

Conversations Today

Your journal about the world of NGOs and Social Enterprises

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KASHMIR'S CHILDREN: RESCUE, REBUILD, REVIVE

About Borderless World Foundation's activities



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Entrepreneurship is the
capacity of creativity and ideas
that can be channeled into a
particular service for people."**
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From the Editor

Dear Friend,

‘Peace’ is a small word with a deeper meaning attached to it. It has different interpretations, different perspectives and different understandings, yet the meaning is one!

“Peace hath her victories no less renowned than war,” said Milton. It has been our constant endeavor to establish peace on earth and lead a life of prosperity and happiness.

We all wish for world peace, but world peace will never be achieved unless we first establish peace within our own minds. Nations go to war, often quoting peace as the reason. We must realize that peace is a journey, not an end. Yet, in our efforts to obtain peace, we often do the most un-peaceful things.

Genuine peace makes our life on earth worth living. It enables people and nation to grow and build a better life for our children. If we want true, lasting happiness we need to develop and maintain a special experience of inner peace. The only way to do this is by gradually reducing and eliminating our negative, disturbed states of mind and replacing them with positive, peaceful states.

Setting a yardstick about what peace means is one’s own way of looking at it. Oscar Romero says:

Peace is not the product of terror or fear.
Peace is not the silence of cemeteries.
Peace is not the silent result of violent repression.
Peace is the generous, tranquil contribution of all to the good of all.

So, peace is something quiet yet good-from within and outside. Peace comes from living in the moment and looking for the good in others. Peace has the power to move mountains. Mahatma Gandhi had spread peace to the world and this was his power!

Peace is a gift you can give to others and to yourself. If you seek peace with a sincere heart, you can find it.

The changemakers featured in Conversations Today have been promoting peace and harmony through their noble work. Be inspired!

—Marie Banu

Workability: We face, the choice of who to be and what to do.

Workability is the condition that is suitable to generate favourable results, it is the capacity to be highly effective. The intention for Workability becomes the spark for us to play a bigger game in life.

To understand workability, it’s important to understand what stops it in our life. Fear, anxiety, caution, judgments, failures come in the way of workability. We stop creating a future and resign to a default future because these emotions do not allow for capacity to be built. Instead it creates doubt, hesitation, insecurity and indecision. Normally we convince ourselves that we’re not free. Our actions are only determined by our unconstrained choices and not by circumstances.

When one stands up for something, takes responsibility, workability improves. For example, I had a fall during a trip at an offsite training place where I was a participant. I was alone and had an injury that put me in a mental spin about what could go wrong. My automatic response would be to worry and be anxious about not having help. I chose to stand up to be comfortable with solitude and that opened up for me speaking-up to ask for medical support during classroom sessions (normally I would be conscious about it) and pursue my learning tasks without getting grounded. This to me is a process of taking responsibility to build workability in areas of my life that are



not comfort zones or are unfamiliar.

I believe, having flexibility, being open to make mistakes, having acceptance and being authentic sets one up for workability in relationships and in situations. Do you wish to translate

your awareness into real results? Then, aiming for workability brings together awareness, action and accountability.

Yours Energetically

Ms. Bhuvaneshwari Ravi is trainer, facilitator and coach of the Positive Energy (PE) program. She is a spiritual seeker with a vision of transforming her own energy state from surviving to being. In this journey she has gathered deep insights and is continuously working towards creating a pathway for more seekers. With years of exposure to spiritual practices like yoga, reiki, and personal development interventions like coaching, she is working in the Organization Development and Leadership Development space. She can be contacted at bhuvaneshwari@teamthink.co.in for arranging Positive Energy training and Coaching sessions.

Identity matters

Identity is a serious issue; at least for the tribals and other marginalized groups who have to time and again prove their identities to avail benefits from the system.

“Not just benefits, but access to basic amenities are also defined by one’s identity, without any effort to know if people were able to acquire their identity instruments,” contends Kanniyappan, Founder of Tribal Youth Welfare Society in Villupuram district, Tamil Nadu. It has been 68 years since independence and our nation is still debating on a suitable approach to tribal development while a section in the civil society laments the disconnect between policy perspectives and the routine life struggles of the tribal population.

