on in India, the orthodox fundamentalists among the Muslims strongly opposed the creation of an independent Muslim state. Not only did they oppose it; they also declared the movement to be un-Islamic. Yet when

Pakistan was created as an independent state, the opponents of Pakistan moved to the new country as self-appointed moral custodians of the people. These politico-religious parties had strong nuisance value in the politics of the country (opposing FLO and all other progressive measures). However, they neither won the confidence of the people nor achieved any success in the electoral process, except for a handful of seats in elections. The situation today remains the same

However, in 1977, this minority group of orthodox fundamentalists acquired an unexpected opportunity to unleash their pent-up frustration on an unsuspecting and unprepared populace Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto was arrested and martial law was imposed General Zia Ul Haque gained power at the time of an unholy alliance of the army and religious orthodoxy This potent and potentially dangerous combination, plus the political circumstances during the period, made it possible for the orthodox fundamentalists to realize their ambitions

The Start of Women's Repression

In March 1981, Zia Ul Haque announced the Islamization of the Penal Code of Pakistan and co-opted the members of the Jamat-e-Islamı in his cabinet. Since the Jamat's position on the status of women in society was very clear, the adverse effect on women of the political setup did not any more come as a surprise. Consequently, a number of detrimental measures affecting women were passed by the government between 1978 and 1981 including the Hudood Ordinance The long-standing demand of Jamat-e-Islamı for a separate women's university, which was part of their election manifesto in 1970, was accepted with a commitment given by the Minister of Education in 1979

In April 1981, a campaign to curtail women's rights under the pretext of Islamization had gained momentum Both print and electronic media were used by the right-wing political parties and Mullahs in attacking women and their personal liberties. A womaris right to dress as she pleases was negated by imposing the dress code Wrapping herself with chadar and covering her head was made compulsory in government offices, schools and colleges. The concept of chadar and chardevarı became synonymous with the honor and dignity of women she must stay at home, or wrap herself in a chadar if she must stay out. Television announcers were required to cover their heads and those who refused were dismissed.

This ordinance does not differentiate between rape and adultery

At the slightest opportunity, women's rights were attacked. Their right to work was questioned. Their liberty of driving a car was even debated in a provincial assembly. The repeal of Family Laws Ordinance was demanded. A planned move to segregate women had indeed begun. As a first step, women were barred from spectator sports. The deliberate attempts to limit the role of women in society within the so-called framework of Islam reopened the discussion on the issue of her rights in society

The Hudood Ordinance: Rape Equals Adultery

In 1979, Hudood Ordinance was promulgated by Zia Ul Haque. This ordinance did not differentiate between rape and adultery. Any woman could be implicated in a false case and the burden of proof fell on the women, even if she was a rape victim. The implications would not come to light antil the conviction of a man and a woman by a Session Court in 1981: the woman was sentenced to 100 lashes while the man was sentenced to stoning to death.

The case involved a married couple whose documentary proof of marriage was rejected on the grounds that the registration date took place after the claimed marriage date, and by which time, the woman was already pregnant.

The young woman, Fahmida, married against her parents' wishes and outside her community and social class. This angered her parents and in a desperate effort to retrieve their daughter, they filed a case of kidnapping against her husband. When Fahmida refuted the charge, the police, even without authorization, demanded documentary proof of marriage. The police rejected the document presented and instead Instituted an unwarranted case of adultery leading to the cruel punishment.

Emergence of a Women's Movement in Pakistan

ANIS HAROON

WOMEN'S ACTION FORUM

The Birth of WAF

The case of Fahmida, with such severe punishment unknown in the history of Pakistan, prompted nationwide anger and resentment It moved the educated and conscious women who were already feeling the impact of the right-wing domination, particularly the members of Shirkat Gah who took the initiative They contacted individual women and members of other organizations who were prepared to take up with the government issues pertaining to arbitrary laws and bigger issues such as outright injustice and inhumanity. The initial meetings were attended by 30 women, leading to the formation of the

Women's Action Forum (WAF) WAF was immediately endorsed by seven organizations in Karachi With emphasis on action, WAF was prepared to appeal in the Fahmida Allah Bux case on behalf of the accused. WAF established contact with one of the eminent lawyers of Karachi who was nterested in the case. It also launched a signature campaign pertaining to other issues affecting women such as participation of women in sports and cultural activities, strengthening of Family Laws Ordinance and rejection of the proposed separate universities for women.

The signature campaign was carried out in four cities where 7,000 signatures were collected. Still, the government did not acknowledge the campaign results, and no action on the campaign demands was taken. Nevertheless, WAF continued its struggle for the cause of women

WAF won a major victory in generating public opinion against the government for its role in the Fahmida Allah Bux case. When Khalid Ishaq, an authority on Islamic jurisprudence, pleaded the case in the Supreme Court, the case proved to be weak and the sentence not justified. The case was returned to Karachi and finally dismissed From

the women's point of view, the final decision on the case was important for it opened new avenues for women to continue their struggle.

WAF's Second Major Case

Safia Bibi, an 18-year old blind daughter of a poor peasant was raped by her landlord and his son. Safia became pregnant and gave birth to a child who died later. Safia's father filed a case of rape against the landlord and his son. The accused were set free on grounds of insufficient evidence, and using the Hudood Ordinance as alıbı, Safia Bibi was arrested on charges of adultery. Her pregnancy was used as evidence and she was sentenced to three years of imprisonment and public lashing.

The sentence shocked the general public, moreso because Safia was blind. WAF publicized the case both within and outside the country WAF-Lahore took up the case actively and some members went to Sahiwal to obtain record. Trial proceedings were brought to Lahore. Lawyers filed an appeal against the sentence while three chapters of WAF, along with other women's organizations, held protest meetings in big cities. With the help of the press, the case was made a big public issue Perhaps to avoid embarrassment, the government asked the Federal Shariat Court for the first time to transfer the case back for review. The court accepted Safia Bibi's statement and she was set free

WAF's Gains from the Case

WAF-Lahore followed up the case and the court proceedings. The Karachi chapter mobilized women's organizations and drummed up support from the press. Three chapters of the WAF coordinated and sustained the campaign

Besides the Fahmida Allah Bux and Safia Bibi cases, other incidents took place to which WAF responded with pickets, protest meetings, resolutions and press statements. Some of these incidents included parading women naked in Nawabpur and flogging a woman publicly in Bhawalpur

WAF came out as a much more organized body which could deal with such cases more effectively

A Further Challenge

Meanwhile, the need to challenge the Hudood Ordinance emboldened since the case of Famida Allah Bux. This time, WAF-Karachi, along with other organizations (APWA, Women's Lawyers

Associations, Tehrik-c-Niswan, Shirkat Gah, Anjuman Jamhoriat Pasand Khawateen) filed a writ in the Federal Shariat Court (FSC) challenging the Hudood Ordinance. The writ was taken up by the FSC in late 1985, and due to the passage of the 8th Amendment, the petition became null and void.

The Law of Evidence

In April 1982, the Council of Islamic Ideology proposed a new law of evidence. This law prescribed that in all cases, other than those falling under the Hudood Ordinance, the evidence provided by two male witnesses will be required to prove a crime In the absence of two male witnesses, one male and two female witnesses will be required

The Law of Evidence elicited negative reactions, and WAF was the first organization to denounce it publicly Not only did WAF condemn it but also took steps to inform women about the law's implications by conducting seminars, lectures, discussions and protest meetings. Theatrical skills were used to highlight implications of the law while poems and songs were used to get the message across

Despite strong protests and lobbying against the law, the government did not pay heed English press, which was relatively free from the pressures of the fundamentalists, lent its full support to the demands of women. A number of women journalists who were either active members or supporters of WAF contributed a lot in supporting the cause of women and strengthening the movement. On the other hand, the Urdu press supported the fundamentalists openly and carried a disinformation campaign against the WAF activists, calling them "westernized" and "anti-religion."

On 12 February 1983, the campaign reached its climax when about 300 women in Lahore staged a demonstration against the Law of Evidence. The call was made by the Punjab Women Lawyers Association, and women from different organizations including WAF responded enthusiastically A large number of police personnel surrounded the protesters, who were prevented from marching towards the High Court. Having failed to stop the protesters, the police resorted to brute force, beating up and arresting women. About twenty women were injured and thirty were arrested. Some of the protesters, however, managed to reach the High Court.

The impact of the February 12 protest was felt throughout the country. It was the first demonstration against the martial law regime of Zia Ul Haque. Thereafter, protest meetings were organized, and

WAF-Karachi held a picket against the use of naked force by the state In response, the fundamentalists attacked women and declared their act as un-Islamic. At this point, there was an upsurge of interest by political parties over the political potential of WAF.

During the same year, the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy (MRD) had gained momentum, albeit with limited success, except in Sindh where it was a popular grassroots movement Women from Sindhiani Tehrik, a peasant-based women's organization actively participated in MRD WAF resisted the pressure of joining MRD but established contacts with Sindhiani Tehrik Seminars were organized on such topics as "Democratic mocratic Rights of Women" and "Sindh Situation" WAF demanded the restoration of the 1973 Constitution and the release of political prisoners. And although none of the WAF chapters were in favor of direct participation in the political processes, WAF started to join the mainstream struggle and established contacts with the liberal forces. Meanwhile, the Law of Evidence was passed in 1984, in spite of all the conflicting issues.

A Short Period of Relief

In the meantime, Benazir Bhutto was received with unprecedented enthusiasm upon her return to Pakistan from political exile. It was a period when the fundamentalist parties left the government and mounted pressure for Islamization and promulgation of the Shariat Laws. This development threatened the cause of women and WAF felt the need for allies in countering the impending Shariat Bill. WAE, on a one-point program against the Shariat Bill, successfully rallied support from the democratic and liberal forces in political parties and among journalists, lawyers, trade unionists and students. A joint action committee led by WAF was formed. A well-attended seminar was organized in Karachi and a demonstration in front of the National Assembly was staged by WAF-Islamabad. Efforts were made to confront the members of Parliament especially women-members, and this resulted in a diminished focus on Islamization Apparently, too, the Shariat Bill went into cold storage

In 1988, elections were held and with the active lobbying by WAF, major political parties incorporated women's issues in their manifesto. Subsequently, the installation of a democratically elected government with a political party headed by Benazir Bhutto the new regime to take up women's issues eased up pressure a bit. A woman a came as a big relief on 2 December 1989. Promises by women's bank was set up as well as the committees and commissions

Pertaining to women's issues. Beyond these, however, no other concrete steps were taken by the government which took the plea of not having two-thirds of the majority in the assembly to enable it to push for reform measures. Amidst this scenario, WAF consolidated its position and declared that all human rights issues are a matter of its concern

Fighting the Shariat Bill

The Shariat Bill was moved to the Senate as early as 1985 by two private members of the James-e-Islami. This bill seeks to establish the supremacy of the Sunni sect, thus, its and passage could trigger sectarian clashes. If implemented in its proposed form, the Shariat Bill would give rise to sectarianism and give sanction to the age-old tradition of discrimination against women. Among others, the bill stipulates that there would be no appeal from a judgment by the Shariat Courts. It conceives of "ulemas" as judges of the courts. This would deprive the legislature of its real power and seriously affect the judicial system.

To fight the impending Shariat Bill, a broadbased front was created in 1986. A joint action committee was formed to implement WAF's one-point program. Thirty organizations, including trade unions and political parties joined the front This was a conscious effort by WAF activists to link up the struggle for women's rights with the progressive and political forces

By July 1990, the Shariat Bill was already approved by the Senate But before it could reach the National Assembly, the body was dissolved and Benazir Bhutto's government was challenged in a midterm election Bhutto was harshly criticized by the fundamentalists for delaying and not being sincere in implementing the bill

The fight against the Shariat Bill again came into sharper focus when the elected government was dismissed under pressure from the fundamentalists and lost in the October 1990 election A new government led by the Islamic Democratic Alliance, backed by a united opposition, was installed in November 1990. Soon, the promises of Islamization and Shariat Laws were made. With the fundamentalists once again sharing the power in government, the pressure mounted up for the passage of the Shariat Bill.

The WAF Impact

The emergence of WAF is a milestone in the history of women's movement in Pakistan For the first time, women organized

themselves in such a way that they have become an important force They fought on two grounds first, against Islamization, which was directly threatening the status of women; and second, the legitimacy of Zia Ul Haque's regime of framing laws From then on, there was no looking back. Women continued to demonstrate their disapproval of a dictatorial regime through pickets, demonstrations, resolutions and press statements. It was a definite departure from the old pattern of charitable work being done by most of the existing organizations The women's issues became central, and political parties recognized the need to address them. In short, WAF catalyzed other groups to become active on women's issues

How far WAF has been successful in achieving its objectives is difficult to say. But considering the apathy that has taken over Pakistani Society today, there is no doubt that WAF has made a lasting impact on society as a whole. This is supported by the fact that in 1979, when the Hudood Ordinances were passed, there was not much protest. Women's organizations and feminist groups did not comprehend the repercussions of the ordinance. When WAF launched its protest campaign, it was more or less alone in its fight. Later, a committee was set up composed of some WAF members and a host of outsiders to protest the ordinance The Committee for the Repcal of the Hudood Ordinance did not only do a fair amount of useful work, it also showed the way to vigilance on issues affecting women

Today, when any new ordinance is promulgated or a bill is tabled either in the Senate or the National Assembly, women would be concerned. And even if they do not actively participate in lobbying or picketing, there is a much wider sense of the proposed bill or ordinance through discussions of its implications

The impact of WAF could be summarized in an article written by Hamza Alvi entitled "Pakistani Women in a Changing Society" (1990):

"The decade of the 1980s has truly been a decade of the women of Pakistan. A powerful women's movement has made a dramatic impact on Pakistan's political scene."

Reflections on Pakistan Experience

More Difficult Times Ahead

Women in Pakistan always find themselves in a very disadvantaged position when addressing human capital issues because these issues are left to men only. Religious orthodoxy and also repressive laws relegated women in the background. A democratic government with a woman Prime Minister, a topmost position, is indeed a psychological boost for women

There are few educated women in Pakistan who take up women's issues, and they struggle hard to bring women's issues into the mainstream. But once in the mainstream, they lose perspective because of lure of economic-generating activities that normally accompany financial assistance Women should therefore weigh their priorities before they accept commitments.

WAF, for its part, has been criticized as being urban-based. It has, however, linked with a peasant-based organization and has conducted joint programs with such groups. In fact, WAF invites women from rural areas to attend workshops participates in rural-based activities such as health programs.

WAF takes an apolitical stance, but is indirectly involved in actions supporting the restoration of democracy in Pakistan

Funding

WAF does not accept foreign funding It sustains itself by contributing monthly donations and organizing some evenings with women-patrons. Some organizations help in publications and members operate from their homes.

Many members feel that it is better for them to muster courage to articulate their conditions in the country rather than get caught in quasi-developmental work like fund-raising. A lot of funding kills the spirit of protest and courage, with the beneficiary NGO getting mired in preparing narrative reports and financial statements to the donor

WAF's Future

WAF was initially organized by professional, middle-class women

and has since been a popular front for individual women and organizations. While it has drawn women from all classes, representation from the lower socioeconomic group is negligible. Its outreach capacity to the poor is limited. Unless a concerted effort is made to bring women from the lower middle class ie, professional groups like primary school teachers and nurses, and nonprofessional groups such as factory workers constitute a massforce. the current membership will not

Of late, there is a growing awareness of the dangers of taking part in WAF's activities. The men, at times, oppose the actions of their women in joining such activities for two reasons one, they are afraid what the women of their families are getting into dangerous activities; two, they want to maintain the status quo

Men wonder about equality of women and what it means to them. They worry that man's supremacy might not be accepted by the women as a matter of right

The growing fear among men should be viewed positively. It can be translated into a heightened sense of awareness and thinking Often for this reason, women would rather work behind the scenes where they would not be very visible in the promotion of progressive ideas, an action which authorities look upon in a negative light

However, if the fear could be overcome, WAF would see a lot more active participation. Economic factors have helped men overcome their fear. More and more women from urban-based lower-middle and middle classes have started to work outside of the house because it is becoming increasingly difficult to meet the economic needs of the family solely on the earnings of the male family member

Even though the entire burden of home responsibilities rests on the woman, the attitudes of the new economically-independent women are beginning to change. Working for economic benefits, however, will not automatically improve the status of women. This change will be achieved by organizing women along their agenda and linking them with the political process.

