

Conversations Today

Your journal about the world of NGOs and Social Enterprises

RNI No.TNENG/2013/52428 | Volume 7 | Issue 1 | January 2019 | 12 Pages | For Free Circulation Only | www.msdstrust.org



PUBLISHED BY: P.N.SUBRAMANIAN
on behalf of Manava Seva Dharma Samvardhani,
391/1, Venkatachalapathi Nagar, Alapakkam,
Chennai - 600 116 and printed by him at
Express Press, Express Gardens, No.29,
Second Main Road, Ambattur Industrial Estate,
Chennai - 600 058. Phone: 044-42805365
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are ready to educate their girl
children."**

An exclusive interview with
Shri Arvind Ojha of URMUL

FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Reader,

Greetings!

Our societies are facing a lot of challenges. There is increasing inequality and poverty, unstable economies, climate change, and many more such issues. Change is happening at an alarming speed and the social and environmental needs are on the rise.

Ms. Susan Berresford, President, Ford Foundation has said, “I believe that most societal change begins when someone wakes up in the morning and is inspired or angry or otherwise determined to alter something in their world.” This thought has been the reason for many social innovations today.

Social innovation considers social challenges as opportunities to make societies more sustainable and cohesive through inclusive practices, co-production, and pro-active grassroots initiatives. It is a bold, new or improved solution, that fulfills an un-met need, changes current behaviors, and co-creates value across sectors.

Social innovation is not unique to the non-profit sector. The emerging field of social innovation is rich and varied – from new models of learning and elder care to new ways to reducing waste, empowering communities and transitioning to a low carbon economy – there are many organisations and individuals who are engaged in the development and use of social innovation across our country.

Conversations Today has been featuring social entrepreneurs who have brought about change in our society through their innovative programs.

As we step into our tenth year, we thank you for reading and assure you to bring in more interesting and inspiring stories of social change.

– Marie Banu

EDITORIAL

Latha Suresh
Marie Banu

Design: Blink Foundation

What responsible tourism can look like in Sumba

While their coastline undergoes land development, Sumbanese youth get an opportunity to train for growing tourism.



Met Jeffry, your friendly host on the beautiful island of Sumba.

Located near Bali, Indonesia, Sumba's stunning coastline and lush greenery makes it an appealing attraction for travellers looking for a more rustic experience.

As the island develops into a tourist destination, the local community that is made up of mainly farmers, have little opportunity to reap the economic benefits of tourism without viable skills.

Sumba Hospitality Foundation has a strong vision for responsible tourism in the region.

It welcomes visitors to stay at their on-campus hotel school which includes five beautiful, bamboo guest pavilions tended to by students. All proceeds help fund the school's programme.

During their stay, visitors are encouraged to interact with the students to learn more about Sumba, or share any experiences that will be of value to the students.

The school aims to set itself as an example for sustainable tourism on

the island and beyond. It is powered entirely by solar energy.

The foundation offers scholarships to promising Sumbanese youth like Jeffry, to be trained at the Sumba Hospitality School for future employment in the hospitality industry.

Only 40 students from all over Sumba are hand-picked every year to attend the immersive one-year programme, where they are mentored by industry professionals.

The programme is targeted at underprivileged high school graduates who would otherwise not have the opportunity to pursue higher education.

Students not only acquire vocational skills, they also learn English, personal development, and permaculture farming, so that they can share with their communities back home.

Issues of malnutrition in children and youth are prevalent in Sumba, and acceptance to the school comes with full boarding, meals, and healthcare.

To inspire other communities with the foundation's model, its

founder, Inge De Lathauwer, boldly chose to kickstart this project in the least resourced region of Sumba. The students each have personal ambitions they're working towards.

Jeffry dreams that “one day I can build a decent house for my parents to stay in their old age.”

Sumba Hospitality Foundation offers him a significant step forward.

ABOUT SUMBA HOSPITALITY FOUNDATION

Sumba Hospitality Foundation in Indonesia is a resort-school that trains local youth in hospitality skills, to prepare them for the tourism industry in Sumba. Forty students - typically from underprivileged backgrounds - were selected in the initial years, and this has grown to 60 students.

—A story by Our Better World (the digital storytelling initiative of the Singapore International Foundation (www.ourbetterworld.org))

Women's Conscience

The nature of women's participation in household and economic activities has undergone a sea change in the past few decades. Factors that support or inhibit this transformation have also changed, calling for a fresh perspective that can help bridge the gap between women and opportunities.

"I also used to wonder why micro-finance became so important in women's empowerment. Wasn't the traditional ecosystem of support comprising family and friends adequate to abet our efforts to run a new economic activity? Did all women really have enough support to look beyond constraints and pursue aspirations? I was inquisitive about those factors in our society that determined the nature of support, encouragement and assistance women received. I grew with these questions and my general observations on the Self Help Groups in and around my village provided new insights. Yet, I wanted to explore why women found micro-credit through SHGs very promising," exclaims Ms S. Nandhini Sudha, Founder of Red Flame Women's Education and Social Service Trust.