Kanniyappan belongs to the Irular tribe community and his journey through school and college reiterate the aforesaid struggles. Born to daily wage labourers who managed to educate their children, Kanniyappan hardly knew the significance of a caste certificate.

“Getting the certificate was very difficult and I couldn’t move into higher secondary classes. My father struggled to obtain that certificate,” he recalls.

Now that admission to class 11 was not possible, he decided to pursue a course at the ITI in Sankarapuram. Here again, the admission process was a stalemate for the same reason. So was the case when they had gone to the Employment Exchange. “It was only after facing denial at these places, we got to know what a caste certificate is and its value for us. We had to learn it the hard way,” says Kanniyappan whose studies had to take a break for two years. During this period, he tried his hand at different jobs to supplement family income—from goat rearing to a daily wage labourer.

In these two years, Kanniyappan and family had to face multiple enquiries by department staff and the local authorities. Being the only student from his village, it seemed that the authorities who were required to come in person, check and then issue the certificate did not process his application. As his father had given up, he himself followed up all these processes and finally succeeded in obtaining his caste certificate.

With the certificate in hand, he was able to continue his studies without any hurdles. During his undergraduate days, he became an active member of the Pazhangudi Irular Padugappu Sangam along with his father. Led by a senior professor, this centre helped the Irula tribes fight for their fundamental rights. Inspired by him, Kanniyappan volunteered to teach at the summer camp every year and also got involved in the paper work required for cases on bonded labour. “The interest I developed here



influenced every choice I made in life thereafter,” he says.

As Kanniyappan’s job did not pay him enough, he took up other odd jobs like painting and plumbing simultaneously. “Every day was a struggle. I could not afford a proper accommodation. Therefore, I returned to my village and joined an elementary school as teacher,” he says.

“I would go to professor’s office after school hours and help him with his work. Applications for electricity connection, caste certificates, paper work on land dispute litigation, bonded labour and many others were prepared on behalf of the people and posted to respective authorities. As the system and people never interacted here, this liaisoning was very critical to protect their rights,” Kanniyappan recalls.

With all this work piling up at the centre, Kanniyappan wanted to work with the youth to prepare them as agents of change and thus founded the Tribal Youth Welfare Society (Villupuram) in 2009.

As he explored the interiors of

Dindivanam and Villupuram districts, Kanniyappan came across a village where people had to dig the ground to collect drinking water. Moved by this state of affairs, he wrote to District Collector and advocated for the need of basic amenities like water, electricity, land pattas for the tribals who resided in these villages. After a wait of six months, Kanniyappan and his team were able to procure land certificates for 43 families and community documents for 150 families. His interventions also helped 11 families in Jakkampettai village of Dindivanam district obtain their Voter Identification Cards.

Tribal Youth Welfare Society has been organizing many awareness programmes on bonded labour, government welfare schemes, special rights/privileges under Indian Government in the villages around Villupuram. Kanniyappan himself has penned awareness songs and short stories that are regularly used in these programmes. He mobilized a group of 63 tribals who attended the three month long training programme on rescuing bonded labourers, organized by International

Tribal Youth Welfare Society has been organizing many awareness programmes on bonded labour, government welfare schemes, special rights/privileges under Indian Government in the villages around Villupuram.

Justice Mission and Adivasigal Kutamaipu, in Chennai.

As he travelled extensively within the districts, he also identified other needs which came in the way of providing education for girls. Children, especially girls who were abandoned, orphaned and belonged to migrant families working in the brick kilns, often dropped out or never attended school. Tribal Youth Welfare Society ensured that they all studied in schools by admitting them in hostels. Vocational training was also provided for girls who could not pursue their higher studies.

Referred by a colleague to CSIM and its SEOP programme, Kanniyappan expected the course to help him perform better. According to him: “Social Work has its own set of skills and it was important for me learn them to be able to better socialize with the system and communities.” Better performance meant value addition to interventions and effective actions in the communities. “I could not think of anything more. But the course enabled me to think beyond what I was doing. It was motivating to see many others like me. I was not alone,” he smiles.

He admits that fund raising and networking were the key learning gains and appreciates the space given for funding agencies, NGOs, social workers, human rights activists to come together. “When I joined the course, I did not know anything about 12A or 80G. I was more of a problem centric worker, helping people represent their issues at the right place. Now, there is more clarity on how to administer my organization. I now focus on learning the issues completely with the communities. This self awareness has helped me organize my responsibilities and dreams in line,” asserts Kanniyappan who dreams of a day when all children from the tribal communities will attend school without dropping out.