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WAF was initially organized by professional, middle-class women

and has since been a popular front for individual women and organizations. While it has drawn women from all classes, representation from the lower socioeconomic group is negligible. Its outreach capacity to the poor is limited. Unless a concerted effort is made to bring women from the lower middle class — i.e., professional groups like primary school teachers and nurses, and nonprofessional groups such as factory workers — the current membership will not constitute a massforce.

Of late, there is a growing awareness of the dangers of taking part in WAF's activities. The men, at times, oppose the actions of their women in joining such activities for two reasons: one, they are afraid what the women of their families are getting into dangerous activities, two, they want to maintain the status quo.

Men wonder about equality of women and what it means to them. They worry that man's supremacy might not be accepted by the women as a matter of right.

The growing fear among men should be viewed positively. It can be translated into a heightened sense of awareness and thinking. Often for this reason, women would rather work behind the scenes where they would not be very visible in the promotion of progressive ideas, an action which authorities look upon in a negative light.

However, if the fear could be overcome, WAF would see a lot more active participation. Economic factors have helped men overcome their fear. More and more women from urban-based lower-middle and middle classes have started to work outside of the house because it is becoming increasingly difficult to meet the economic needs of the family solely on the earnings of the male family member.

Even though the entire burden of home responsibilities rests on the woman, the attitudes of the new economically-independent women are beginning to change. Working for economic benefits, however, will not automatically improve the status of women. This change will be achieved by organizing women along their agenda and linking them with the political process.

THE BANGLADESH EXPERIENCE

Situationer

NGOs in Bangladesh live and work in a "state which has pervasive influence and a repressive structure." People perceive that the government is only interested in plundering, along with the beneficiaries of the patronage system namely the elite, bureaucrats and politicians. This is the challenge for NGOs to operate effectively in Bangladesh.

At first, sometime after 1971, NGOs started with relief and rehabilitation. This did not last long because the society was not in such harmony that resources would flow to those who need them. From being relief organizations, NGOs shifted to building grassroots organizations called *institutions of the poor of people's organizations*. This effort educated the people on the structural causes of poverty and motivated them to do something about the problem. More specifically, it taught the people how to come together, become self-reliant, be able to use their own resources and get out of dependence from borrowed money.

People were taught to fight social injustice, thus, people's organizations have become catalysts of social action. Such NGOs constantly engaged in reflection and analysis as the process would show what has gone wrong and what has gone right.

In a society where the government fails to deliver services to the majority, a vacuum results. In a way, the NGOs are pulled to fill in this vacuum. In Bangladesh, the government and donor agencies enjoin the NGOs in their activities, encouraging the NGOs to take on national programs such as immunization. This trend has polarized some NGOs into government-sponsored programs, on the one hand, and development-oriented ones, on the other.

With the influx of donor agencies, several donor-driven NGOs sprouted. Their programs range from very specific activities such as vasectomy, delivery of condoms and digging of latrines. The development-oriented NGOs who have become the minority group recognized the imminent threat. They came together and clarified

their vision and reason for being. After a number of meetings, they resolved that their primary goal is to strengthen the local people's organizations, federate into a union organized by the NGOs themselves, and ultimately form an inter-NGO federation. This means that the local POs would be organized into larger PO units and that they would network within themselves so that their plans, programs and participation in the political processes could find larger expression and, therefore, more impact.

Although networking has already gained roots among NGOs, the concept of inter-NGO federation is to be tested for viability. To this end. NGOs in Bangladesh try to tighten their grip among themselves. They set up district chap chapters of NGOs involved in networking. These chapters serve as fora for sharing information, problems and activities, creating an understanding of NGOs operating within the district, So far, the effort has brought together NGOs with interest in environment, land reform, women and development, agriculture and education.

Land Reform Issue: A Historical Background

Legacies of pre-colonial and colonial history of Bangladesh exist in its dominantly backward agrarian structure of economy. 80% of its 116 million population depend absolutely on agricultural productivity and land.

The British colonial rulers in India (Bangladesh was part of British India) settled their imperial interests permanently with the landed aristocracy called *zemindars*. Peasant uprisings against the local zemindars, their master-rulers and the British colonial power grew in the later half of the eighteenth, through the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century.

The government was confronted with several problems: acquiring a stable land management system, overcoming the British oppressive colonial government and the Pakistani rulers during their 24-year reign, and solving the repeated peasant unrest in Bangladesh over a period of 200 years. These problems amply justified the need for structural land reforms that would guarantee social justice for the poorest and highest productivity for the agricultural sector of the economy.

After the partition of India in the late 1940s, Bangladesh which was made a part of Pakistan, saw a series of land policy pronouncements in the form of laws and rules. The East Bengal State Acquisition and Tenancy Act of 1950, primarily sought to abolish the notorious zemindary system and promised other reforms for the

sharecroppers and the rural poor. The landless and marginal farmers were supposed to get allotment of the lands recovered through the enactment of the land ceiling which was fixed at 33.3 acres per family This lofty promise made by the government was not realized during the 24-year of Pakistani rule.

After the independence of Bangladesh in December 1971, the newly established Bangladesh government headed by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman promulgated a presidential order promising land reforms in favor of the landless, marginal farmers and poor sharecroppers.

The land ceiling which was raised to 125 acres per family in favor of the rural elites and big absentee landlords during General Ayub Khan's rule over Pakistan in the sixties was again reduced to 33.3 acres by the new Bangladesh regime. But the other presidential orders and rules relating to land distribution and sharecroppers' rights remained virtually ineffective. A true land reform was never effected due to weak political will of the policy-makers at the highest level, lack of organizational determination on the part of the implementing agencies, and the nonexistence of grassroot organizational leadership among the beneficiaries — the landless and the marginal farmers.

Another Chance for Land Reform*

SHAMSUL HUDA

NGOS COORDINATION COUNCIL FOR LAND REFORM

In its Rome Conference in 1979, the World Conference for Agricultural Reform and Development (WCARRD) stressed the need for agricultural and land reforms in developing countries to pave the way for sustainable development. The World Bank then started to encourage agricultural reforms in the Asian countries, taking South Korea and Taiwan as their model.

Whether it was in keeping with the WCARRD prescription or a self-initiated move, the Government of Bangladesh in 1982 commissioned the Land Reform Committee to study the problems relating to land reform. A report was prepared and submitted in early 1983. Some of the recommendations of the committee were considered and the Bangladesh Land Reform Ordinance was promulgated in 1984. This ordinance, which was later ratified by the parliament, among other things, provided for —

☐ refixing of land ceiling at 20 acres per family;

☐ free distribution of government land only among landless;

☐ preservation of the rights of the sharecroppers through a five-year agreement between landowner and the sharecroppers;

☐ declaration of benami ownership or ownership by proxy as illegal and punishable; and

☐ fixing of the minimum daily wage for agricultural laborers at 3.27 kg of rice or its equivalent in cash.

The Key Issues

Through various social actions and processing of government decisions, the following concerns were identified:

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See **Land Reforms and Land Management in Bangladesh and West Bengal by Kamal Siddiqui and others.*

☐ recovery of ceiling surplus land;

☐ free distribution of government-owned and ceiling surplus land among the genuine landless men and women;

☐ ensuring the minimum daily wage for the rural/agricultural laborers who are mostly unorganized;

☐ ensuring the tilling and sharecropping rights of the sharecroppers through execution of agreement between the landowner and the sharecropper;

☐ abolition of the ownership by proxy (benami ownership) and absentee landlordism;

☐ organizing the landless, agricultural laborers and marginal farmers through their grassroot organizations/groups and their nationwide networking; and

☐ encouragement and initiation of campaigns for simultaneous actions toward the reform of land ownership both rural and urban areas.

How the NGO Council for Land Reform Came to Being

The Land Reform Ordinance which was enacted by the Government of Bangladesh in 1984 was not effective until 1987 because of the lack of political initiative and the bureaucratic lethargy on the part of the government.

However, these missing initiatives were offset with the reforms brought about when Mokammel Haq joined as Secretary of the Ministry of Land late in 1986. A dynamic and energetic civil servant, Mr. Haq thought of ways to seriously implement government laws. Saidur Rahman, then Deputy Country Representative of Oxfam and a personal acquaintance of Mokammel Haq, paid a courtesy call on him in early 1987. This informal meeting initiated the process of forging joint initiatives between government and NGOs on land reforms in Bangladesh. The meeting was followed by a series of formal group discussions and meetings of the NGOs and those between ministry officials and NGO leaders/executives. The first formal meeting between NGOs and the Land Ministry was chaired by then Land Minister Mayeedul Islam. It was held on 19 March 1987.

In the first phase of the joint initiative, 20 NGOs agreed to cooperate with the Land Ministry in implementing the government land distribution program. An 11-member coordination council for land reform was formed. The formation of the NGO Coordinating Council in fact opened up a new area for effective inter-NGO cooperation and the formation of an NGO coalition based on land reform activities.

The NGOs who had been working with the landless since the mid-1970s and had some worthwhile experience in empowering groups of landless men and women took this opportunity to strengthen networking among the landless groups, create awareness among them, and establish the rights of the landless.

The government, on the other hand, encouraged active participation of NGOs in the land reform program. Addressing a grand rally of the landless and marginal farmers organized by the government on 2 March 1987 in Dhaka, then President Ershad made a public call to the NGOs to cooperate with his government in implementing the land reform program. Some 56 smaller and local NGOs, encouraged by the objective of the program, cooperated with the government in pushing it.

The national level organizations that took the lead role in initiating this process are Proshika-MUK, Oxfam, Comilla Proshika, Caritas, RDRS, and Nijera Kori. They activated and pushed for the program and made other organizations enthusiastically join in.

NGO Cooperation and Patterns of Networking

The following are areas of cooperation and joint action for the land reform program which the Ministry of Land in Bangladesh and the NGOs Coordination Council for Land Reform have identified:

☐ identifying government land;

☐ identifying genuine landless farmers;

☐ preparing the basic policy document of rules (*Nitimala*)

☐ strengthening the publicity campaign;

☐ establishing a land reform cell for monitoring of the program in the Ministry of Land;

☐ holding divisional and regional conferences with NGO field workers, landless group leaders and government staff and officials working in the field;

☐ training of the landless men and women group leaders and NGO field workers;

☐ renovating and running a training centre offered by the Ministry of Land for the beneficiaries.

The first two items are done by the grassroot organizations in the field with assistance and support from local administration.

Basic policy document of rules

The officials of the Ministry of Land and the senior officials of different NGOs jointly worked out the draft policy document of rules for government land distribution, which is in fact the guiding manual

for this program. In Bengali, this policy document is called *Nitimala* The *Nitimala* details out the responsibilities and duties of the government officials, NGO representatives, public representatives, specially the landless group leaders.

The policy document mandates the inclusion of one NGO representative nominated by the NGO Coordination Council in the district and by the *upazila* (subdistrict) level land reform committee.

Publicity campaign

The land reform program requires mobilizing massive public support for its implementation, particularly the land distribution aspect of the program.

Basically, what was needed was to create awareness among the landless about their right over Khas land and other public resources. The NGO Coordination Council, on behalf of the Ministry of Land, published posters and leaflets to create awareness among landless poor in the rural areas. The NGOs worked jointly through the coordination council for this campaign. Group meetings of women and men were held to inform them about the government decisions and the laws guaranteeing land to the landless.

The Land Reform cell

The Ministry of Land, with support from the Coordinating Council for Land Reform, established the Land Reform Cell. The basic responsibility of the cell is to supervise, monitor and facilitate the implementation of the program.

The cell is furnished and manned jointly by the government and the coordination council. NGO staff working for the cell are paid by Oxfam, Proshika, Comilla Proshika and other member-organizations of the Central Coordination Council for Land Reform.

Regional conference of the field workers

As an essential part of the publicity campaign and dissemination of information on land distribution, the NGO Coordination Council organized 14 divisional/regional conferences for NGO field workers and landless group leaders in the different regions of the country. Some of the conferences were attended by the Land Minister and Secretary. The field level government officials were also active participants to these conferences.

Problems and obstacles experienced by the field level workers and landless group members were discussed in detail, and suggestions were made.

Training for the landless group leaders and NGO field workers

NGO Coordination Council arranged training courses for the group leaders of the beneficiaries. The most experienced trainors of the major participating NGOs worked out together a module and conducted the training courses,

Some 96 field workers from 24 participating organizations have so far been trained by the coordination council under its training scheme. Also, some 14 trainors from 10 organizations have been specially trained by the council to undertake the training of the beneficiaries. Furthermore, 60 men and 28 women leaders of 44 *guchcha gram* under the *guchcha gram* beneficiaries training scheme of the council.

A consultative committee for training, which is a semipermanent body, was formed with the most senior trainers of Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC), Caritas, Proshika, Association of Development Agencies in Bangladesh (ADAB), Comilla Proshika, Nijera Kori, Oxfam and ARBAN.

Assistance for a training centre

The Ministry of Land established a training center of its own over the government premises located at Jamurki, a remote place about 90 km from Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh. The Coordination Council provided assistance to renovate the old building and develop it into a training center. This Center is now used for providing training to the beneficiaries of *guchcha grams* who were allotted a plot of land and a house by the government.

Mobilizing the Samata Samaj Kalyan Samity

Samata Samaj Kalyan Samity (Samata Social Welfare Association) is an organization that works for the landless in a district called Pabna in northern Bangladesh. It has been an active member of the NGO Coordination Council for Land Reform from the very inception of the program.

Samata has organized about 300 male and 200 female groups within a period of seven years. These groups consist of about 20,000 landless men and women are aware of their rights over government land and other available public resources. Many of them became functionally literate through the functional literacy courses conducted by Samata. They have struggled for the allotment of the huge government land in the Ghugudaha beel of Pabna in the last five years. It is very unfortunate that despite the existing law and rules (Land Reform Ordinance, 1984 and Basic Policy Document of Rules) which grants this land to the landless of the locality, the local powerful

and influential landlords, with direct support from their political patrons in the ruling party and administration, kept this huge tract of land (2,800 acres) under their illegal possession.

The landless men and women organized by Samata, however, refused to accept the situation created by the powerful landlords and their allies. They organized protest rallies against the illegal occupation of land and the harassment of landless men and women by the landlords and influential people. They made representations for their legal rights to the local as well as higher authorities in the Ministry of Land. The Land Secretary and the Land Reform Commissioner lent their fullest support in favor of the suffering landless groups.

The infuriated landlords and local elites nevertheless continued to harass them by lodging false cases of dacoity, murder, and insurrection in connivance with the local police. Sixty such false accusations cases were lodged with the police against them in the last four years. About 400 Samata workers and landless group leaders were arrested by police, imprisoned of various terms, or suffered other kinds of harassment. However, all the cases except the one reviewed through legal process in support of Oxfam, and other member-organizations of NGO Coordination Council for Land Reform and Human Rights Commission proved to be based on false charges. Hence, the accused leaders and workers of Samata, were acquitted, except a murder case involving five landless group leaders and Samata workers, including Kader and Sarwar, the coordinator and assistant coordinator of Samata, respectively.

Samata did not initially cause concern to the powerful local elite. The committees settled family feuds and social disputes such as marriage, divorce, litigation for land and money, etc. Samata also campaigned against traditional money lending and exploitation by the landlords and money lenders. They developed their own savings and small credit program for the benefit of the landless groups. When it grew in number and strength, Samata started irritating the powerful elite and landlords.

Through the process of conscientization, the landless and poor people began to demand legal services from government and semi-government institutions like banks, hospitals, schools, public health organizations, etc. They launched campaigns against bribery and corruption of the government officials and social exploitations by the landlords.

Finally, in the 1984 election for the upazila chairmanship, the support of over 20,000 strong landless resulted in the unprecedented landslide victory for the candidate who was unofficially supported by

the landless and a crushing defeat for the government party nominee who belonged to the landlords' class.

Samata thus became a social and political force within the locality. The powerful and exploitative groups became wary of their strength.