Nandhini hails from Elathur village in Vellore district and like most other girls in her village, she studied till class ten and got married at the age of eighteen. Her thoughts and questions persuaded her to work in organisations that implemented micro-credit programmes for women. She joined Thirumalai Trust in SIPCOT and worked for two years as its Block Coordinator. "I saw the confidence that women felt. It was not only credit availability, but the sense of accomplishment they felt. Women seemed happier when they were able to help other women. Similar work in Hand-in-Hand organisation took me closer to beneficiary families and I began to see other concerns that bothered young women," shares Nandhini.

Alarmed by the rate of teenage pregnancies in Vellore district, Nandhini decided to organise simple interactive sessions with adolescent girls to help them understand socialisation, typical patterns and ways to thwart undesirable consequences. She got in touch with three school principals in her village and conducted these sessions. "We are not a society that completely favours sex education. All women, irrespective of age, find it uncomfortable, and some even feel shameful to discuss this issue. The inhibitions that I felt while actually interacting with the girls called for a proper training in the subject," she says.

With all her exposure restricted to her prior work experience, Nandhini decided to get trained in her subject of concern and also on the dynamics of running her own organisation which, she felt, would allow her to divulge to



address new concerns as they emerge. Her expectations from CSIM were clear – she wanted to learn the intricacies of communication that can take her ideas farther and convince listeners about her objective. "CSIM enabled me to look beyond the immediate reality. One often reacts to a situation (here, teenage pregnancies) and thinks of ideas that can deal with the situation instantly, like training programmes for adolescent girls, etc. It is rather more important to analyse all aspects of the situation and intervene wherever possible to eliminate such situations by conducting awareness among parents. I realised why it was important to understand gender and rights perspectives. I knew I had to become the nodal point in my village that could connect poor children to welfare schemes that were available. CSIM taught me how to stay updated," says Nandhini, who recently completed a course on Child Rights conducted by Loyola College and Unicef in Chennai.

2017 marked an important year for Nandhini – the inauguration of her Trust. The CSIM course and her training on Child Rights gave her the determination to look at different layers of an issue and



Her expectations from CSIM were clear – she wanted to learn the intricacies of communication that can take her ideas farther and convince listeners about her objective

promote interventions where appropriate. "We organise awareness programmes for parents to help them better understand child behaviour and

their state of mind. They should be prepared to guide their children, without any stigma or subscription to specific gender roles," adds Renuka, Field Staff at Red Flame Women's Education and Social Service Trust.

Given that the issue is not restricted to school going children, efforts are also taken to reach children outside schools. In the process, children employed in the construction sector and other hazardous conditions are mobilised and admitted in government schools. "Once children are in schools, it becomes easier for us to impart awareness and training programmes," she opines.

Nandhini wishes to initiate vocational training programmes for adolescent girls and women as it is the best chance to bring together women of all age groups and education background. "As students, she believes, they will become a homogenous group and it will be easier to facilitate dialogues on sensitive matters that affect their health and welfare. Awareness that comes from such deep interactions will encourage them to take a united stand for or against matters that concern them. I want to see that collective conscience protect and promote rights of all women in the community, bringing them closer to their opportunities," she says.

—Shanmuga Priya.T

Leader & Leadership Matters...

10. B. Sensitivity in relationships : A Culture of respect and togetherness

“I’m thankful for my struggle because without it I wouldn’t have stumbled across my strength.” –Alex Elle



Meaning of appropriateness in relationships: The Leader understand the importance of timing (when to do what) in his/her relationships. (LOI, www.discoverself.com). Appropriateness means the quality of being suitable or proper in circumstances. The synonyms are befitting, apt, pertinent, relevant, just, deserved and so on. The antonyms are unfit, irrelevant, unseemly, improper and so on

Having explored the sensitivity in relationships, the obvious question is how much of sensitivity is good enough? When does it go beyond the effective zone for a leader? The question ‘how much’ leads us to a knowledge that there is a certain discipline that is essential in a relationship. That discipline instills a sense of appropriateness. Just like how in preparing a tasty dish, it is not only important to know what ingredients to add, but also how much and when to add that makes the dish tasty; even in managing relationships appropriateness in every communication becomes vital for its sustenance and growth.

Appropriateness in relationships depends heavily on the ability to read and understand the context. The context presents several elements that may be paradoxical and challenging. A Leader who can absorb all the elements in the context and relate to the person by balancing the context would naturally be appropriate. Whenever any one or two of the contextual elements are not

taken into consideration by the Leader, there are misunderstandings, miscommunication and conflicts. In conflict resolution, we first look into putting a clear picture of the context and then attempt new understanding for the warring parties. Many conflicting situations leaves the person distraught and stressed. These stresses show forth as physical ailments.

To discuss about the process of de-stress and the value of being appropriate, this time we met Dr. Shubha Madhusudan. Dr. Shubha is a columnist in Udayavaani, Psychologist providing clinical services in health and social care settings at Fortis, Director at Manasvi Consulting, Chairperson, of Ethics committee in SAKRA hospital and Sagar Hospital and an external member of POSH of various organizations. Being an excellent speaker and seasoned corporate trainer, Dr. Shubha brings with her a rare insight and blend of exposure and experience in the field of Individual health and personal growth, stress and productivity, cardiac rehabilitation, organizational behaviour/industrial psychology and quality process. Her specialty is to integrate ‘mind and body approach’ while treating patients with medically unexplained symptoms. Her core competence lies in dealing with unresolved emotional conflicts, unfulfilled life desires, and personality structure of the patients suffering from medically unexplained symptoms. She has worked closely with doctors from Fortis hospitals to help patients overcome such conditions. She dreams to create a band of “motivational evangelists” who can teach the youngsters about reality based living through Manasvi Foundation.