—Shanmuga Priya.T

Inspiring Conversations with Shri Ramana Maharishi

Mrs. Piggott returned from Madras for a further visit. She asked questions relating to diet regulation.

D.: What diet is prescribed for a sadhak (one who is engaged in spiritual practices)?

M.: Satvic food in limited quantities. **D.:** What is satvic food?

M.: Bread, fruits, vegetables, milk, etc.

D.: Some people take fish in North India. May it be done? No answer was made by the Maharshi.

D.: We Europeans are accustomed to a particular diet; change of diet affects health and weakens the mind. Is it not necessary to keep up physical health?

M.: Quite necessary. The weaker the body the stronger the mind grows.

D.: In the absence of our usual diet our health suffers and the mind loses strength.

M.: What do you mean by strength of mind?

D.: The power to eliminate worldly attachment.

M.: The quality of food influences the mind. The mind feeds on the food consumed.

D.: Really! How can the Europeans adjust themselves to satvic food only?

M.: (Pointing to Mr. Evans-Wentz) You have been taking our food. Do you feel uncomfortable on that account?

Mr. Evans-Wentz: No. Because I am accustomed to it. **D.:** What about those not so accustomed?

M.: Habit is only adjustment to the environment. It is the mind that matters. The fact is that the mind has been trained to think certain foods tasty and good. The food material is to be had both in vegetarian and non-vegetarian diet equally well. But the mind desires such food as it is accustomed to and considers tasty.



D.: Are there restrictions for the realised man in a similar manner?

M.: No. He is steady and not influenced by the food he takes.

D.: Is it not killing life to prepare meat diet?

M.: Ahimsa stands foremost in the code of discipline for the yogis.

D.: Even plants have life.

M.: So too the slabs you sit on!

D.: May we gradually get ourselves accustomed to vegetarian food? **M.:** Yes. That is the way.

Mr. Evans-Wentz continued another day: "May one have more than one spiritual master?"

M.: Who is a Master? He is the Self after all. According to the stages of the development of the mind the Self manifests as the Master externally. The famous ancient saint Avadhuta said that he had more than 24 Masters. The Master is one from whom one learns anything. The Guru may be sometimes inanimate also, as in the case of Avadhuta. God, Guru and the Self are identical.

A spiritual-minded man thinks that God is all-pervading and takes God for his Guru. Later, God brings him in contact with a personal Guru and the man recognises him as all in all. Lastly the same man is made by the grace of the Master to feel that his Self is the Reality and nothing else. Thus he finds that the Self is the Master.

D.: Does Sri Bhagavan initiate his disciples?

Maharshi kept silent.

Thereafter one of the devotees took it upon himself to answer, saying, "Maharshi does not see anyone as outside his Self. So there are no disciples for him. His Grace is all-pervading and He communicates his Grace to any deserving individual in silence."

D.: How does book-lore help in Self-Realisation? **A.:** Only so far as to make one spiritually-minded. **D.:** How far does intellect help?

A.: Only so far as to make one sink the intellect in the ego, and the ego in the Self.

Mrs. Piggott: Why do you take milk, but not eggs?

M.: The domesticated cows yield more milk than necessary for their calves and they find it a pleasure to be relieved of the milk.

D.: But the hen cannot contain the eggs? **M.:** But there are potential lives in them.

D.: Thoughts cease suddenly, then 'I-I' rises up as suddenly and continues. It is only in the feeling and not in the intellect. Can it be right?

M.: It is certainly right. Thoughts must cease and reason disappear for 'I-I' to rise up and be felt. Feeling is the prime factor and not reason.

D.: Moreover it is not in the head but in the right side of the chest.

M.: It ought to be so. Because the heart is there.

D.: When I see outside it disappears. What is to be done?

M.: It must be held tight.

D.: If one is active with such remembrance, will the actions be always right?

M.: They ought to be. However, such a person is not concerned with the right or wrong of his actions. Such a person's actions are God's and therefore they must be right.

D.: Why then the restrictions of food given for such?