The NGOs Coordination Council continues to mobilize the NGOs who have been working for the landless and other support groups like human rights groups in favor of Samata. The Council also convinces the government with the support of Ministry of Land that Samata can help implement the ongoing land reform program of the government.

Dwip Unnayan Sangstha and the Landless

Dwip Unnayan Sangstha (DUS) is another organization of the landless which started work in Hatia, a remote island in the subdistrict of Noakhali in the southern part of Bangladesh. DUS was created out of the struggles of the local landless and initiatives of some energetic youths who had good experience of working for many years as Red Cross volunteers in the area during natural disasters like cyclones, tidalbores, etc. Land reform is one of their priority programs.

So far, DUS has organized 329 male groups and 213 female groups of landless who have been allotted government land in Hatia.

DUS, like Samata, braved all kinds of obstacles and challenges created by the local land-grabbing landlords and powerful people. In November 1990, for instance, the armed gangs employed by the landlords attacked the landless who were allotted government land in Dhalchar area of Hatia. About 20 landless were physically wounded but they were not scared nor intimidated. They resisted the brutal attacks of the gangsters and, finally, they were able to protect their crops from looting.

The NGO Coordinating Council discussed this matter with the senior officials of the Home Ministry. DUS and Proshika, another NGO, contacted the local and district administration for prompt action. The police moved very quickly and drastic measures against the misdoers were ensured.

Impact of the Program

The impact of the program and the experience gained through its nationwide activities are significantly remarkable. The following are noted:

☐ According to government figures 1,068,431 acres of government land have been so far distributed among 1,067,867 landless families.

☐ Land reform, which was always considered a political and a very sensitive issue, was debated at various levels by government and opposition political groups. National interest on the program was provoked and prompted by NGOs participation in the government land distribution program.

☐ Participation of NGOs in land reform and the government land distribution scheme also stirred various sectors of the society including the civil bureaucrats, journalists, academic experts, political activists and development workers.

☐ Almost everyone recognized the land reform program as a national agenda which demanded urgent attention and political significance. While some criticized NGO participation in implementing the program others welcomed it with optimism.

☐ The landless beneficiaries and NGO field workers who were very active in implementing the government land distribution scheme had to face a lot of problems in the field.

The problems identified in the last three years are as follows:

- ❖ Most of the government officials were still traditional in their practices and lacked commitment and orientation both in policymaking and implementation. Very few officials proved to be committed to and encouraged by the program, due to practices inherited from their colonial past.
- ❖ The rural and a section of the urban elite were not very supportive of the government land distribution scheme.
- ❖ The local landlords would sometimes collaborate with some government officials and their allies in opposing vehemently the government land distribution scheme. They resorted to various acts of violence including physical harassment, murder, molestation of women, looting and arson, etc.
- ❖ The government officials in the field as well as those responsible for implementing the program badly needed motivation from the government.
- ❖ Most of the time, the necessary information and the materials needed to identify government land are not available in field offices of the government.
- ❖ Landlessness in Bangladesh has grown to an alarming rate over the last two decades. In the 1970s, 50% of the rural population were landless or near landless. By the end of the 1980s, the figure reached 68%.

❖ Land-to-man ratio in Bangladesh, which is a predominantly agricultural country, is terribly unfavorable to the landless and landed poor. Per capita land in Bangladesh is only 0.19 acre. At present, the Bangladesh government has only 4,72,000 acres of land for distribution among 38 million landless beneficiaries.

Future Prospects

To immediately implement the ongoing government land distribution, more vigorous action-oriented programs should be worked out. Among these are

- a program to register the landless, marginal farmers and small sharecroppers within the shortest possible time;
- networking of the landless, marginal farmers and sharecroppers, at the initiatives of NGO coalition in Bangladesh, to implement any new master plan that will help recover the ceiling surplus land and ensure their quick distribution among landless;
- campaign for simultaneous actions to reform both rural and urban land ownership and improve land-to-man ratio;
- encouragement for landless and marginal farmers to access government or ceiling surplus land and all other public resources like waterbodies, lakes, health facilities, education, credit, etc.;
- legal aid and other support for the landless and landed poor against harassment and social injustices;
- a national master plan for the land reform involving government agencies, academic experts and grassroot organizations, NGOs and political activists; and
- a further strengthened and effectively coordinated inter-NGOs networking both at national and international levels.

Reflections on Bangladesh Experience

It was a historic decision for the NGOs to get involved in the government-initiated land reform program. Such was the spirit behind the formation of the coalition; the NGOs believed that the government's declaration on land distribution is one opportunity to demonstrate their intentions. The coalition played a crucial role in educating the landless, ensuring that they get the land, and in assisting them to gain more out of life.

Working with Government: Right or Wrong?

Given the repressive system in Bangladesh, NGOs face a dilemma. Government usually commands NGO activities that help maintain the status quo, just as what the service provider-NGOs exactly do. When NGOs challenge the system, the government clams on them, and the latter become repressed. With such a possibility, NGOs who work with government on the land reform program ask themselves: are they doing the right thing?

As the program progresses, the NGOs think they are partially right in the direction they have taken because through their intervention, some genuine landless gained access to land. Yet, they face a profound sense of divergence from government values and strategies. For instance, in villages where the head of the state would visit, government officials fuss too much about systems and procedures and pay little attention to the substance of the program.

Land Reform Efforts in Bangladesh

Land-related problems in Bangladesh are deeply rooted in its political history. While there have been significant efforts to give land to the landless since the enactment of the East Bengal State Acquisition and Tenancy Act in 1950, much still needs to be done.

Other rules relating to land distribution and sharecroppers' rights remain virtually ineffective, owing to weak political will of the policy-makers at the highest level, lack of organizational determination of the implementing agencies, and nonexistence of a grassroot leadership among the beneficiaries. For instance, in preparing for the President's visit, government officials have to run day and night to get the cluster villages built up, getting the services of contractors and not the villagers themselves. Since there is no apparent people's participation,

NGOs have reasons to doubt whether the people would value the land as much as they should.

Land actually awarded to the landless varies from region to region and, to a large measure, depends on the honesty of the government officer in the area and/or the effectiveness of the organized groups. In places where NGOs are strong, there have been substantial achievements in pushing for land reforms.

Dependence on Donor Agencies

NGOs in Bangladesh, even after a decade of development work, still grapple with survival issues. Majority of them, being donor-led, become drained because their energies are zapped into service-delivery programs wherein they have proven to be most effective. This orientation, however, is counterproductive to the promotion of social justice and sustainable development. The crucial question therefore is - can the NGOs continue to fight the system even without money from the northern donors? The coordinator of the NGO Council for Land Reform himself likens NGOs in Bangladesh to a house of cards that would fall apart when the donor withdraws its support.

The NGOs dependence on foreign aid prevents them from learning how to live within their means, much less plan what resources they could raise. As desired by the local NGOs present during the workshop, aid to Bangladesh both to NGOs and government must be cut. This issue in fact can be the focal point of strategic networking in the region.

Lessons on NGO Cooperation

Cooperation among NGOs on the land reform program was a good exercise for subsequent cooperative efforts. During the catastrophic flood, for instance, NGOs worked together more solidly. They carried out a rehabilitation program that spilled over further work on the land reform program. The experience has encouraged NGOs to extend their work to other issues such as ecology and environment.

However, not everyone was satisfied with the exercise considering the different levels of understanding and maturity of the NGOs. The bigger NGOs had set up offices at the district and national levels where they were more effective; smaller NGOs, despite their enthusiasm, could not be as effective, NGOs, whose programs include and help effectively in building the villages. These NGOs felt more satisfied working with the people; others set up a common fund to make the project self-reliant.

NGOs and the Peasant Movement

Bangladesh has a strong peasant movement which can be viewed as a major player in the entire democratization process. The proliferation of NGOs involved in service delivery is perceived as a counterforce that undermines the emerging democratization process in the region and the peasant movement as a sector. It is therefore not unusual that NGOs are doubted as to whose interest they represent.

For one, leaders of NGOs do not come from the peasants themselves. They could not also claim to have the accurate idea on what and how reforms should be done. Dialogues, however, can bridge NGOs with the rest of the populace. Moreover, NGOs should look at reforms from a different perspective, without directly delivering the services which the NGOs deem as the needs of the people.

Can NGOs Really Make a Difference?

The present social and political structure in Bangladesh is so pervasive that even a phone call from a top official will undo all the efforts that have been put into a project.

NGOs wonder if they can really change the situation. For 17 years, they have organized only 10% of the population which do not measure up to the needed critical mass to effect the necessary reforms. The present political situation in Bangladesh and heavy dependence on donors are the key challenges that they must address at once.

THE INDIA EXPERIENCE

Situationer

Almost forty years after independence, India portrays two distinct cases. On one hand, it has made progress in science, industry, agriculture, health and education. One can even say that India has joined the industrial race. Ironically, these advances are matched by a downward trend: the continuing marginalization of farmers similar to the case in Bangladesh. Farmers are marginalized as they migrate to the urban areas where they become landless agricultural workers. Due to lack of good income opportunities in the farm, the farmers diminish in number. Their landlessness pushes them to provide labor for industries.

Economic growth in the urban centers is on the uphill, while that in the rural areas is dwindling. Government programs, which are basically aimed at improving rural productivity, have further led to the impoverishment of the rural sector. To cite a few examples, the Green Revolution has marginalized the farmers; the White Revolution has taken milk away; and the Blue Revolution, a program for productivity in the fisheries sector, has further depleted the seas. In figures, the socioeconomic situation translates to around 50 to 60% of the population living below the poverty line, 70% of whom are illiterate.

The political situation in India could best be described as a democracy of the elite. Some political parties take after traditional Hindu parties and election is based on the caste, money and muscle power. Essentially, the political system is feudal, where there is only a change of positions by the same holders. Whereas the king used to rule, now it is the elected assembly of people coming from the same class which runs the affairs of the state.

Development of NGOs in India

The historical development of NGOs in India is divided into three periods:

The 1960s

The global economic crisis in the 1960s which brought in widespread unemployment in the country caused much frustration among the youth. The period saw young people leaning towards the leftist ideology and professing keen interest in the Marxist parties. Most were inclined to tackle the economic problems in a revolutionary manner, bringing in a juncture in India's history characterized by a rise in voluntary actions.

European donors, which traditionally were funding church-related activities, then realized that the church lacked progressive actions. The donors thus started looking for alternatives. Gandhi and his group got in touch with Protestant resource agencies. The link started the shift of funding from traditional to alternative groups.

The Indian Christian Movement, which was mostly composed of the youth, joined the voluntary actions. Followers started trooping to the rural areas. Influenced by Paulo Freire's "Pedagogy of the Oppressed", the young people became interested in nonformal education which focused on conscientization, rural organizing and the like. The trend, which ushered in the romantic idea that empowerment is a seed of the change process, continued for ten years or so until its adherents were confronted by the reality of social structures and pragmatic considerations.

The whole experience led to the creation of two types of NGO groups. One group realized that they could not continue with their rural work and thus returned to the cities taking the intellectual path. This group became involved in training organizations and provided professional services such as evaluation, consultancies, and the like to donor agencies. The second group explored alternatives in other fields such as health, education, etc., becoming project-oriented and implementors.

By the end of the decade, the NGO phenomenon became somewhat like a business. There was an alarming growth of NGOs, particularly in the southern part where unregistered NGOs abound. In Bangla Pradesh district alone, there were some 3,000 NGOs with two or more NGOs operating in some villages. The proliferation of NGOs was matched by the rise in the number of donor agencies. OXFAM, the one and only foreign agency in the district soon found competition to 19 others.

1970s

By this period, the growth patterns of NGOs were clearly taking the horizontal and vertical direction. The horizontal pattern was

represented by the far-and-wide spread of NGOs and donor agencies. The vertical growth pattern was shown in the magnitude of the wherein small groups typically started operating with only a projects, where capitalization of 30,000 rupees, then moved on to handle bigger projects, including the infrastructure development of NGOs.

Mid-1980s Onwards

A new aspect of NGO development government relations the era of NGO-has been evolving from mid-1980s to the present. Around five years ago, government took interest in NGO activities, and this interest was concretely manifested in government's desire to channel funding to NGOs. Government distributed funds to voluntary agencies and every government department had direct funding available to NGOs. To attract NGOs, government established an agency to liaise with them. The hitch, however, was that government also wanted to maintain some control on the NGOs.

Relationship with government. Generally, NGOs in India collaborates with the government in the implementation of good programs at their initial stages. But as voluntary organizations start to talk about organizing the poor, the government considers the action subversive, antigovernment and anti-nationalistic. There are NGOs identified as antigovernment and therefore blacklisted.

NGO-PO relations. One significant dimension in the development of NGOs is the NGO-PO relations, the POs being the main focus of NGO work.

The NGO-PO relations have an interesting feature: some NGO-sponsored POs become cooperatives, unions or even emerge as people's movement (the last case, however, is not statistically significant). There are now many POs that have taken an imitative pattern of NGOs in terms of operations and organization. This could be attributed in part to the laws governing NGO activities and to the role of donors in the development process.

The Project trap. Viewed within the context of the NGO-PO development, donors play a very significant role in pushing POs and NGOs into a type of process intervention: the project trap. Funds are determined in terms of program lines, whether vertical or horizontal.

NGOs claim that movements have now emerged, but even after 15 years of work, no such movement has actually existed. NGOs that have taken after the "project model" can best be described as

externally funded and accountable to various regulations and limitations attached to the funding agreement, contrary to the goals of social transformation.

Displacement as a mobilizing force. The three case presentations from India in the following pages focus on the phenomenon of displacement as a mobilizing force, which also gave rise to the movement kind or activist type of NGOs.

All over India, there have been development projects that cause tremendous damages to the environment and displace people in the process. These development projects, ironically, are state interventions that are meant to help the poor, but unfortunately they have resulted in the people's loss of control and access over productive resources.

The failure of these development projects and the resulting displacement and marginalization of the people have led many NGOs to move from a traditional focus to a more radical posture. The Kanniyakumari March, the Development and Reconstruction Movement in Madhra Pradesh and the emergence of the National Working Group on Displacement are some of the direct responses to the adverse effects of development projects.

An Environmental March to Protect
Water and Life in India

FELIX SUGIRTHARAJ
ASSOCIATION FOR THE RURAL POOR

Ecological Crisis

Ecological and environmental conditions in India have aggravated over the last ten to fifteen years, threatening an extensive devastation of the fauna and flora of the country. In earlier years, indiscriminate destruction of forests caused soil erosion, climatic changes and a host of other land-based problems. The development of science and technology has deteriorated land and water systems, affecting the very existence of life and resources. In the country's coastal areas, major rivers and water systems face mounting problems caused by several man-made factors, accompanied by large-scale industrial expansion and investment, indiscriminate dumping of untreated human sewages, industrial wastes, toxic materials and the like.

This paper discusses the dimensions of environmental problems in water resources of India.

Exploitation of Fisheries Resources
and the Plight of the Coastal Poor

So long as the harvest of the fisheries resources is confined to the traditional techniques of the artisanal fishermen, there is no threat to the ecology. As years passed, however, and the use of modern fishing gear became more popular, and over exploitation of marine resources became prevalent, leading to ecological breakdown beyond recovery. The advent of high technology has resulted in trawling all over Kerala and Tamilnadu which was motivated by private profit and exports.

Initially, this trend helped to forge a new prawn processing export industry; later, however, the industry which was supposed to help the economy proved to be destructive. Quite clearly, there was over exploitation and depletion of demersal species, particularly the highly

preferred export item of prawns. Moreover, wealth was in the hands of a few elite, while the vast majority of subsistence fisherfolk became more marginalized. The modernization of the fishing industry have caught up with heavy investment costs, debt traps and rising costs of engines and spare parts against falling returns. These resulted in a type of development devoid of resource link, which could best be described as suicidal because it has greatly hampered the environment. It is characterized by resource depletion, on one hand, and dwindling incomes and social discontentment on the other.

The eastern region, called the Bay of Bengal Coast, has been the target of many government projects that only displaced the coastal poor. Apart from the construction of sea resort hotels in the name of tourism, the federal government have developed a deliberate policy to evict the coastal poor in the name of defense priorities.