Shubha, what does appropriateness in relationship mean in the cases that you handle? Let us discuss both dimensions - you, as a counsellor enabling them to resolve conflicts and also you as a Leader who is communicating to your clients.

“Kalpana, Sensitivity between relationships can be taken care of through being appropriate to the context. There are lot of people who come with varied issues for counselling. Be it, executives, CEOs; they face several issues in people dimension within the organization. For example, one person in the team will not be following the organizational process. He/she may not give prior intimation about leave even if they know or short notice without understanding what others in the team need, there will be customer deadline to follow but personal issues like mom

being unwell will become a challenge. In many cases, the leaders have been insensitive to understand the emotional dimension of the other person. At times, employees have also used the challenging context inappropriately to escape situations.

When Leaders are not context sensitive and appropriate, it could be that they make personal remarks which attack the person at a personal level. Sometimes dis-regarding the person in the way they talk could be inappropriate. Messages being given in a hidden manner and sexual advances done inappropriately are all leading to conflicting situations in relationship due to inappropriateness in respecting the other person.

Whatever education and knowledge, true personality is seen when how gracefully you stand in a crisis situation. Appropriateness is grace, according to me. Only grace will attract the other people to stand and support. Sometimes people get to the extremes and others will use the context. Academic adequacy and social cognition do not necessarily go together. People use the context as well as misuse the context to their advantage.”

When there is inappropriateness and context insensitivity in relationship, how does it show up in the cases you handle? Give me some examples to understand better

Dr. Shubha very patiently explains to me giving a brief background of the kind of patients she meets generally, and adds that most of the patients suffer from psycho somatic illnesses that have emerged because of context inappropriateness. Over 60% of the time there is a block in the personal and professional relationship which is caused due to inappropriate expressions of emotions.

“In a case of an employee who came with pelvic bone pain but actual no damage to pelvic bone as such; I found out, he had a belief that all people are insensitive to him. When he shared about his need for money and job, taking advantage of his vulnerable position in life, his manager started to use the situation and dump work on him that others don’t do. This led to emotional and psychological oppression. Sadistic tendencies of the person is also sometimes a contributor. When the employee is not assertive, communication is hampered.”

“In another case of a lady who was undergoing IVF, the finances were not the priority but the baby was the priority. Yet IVF was costing them high and she wanted to try for a natural

conception. Her husband wouldn't understand the appropriateness that was required for the natural conception to happen. He would not contribute to her emotional stability appropriately. His inappropriate actions would only distance them than bring the romance into the relationship. So they had to learn to deal with each other emotions and understand the context appropriately to follow the instructions of the doctor for child birth."

Shubha, why do you think we act or be inappropriate in our actions in a relationship?

"Generally, when a person is insensitive, it has its roots in the way the person has been grown and his evolution in the personality or tunnel thinking. People don't look at all aspects of a particular situation. Tunnel thinking is when the person does not think this way or that way, but has one opinion about the context or the person who is giving that particular response.

A problem in personality evolution and fixated beliefs contribute to inappropriateness in responses of people. Their upbringing right from childhood, their beliefs as they grew, their experiences both good and trauma, cause a personality to evolve. The first relationship that has been formed will make all the difference. First male figure and first female figure in life matters. The development of empathy right from the way the parents have treated them matters a lot as they grow up. Many Leaders think others have to be the way they are and are unable to accept different personality and different behaviour of others. They want to either correct it or reject it."

have to be very fair, unbiased and my empathy should be very high. I have to be context sensitive and cannot talk casually. I can only offer them suggestions and allow them to decide. I have to check on their clinical stamina and help them build their assertiveness to handle the inappropriate responses in situations. Their emotional strengthening has to happen.



I follow the venting out with reflective sessions and also provide some education too. For the Leaders especially, I train them through written material, knowledge on behaviour as well as self-revealing exercises to know themselves better. Whether you are a leader by power and authority or not, context can force you to lead. Hence context sensitivity and appropriateness in emotionality will make us strong."

Tell me Shubha, how easy or tough is this learning to be appropriate? What should a Leader follow to be appropriate?

Shubha says, it becomes very difficult to predict what affects human behaviour and human intention. Intentions may be fine but behaviour may not be in line with it. It is difficult to draw a clear cause and effect like the way we do in science. Rapport building is very important and it cannot be done overnight. It has to be built with the counselee having trust and faith in the counsellor and learn from them. The key she says is to understand the inner intentions of the person and respond to them than mere outward behavioral response. The leaders who want to be appropriate have to uphold certain rules and principles in their interactions in the organization. A leader should be clinical in approach and not criminal. A Leader will have to watch out for people, process, productivity and profits. They cannot inadvertently mix emotions and business. They have to watch out for their expectations and assumptions colored by the text and visualization in mind.

Tell me Shubha, as a counsellor how do you ensure you are appropriate in relationship with your clients and colleagues? What kind of personality are you that helps you being appropriate?