At Mandapam, the Gateway of Sri Lanka, the Indian Security Force regularly checks in the infiltration of Tamil militants and smuggling of arms and ammunitions. This creates panic among the poor fisherfolk in Mandapam arca, such that 75% of the poor fish workers have been demanding the withdrawal of para-military forces. Of late, the Tamil militants of Sri Lanka have virtually controlled three coastal districts of Tamilnadu, threatening the Catamaran fisherfolk of dire consequences in case they interfere with their movements and camps.

Pollution

Incidence of pollution of both the marine and inland waters has been rampant all over the country. Almost all the major rivers in India are polluted, including those in Yamuna, Damodar, Godavari, Krishna, Kaveri, Thungabadhra, Periyar and Hooghli. Large quantities of untreated sewerages and industrial wastes including DDD are dumped daily into the rivers causing extensive water pollution and fishkills. The presence of mercury and radioactive wastes from the Indian Rare Earth Limited dumped into the Periyar River is a serious matter. The toxic materials affect the fauna and flora as well as human life, resulting in the birth of physically handicapped children, and the prevalence of cancer and other genetic disorders.

According to the State Committee on Science, Technology and Environment, the water bodies in the coastal zone are polluted mainly by effluents discharged from industries, sewerages, garbage, fertilizers and pesticides which are washed down by flood waters.

Water sustains life

Water is our planet's most important and indispensable resource. It is a wealth which we need to preserve into the future. The volume of water on our planet exceeds 1,400 million km 90% of which is in the ocean. The oceans also receive 90% of the rainwater. The remaining 10% that fall on land is the earth's source of fresh water. Part of it seeps into the ground; some are stored in lakes and tanks; while a large portion flows through the rivers back into the sea, thus completing the cycle. Average yearly rainfall is 400 million cu m.

Fishworkers used to regard the aquatic system as a community-managed property and, therefore, they would take measures to preserve this resource. However, recent intrusions in the form of militarization and tourism, mining and building of dams have damaged the harmonious resource utilization patterns, displaced people and created a huge army of environmental refugees.

Drinking water

Fresh water supply in the coastal zone has been a major problem. The water pressure is too low for distribution. There is also the problem of sanitation and drainage from the fishing villages and pollution from effluents. The contamination of drinking water, use of polluted water for washing, and filthy surroundings on the beaches have led to widespread epidemics among the coastal poor people. The overexploitation of the ground water resources is reported to have led to the excursion of the saline wedge inshore.

Water mining at the coastal regions to supply fresh water to the sea resorts and five-star hotels around the coast has created a "drought" for fresh underground water. Fisherfolk have to walk further for their drinking water due to the salinity of water near the beaches.

Nuclear threat

The proposal to set up nuclear reactors near the coasts has further added to the threat of ecological and environmental imbalances. Besides the nuclear reactor near Madras, another one with funding from Russia will be built down south within the next two years.

Why should the advanced nations of the world want to promote a technology to other nations whose ordinary citizens vehemently oppose?

The Origin of the Kanyakumari March

In India, voluntary organizations have been working closely with the unorganized masses for the past fifteen years with a relatively wider political space.

There has been a growing national awareness on the need to protect the environment and conserve the natural resources from indiscriminate plunder. People resist large-scale irrigation projects, anti-people forestry schemes and ill-conceived developmental projects. The Chipko Andolan Movement to preserve trees by Tribals, the "Save the Western Ghats March" against deforestation, the Balliapal struggle of the coastal poor against the site for the Missile Test Range, citizens' protests against nuclear power plants, fishworkers' movement for protecting fish life -- all prove the people's concerns about safeguarding resources and protecting life for the future.

The idea of the "Long March" between West Bengal to Kanyakumari, covering 3,500 m on the Eastern Coast of India, came from the National Fishermen's Forum call for a planning meeting of its allies and interested societies and people who have been working closely with the coastal poor. Out of this, a coordination committee was formed and invitations were sent to three categories of organizations namely: (1) large voluntary organizations with national character; (2) scientific research and technical organizations which are interested to develop appropriate technologies to enhance economic development among the coastal poor; and (3) grassroots fisherfolk and peasant organizations that have been known to the coastal poor.

A group of voluntary agencies pointed out the broader objectives of the march as follows:

- widen people's awareness of the vital link between water and life and provide encouragement for the people's initiatives and struggle to protect water sources;
- form a network of all those who are concerned about the issues;
- pressure the government to evolve a sustainable water utilization policy to democratize and strengthen water management agencies, and possibly, transfer ownership of rivers from the State;
- assess the damage done and identify problem areas for further study and investigation;
- evolve practices for rejuvenating water resources;
- set up a task force and action committees of local citizens to play the role of advocacy at all levels; and,
- follow up the march by holding national, regional and state level conferences to monitor the issues identified and pressure the government through high level committees to stop of abandon defense and nuclear installation, implement acts such

as a Marine Fisheries Regulation Act and a National River Policy Act, ban trawling within the prescribed distance from the seashore and resettle displaced fisherfolk and poor peasants since twenty-five years back.

On a national level, 100 representatives from different organizations who have been interested in the cause of the poor attended the planning meeting. The meeting was held for two days, and the major issues on the Eastern coast which directly affected the coastal poor were identified.

West Bengal: Fish poisoning, pollution of rivers, and destruction of mangrove forests in the Sunderban swamps.

Orissa: Leasing of Chilka Lake to TATA's (a recognized monopoly capitalist) for prawn farming, making five thousand poor fisherfolk unemployed and alienated from the lake; and the Missile Test Range site at Balliapal and Bhograi, where 6,350 people were handed notices of eviction by the state government.

Andhra: Dislodging by Visakhapatinam Shipbuilding Yard of 50 Catamarans fisherfolk villages with 50,000 fishermen, women and children; devastating cyclones affecting and displacing the poor year after year in Nellore District.

Tamilnadu: Health hazards inflicted among the poor fisherfolk in fishing villages near the nuclear power plant which is close to Madras; proposed plan of building another nuclear power plant at Koodangulam; large contingents of para-military forces at Mandapam, the Gateway of India from Sri Lanka; trawling in the shallow waters and other violations of the Marine Fisheries Regulation Act; and the Tamil militant movement that meddle with the small fisherfolk.

Role of Various Agencies in the March

The National Fishermen's Forum rallied several large voluntary agency networks to attend the planning meeting. The Coastal Poor Development Network, Voluntary Agencies Network, Bay of Bengal Fisherfolk Union, the Association for the Rural Poor (Madras), Landless Agricultural Laborers Union, Salt Pan Workers Union, Working Women's Forum, Working Women's Liberation Movement, Dialogue Group, and a number of small peasant movements and fishworkers associations pledged their overwhelming support sup in the spirit of solidarity. These groups were determined to carry out the struggle for social justice.

International Funding Agencies such as Food First Information Network (FIAN) Germany, Bread for the World, Novib of Netherlands, EZE and others gave financial as well as moral support to the rally. FIAN, the human rights organization in Germany, highlighted several issues and wrote an open letter to the Prime Minister of India to stop defense installations and let the poor people live in their original lands.

Level coordination

The regional action committees, which were formed among a hundred representatives, agreed to call for seminars and collect donations, arrange press conferences, print posters and notices, and organize rallies and public meetings. The regional seminars brought participants of all sections from different states to study once again the implications of the rallies and people's marches.

Later, it was resolved that village action committees be formed in each village, composed of a seven-member team of men, women and youth. This committee would then be linked with the inter-village action committee. All district level committees would constitute a state level action committee, and this body would hold pre-march campaigns to mobilize grassroot communities, intellectuals, students, lawyers, and women, among others, to engage them in different tasks in the district action committee.

National task force

In the meantime, the national task force held press conferences in New Delhi and publicized the march through national media like newspapers, radio and television. Special police permission was sought at different stages to ensure peace and order during the march. The threats were identified and various tactics and strategies were worked out to check violence and disharmony.

Preparing for the march

The march began on 1 April 1989 from Calcutta in West Bengal, but preparations were made as early as September 1988. It took nearly eight months to sell the idea of the march to 180 million people in all the four states of the Eastern region. More than 5,000 volunteers, mostly students, village youth and representatives of voluntary agencies made a great publicity for the marchers and arranged reception committees along the way to receive the marchers and safeguard them against any assaults. Local people, especially the fisherfolk, showed great enthusiasm by collecting individual donations

to organize small group meetings and provide hospitality.

In January 1989, when the federal government learned about the real motives of the march, it refused permission and requested the leaders to abandon the march. After a long dialogue between leaders of various political parties and lobbyists, the government granted permission on the condition that sensitive issues which propagate anti-government feelings among the coastal poor should not be discussed.

The political parties, which had close alliance with the ruling party, protested against the march through public meetings. They feared that it would expose their anti-people stand. Men of strong physique were employed to thwart it even before it began in Calcutta. On the other hand, the left front government in West Bengal did not see any serious political repercussion and therefore permitted the march to go on as scheduled. The government's attitude in Andhra, West Bengal and Tamilnadu was cordial since in all these states, the regional parties, which were antagonistic to the policies of the federal government, were in power. Besides this, the issues at stake, i.e., policies over water systems, were of national character.

In Orissa, the marchers faced critical problems. Government abandoned its decision to build the Missile Test Range in Balliapal-Bhograi, and the village youth organized suicidal squads all over to defend eviction of their villages. The state government banned the rally and drove the rallyists away. Yet the marchers persevered and bravely faced dire consequences. They gave speeches at meetings.The common people and the youth firmly defended and safeguarded the marchers. The response was overwhelming.

The March

The president of the National Fishermen's Forum flagged off the march from a small town near Calcutta with some 5,000 people surrounding the marchers. The march was organized in such a way that wherever necessary, vans or mini-buses would be used to carry the marchers. In most places, the marchers walked along places where the people welcomed them. They went into the interior villages since people invited them to visit their homes and have food with them. The marchers, numbering about 50, consisted of fishworker leaders, representatives of voluntary agencies, singers, musicians, a video film shooting team, a photographer, a mechanic, a press reporter, and many others. The marchers walked three-fourths of the distance between Calcutta and Kanyakumari (3,000 km.). They were struck by the overwhelming response from the coastal poor who gathered in large numbers to welcome and listen to them.

Most of the time, translation was needed because the people spoke diverse languages and dialects across regions; yet, this was not a major problem. The message was properly communicated and people were highly politicized. Local leaders from the grassroots spoke in different meetings and represented the poor who are unjustly treated. The action committees collected donations and contributions at the villages and handed these over to the leaders of the campaign.

The marchers were confident. They had more funds than was expected, which they used to feed thousands of volunteers who came from different parts of the country to attend the concluding day of the campaign at Kanyakumari, the southernmost tip of India. The long march, with the theme "Protect Water, Protect Life," ended on May 1st, Labor Day.

ARP's Organizational Role

The Association for the Rural Poor (ARP) is a nonprofit organization registered under the Societies Registration Act of Tamilnadu and also with the Ministry of Home Affairs.

ARP maintains a head office in Madras, the capital of Tamilnadu, one of the southern states. It has been promoting and fostering labor unions among the fisherfolk and poor peasantry in the countryside. ARP also founded the Social Action Groups Consortium which gathers 70 small and large voluntary organizations in the southern region. It played a major role in the gathering of ten larger NGOs in the eastern region, between West Bengal and Tamilnadu, and in forming the Coastal Poor Development Network of India. The ARP is one of the founding members of the voluntary agencies network of India.

When the long march reached Andhra Pradesh, one of the southern states, ARP and its allied NGOs and district action committees virtually took control of the march until the campaign reached Kanyakumari down south. ARP organized rallies, public meetings, seminars, protest marches, cultural festivals, dramas and musical concerts throughout a 1,000 km stretch over the coastal roads. Two labor unions with which ARP is closely linked took charge of demonstrations, rallies and protest marches; NGOs organized public meetings, processions, seminars and cultural programs, while village action committees took charge of women leaders dialogue, flag hoisting publicity, audio systems and collecting funds.

Challenges

Managing the long march faced severe challenges. A few NGOs questioned ARP's collaboration with labor unions. For them, the

National Fishermen's Forum, a radical labor union, raises only political demands. Other labor unions in the organized sector did not give their full support saying that ecological issue is not a working class issue.

ARP also learned that sometimes networking on a larger scale yields better results than localizing the issues. Also, national issues related to the political economy should be supported by statistics and correct information. Nonetheless, joining hands with labor unions is a unique experience. Finally, it is important to get the support of the press persons and intellectuals like scientists, professors, technocrats, and researchers. This group could well play the role of advocacy and document the issues before presenting them to the government.

The Future

The network began in the long march is still active and has in fact grown strong. However, ARP has been criticized for various reasons: networking only in the eastern region without reaching out to other parts of the state; flaunting large networks, as if losing touch with grassroots; siding with the government; dividing the unorganized labor groups into coastal poor and island poor; even thwarting people's struggles and making them reactionaries.

Marxists say that environmental issues are neutral and do not lead to the benefit of the working class. It does not come as a surprise if ARP is labelled as a counter-democratic force because it is controlled by the elites.

Strategic networking among NGOs in India is such a huge task, perhaps beyond ARP's grasp and control. Fora such as this should be able to identify and prioritize options and relay social, economic as well as political implications of various decisions.

Development and Reconstruction Movement in Madhra Pradesh

P. V. RAJAGOPAL
FEDERATION OF VOLUNTARY AGENCIES OF MADHRA PRADESH

Exploitation of People

Life in Madhra Pradesh (central part of India) for the ordinary people has become more and more difficult. The onslaught of so-called development programs and projects continue to deprive people of whatever small assets they were able to generate for themselves through many years of hardwork. Land, water, forests and their rich culture -- all that they had protected for so many years are rapidly moving out of their hands. The ordinary people find it difficult to follow the development model of the country, a model which puts more importance to material gains over human values.

As a remedy, the tribal people in this state tried to run away from areas where they felt their values and culture could not be protected. But the seemingly insatiable desire of the so-called civilized people to extract wealth from the resources of Madhra Pradesh did not permit the tribal groups to escape. Having exploited the plains, the development experts moved deep into the forests in pursuit of their development goals. Thus, in the name of improving the living conditions of the poor people, big dams, national parks, mining sites, paper factories, power plants and other projects were introduced in the different areas of the state.

Gradually, however, the people recognized the kind of game played on them, as evidenced by many reported incidents which took place recently in the state of Madhra Pradesh. The people have decided they will not compromise their rights with the kind of development that the experts want to implement
.

The Effects of Maldevelopment

The effects of most official development projects in India are

glaring.	These are..

- displacement of people on a large scale;

- introduction of materialism, overriding other human values,

- destruction of a rich culture of tribals and villagers;

- destruction of a rich natural resource base for the benefit of the few, at the same time perpetuating poverty for a large percentage of the population,

- disturbing the ecosystem; and

- unemployment.

Hundreds of documented cases show that many families are displaced more than three times within a period of ten years. During each displacement, these families are pushed deeper into poverty. Worse, they never got the proper attention by the government that is duty-bound to rehabilitate them. Rehabilitation programs, if any, only worked to divide the communities since there is not enough land to accommodate entire communities. Those who must be held accountable avoided punishment because there are no proper documents.

Compensation cases in the courts take a very long time to settle. In some cases wherein compensation is awarded, it was never paid on time. Moreover, the amount paid is too small to enable the displaced families to buy enough land for resettlement. As a result, the displaced victims are further exposed to exploitation.

Apart from the economic aspect, there are damaging social and cultural effects brought about by the official development projects. Around the sites of such development projects, prostitution has grown, catering to the educated officials and contractors. Local people who end up as daily wage earners get trapped in vices like gambling and drinking with their earnings going back to the pockets of the contractors.

As a way of keeping the people beholden to development projects and to prevent them from getting organized, the sale of alcohol is systematically promoted in such big projects. In some cases, alcohol is distributed for free by the contractors in a false sense of happiness. probably to keep the laborers

A Threat of Identity Crisis

Nationalization of the forest and its destruction only work adversely for the tribal population who depend mainly on forests for their livelihood. Bamboo craftsmen become jobless because the bamboos are supplied to paper factories. Drywood for cooking and other minor forest products are becoming extremely scarce; people have to bribe

officials to have the goods which used to belong to them.

Moreover, national health programs have destroyed the traditional health care system. Family planning is being pushed even among those tribal communities that are fast disappearing. Tribal people who are used to dancing and singing at night as part of their rich cultural heritage, are now made to sit infront of televisions to watch the cultural activities of people in the cities.

Available Options

The people are left with two options — keep silent about the situation or take action by analyzing the situation and working towards changing it.

There are segments in the country who have challenged the development model being imposed from the outside and have tried to stop its implementation as early as possible. A good number of rural youth in Madhra Pradesh, for instance, have started a struggle against such development model, which has attracted the attention of people nationwide. Big dams, mines, power plants, deforestation, displacement, bonded labor, land distribution and many such issues are being addressed by social action groups in various parts of Madhra Pradesh. These groups carry specific messages: mass movement against the Narmada Project in Western Madhra Pradesh; save the soil movement against the Tawa Irrigation Project in Hoshangabad; struggle against mechanization around Bhilai Steel Plant; struggle against displacement in various coal mines; struggle against pine plantation in Bastar; struggle for proper rehabilitation around the Sinharauli Power Plant; and mass mobilization on land issues by Ekta Parishad, a state-level network of village groups.

These and other areas of struggle indicate that the poor people will not remain silent anymore. The poor have expressed their objections to the wrongdoings of the state, making the latter take a defensive position. Unfortunately, those in government continue to analyze all issues purely in economic terms, their development model always revolves around material considerations rather than on the people themselves. It would certainly take long before the mindset of those in government could be changed. However, they could be influenced by the mounting pressure built by people who are unwilling victims of the present-day development designs.

Different Strategies, Different Levels

Around 1980, the rural youth in some districts of Madhra Pradesh were trained. They were encouraged to form some small

action groups. Young boys and girls started joining this social action movement until it grew into a forum of about 500 full-time activists by the year 1990. Similarly, this movement grew into a state-level phenomenon and started creating some impact. Within a span of ten years, Madhra Pradesh witnessed a number of actions addressing issues on land, wage, water, forest and on many other issues greatly affecting the poor people.

Demands for social and economic justice from the people were met with resistance by the state. Some people in the government resorted to beating, arresting, putting activists in jail, filing false cases against them, using media to propagate baseless accusations and the and contractors also tried hard to stop the youth movement. However, with a deep sense of commitment, the activists were able to surmount all odds and have gained wide acceptance among the youth.

Awareness building
Awareness building and formation of people's groups at the village level are strategies done at the initial stage. Each group (about 20-30% of the total population in a village) would debate on issues that relate to their day-to-day living and initiate actions to address these issues. They lay out options to boycott any order imposed from outside which has adverse impact on the poor or they find alternative strategies. The choice is left to the group. As experience has taught the village-level groups, any of the strategies could be effective, as long as the members of the groups are mindful of the people's own interest.

Preparation for larger actions
Each action should be viewed as a means to build organizational strength. Mutual visits, common training programs and partnerships with other village groups on issues that affect people at a larger scope are some of the strategies that could prepare the groups for larger actions.

The people of Madhra Pradesh have now reached a stage where the residents of one village, district or even region will come to the aid of their counterparts in other areas and show their concern. This attitude is very important as it creates a critical mass that is capable to tackle larger issues like displacement, at the same time raising questions on the development model promoted by the state.

Federating efforts
While the social action groups are active at the grassroots level forming people's organizations, NGOs in Madhra Pradesh are striving

to form a federation of voluntary agencies at the state level. Some 60 NGOs involved in different types of activities have come together in a forum to discuss common strategies and work slowly towards building a network. The NGOs involved in this effort can be classified according to three major types:

- social action groups that believe in people's power;

- service organizations that believe in the importance of providing service; and

- educational institutions.

These NGOs stand together to protect the interest of the volag circle while trying to ng to play a complementary role at the state level. Some organizations are good at training, others are good at mobilizing resources; some are good at campaign activities while others are effective at relating with the government.

The process of federating is very important in promoting NGO interventions in society. The goal of any federation should be the promotion of the people's interest rather than the protection of the interest of the *volag*. It is inaccurate to assume that by protecting the interest of the *volag*, the interest of the people in general are protected. There are NGOs that show more concern about their own interest rather than those of the people.

In Madhra Pradesh, the major roles that the federation wants to play are as follows:

- consolidating action against state oppression on activists;

- providing a forum for analyzing programs and projects initiated by government; and

- promoting communication among volags by publishing a newsletter.

Some Federating Problems

Maintaining the enthusiasm of all members for a long time is not an easy task. Equally difficult is compromising quality at every level, an inevitably painful experience in fact. Expectations related to sharing of resources is one source of irritation among members:*volags* that are better endowed are supposed to share their resources with those that have less.

Given this experience, it looks like the promotion of federations at the grassroots level would be a better idea than the federation of *volags* which only promotes the emergence of another formal structure. It is about time that development workers move beyond *volags* and work with those that are truly committed to the promotion of people's organizations.

Towards an Effective, Meaningful Networking

A lot of factors should be considered to make networking both effective and meaningful. Broadening the understanding of each group, and creating interest among networks and their members such that they will support each other are some of the demanding roles of NGOs. Not many people would like to play the lead role that calls for a deeper sense of commitment. In most cases, those in the NGO circle imitate the present political leadership or the bureaucracy, though they appear to promote different values through approaches and actions. This is a conflict which NGOs are not able to resolve even among the leadership in the *volag*, especially when the leader belongs to the middle or upper middle class.

This problem is not as serious in the grassroots level where generally, one could find more deeply committed leaders who are willing to promote and respect values which are often not popular among the so-called elites of society. Too much compromise on values at this stage is counterproductive to the struggle for change. For the struggle is not just against poverty merely aiming to earn a few more coins but to change the socio-political and economic order through alternative values.

The Madhra Pradesh *volags* are lucky enough to get a good number of young people who provide leadership at various levels. The promotion of group leadership is one important strategy adopted by the Madhra Pradesh *volags* towards networking at the grassroots level.

The Networks

Ekta Parishad (Forum for Unity) was formed in the middle of 1990 with small village-level groups as its basic unit. Each member of this state-level forum actively participates in promoting social justice. It is too early to assess this network inasmuch as it is still in its formative stage. It is probable that activities for the next two years will shape Ekta Parishad as a strong forum of people capable of working towards social, economic and political alternatives.

Youth for Social Justice, which was launched towards the end of 1990, is a campaign designed to involve the urban youth. It identifies the problems that affect them and establishes the linkages between the rural and urban youth.

Volags Against the Tide

The concepts of awareness and institutional building among rural poor during the 1980s were relatively new in the field of social work. The *volags* promoted an entirely different concept of social work – a

new twist to what was generally accepted. This brought opposition not only from the government but also from the traditional *volags*. Politicians and those who had vested interests feared the new-found involvement of *volags*. a lot of

Volags were generally used by the politicians to cover up their inefficiency and do propaganda work for the party in power. During the last ten years, political parties, landlords and contractors with the help of the bureaucracy tried to finish off the work that the volags were promoting. These groups even used the media to propagate all sorts of stories against the *volag*, especially those promoting the idea of social change. They branded the rolags as anti-nationals, CIA agents, Christians converting Hindus and NAXALS who promote armed struggle just because the *volags* were taking up issues for the poor.

In the M.P. *volag* circle, many of the members were beaten up, arrested and jailed. Many false cases against them have been brought to the courts which are now pending. These not only demanded much of their time but also of funds which were difficult to raise. Some like-minded officials in the bureaucracy helped out when the times were rough.

Fighting court cases entails a lot of work and frustrates young people, thereby compelling them to stop further work on social justice. The *volags* have been dancing to this music for the last ten years, and will perhaps keep doing so as long as the work continues. Interestingly enough, young activists have learned to live with these oppressive tactics rather than get frustrated. They see these acts as part of a process towards change. As a proof, more and more young people have signified their intention to join the movement.

The major role of *volags* at the state level is to counter oppressive forces and encourage grassroots level actions.

In the final analysis, only a mass-based organization like the *volags* with proper understanding and value orientation can bring about some basic changes in the society.

Carrying the Network

Common perspective
The concepts of awareness building and struggle are often misunderstood even by senior members of *volags*. These concepts should be properly analyzed and understood in its proper context. Every struggle for a better society should be seen as a positive rather than a negative action. The same thing is true for many other

concepts including democracy, nationalism, development, etc. Unless we understand them from a broader perspective, we may have to face opposition even from among colleagues in the *volags*.

Financial and moral support

It is not easy to identify those who are willing to work with the struggle in a span of, say, ten years. Luckily, there are some friends associated with funding agencies who are willing to be part of the task for social change. These people show profound interest in the growth of rural youth, formation of village-level groups and shaping them into a large network, federating the volags in the state and encouraging others in areas where no such work has yet begun.

The rural youth and the poor people took time out and shared whatever resources they had in order to promote the work. However small, these contributions were extremely important in redesigning at the field level a strategy to break from dependency on outside funding. The small support base at the grassroots level should be strengthened and tried out in hundreds of villages.

A Dream of a Better Village Network

Reorganizing the village economy is not done only to generate local funds to support the work but it is also a way to develop the village. Boycott of urban products that destroy village industries and economy is another way of making the village self-sustaining. The flow of wealth from the villages to the cities should also be stopped. Future focus will mainly revolve around regenerating village economies, and promoting participatory democracy in order to be part of all decision making processes.

The *volags* face the challenge of making the "dream of a better village network of villages and a better society" a reality.

Volags or NGOs which are not willing to meet such challenge will no longer be relevant to the people in India.

Fighting Back:
Collective Actions Against Displacement

SMITU KOTHARI
LOKAYAN

On September 23, 1989, a historic gathering of over 40,000 people took place in Harsud, a small town in the central Indian state of Madhra Pradesh. This rally was widely recognized as the first collective national assertion against a destructive development process. What was equally significant in this convergence of diverse, scattered forces from all over the country, representing concerns and struggles of the victims of development, was the urgency to seek solidarity with those striving to evolve a political alternative to the dominant models of development and governance.

Precursors to the Harsud Rally

Unprecedented events create new challenges. Events like the Harsud rally could not have heightened as much were it not for sustained political mobilization (from local to national). They also highlight a major unresolved dilemma: what kind of balance should groups strike between direct action and sustained mobilization? Furthermore, what balance should be made between lobbying and mobilizing?

For centuries now, the Indian subcontinent has witnessed the struggles of those who face encroachment by outsiders. Particularly during the last two centuries, colonial "management" and "development" resulted in the rapidly declining access and control over productive resources by communities. Tribal revolts, rebellions, protests and resistance — though intermittent both in their tenacity and size — were the precursors of the Harsud rally. Recent research and oral accounts of histories of communities in forest areas indicate the intensity of resistance that had been there for some time. On the other hand, these documentations also reveal the enormously

sophisticated strategies used by the incumbent system to subvert, manipulate, coopt and when all else fail, crush these popular assertions.

Several other more contemporary processes made Harsud possible. A growing and simultaneous realization of the negative consequences of growth-centered development, the tempering of the euphoria of nation-building and the failure of the system to deliver the goods were some reasons for the success at a macro perspective. Three significant political processes fuelled the successful mobilization:

- the maturity and intensity of the struggles along the Narmada River against a massive dam building project;

- three national-level meetings which were pulled together to express a collective assertion against big dams but which later brought together radical environmentalists; and
- a two-year national process under the Working Group on Displacement which brought together a wide cross-section of activists, professionals and other concerned people.

This case study focuses on the third process wherein the author had the privilege of serving as co-convenor.

Brief History of Displacement

In the post independence period, thousands of hydroelectric, industrial, defense and other development projects were undertaken by the public and private sectors, much of which were part of the formal planning process. Massive investments of public funds supported by multilateral and bilateral funding were directed towards achieving aggregate economic growth. Furthermore, the modernization of agriculture, through escalating chemical inputs and mechanization placed a demand on scarce natural resources. National security took precedence over people's security. Ironically, much of this was justified in the name of "poverty alleviation" and removal of "backwardness."

These processes not just placed unsustainable pre sures on the natural resource base; they also led to large-scale displacement of millions of people. Studies undertaken by a wide variety of groups suggest that over 20 million people in India have been displaced by the planned development process. People's lands were either "acquired," "submerged" or "reserved." Millions of others were marginalized as a direct or indirect consequence of this development.

India loses 1.5 million ha of forests annually. Over 60 percent of productive land is afflicted today by various forms of degradation. In

the command areas of large irrigation projects, extensive lands have become water-logged or salinic. Significantly, too, majority of nomadic people (who number 60 million) became impoverished as their access to grazing lands and their nomadic routes have been disrupted.

Apart from the ethics of maximizing short-term productivity and profits, another powerful ideological weapon is the "integration" It is assumed that the ideology of western-influenced modernization is superior and, therefore, all other forms of knowledge, social organization and identity are inferior and regressive. The political motivation of planning and development — from the start and until the present — is control and domination. Hence, for the sake of modernization, it is essential that tradition-enhancing systems, cultures and identity be penetrated and weakened. Yet, inspite of the Indian experience which suggests that there is greater possibility of strengthening decentralized democracy in a culturally plural society than in a homogenized and standardized one, the "developers" tried to do the opposite.

Moreover, the communities affected by these development projects are rarely involved in their planning and implementation. For instance, in 1964 in North-Central India, officials ordered over 100,000 people to vacate their lands in favor of a dam project 24 hours prior to submergence! In the infamous Narmada Project, one of the more controversial dams in the country, which has met over a decade of popular resistance, majority of those to be submerged have not been informed about the plans that will affect their lives and cultural practices.

The Working Group on Displacement (WG/D)

Over the years, many groups had come together in the course of campaigns against large development projects, defending the rights of those who had faced state repression or loss of their subsistence rights. Repression was manifested in either the complex process which alienates people from their land or lose control over other community representatives and concerned citizens from the cities. The convening of representatives of mass movements and popular groups, lawyers, social scientists and other researchers to respond to the wide range of issues underlying the process of displacement was to be the start of the Working Group on Displacement (WG/D).

The Working Group on Displacement (WG/D) is tasked with the following activities:

Organizing dialogues between representatives of groups and concerned citizens
The group has organized over 20 meetings in different parts of the country to better understand the causes and extent of displacement and to evolve strategies that would respond to the situation.

Providing national support to local struggle
The Working Group on Displacement likewise provides national support for communities and individuals who carry on the struggle for justice.

Informing, influencing and formulating policy
There is no comprehensive policy and legislation today addressing the rights of the people who are displaced by development projects. The only overarching law applied is the Land Acquisition Act of 1984, an antiquated piece of legislation meant to facilitate colonial acquisition of land and other properties with the least obligation to the state. There is now an ongoing campaign in the country to repeal colonial legislations.

For its part, the WG/D worked intensively on a draft national policy on rehabilitation. The draft was widely circulated and deliberated upon in several state-level meetings organized by WG/D to further develop the draft. After this, the collective pressure of hundreds of groups and individuals was brought to the attention of the government. This entire process had three gains:

- a multi-disciplinary team participated in the exercise,

- a wide cross-section of organizations and individuals were involved and they began to own the effort; and

- public awareness was created on the whole issue of displacement and its interrelated dimensions.

Simultaneously, several other struggles reinforced and cross-supported the issues raised by the group. These were the struggles against the Narmada and Teri dams, the multiple displacement in Singrauli, the nuclear power plant at the Kaiga and the missile range at Baliapal.

Raising public awareness

WG/D held regular public meetings, press briefings, campaigns, demonstrations, and the like to strengthen its stand on various issues, Constituent members helped in this respect. However, the group encountered several serious problems such as

- indifference of media;

- an expanding middle class which is emerging as an exponent of a materialist, consumerist culture;

- social and political developments which overshadow the ongoing struggles for survival; and

- an electoral process which makes it difficult for the politics of survival to gain recognition and support.

Preparing a state-of-the-art paper

One of the fundamental problems in our societies is that the *negative effects of the dominant models of development rarely manifest on the national scene.* As long as the effects remain scattered and responses remain dispersed and fragmented, the system can only assume little responsibility. Collective assertions based on common experiences are crucial to challenging the established order, whether local or national.