Dr. Shubha laughs and takes a pause. She goes into a reflective mood and shares, "I first ensure my own personal composure. I watch out for the way I dress. I choose a neutral color and design or pattern that suits me and the situation without drawing too much attention to me. I show deep respect from the time my client enter into

my cabin till they leave. I am not assertive and do not display fear or surprise to anything that they share. I choose to be neutral without judgements. This comforts the clients to vent out their feelings and thoughts openly with me. I also use humor in my conversations and lighten up the situation for the. I do not give them any false hopes. I urge them to open up and look for solutions and resolve their issues.



I am lucky that my passion, profession and as a person, all have collided into one page. When the patients go from me, they should go enabled. If they come in wheel chair they must at least be able to go back limping. Not that they come walking and go back limping. When I enjoy thoroughly, I don't need to cleanse anything. I don't need a holiday or time out.

Anything new I see I am fascinated and I continue to learn to become more and more appropriate in my approach and support. What I say, what you understand and what you communicate to others are all to be the same. Every client of mine has some learning for me. I believe, if I sit with a curious mind, I can learn something and I treat the client like an equal partner and never internalize their pain. This makes me context sensitive and context appropriate.

I tell the cardiologists - you can only tell how the heart beats but not why the heart beats. Why it beats is my forte."

It is very fascinating that we do much practice to keep our body fit, but do very little to keep our mental fitness right. It is the right fitness that enables us as Leaders to be appropriate in all conversations, responses and decisions in a relationship.

The right extent of Expression, ability to give freedom, take the responsibility and show sensitivity appropriately makes the Leader a True friend to a Boss, colleagues, and subordinates in an organization. This makes the relationship orientation of the Leader well matured emotionally.

In the next series of Leader and Leadership matters, we move on to examining the attributes that contribute to the Leadership Orientation of a Leader.



—Dr Kalpana Sampath



Dr. Shubha opines that while people who are facing inappropriateness from relationships get into mental illness, it is also the people who are having personality inadequacy issues act inappropriately in situations. Both have to be handled. There are cases where she has had patients with deep stress meeting her for counselling and it has been identified that the husband of the patient with undetected mental illness has been the cause of stress and denial of the situation leads to conflicts. Dr. Shubha has given talks in All India Radio highlighting many of these points.

Shubha, you as a counsellor how do you help people to value appropriateness in relationships and communication?

"The true work of a counsellor is to make them capable. I first put a grid to understand the problem and identify the causes. I identify the Personality inadequacies. I do not jump into giving them mere questionnaires to answer. I first let them vent out. Once the venting is happening a clear pattern emerges when we listen to it carefully. Then the passion is identified which causes inappropriateness. I bucket and bifurcate their problems and they will identify what exactly is the problem themselves. As a counsellor I

DRIVE SAFE



It was a horrific incident of rape in a well-known app-based cab service that prompted Vandana Suri to think of a solution to concerns surrounding the safety of women and children in cabs. “Child sexual abuse has always been a major concern for all mothers, and as women we often find ourselves unsafe on roads, in public transport,” she says, “I thought it was best for women to take a stand and take control of their own safety, instead of waiting for society to change.” It was this thought that gave birth to Vandana’s baby, Taxshe.

Nearly four years since Vandana founded Taxshe, the cab service operated exclusively by women, for women and children, has seen great success. Taxshe drives over 450 children to and from school, every day, aside of conducting similar trips for 50 working women in Bangalore. “Instead of looking at the number of trips we conduct, we take pride in the number of women and children we keep safe,” says Vandana, “Our measure of success is safety and not trips.” Expats have also made a significant percentage of Taxshe’s clientele, with

several tourists booking flights based on the availability of cabs. “This means we will do well on the global safety map as far as women tourists are concerned,” Vandana adds.

The response to Vandana’s enterprise is more than encouraging. “We currently run a client waiting list of 4500-plus in just Bangalore alone, and have recently set up shop in Gurgaon as well,” she says, “Nearly 95 percent of our clientele are children, which also ensures fixed timing, fixed routes, fixed clientele and a whole lot of love for our women drivers.”

A large number of the drivers that Taxshe ropes in, are women mobilized from underprivileged sections of society by NGOs like the Neeva Foundation. “We work with local leaders in the slums, and have devised a system, where our women drivers are now taking the roles of mobilizers,” says Vandana. What this means is Taxshe’s women drivers take on the role of ambassadors, going about inspiring other women to join the movement by speaking to them from

experience. But by Vandana’s own admission, it hasn’t been easy. “Driving was never considered as a career for women at all,” she observes, “It has been stamped as an unsafe and a male-dominated career. It takes a lot of time to reach out to women drivers.” And even in the instance in which a woman is willing to join, Taxshe encounters situations wherein the woman’s family shows resistance to the idea. “It takes a long time to convince their families, and to show them how we have made it safe as well as lucrative for our drivers,” she adds.

Taxshe works on the basic premise that for better safety of women and children, only woman drivers must be roped in. “Women drivers are your best bet against child sexual abuse,” Vandana affirms.

Elaborating on the organization’s standard operating protocol, Vandana explains, “We operate fixed bookings for the year, wherein the same driver is assigned a set of children who travel every day. So, we drive the same kids, the same routes and same timings throughout the year.”