Towards this direction, the WG/D members prepared a comprehensive document on the impact of development. This paper feeds historical and political perspectives with empirical evidence on the issue of displacement all over the country. Throughout this activity, WG/D supported itself by indigenous funds contributed by each of its constituent members and by some organizations where these individuals are based. WG/D strongly believes that political struggles and collective actions should be supported by local resources.

Regional and global networking

A wide range of initiatives have been taken towards strengthening regional and global linkages. These efforts not only challenged multilateral and bilateral donors, but also countered the growing influence and penetration by the global economic and political establishments, including the transnational corporations, the military, and the elites. Concerted efforts which have built global links highlight three broad strategies:

- facilitate and pressure national groups in the dominating countries to demand accountability by their own governments and of institutions like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund;

- create wider public awareness of the interrelationships between issues, i.e., development lending, transnational corporate interests and and

- establish relationships with community-based movements, trade unions and political parties.

There are serious limitations and oppositions to these efforts. Most local and national initiatives have been unable to sustain global networking, primarily because their domestic struggles are already overextended. Several groups are subjects of vilification campaigns which allege that they collaborate with interest groups who want to restrain national development. More seriously, however, there are specific violations created by, say, World Bank lending, at the cost of exposing its tremendous influence and its role in legitimizing the dominant economic model. A growing number of groups feel that the World Bank should be transformed, if not closed down altogether. However, most campaigns against it have either led to superficial reforms or side-stepped through clever exercises in public relations.

Intersection and convergence
An important aspect of the current phase of political mobilization is the intersection of various movements and campaigns. It emerged because of felt need and the conscious effort to link diverse activities. This phenomenon is significant because it breaks the compartmentalization of issues and strengthens each one in the movement. New dimensions are opened up, greater collective self-confidence is built and a more united resistance is created against the forces of erosion.

For example, the National WG/D collaborates with the National Campaign on Construction Labor, both of which are also linked with the National Campaign for Housing Rights. (The latter has had a significant impact on redefining the concept of housing.) Regular links have also been established with popular movements ranging from those of traditional fishing communities, tribal areas, and comprehensive participatory research, among others.

Some Networking Challenges and Issues

In the course of our work in the WG/D in Lokayan, and in many other collective activities in which my colleagues and I have participated, some larger questions related to networking have emerged:

For the networking to be meaningful, it should be comprised of individuals and groups who have direct links with the affected or 'victim' communities. Most western networking initiatives on so-called "developing country problems" have been ineffective in strengthening the transformative processes. They have, at best, succeeded in limiting the damage. Groups should, therefore, emphasize building people's networks within their own countries, not only to make their governments and corporations more accountable, but also to build and participate on the immensely difficult task of transforming societies.

Within India, there has been an explosion of networking efforts in the past years, some of it supported by donors. Many are urban-based lacking links either with the community or the political movements (or both). The challenge is to link with communities and remain accountable to them.

Networking which is autonomous of social organizations has serious limitations. In fact, the more rooted movements and groups are extremely suspicious of individuals who project themselves as radical representatives of ongoing struggles yet have little sustained relationship with any organized group. Unfortunately, vast resources are expended today on efforts which, in the final analysis, appear to maintain these urban-based individuals and organizations rather than strengthen the affected communities.

Collective action in India must be conceived as a political task that is essentially transformative in purpose and does not merely initiatives reform public policies. Single-issue initiatives (e.g., banning pesticides, baby food or dangerous drugs) are often urban-based. However, effective networking efforts in a diverse and pluralistic society like India must be contextualized within an understanding of the values, dreams and fears of communities on whose behalf the efforts are directed. Too often, our values and priorities are defined or influenced by superficial, historical thinking or simply muddled by certain ideologies in the West. There has been a virtual neglect of the pre-modern and indigenous voices in an effort to make new values and priorities relevant. The challenge is how to strike a balance between tradition

and modernity. If networking for transformation has to take root, it will have to grapple with this question.

Many networking efforts are historical, apolitical or at best, selectively political. Jan Vikas Andolan (JVA or Movement for People's Development) is a national coalition for a better society working for alternative modes of development. Its emphasis is in linking indigenous measures with modern inputs, and in *countering the structural oppression* in society. The effort requires a sustained understanding of the forces which destroy or erode the emotional, spiritual, ecological, cultural and economic bases of our communities.

Simultaneous with the intrusion of harmful technology at the local level, hundreds of dependence-creating technologies are being dumped elsewhere in the country. And while the economic penetration of a local corporation may be controlled, the implications of international agreements such as the Uruguay Rounds of General Agreements on Tariff and Trade (GATT) are slowly but surely paving the way for the recolonization of the world by transnational corporations.

Diverse levels of networking by both local and non-local developers, should evolve distinct strategies to respond to the challenge.

The relatively easy availability of foreign funds, including those allocated for networking activities, has created its own set of problems. The nature of social innovation by people's action groups would be more desirable if assistance comes from local resources. If support comes primarily from the middle classes (or small contributions from each person in a massbase), it would be relevant to require sensitizing strategies. The burgeoning middle class today (nearly 150 million people in India) has a massive vested interest. Relatively homogenous and aspiring for almost same package of consumer goods and lifestyles as its western counterpart, this class strongly desires to sustain the status quo. In India, this class is also the source of fundamentalist support, having acquired substantial wealth. Yet, the effort to sensitize it, such as creating allies by drawing upon idealistic and patterns of thinking, is neglected.

In many ways, external funding erodes the spontaneity of collective efforts. By insisting on a "project style," with the demands of the funding agencies, there is little focus on innovation to truly make research more participative, institute mainstream change, and formulate long-term strategics.

Funded research has been too much of the applied variety, with the academicians picked out of research institutions and universities. In the process, they are set apart from intellectuals within movements

— intellectual-activists who are rooted in the cultural and political milieu and linked to the social dynamics of a given situation or area.

The Dilemmas

In the course of our work, several dilemmas have emerged. Some of these are distinguished below:

Political intent vs. reformist response

In many cases, the intent of a political strategy is transformative; however, the system invariably responds in a reformist manner. In the absence of a political mobilization, a network or a campaign is bound to be absorbed into the system without any significant change in its basic character. Even if such incremental gain is significant because it represents an expansion of democratic space, the dilemma remains.

Local vs. national vs. global

The Indian experience in networking is replete with sustained struggles yielding successes in the local spaces. However, there is almost no aggregate impact on the macro level. Changes are not visible in the five-year plans, the planning priorities and other political and economic developments at the national or regional levels. This issue emerges frequently in discussions for two reasons.

First, activists have often become disillusioned and despondent after ten to fifteen years of local-level struggles with little or no impact at the national level.

Second, with limited energies and resources, local groups are unable to balance the time for pressuring government, influencing policy or filing court cases, and sustaining popular mobilization. For instance, in the WG/D, after the policy draft is completed, we are unable to give the required time for lobbying and pressuring in Delhi primarily because of several other crucial struggles with which we are committed. The same dilemmas operate in the national-global axis.

Dominant perspective vs. creating alternatives

The dominant worldview of development, pervasiveness of modern science and technology, and partisan character of our states are inconsistent with ecological sustainability and social justice. Invariably, the system can only accept so much. In fact, the dominant economic interest is evolving extremely sophisticated strategies for manipulating or coopting dissent. If it fails, then

state or para-state forces are used to subvert or crush popular struggles.

The Task Ahead

It seems at times that most of our energies are expended in defensive action; however, the task ahead is more enormous. We must not only involve olve in restoring the primacy of political mobilization but also in the much more difficult task of influencing attitudes, values, systems of thought and action. The institutions that must bring this change about and the leadership needed to create cohesive and ecologically-sensitive movements are still extremely weak, if non-existent.

We devote too much energy on incremental exercises, not on transformative ones. The challenge calls for a radical reorientation of priorities and strategies to build and sustain collective action locally, nationally, regionally and globally

Reflections on India Experience

Shifts in Networking

Networking is not a new idea in India; it dates back to as far as twenty years ago. During the early period, however, networking was more for reasons of efficiency — for the sake of networking itself — as more regional and state-level organizations separated. Since then, there have been clear shifts in networking; the emerging pattern is one that explores issues with common factors. Issue-based networking may focus on problems of drought, displacement, environment and other issues. Networks today must be engaged in political roles such as raising critical consciousness in supporting the initiatives of the people.

Evolving Networks from Below

Among Indian NGOs, the more common view is that the networking process starts at the village level where they organize pre-school children, school children, youth, mothers, and farmers into six groups, putting into context the different basic human needs. NGOs assist these groups in terms of training and providing other inputs to empower the villagers. The villages are linked into clusters, and clusters are linked into district-level groups. This mode of networking reaches 8,200 villages where legal and education programs are organized.

Networking vis-a-vis Isolation

Collective efforts emanate from the common need of people to become part of a larger political process at the national or state level. Activists who have spent ten to twenty years in local areas may feel isolated leading to fatigue. In some communities, for instance, some groups boycot the elections on the argument that the macro situation is so grim that even elections could not solve the problems.

There may be a few successes attained, but looking at development at the national level, the activists feel completely helpless and disillusioned. Many of them become cynical while others simply

give up the struggle for change. On the other side, the state and vested interest groups find it easier to crush or manipulate, coopt or subvert localized groups' efforts.

Who Gets the Credit?

Establishing collective efforts could lead to a lot of problems. For example, who gets the credit when something gets done? In the Narmada Dam experience, it was agreed that no names would be exposed and the movement would be projected instead. This was, however, questioned by some people, asking what was wrong with a few individuals, local activists and leaders getting known in the national level. Someone should impress upon the people that an alternative group of leaders is emerging.

Responsibilities in a Network

Being part of a collective action is very much like living in a community. It puts a tremendous amount of responsibility on individuals and requires the exercise of self-restraint, a basic principle in community life. Likewise, one must be open and accountable to every group and the members of one's group.

Funding

More intensive studies and reflections should be done with regard to funding because it is an issue that crops up time and again. Many NGOs are dependent on donor funding. It is about time to change the funding process to one that is independent from donors.

The issue about NGOs that channel foreign funds to movements may have moral and ethical implications, but it is not fair to apply one rule on all cases. Considering that it is being done extensively all over the region, there are practical and feasible reasons for asking donor assistance. Whether or not movements or campaigns should receive foreign funding is a decision that is best left to the individual organizations themselves. There is, however, a need to be vigilant about the sources and conditions of funding.

Redefinition of Goals

Many NGOs are worried that the goals of professionalizing the sector is carried too far, thus, negating the years of struggle and development work. Because of dependence on donors, many NGOs strive to become output-oriented, immediate-goal-oriented and adherents to the annual-report-based approaches. This kind of

approaches is not needed in collective actions. This does not mean, however, that NGOs should not focus on goals; rather, NGOs should redefine their goals and success criteria such that they are centered on the communities that they serve. After all, it is important for people to have a sense of confidence that they have achieved something and they are able to measure and report the achievements. Moreover, goals and success should go beyond concrete achievements to sustain the NGOs' energy and enthusiasm, especially if the results of what are being done today may not be seen in the NGO workers' lifetime.

Proaction

NGO experience in community organizing shows that while empowerment leads to mobilization for social transformation, the economic activities sustain the organizing work. This is more than providing traditional income-generating opportunities; it also entails doing a proactive type of work. More precisely, it means getting rooted on whatever economic activities of the poor and enabling them to get around the problem without straying from the larger political perspective.

In their work with marginal fisherfolks, NGOs have observed that these people are poor not because of productive disability or ignorance, but because of constricting economic relations, such as that with the moneylenders in their communities. When the NGOs realized the problem, they assisted the fisherfolks to organize cooperatives so that they would no longer depend on the moneylenders. However, this is not sufficient because most of the fisherfolks are into deep fishing and face stiff competition with trawlers. This problem and other issues point to a need to unite to be able to relate, bargain and negotiate with the political forces. Organizing cooperatives and trade unions are complementary efforts that sustain development work in the area.

Building a Movement

A large number of networks are converging into a movement. The Indian NGOs must be able to respond to this challenge by being able to identify the economic support they need and clarify their political goals in joining people's movements.

What is the relevance of NGOs? On macro-micro levels, networking is crucial, and this is seen in the hundreds of networks in different lines of work which are converging. NGOs should, however, watch out for oversimplification, something probable when groups unite for a common goal. There is a need to strengthen and promote a large number of networks and the purpose for their existence. This

requires a new paradigm of leadership, a collective model that recognizes each and every component.

On NGO-PO Relationship

NGOs sometimes trail the wrong direction particularly with respect to NGO-PO relations. Instead of harnessing and motivating voluntary action from the grassroots, some NGOs see the action of the grassroots as a challenge to their own turf. Some big NGOs organize people, take the leadership role and do everything, such as reporting and funding. This alienates the people from their own initiatives.

NGOs must remember that they are different from POs. They should refrain from taking action in behalf of the POs. Their actions must be based on their own objectives to which funding must be channelled.

Vision in Networking

It is important to have a long-term vision in networking. While the goal of networking is to work for a bigger change, it should start from small victories and slowly build up from there. Admittedly, it would be difficult to sustain, much more inspire a big group wherein it would take 30 years or more before members could reap the fruits of their labor. One way to sustain the movement is to be aware of reality and to exercise care in organizing campaigns.

Partnership with Funding Agencies

Funding does not stop at its sources. One must know the situation and goals of funding agencies. No matter how liberal some donors may be, they have their own interests to fulfill. While NGOs talk of self-respect, some funding agencies destroy the principle of self-reliance by perpertuating dependence.

NGOs as Catalysts, Innovators and Motivators

NGOs play a crucial role in educating people on their rights and responsibilities about matters. But NGOs must do it in such a way that they would motivate people to think of themselves as a means of strengthening grassroots democracy.

It would also do well for NGOs to be social innovators. It may be a very difficult but very exciting role. As innovators, they must concentrate on complex but realizable strategies to fight for people's rights on access and control over resources, in recovering or

regenerating industries and in creating confidence

Particularly in India, there is a need to protect the village economies. These communities have their own system of agriculture, water management and other industries, bur are being supplanted by alien and expensive models. NGOs step in to analyze and scrutinize the developments that are happening. The challenge is in refocusing the already rich culture and knowledge of the people

The Real Agenda

The global situation shows a collective addiction to growth and consumption. This type of growth puts a heavy demand on the environmental resources, to the point of systematically destroying ecology the basis of all life and human civilization. Ir is increasingly driven by the unaccountable force of transnational capital It uses the state as its instrument and disempowers the people.

The core of NGOs' task is the return of the control of the state, community and natural wealth to the people in equitable shares.

Definition of Strategies

In defining strategies for action, class interests are involved, and class struggle remains important as it is part of the effort to achieve structural change. Nevertheless, with the given agenda, the framework for this struggle must change. Everyone, regardless of class except for those who are greedy must share an interest in the outcome of the struggle for change. We all share interest in the survival of life and civilization, not a matter of interest of one against the other. This is the basis of building an alliance across all classes and sectors.

The basic strategy calls for changing the perception of all sectors about the nature of development and solutions to the crises that lie ahead. This means working above ground, and being a transparent, visible and candid force. This also means building alliances across all segments of the society, with focus on consensus building.

Alliance Building

Alliance building must focus on individuals not on institutions because most of the institutions are products of the growth-centered vision. This is why voluntary action is important. Voluntary action centers on the individual.

Alliance building must have a strong international dimension as what has surfaced in several discussions during the workshop. In dealing with the issues of transnational corporations (TNCs), one realizes that much of the potential for the control rests in the North.

Reduce Dependence on Foreign Funding

Throughout the workshop, there has been a demand to reduce dependence on foreign funding. Even more important is reducing dependence of the government/state on international funding as this is where the greatest distortion of policies take place. The bulk of foreign funding sources are directly controlled by transnational corporations (TNCs).

If NGOs are to focus on policy advocacy, the issue of foreign funding becomes even more critical because of the need for independence and credibility. Serious attention must also be given to restoring true volunteerism.

Demilitarization Issue

Demilitarization, although not well-discussed during the workshop should be high in the agenda. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) reports that military spending is the single, most distorted item in terms of allocating scarce resources. Military activities place enormous stress on the environment.