The charges, however, are premium. But there’s a good reason for that as well. “Nearly 70 percent of the billed amount goes to the women drivers,” says Vandana, “But it still works out to be quite economical for clients owing to our HUDDLE model.” This means that the company’s vehicles are capable of carrying as many as six to eight children, which makes cost-sharing an effective solution in the pursuit of economy. “Then the women who go in the same route travel together, which in turn makes it cost-effective for them and their organisations,” says Vandana, “So, this is a win-win for both, the women driver and society at large.”

One issue that continues to plague the service though, is the availability of women drivers in comparison to demand. The solution to this problem, Taxshe says, is the strategy of working where demand is the highest. “During the day, women are safe with regular transport, so we focus on keeping children safe in the day time,” says Vandana, “In the evenings and at night, we drive women to and from their workplace. We also have

specialised drives for feeding moms, as they are not able to breastfeed their babies with regular male-driven cabs. We also have sunshades on our cabs for privacy that these mothers require.”

Taxshe’s targets are ambitious. “We plan to keep about one lakh children, safe and sound, over the next four years,” says Vandana, “This can be done with just about 4,000 women drivers in four years. We are targeting two cities for this Bangalore, and NCR.”

Taxshe hopes to close this fiscal with 100 women drivers on the road, 62 of whom are already in various stages of training, and 25 already employed. “We intend to understand the nuances of scale and be ready for the next big plunge, rather than looking at scale hastily,” says Vandana, “Every substantial growth trajectory needs to be carefully monitored for success.”

“We plan to keep about one lakh children, safe and sound, over the next four years.”

Attachment



When a factory was burning down, the aged owner of the building was there weeping aloud at his loss. “Dad, what are you weeping for?” said his son, “Have you forgotten that we sold the factory four days ago?” That instantly stopped the old man’s tears.



Explicit Learning

- A. My sorrow is directly proportional to my ownership.
- B. We get attached only to what is ours.
- C. Revelation of ownership stopped the tears instantly.



Introspective Learning

- A. What is the basis of my attachment?
- B. Why is my sorrow limited to my loss and not to loss itself?
- C. Why do I feel good at somebody’s loss?

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Centre for Social Initiative and Management

Centre for Social Initiative and Management (CSIM) is a unit of Manava Seva Dharma Samvardhani. It is a learning centre that promotes the concept of social entrepreneurship. CSIM offers **training and consultancy to social enterprises** – for-profits and non-profits – to facilitate them to apply successful business practices and yet retain

their social mission. It also offers training and hand holding support to prospective social entrepreneurs and enable them to launch their social initiatives. For more information, please visit our website www.csim.in

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CSIM also facilitates **Social Accounting and Audit** for social enterprises, CSR projects, and NGOs through Social Audit Network, India (SAN India).

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Enterprising Rural Development



Studies contend that rural poverty is not completely understood and as a result, rural development is not holistic. The very perception of rural poverty has emerged from various observations, but with limited contribution from the people who live in rural areas. The relationship between rurality and rural poverty needs a fresh perspective that can look beyond existing strategies and enable the process of holistic rural development. “Rural Entrepreneurship offers this window of opportunity suiting the needs of a large work force, whose occupation, especially agriculture, is seasonal and struggles to provide income throughout the year,” says Mr Liju George, Co Founder of Rural Caravan, a social enterprise based in Nasik, Maharashtra.

Founded in the year 2016, Rural Caravan aims to enable human development at the grass roots level through small, local enterprises that look beyond needs, to resonate with strengths and aspirations of the community. Exploring the tribal belts of Palghar region in Maharashtra, they came across the village Amale, untouched by conventional development. “People’s pride in their culture and traditional knowledge got us working on different engagements that could build on such strengths. Rural Tourism was the idea that directed us, as the people were delighted to share about their lives. We believed that a tourism enterprise as the vehicle for rural-urban engagement will serve many purposes, most of all, it allowed both rural and urban people to look at each other’s lives from a personal level, and the potential market each was to the other,” elaborates Liju.

Convinced of the potential of such an enterprise, Rural Caravan set on to develop the capacities of the members of Mahalakshmi Self Help Group in

hospitality management. As different groups came in, the villagers were able to identify needs of the visitors and accordingly arrange desired services through locally available resources. When an all men groups came in, they came up with the idea of building a shed for accommodation. Then came the women’s group that prompted the idea of building rest rooms. After all such pilot trips, the Mahalakshmi Self Help Group’s tourism enterprise became equipped to attend to the needs of visitors from all age groups.

Tourism, like agriculture, was seasonal too. The tourism venture could hardly run during the summers. The region was characterised by heavy seasonal migration to Mumbai, seeking work in land fills, brick kiln furnaces and others. “The challenge of job creation for our young, growing workforce and the stress on urban resources due to the mass seasonal exodus are big concerns across the country and world. Cities cannot handle this pressure and therefore alternate opportunities must be created at the village level,” asserts Manish Nair, Co Founder of Rural Caravan. The team was then seriously concerned about creating year long opportunities for the people of Amale, a hamlet with only seventy households. The focus now turned to the mapping of local skills and resources, around which small scale, profitable enterprises could be built upon.

Then came the improved cook stove enterprise that made Amale Indoor Air Pollution (IAP) free in 2017. IAP and its effect on women’s health provoked the team to introduce new models that suited their cultural practices. A design was then chosen based on the villagers’ feedback and they were trained in co-creating the improved cook stove through practical training programmes.

They built and installed a unit at the cost of two thousand rupees. Their determination to convince the community about product’s utility, financial diligence and new, innovative offers gradually built their entrepreneurial skills and aspirations. Having covered the market in Amale, the enterprise is now set on to explore new markets in the neighbouring villages.



“Rural India is a very difficult market to penetrate and who better can break these obstacles than the rural people themselves,” claims Liju, adding that new tools and techniques are introduced

by Rural Caravan to help them access markets. Rural Caravan went on to build an enterprise in wild honey rearing too. The support in branding and packaging has opened up a wider market for this produce.

Development of enterprises was always accompanied by a conscious effort to help villagers see the rural urban linkages and market opportunities from rural to rural and rural to urban regions. As both can drive growth, it was up to people’s aspirations to recognise their path. Building community enterprises and identifying the right people to drive them threw upon numerous challenges to Rural Caravan. As a process focussed institution, the team had to deal with a beneficiary group for whom time was infinite. “Redirecting their behaviour to operate within a desired framework was a daunting task, but very rewarding,” he smiles, adding that such behavioural changes are a crucial part of the change Rural Caravan intends to bring about in the course of Rural Development.

From this stature of a hand holding institution, Rural Caravan dreams of building platforms for innovation and connecting rural people with their mentors, customers and other significant stakeholders. In order to encourage the culture of collective decision making and community level dialogues that enabled everybody’s participation, Rural Caravan also intends to strengthen panchayat structures. A big dream and a long journey to help all of us see rural India for what it really is!

—Shanmuga Priya.T

SOCIAL ACCOUNTING SHOULD BE ABOUT GOOD ORGANISATIONAL PRACTICE, NOT JUST A TOOL FOR MEASURING SOCIAL VALUE...

‘I think that social enterprises should be looking seriously and overtly at the degree to which they contribute to social capital. This would mean putting in place how they build trust between people and organisations; how they encourage reciprocal working and mutuality; how they state and then live up to their values; how they support a commitment to a community and a sense of belonging; and how they actively create connectedness through informal and formal social networks.

I would also take this further and say that social enterprises could, and perhaps should, take a social capital approach. This might mean separating out the composite elements of social capital and examining how what social enterprises do and how they do it can contribute to strengthening social capital.

We should arguably be embracing social capital making it a central tenet of what social enterprises are all about’.

This got me thinking – how can a social enterprise show that it is creating social capital? Not only in the work that it does and the outcomes that it creates but also in the way that it conducts its business. I believe that the most effective way to create social capital is to live up to the values which underpin the approach that an organisation takes to its decision-making.

There’s been a huge resurgence in interest recently in ‘social accounting’ – Social Business Wales has a ‘Social Accounting Zone’ on its website, Community First in Herefordshire and Worcestershire and Salford CVS both provide support and training, and a range of academic articles explore the link between social enterprise and social accounting. Social Value UK believes that there should be a wider discussion on the nature of accounting principles – ‘Accounting for Value’.

Could ‘social accounting’ be the answer to proving ‘social capital’? As a director of SAN, I know that the answer is ‘yes... but – it’s not as simple as that’.

Social accounting is not necessarily about being accountable for values or creating social capital (or even in reflecting on accounting principles). It’s more about proving outcomes and impact; the ‘social value’ which is created by an organisation’s activities.

I believe that this is market driven. Commissioners and funders are looking for evidence of impact and for a return on their investment. Everyone wants to be the next to publish a social impact report. In fact, this goes beyond the remit of social enterprises, co-ops and the third sector – ‘ethical business’ is now mainstream. Even major corporations publish social impact reports – Nestle, Teva, NatWest, Marriott International, and Walmart to list a few.

But social accounting can only show social capital if it also covers how the values of an organisation – trust, mutuality, social networks, commitments to a community, etc – are embedded in its operation and decision-making.

There have been various attempts over the years to define a system of ‘social accounting’ which would sit beside financial accounting... again, I refer you to a recent blog by Alan Kay. In this blog, Alan refers to the work of John Pearce from 2004 – which describes how financial accounts could be presented in a way that separates out the Trading Costs from the Social



Benefit Costs.

This leads us to consideration of the importance of an organisation’s values as distinct from simply accounting & reporting on ‘social value’.

Values are the set of principles that underpin how an organisation operates in the social economy, and social accounting is the way to present the cost and impact of creating social and community benefit. Organisational values are about how an organisation conducts its activities and operations and social value is about what it has achieved through its activities.

Most importantly, in the social accounting and audit process, organisations are required to report on what SAN has called the Key Aspects Checklist, which examines the fundamental elements of their business operations. This includes human resources, governance & accountability, financial sustainability, environmental sustainability and economic impacts which are an indication of an organisation’s ethical principles and values.

In 2012, the ‘Social Value Act’ introduced a curved ball, creating the concept of ‘social value’. SAN had always talked before about ‘values’ as being things that are important in underpinning the way an organisation is managed; ‘performance’ being how well an organisation achieves its goals and ‘impact’ and the difference it is making.