Developing Partnership Across All Sectors

As NGOs move into larger agenda, a lot of effort must be devoted to building capabilities in alternative policy analysis. The growth-centered vision of TNCs command enormous capabilities and institutions to promote their interests; NGOs must be able to counter that with their intellectual concerns. Such would require NGOs to reach out to all sectors media, politicians and the business sector. NGOs must get their ideas into the mainstream of educational processes and systems. NGOs must also learn to use massbase forces such as the forces of religion and religious institutions. All these are part of developing an inclusive partnership across all sectors and segments of society in addressing the large agenda.

AN INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN

The Global Baby Food Campaign

ANNELIES ALLAIN

IBFAN/IOCU, MALAYSIA

Rescuing Babies

A woman was walking by the river when she saw a baby in the water. Naturally, she dived in and rescued it. Barely had she reached the shore when she saw another baby in the river and she had to rush back into the water and save that baby. She was exhausted by the fight with the current when she saw yet another baby drowning. She called for help and her friends came running. For several hours, people along the river bank rescued babies. So shocked, cold and tired were they that no one had taken the time to look and see that there was someone upstream throwing babies in the river.

Stories like the one above are useful in making people reflect about cause and effect. Too often, we act on immediate emergencies and are occupied "rescuing babies" that there we leave no energy to analyze the causes. We may also find ourselves on one single path, following a leader like lemmings headed to a cliff. Strategic networking offers some safeguards against narrow-mindedness alongside the better known advantages of efficiency and flexibility.

This paper will examine the evolution of the International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN), one of the oldest loose coalitions of citizens' groups focusing on a single issue.

The Problem

The feeding of babies seems such a simple and straightforward issue that surprisingly it has inspired so much controversy and has led

many people around the globe to join hands and work together.

Babies are best fed by their own mother's milk. To replace human milk by a concoction of animal milk and feed it by bottle to a baby is hazardous. It exposes a young and sensitive digestive system to external bacteria and deprives it of the protection of the enzymes and antibodies in breastmilk. Yet millions of babies are bottle-fed; more than a million die every year because of it.

Breastfeeding rates continue to decline. Analyses show that mothers lose confidence in their physical ability to provide all the nutrition their infants needed. Marketing practices reinforce the deliberate move to supplant breastfeeding. It is a bit like pushing babies towards the river's edge and leaving them for others to save. The subtleties of marketing have a way of deceiving people so that even health workers genuinely believe the objectivity of bottle feeding.

The six groups' that started IBFAN worked on development and trade issues, consumer rights and ethical investment concerns. They knew little about babies, nutrition, infection and the like; but they knew about marketing, hunger, poverty and inequality. When they met with the doctors and nurses who could explain the effect of bottle feeding, the causes were quickly lined up. And to this day, IBFAN believes that it is useless to promote breastfeeding as long as commercial marketing practices are allowed to go on without restrictions. Breastfeeding should be protected to stand a chance in today's marketplace. This analysis pitched IBFAN against the twenty firms, mostly transnational companies (TNCS), that control the global market of breastmilk substitutes.

Early on in the campaign, a convincing article was written about demarketing the products. This obviously have been the easiest solution to the problem, but the network never seriously pursued demarketing as a plausible strategy. Instead, it listed a number of commercial activities identified as aggressive promotion of infant formula: advertising, milk nurses, bonny baby labels, samples, etc. Many of these stopped due to the campaign but other avenues of promotion intensified, and campaign demands were adjusted accordingly. As the years went by, both manufacturers and critics grew more sophisticated, but the basic issue remained the same: protect mothers and babies from commercial misinformation.

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[1] ICCR, IOCU, INFACT, AG3W WoW, OXFAM

Evolution of IBFAN

The International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN) was formally started on 12 October 1979 after a UN meeting on infant and young child feeding. The history of the network, however, goes back even further to 1972 when first contacts were made between a Malaysian consumer leader and an American church worker. British development activists became involved after a cover story in the New Internationalist (1973) and a book by War on Want called The Baby Killer (1974). Swiss students translated the book and entitled it Nestle Kills Babies. Nestle sued the students for libel and there were three hearings in the Nestle lawsuit between 1975 and 1976. Each hearing attracted a lot of media coverage and witnesses from all over the world.

The Nestle trial provided an urgent need for solidarity and focus on the campaign. At the end of the trial in July 1976, groups and individuals from eight countries met to discuss the necessity for continuous data collection and a system of sharing information. They recognized the usefulness of international contacts to avoid being isolated when attacked. They learned a lot about the power of the media and saw the need to develop further links in the South. Adversity gelled the unity and determination of these development groups.

Motivated by the same concern for the negative impact of TNCs in developing countries, the National Council of Churches in the US followed the trial. It also bought the rights to a 1975 film called Bottle Babies by Peter Krieg. This film showed the direct link between promotion, malnutrition and infant deaths. It carried the message to thousands of American students and church-based groups and led to the start of a national network called INFACT, the Infant Formula Action Coalition. Those who learned about it wanted to do something, but they were far from the scene of poverty. Since Nestle sold instant coffee and chocolates in the US, and the idea of a boycott caught on quickly. The Nestle boycott officially started in July 1977 and by 1978, it had spread to three other countries and threatened to spread even more.

More of a Political Issue

The baby food struggle began as an elementary argument for better infant health but soon evolved into a political fight. Politics, not party politics but power politics, permeate the world's social and economic structures. Working on an issue as apparently innocuous as breastfeeding has been an eye-opener for many network affiliates,

especially those who did not want to get involved in politics but gradually found out that challenging vested interests was unavoidable.

Power politics is mostly in the hands of the state and the marketplace, but by organizing people, more can claim a share and exert their demands, thereby, defy the existing structures. Ignorance about power politics can mean loss of people's rights and, once lost, these cannot be easily regained. This, is the most exciting potential of strategic networking.

The ongoing struggle on baby foods shows that certain challenges are not easy, but successes can be achieved and the basics of networking are the same whether one's goal is land reform, ecology, improved health or peace.

People's organizations constitute the "third system" which should balance out power with government and business the first and second systems, respectively. In some places, the "third system" is latent or disorganized; in others, it operates only at very low-key levels. Networks are a new and powerful expression of the "third system". Focussing on a single issue, as most them do, they develop expertise which can effectively challenge the knowledge and dominance of the other systems.

The World of Politics, Power and People

If we place IBFAN's subject into focus, we can draw concentric circles around it representing local, national and international space. How does the local situation affect mothers and children in their deciding about infant feeding? We soon find out that health workers have a profound effect on this, but they themselves are subject to different pressures and practices. Hence, we place health workers in a symbiotic relationship with mother and child, both in the center of our attention.

Three segments affect mother, child and health worker. Public opinion, local consumer habits, family and social influence constitute one segment of the specter that influences the mother's choice. On the business side, there is advertising, subtler forms of promotion and hospital practices. Hospitals have a set of strict routines. They usually have a long-standing relationship with specialized commercial suppliers, and many, of course, including physicians, are in the private

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[2] Throughout this article, I have preferred to use the term "third system" or "people's organization" rather than "NGO which has a negative connotation. The advantage of the term "people's organization or PO in Anwar Fazal's words, "is that one can call government, NPO or nonpeople's organization"

sector. Pharmacies, shops, direct mail, and media projections all reach out to the young mother.

In the last segment are government policies which also have a bearing on mothers' choices. The public health system may or may not encourage breastfeeding. Medical school curricula in nearly all countries have inadequate training in the proper management of lactation. There may be restrictions on advertising, sometimes even on other forms of promotion, or the government may be committed to "free trade" with no binding limits for the commercial sector.

At the national level, these three systems or sectors influence the center-subjects. National company marketing policies, Ministry of Health directives and the influence (or lack of it) by national IBFAN groups, mother support groups, academic, church, media, and opinion makers make a lot of difference. Transnational marketing practices have a direct bearing on the national sphere. Barring effective legal restrictions, the decisions are made in the international sphere at the TNC headquarters. Just as national companies or subsidiaries may form national trade associations, the TNCs also have their international representative associations.

Health workers, consumers, religious congregations, scientists and baby food activists all have their international linking systems. The media fall between the cracks of the systems; sometimes they sing the tune of national governments or are owned and, to some extent, governed by a TNC like the Rupert Murdoch Consortium. In other cases, the media are ferociously independent. Journalists may have independent judgment but if the advertising department has giant clients to humor, we all know that certain activist stories will not get any mileage.

The international space does not only harbor TNCs and people's networks but also the United Nations (UN) family. Ideally, the UN system represents "we, the people" but in practice, power in that sector is exercised by the collective will of national governments, autocratic and democratic alike. And even that statement needs further tempering because some governments are very much "more equal than others" and in the 45 years of the UN's existence, international bureaucrats have developed crafty ways of pre-shaping decisions by governments. In other words, the secretariats of the various UN agencies have become actors.

The chart is not complete without showing some of the ways by which one sector affects the others. These are pressures and dependencies which vary greatly, from sector to sector, from country to country. Political contributions or pledges of investment may

reduce legislative control enthusiasm. Promises of grants or threats of restrictions on activities may lessen citizens' pressure on government. In some cases, pressure on companies may result in direct or indirect retaliation against the activist leader or even his or her family. It is too complicated to draw on the chart but the reader can imagine how indirect pressure may be exercised via the government, a local institution, the media, the UN or, a particular group, or even an outspoken citizens' organization.

We may not like it, but this is the nature of the world of politics, power and people. Some will shy away from it. Others will tackle it with gusto. Still, many will ignore it. For international networks with a campaign at hand, it is indispensable to analyze the whole picture, identify allies and build strategies, seek maximum leverage, and help the like-minded to understand how politics affect their struggle at local, national and international levels. As for so many things, direct experience is the best teacher, but learning can be sped up considerably by having a model to follow and some theory to reflect on.

IBFAN's Dual Track

When IBFAN was set up, there was no intention of having any constitution, head office or directorship. The people who created the network wanted a new kind of citizens' organization, one where each group and each person could do what they are good at and receive help and encouragement from others who share the same principles. In a network, nobody can be forced to do things; but all should be committed to do the best they can and together, they grow stronger. This operating method has served IBFAN for the past ten years, leading others to adopt the same. The Health Action International Network and Pesticide Action Network were directly inspired by and patterned from IBFAN.

Two key successes stand out in IBFAN's past 10 years. One is the Nestle boycott, the other is the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes (the Code). The boycott, which was started before IBFAN was born as a network, triggered the need for the Code. The US Senate hearings led by Edward Kennedy lifted the issue from popular street action to a level of "higher" politics. Since it was an international issue, it seemed only natural to elevate it to the UN. The business sector was quite happy with this and even claimed that it was on their request that the World Health Organization (WHO) was asked to "take over".

As long as the debate remained at grassroots level, company executives had to defend their policies in public meetings with a usually critical audience. At the UN, it was felt that things would be different, more polished, more "scientific", and there would be more chance to maneuver. As for Nestle, it was not the first time that the company was in a position to manipulate a UN agency from the inside.

The "third system" followed Kennedy's recommendation and the WHO/UNICEF's mediation with mixed feelings. They sensed correctly that the quiet corridors of the blue-glass WHO building in Geneva would put them at a disadvantage with the smooth executives of the company just down the lake (in a very similar blue-glass reflecting structure). And although it had been expected that the boycott would be dropped, boycott leaders elected to maintain it as a separate pressure mechanism and a ready position in case the WHO talks should fail.

For five years, IBFAN's efforts ran on the two tracks simultaneously. Its energy and limited resources were divided between stirring up more boycott endorsers and sitting in Code drafting sessions, WHO executive and assembly meetings, and lobbying delegates. When the Code was adopted (by 118 nations against one, a huge success in itself), again, there were expectations from outside the third system that now the boycott would be over. But within IBFAN, there was never any doubt as to the wisdom of keeping the two tracks. There were jokes about "Nestle-bashers" and "Code-pushers, but in reality there was a remarkable unity in holding on to both and seeing which one would accomplish IBFAN's task faster.

Speed is also important in networking. Some 40,000 children die everyday of diarrhea; at least a quarter of them could be saved if they were breastfed. The specter of infant deaths haunted the boycotters who doubled their efforts in searching for ways to put more pressure on the transnationals. The North American groups developed a highly specialized single-product focus on Nestle's prestigious instant coffee Tasters Choice; and by mass action were convincing one supermarket after another to stop stocking it. European groups followed suit with a focus on Nescafe.

The worldwide groups were becoming more vocal and more skilled in tracking violations on the Code which were needed to bolster both the boycott action and the pushing for the Code's

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[3]Allain, A Challenging Transnationals, ICDA, March 1983

implementation. Nestle employed various methods of trying to silence the critics or "picked them off one by one. Many of these backfired and Nestle's public image became more and more tarnished. The new managing director eyed takeovers on the US market. Finland endorsed the Nestle boycott. Finally, Nestle started making serious moves to meet the boycott demands. That was in 1984.

Division Within

IBFAN faced its most serious internal challenge ever on the question of ending the boycott. The boycott preceded the Code and boycott demands were different from Code's provisions in that, as an international tool, it recommended worldwide action while the boycott had always stressed more the welfare of the Third World. Nestle agreed to meet the boycott demands, to a large extent, and promised to solve outstanding issues later. The boycott was suspended for six months to give Nestle time to implement its promises.

The North Americans felt victorious and set up a huge IBFAN conference in Mexico to celebrate the end of the boycott in 1984 Nestle did implement a number of changes new labels, no more ads (for infant formula, that is), no more samples and it promised to agree to the WHO interpretation on "supplies" An agreement spelling out all these provisions was later signed in New York just prior to the Mexico conference.

European and Third World groups were invited to join in the celebrations, but they came with strong reservations about just one clause in the agreement which said: "In all countries, except Western Europe" Nestle did not market infant foods in North America or in Eastern Europe. The agreement, in practice, applied only to developing countries. While victories, even partial ones, need celebration and occasions for reunions of so many IBFAN affiliates were rare, the excluding clause in the agreement dampened the jubilation.

The American groups agreed in principle that the Code's implementation should be universal, but felt they could not have added it to the original boycott demands. The Europeans felt cheated and were angry about the lack of structural vision among their American counterparts. The Third World groups mediated and helped to repair the rift. Asians, Africans and Latinos resolutely joined the Europeans in denouncing the double standards. They claimed that if

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[4]Donation of free or low-cost formula to hospitals and maternities

marketing practices still allow the promotion of bottle feeding in the rich countries, the effect would reverberate in other countries and the ultimate impact would be the same. Western models, with the aid of mass-media circulation, would still carry the message that bottle feeding is okay as long as one is careful about boiling, sterilizing, measuring and can afford to buy milk substitutes in sufficient quantities, etc. The message they wanted to relay was a straightforward recognition that breastmilk is the best anywhere at any time for rich and poor alike and that substitutes are inferior products to be avoided unless there was really no alternative.

The IBFAN Coordinating Council spent several days in Mexico threshing out the differences. Unless they get Nestle to negotiate, the U.S. groups would never achieve a major breakthrough. Without brushing aside the short-term victory, IBFAN focused on its long-term objective -- eliminate promotion for breastmilk substitutes, bottles and teats in all countries. The lesson from Mexico reaffirmed the need for solidarity, confidence and communication.

For its part, the industry examined the divergences within the network in its attempt to exploit the "soft spots". Considering the wide variation of the groups and their constituencies, frequent and open communication was the only defense of IBFAN in its fight against the much more homogeneous giants. To avoid any temptation for separate dealings, the International Nestle Boycott Committee, INBC, would coordinate responses to industry moves.

Two goals were more clearly defined in Mexico: a commitment to universality and a concentrated effort by all to follow through on the struggle. The division of opinion may leave scars, but the dynamism of networking and the deep trust, which has somehow grown among IBFANers worldwide, managed to overcome the differences and plan for future action.