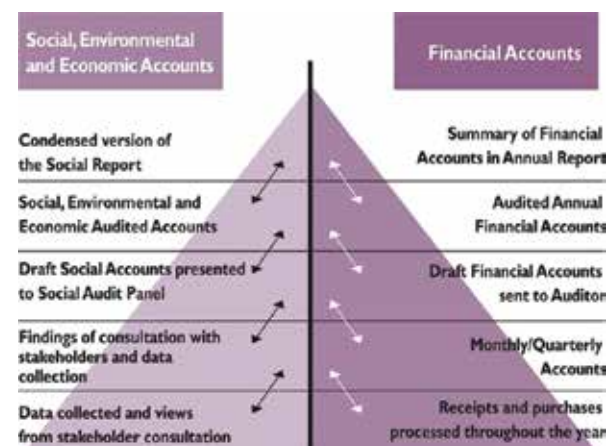
But, then, when social value became mainstream, the idea of ‘values’ as a set of principles about how organisations operated was lost and this led to a confusing array of tools, methodologies, and online platforms to measure ‘social value’, many of which have plagiarised simple and effective concepts which already existed.

Interestingly these tools are mostly championed by the people spending the money, not the people using the money.... Measuring ‘social value’ is becoming

market-driven, rather than being driven by the ethical business/social enterprise/co-operative principles and values that our sector holds dear.

But where does that leave social accounting?

The following diagram illustrates the parallels



between social accounting and financial accounting.

They are similar processes working with different data, but they don’t necessarily reveal the values that organisations have...

Nothing has changed; Social Accounting and Audit allows community and social enterprises to build on existing monitoring, documentation and reporting systems to develop a process to account fully for social, environmental and economic impacts, report on performance and draw up action plans to improve on that performance.

The process also allows an organisation to evaluate whether it is delivering the values which underpin its operation and to use the Key Aspects Checklist to carry out an assessment of responsible practice. It does this alongside its financial accounting... Businesses and organisations are legally required to produce their financial accounts; social accounting adds depth and understanding to how socially responsible organisations deliver and operate their services.

In summary, social accounting is good business/organisational practice, not just a tool for measuring social value... and it should be mandatory. But that is possibly the subject of another blog!

My rallying call, therefore, to social enterprises, community businesses and co-operatives is don’t just use a tool to measure the impact on your service users. You can only truly know whether you are making a difference, creating social capital and living up to your values if you properly embed social accounting to prove both ‘value’ and ‘values’. Use the information that you have collected as part of your organisational decision-making to improve performance; demonstrate impact; and finally, to be accountable to all stakeholders.

—Anne Lythgoe, Social Audit Network
www.socialauditnetwork.org.uk

Master Class in Social Accounting & Audit



Social Audit Network, India organised a Master Class in Social Accounting and Audit on from 13th to 15th December 2018. It was held at Duff & Phelps in Aerocity, New Delhi.

Nine participants enrolled for this course. The sessions were handled by Social Auditors Dr. Archana Pillai and Ms. Latha Suresh, Director, SAN, India and. A live Social Audit of Sahayam Intervention Centre, a social enterprise in Dwaraka, engaged in counselling services was also conducted on the final day by Ms. Marie Banu, Social Auditor, where the participants reviewed the social accounts written by its founder, Ms. Mahalakshmi.

The objective of such Social Accounting and Audit Master Classes is to initiate a group of practitioners into the science and art of SAA. It ensures that participants are well versed with the principles underpinning the process as well as solutions to the practical challenges that arise out of undertaking SAA in Social enterprises and CSR projects.

The Master Class is a pre-requisite for those who aspire to become Social Auditors. **The next master class will be held in Chennai in the last week of February 2019** If you wish to enrol, write to socialaudittraining@gmail.com or call Mr. Vimal at 9841416840 or 044-42805365

“EVEN THE POOREST AMONG POOR ARE READY TO EDUCATE THEIR GIRL CHILDREN.”

Arvind Ojha shares with Marie Banu Urmul's journey

Arvind Ojha, is the CEO of URMUL, one of the most successful NGOs in India. He has been working in the desert of western Rajasthan for more than three decades on the issues of rural development focusing education, health, livelihoods, climate-change, promotion of people's intuitions in the region. He is a global leader advocating for ending child marriage and ensuring gender equality. He is chairing the Girls not Bride-Rajasthan Alliance. Arvind was pioneer in initiating and promoting rural tourism with the focus of community development in the Thar Desert. His concern for desert issues and advocacy urged him to promote a research-based initiative-Desert Resource Center.

In an exclusive interview, Arvind Ojha shares with Marie Banu Urmul's journey.

Can you share the changes you see over the last three decades?

It is almost three decades now and I can see a lot of changes. Earlier there were no roads and no water in the desert regions. Also, there were no health or education services in this area. URMUL decided not to wait for these services to be provided, but started engaging in health care services for our project villages. We focused on safe childbirth, maternal and child health, and tuberculosis (as its prevalence was high in this region). Gradually, we extended this program to different desert regions of Rajasthan.

In 1987-1988, Rajasthan faced its worst drought. We had to relook at our focus area, and recognized livelihood to be more important for these communities with their incomes becoming rare. So, we worked with the District Administration and carried out famine relief works like pond construction. We understood that providing drought relief work alone was not sufficient and there was a need for drought proofing. For instance, ponds required cement lining so that the water could be retained for longer periods.

Another change is in the area of girl child education. In 1988, I conducted a study and found the women literacy was only 7%. We were once asked to manage a GOI project, which was to run 30 non-formal centres. But, we did not have teachers. It was a pity!

Hence, we focused on educating girls first. We initiated a project along with Lok Jumbish - an educational intervention of the Government of India started by Anil Bordia.

We started Balika Shivir in the border

areas of Rajasthan in the police chowki premises. At first, it was a challenge to ask the villagers to send their children for residential training.

There are a lot of researches and evidences to show that parents do not want to educate their girl children as they have a lot of work they have to manage in the household – from care of siblings and parents, to managing the livestock and doing household chores. We did not lose hope and tried.

We started with 140 girls and allowed parents to meet their daughters on Sundays. Confidence Building among the girls was a major area that we focused upon. We taught them communication skills besides academics. I am proud to say that more than 40,000 girls have been educated up to 5th standard and many have joined college. Some have become nurses, teachers, and sarpanches as well. The girls who were once shy, are now leading confident lives.

Two things were important in Balika Shivir. Community living was an issue due to caste factors. In our culture, we have community eating which develops culture and relationships. Hence, we brought in this system although it was difficult in the beginning. Now, we see a lot of change in the girls as they grow. They have made good friends with their peers irrespective of caste. Although they have to follow the caste system in their homes, I am certain that when they become mothers they won't. It is a long term social change process.

Secondly, it is a myth that the village community would not educate their daughters. After educating 40,000 girls we realized that even the poorest among poor are ready to educate their girl children provided they are assured safety.

What were the innovative programs launched by your Trust?

URMUL worked in Rajasthan canal areas and worked on settlements, displacement, water distribution, and channel constructions. We had two innovative programs. One was the Shiksha Karmi schools (200 in number), which was launched with the support of the State and Central Government, and Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA).

The people who were settling in the new canal areas were abandoning their villages and the schools were not put to use. Hence, there was a need for new schools in the regions where they were relocated. URMUL was

also the agency for training the teachers for these schools. We identified local people – boys who were educated up to 8th standard and girls who were educated up to 5th standard.

A question was raised in parliament if we were providing quality education, as the teachers were not qualified. Late Shri Narasimha Rao who was the Prime Minister at this time, formed a committee that was headed by Smt. Ananda Lakshmi and a comparative study was commissioned. The report findings revealed that our schools were performing better when compared to other government schools in all aspects of education (IQ, aptitude, reasoning, etc) because our school students were regular.

The other innovative program was remedial solutions for watercourse covering strategy in desert regions. The water channels in desert areas are constructed in contours or sand dunes and during summer the farmers on the tail end of the channels are affected. We found a low cost remedial solution for these watercourses and it was fantastic. The government was appreciative and World Food Organisation offered us support to cover more such canals. Now, you can see the change in these areas.

We organized canal yatra, which was not appreciative of the government though. But, when we submitted our report, some issues like water logging, and malaria were received well.

What are the crafts that are promoted by URMUL?

There are a lot of good crafts in desert regions and we realised that it would be fantastic if we could revive them, as it

will provide livelihoods for artisans. The caste hierarchy is comparatively very high in this region and artisans belong to backward castes.

The art of embroidery actually came from Pakistan during the Second World War in 1970s when around 20,000 refugees came to India. They lived in refugee camps for 17 years and on release were allocated lands in the Bikaner canal area where there was no water. Hence, they engaged in cutting shrubs that were used to make coal, and also produced liquor. After URMUL's intervention, these women were engaged in embroidery, as they are good at it. They are now earning their livelihoods while at home.

There were a lot of charkhas (spinning wheel) lying in the rooftop of villager's homes. This meant that these people knew spinning. Bikaner is one of the biggest wool markets in India and there were Khadi institutions that were not functional. So, we bought sheep wool and engaged the villagers in spinning. There was a lot of wool remaining, and so we involved the weavers who were affected by drought and trained them in spinning. As the local market was affected, we explored urban markets and involved NID in designing and young boys from IRMA as well.

Old women were skilled in this activity and could work from their own homes. They could earn an income in a dignified way instead of digging ponds or being engaged in road works.

About farm stays in Rajasthan coordinated by your Trust?

Urmul has partnered with Association for Fair Tourism and Solidarity and provide support for foreign tourists who wish to visit villages in Rajasthan. Local villagers in our project areas are identified to host the foreign guests, who are mostly from France.

In the beginning it was difficult to gain the confidence of villagers but now they are open to accommodate them in their homes and are learning from each other.

We have trained the villagers to provide basic hygiene requirements for their guests and have created an additional livelihood opportunity for these villagers. We encouraged them to construct a simple toilet for the sake of tourists, which they did. With the facility being available, the families have now started to use it.

During the farm stay period, the tourist visits the local artisans and some even engage in agricultural work. We believe that they should see the beauty of the desert and also understand the development happening at the village level.