Expansion of IBFAN

Immediately following the 1981 World Health Assembly which adopted the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes, 90 IBFAN members met in Geneva for the IBFAN Congress. They previously lobbied the WHO delegates and witnessed them vote on the Code so as to be able to hold their governments to commit at the international level. Convening the 90 members in Geneva was a very conscious effort to make IBFAN grow, yet maintain its informal structure and remain effective. During the 1981 Congress, six regions were established and regional representatives were elected. Each Third World regional representative was given a

substantial amount of US$500 mainly for stamps and local organizing. Communication was considered the most important aspect of

networking even though it caused ill feelings among those who felt they were "used" by the core groups (founders of IBFAN, who are nearly all Western). They constantly feed information to the groups on marketing and receive little feedback. They were thoroughly pummeled during the Congress. They were accused of dominating decision making, controlling the finances and telling others what to do. Once the anger simmered, however, all had sat down to draw up

principles, objectives and a system of democratic decision making. IBEAN's structure puzzled many who came from more bureaucratic and more hierarchical backgrounds, thus, expected something less jellylike.

One of the founders gave an inspiring talk about IBFAN being mirrors: now it's there, then it is not, and next, it is multiplied everywhere. IBFAN's strength, however, lies, in its lack of a formalized structure. By having a flexible system and getting many to join, eventually baby food manufacturers and government officials would have to look over their shoulders all the time, knowing they may be watched. Another pioneer of IBFAN spoke of the similar effect of a never-ending spread of bushfires putting one out here would only lead to another one bursting into flames on the next hilltop. The industry would be thoroughly confused, obliged to be on guard at all times and would eventually give up its unethical marketing of baby milks.

Decentralization, democracy and information-sharing were the bases for IBFAN's expansion. There were no fees nor membership criteria; only adherence to principles favoring better child health. The more active affiliates, in their own way, were the more involved in running the network. There was awareness all along, especially on the need to build up some of the weaker groups and even create new ones, because like a chain or a fishing net, the structure is only as strong as its weakest link. Policies were set by the IBFAN Coordinating Council which met once a year and kept in touch with each other via bimonthly reports. Ten years ears later, the basic structure was reviewed at the IBFAN Forum and found to work well. Further decentralization was formalized by adding two more regional coordination centers (Nairobi and Montevideo) to the existing ones.

Asia was the first region to involve many groups in IBFAN. Thanks to the International Organization of Consumers Unions (IOCU), a founding member of IBFAN, and the capacity of its Regional Director to enthuse IOCU members. In Africa, the network

is indebted to one person who abandoned his secure job in order to devote full-time work for IBFAN starting with her US$500 and a little more than promises of help. Painstakingly, she built up groups throughout East Africa, innovating as she went along. Some of the Latin American and Caribbean groups had been involved from the start; others joined gradually. The Canadians cooperated with the Americans in the Nestle boycott, and as it spread to Europe, boycotting groups almost had a subnetwork within IBFAN. In some parts of Europe, affiliated groups that faded out, would resurface and flex their muscles again or be replaced by entirely new groups.

Many of the most recent IBFAN groups are nursing mothers' groups. Initially, they shied away from IBFAN because they were told it was "political". IBFAN's staying power and initial successes have convinced many of these groups that one cannot remain apolitical with the infant feeding issue. Development action groups and consumers unions have always been staunch supporters of IBFAN. More and more health associations and women's groups are joining in.

IBFAN today is almost entirely run by women. There are always more new people joining than old ones leaving. We used to eagerly count new groups as a gauge to IBFAN's success but rapidly lost count as expansion took place so quickly. At the fund-raising for the network's tenth anniversary, organizers made a count and found 148 IBFAN affiliated groups in 74 countries.

Money Matters

Financing of IBFAN groups for trainings, seminars, lobbying exercises and planning meetings remains largely in regional hands. National activities are financed mostly by a separate fund-raising, occasionally supplemented by seed grants from the regional pots.

Most of the international planning meetings take place by riding on to some other major events to which a number of the key actors would go or be invited anyhow.

IBFAN's role in the development and adoption of the WHO/UNICEF Code gave credibility to the network and improve its fund-raising prospects. The Nordic and Dutch donors looked with a sympathetic eye at the new kind of "third system" power which could act at the political and practical levels, especially in the Third World. But although they agreed with IBFAN's principles, they were baffled by its lack of formal structure. Some of the groups which did not exist as legal entities were forced to draft statutes and become registered for accountancy reasons.

Since the infant feeding problem remained in the so-called developing countries, groups in industrialized countries found it next to impossible to source funds for their own day-to-day functioning. The Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA), Danchurchaid and some of the Dutch church groups eventually broke through this deadlock and SIDA especially, recognized the need for organizing in the West to undo a problem caused by Western-based transnationals.

Monitoring of the Code's implementation until very recently was done on a voluntary basis with scarce funds going to combined training-monitoring exercises in relatively few countries. Internal support was more widely extended in spreading know-how about fund-raising, sharing information about donors, reviewing and recommending funding proposals for new groups. Some groups are naturally more successful than others. In general, however, it remains very hard if not impossible to find funds for activities in the North. Some of the better-off, well-established Southern groups have now started helping out by offering consultancies and joint arrangements.

At one point in IBFAN's history, we tried to put a worldwide package of proposals under one huge funding umbrella. Donors balked at the idea and the package of proposals was shelved.

Network Management

The management mechanisms within the IBFAN network continue to be rather flexible. The structure for planning and decision making, called the IBFAN Coordinating Council (IBCoCo), is made up of regional representatives, coordinators and several members-at-large (mostly ex-leaders who allow new ones to pick their brains). IBCoCo tries to meet once a year, but it cannot always afford to have a full meeting or to make the meetings regular. Piggybacking, hitchhiking, kangarooing are all familiar concepts to Council members. A planning meeting back to back with another event is far from ideal, but spending scarce money on travel just to discuss "management" is not consistent with the IBFAN grain.

Modern communication technology does help network management. The use of fax machines threatens to take over all traditional forms of linking, with the very real danger of excluding partners who do not own or have access to a fax machine. Information sharing, that oil which keeps the cogwheels of networking running, will continue to rely on frequent exchange by post within and between regions.

While IBCoCo sets the overall policies, identifies priority activities

and reviews performance, there are subcommittees for specialized activities and a Quick Consultative Committee which can make emergency decisions.

Regional coordination centres, which have full-time staff engaged in more documentation and publications, have grown from three to five. Each centre carries specific responsibilities to service its immediate region but can and does also link up with other regions.

Regional representatives are elected by groups whenever a regional meeting is held. When this is not possible, they are either appointed or reconfirmed by their peers in the coordinating council. Their roles are to maintain and foster communication between IBFAN affiliates in the region, encourage new groups to join, advise on project outlines and get help from IBCoCo on funding proposals, new initiatives and the like.

Training, advocacy and media work, fund-raising and documentation are common themes which run through all five activities of IBFAN (c.g., networking, information sharing, company campaigns, Code implementation, and breastfeeding promotion and support).

All IBFAN groups are involved, to some extent, in all five activities, but are free to emphasize one over the other depending on the particular needs of their constituencies.

IBCoCo assigns particular coordination and development functions to consenting network partners who have developed special skills in the area (c.g., IBFAN Nairobi develops training modules; IBFAN Penang concentrates on the Code's implementation; IBFAN Geneva maintains liaison with WHO and other international bodies on medical curricula; and IBFAN Montevideo focuses on women and breastfeeding, etc.).

Opposing Interests

It is beyond the scope of this paper to fully analyze the range of tactics employed by the "second system", i.e., the business world and especially transnationals who control the babyfood market. But these incidents cannot be denied:

- In the early years, the companies flatly denied responsibility for infant deaths; they blamed the victims.

- Complaints about aggressive marketing and Code violations reported by IBFAN are always called "allegations". The company would take six months or a year to investigate it; by then the "allegations" have vanished.

- Code violations are written off as isolated incidence or exceptional error on communications, etc.

- They challenge IBFAN to prove that promotional practices increase the number of users of the products (so use of marketing, after all?). what's the

- The companies also downplay breastfeeding by saying that it is unethical to make mothers feel guilty about bottle feeding. And what about working women, orphans, contaminants in breastmilk, etc.?

- Frontal attacks like the branding of Marxists in the early eighties have subsided but there is still a tendency to "divide and rule. Some infiltration also creeps in.

- Teams of corporate lawyers have peered over the International Code to find loopholes. Subsequently, tedious legal arguments have developed over the interpretation of one or the other provision.

- Marketing experts have developed different ways to build brand-loyalty among consumers. Nestle started marketing "hypoallergenic" Nescare baby lotions and powders in Malaysia on 1 November 1990. Two weeks later, there were Nescare flyers all over the maternities in town.

- Australian and British TV recently produced documentaries on the babyfood scandal. Within a year, Nestle countered with another video using the same doctor and attempting to split medical opinion.

Since the early 1980s, many companies have developed consumer affairs departments and appointed "issue management" directors. The marketing experts subscribe to specialized newsletters which gauge public interest in activist issues and even give profiles of groups and individuals. In many prestigious business schools, especially in the U.S., the infant formula controversy, as they often call it, is used as a case study for management training.

The "first system" should not oppose IBFAN's goals and objectives. Unfortunately for everybody government has considerably and deliberately slowed down matters. Ever since the leadership at WHO changed, the Code has not been a favorite document for the Secretariat's officials. Company pressure, political pressure and sheer lack of courage have led to dillydallying over words and proceedings. Fortunately, UNICEF has stood firm and so have quite a number of governments.

The lack of firm support by WHO for its own resolution became

especially clear over the issue of "supplies". The 1986 World Health Assembly denounced supplies as a promotional tactic and said they should not be allowed. But there was no follow-up. IBFAN groups felt supplies were so important, and did little to remove it. They started another Nestle Boycott in 1988, this time dragging Wyeth and other firms as well.

Strategic networking in IBFAN's experience needs many tracks to run on legislation, advocacy and health workers' training and also tactics like boycotts - which hurt companies in their "good" corporate image. The world may be getting better for babies but slowly…

SYNTHESIS

Key Issues and
Highlights of Discussions

The Development Agenda

Environmental degradation cannot be dealt with in isolation from poverty and powerlessness of the people. As the cases have shown, there are certain processes that keep people in poverty and helplessness and which, in turn, alienate people from nature. Foremost among these processes are the growth-centered vision of development by governments and official agencies as well as the economic activities of transnational corporations. These activities place a heavy demand on the limited resource base. Their development initiatives, therefore, run

counter to the goals of social justice and sustainable development. Set against this deepening crisis, the lessons center on the emergence of struggles that revolve around reconstructing societies, political processes, basic organizational forms and economic relationships. These new NGO activities pose a new set of questions, challenges and dilemmas on the NGOs. The large agenda before them is defined by the need to reorient "the way we produce, the way we consume, the way we live, the way we govern and the way we relate to each other."

Strategic Networks Defined

Strategic networks are alliances of individuals and organizations that combine resources in pursuit of a shared, defined and consequential goals. They are a creation of a new form of relationship between and among POs, NGOs, and GOs. They may be considered as the building blocks of social movements (but not necessarily of people's organizations), the larger aggrupations which are action-oriented and are propelled by voluntary social energy. The source of real power of these movements is its ability to move together quickly in strategic networks focused on specific issues. These networks in turn become the building blocks for a deeper understanding of issues.

Individuals or organizations who consciously create, maintain and shape more strategic networks are considered as catalysts. The operating principles relevant to strategic catalysts are -

- small staff and budget,
- leadership rests with those who control most the outcome of the effort;
- continuous search for other groups which could broaden the coalition;
- work with existing organizations; not try to create new organizations; and
- use of protest actions as foundation to position for proactive action (proaction); move from simply attempting to block negative action through protests, into attempting to remove the causes of the damaging action through proactive initiatives.

Some characteristics of strategic networking were pointed out as follows:

- transformative vision/peaceful change
- people-oriented/propelled
- life-centered
- empowering (personal-social/community)
- creative
- engaged in political process/issue politics
- has horizontal and living structures
- voluntaryism as primal energy
- based in solidarity, love
- evolving/dynamic
- mutual accountability
- new forms of leadership
- copes creatively with diversity and tension

Focus on Proaction

There is a growing role for NGOs in articulating alternatives. They find themselves moving beyond simply protesting the action of governments and corporations to a proactive stance of building support for positive alternatives.

The focus on proaction leads to an entirely new conceptualization of the development problem and the NGO roles in addressing it. The NGOs at the forefront of this reconceptualization, predominantly in the Philippines and India, are becoming engaged in what might be

described as recreating or regenerating ecological and social structures. The former includes the rebuilding of soils and hydrological systems through new patterns of land use and management based on intensive, environmentally sound and organic farming practices.

Strategic Networking as a Transformational Process

NGO actions through strategic networks culminate into social-movements. This process puts a new set of questions, challenges and dilemmas on NGOs because it is of a different context. The leadership that NGOs provide in strategic networks, given the emerging trend, requires a new set of values, attitudes and goals.

Working for the transformation of society means bringing about structural changes, a task that is not simple but nonetheless feasible. It is a long political process whose outcome may not be seen in one's lifetime. In Bangladesh, for example, 13 years of organizing has enjoined only 10% of the population.

Donor Skepticism

There is a growing skepticism of donors who work in conventional funding modes. No matter how liberal some donors may be, NGOs still find it difficult to find partners who would accept the terms of the donee because donees have to give donors a clear accounting of how their funding are utilized. Donors sometimes are supportive of transformational initiatives; at other times, even when not intended, they co-opt the process of change.

NGOs must reach out to form alliances in pursuit of a transformational strategy with many diverse groups, including government and international agencies. However, they caution themselves on the legitimacy of organizations and programs that are inherently part of the destructive processes. The World Bank is generally considered an exemplary case of such organization. Its efforts to engage NGOs to support its projects and policies pose a growing concern.

The workshop participants strongly believe that NGOs should reject the advances by the Bank and focus instead on the negative consequences of its financing in a campaign to reduce its size and influence.

Governance by the People

The unresponsiveness of governments to the needs of the people has led to an orientation of taking control of a number of areas in

community life. The intention is not to do away with government but to reduce its pervasive presence and control, thereby gradually absorbing it into the systems of accountability and responsiveness, These efforts veer away from the reliance on ideologies of capitalism and socialism. They converge toward a consensus of goals that can be shared by people across the political spectrum. Only then can they work together in search for pragmatic solutions.

What Role Must NGOs Play?

Should NGOs remain as service delivery agents or should they move on to become catalysts of development?

Those involved in strategic networks must focus on developing competencies and capacities of people, therefore, assuming more of the catalyst's/activists' role. Service provider NGOs, on the other hand, are usually perceived as dependent on foreign or governmental funding; and being so, they are viewed as least likely to be active in promoting empowered people's movements. The principle of empowerment, it, is held, is incompatible with dependence.

Service organizations, nonetheless have a place in the network. Monoculture networks lack strength. Those who believe otherwise were reminded during the workshop that networks are like a tropical forest where big and small live species live. The more important thing is to be able to manage diversity.

Problems and Challenges

There is a trend in the region where governments are becoming forceful and the state is evolving mechanisms to crush, manipulate and co-opt popular struggle. This situation is more pronounced in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan. This is one scope of resistance by networks. Whether NGOs like it or not, they should play more political roles.

The issue of self-reliance is a serious concern, as the concept is destroyed by donors themselves. In Pakistan, for instance, initiative is taken away from POs. NGOs, in comparison, are well-funded. This has resulted in several donor-driven activities. Networks thrive in the spirit of volunteerism, thus, should be internally supported. This is essential in maintaining independence and credibility. Donor-donee relationship is often a source of tension in strategic networking.

For networks to be meaningful, they must sustain their relationship with the affected communities. Some of the experiences shared during the workshop indicate that some of the more forward-

looking NGOs are moving beyond project-oriented, dependency-creating relationships with individual villages. Effective networks must be structured to link both NGOs and POs as interdependent, self-reliant partners in complex patterns of lateral relationships in pursuit of major national and global agenda. While NGOs continue to strive to professionalize their field, they should not distance themselves from the people whom they profess to serve. Theorizing development frameworks is one thing; going out there in the field is another.

Lastly, NGOs must not fall into the trap of institutionalization wherein form becomes more important than substance. The tendency to create supra-NGOs may kill aspirations and goals of a community as the processes get complicated along the way. It might be important to strike a balance between keeping a loose federation of movements and maintaining an organized, strong and efficient workforce to push for people's development agenda.

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