M.: Your present experience is due to the influence of the atmosphere you are in. Can you have it outside this atmosphere? The experience is spasmodic. Until it becomes permanent practice is necessary. Restrictions of food are aids for such experience to be repeated. After one gets established in truth the restrictions drop away naturally. Moreover, food influences the mind and it must be kept pure.

The lady told a disciple later: "I feel the vibrations from him more intensely and I am able to reach the 'I' centre more readily than before."

Source: Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi

Editorial

Latha Suresh
Marie Banu

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. CSIM operates in Chennai, Coimbatore, Hyderabad and Bangalore.

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CSIM also facilitates Social Audit for social enterprises through Social Audit Network, UK and SAN, India.

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Regulating the Social Work Sector

Social Audit has now come as an initiative of the NGOs, as a modality to self-regulate and to present its work to their stakeholders, institutional donors.

Social entrepreneurs who lead the social cause are not conscious by design or default on what their responsibilities or accountabilities are. They are only keen in numbers and not on the quality.

Social Audit has now come as an initiative of the NGOs, as a modality to self-regulate and to present its work to their stakeholders, institutional donors. Under CSR Act, corporates declare a percentage of their profit as it is legally required to devote for social purposes. They are at a loss to see which social cause and where and how to see the input and output of their social work in order to report to their board.

Therefore, NGOs taking to Social Audit on themselves as well as for corporates are going to increase the participation of corporates in social activities in a more meaningful and voluntary manner. Of course, the next stage will be to report and regulate. For that both government and corporate require trained manpower and NGOs. While trained manpower are required to handle all controls and measurements, NGOs are needed to work towards sustainability.

NGO sector, including CSIM, is offering a key role in creating professional manpower to the accounting framework for NGOs with NGOs sitting on it and auditors as third party validate the contents of the social accounts, its outcomes and impact.

What happens in India is that there are news reports of mismanagement of NGOs and when it comes to the attention of the government they immediately put a halt on it as a regulator and not as an enabler. This is because, they don't have people to enable it even if they would love to.

As professional managers you should be able to regulate impact, regardless of self-regularisation or sustainability. The regulation should become part of the NGO activity. For example, in the case of excise duty and custom duty paid by company when they ship out their products.

Previously, there used to be officers from Excise and Customs located within the factory who will certify the goods. They found this management system very expensive and said that the factories should follow self-regularisation and pay duty directly to the government and file their returns.

Likewise, NGOs should concentrate on self-regularisation and prove that their objectives have been met.

In time, Social accounting and audit should be approved by the Government,



As professional managers you should be able to regulate impact, regardless of self-regularisation or sustainability.

”

like the financial audit is approved by Chartered Accountants. Social Audit should become a necessary certification or self-certification for all NGOs in order to prove that their objectives have been addressed.

Social Audit can be separate course, or an add-on to any engineering or medicine or any other degree, because it addresses the issue of a social work organisation and how they are functioning morally and ethically. This is what the government is interested in as they are not looking at what is the vision, mission, output, etc. and whether you have achieved 60 percent or 80 percent of your mission and if you have data to prove it. Social Audit will become like a Profit and Loss account and audited by a third party Social Auditor.

In Financial Audit of a manufacturing or service company, it brings out what is the top line and what is the sales turnover, the amounts paid for excise duty, sales tax, and payable to government. The bottom line is profit before tax and net is profit after tax.

Likewise, if NGOs want to have a financial sheet, you can have a top line - income which is sourced through donations or interest from fixed deposits and a triple bottom line which is qualitative or quantitative in nature.

Bottom lines outlines the impact on economy, ecology and equity. Ecology means improving the environment, whether it has made the environment less vulnerable because of the activities undertaken as it is indirectly sustaining the cause of environment. The second one is economy - which the NGO has to improve of the stakeholders. Everybody should feel happy; the donor who gives 10,000 rupees should feel happy and the happiness index should be worth 20,000. This is not measurable. I used to say it is not gross national product; it is gross national happiness! That should be our measure.

Equity means all people are equal - whether disabled, men or women, no matter what caste, creed, colour, or religion.

Therefore, people who can certify all the triple Es are only Social Auditors. They can be trained out of Chartered Accountants as they understand quickly and have a methodical reporting. Triple bottom line compliance will change their outlook.

— P.N. Devarajan

Kashmir's Children: Rescue, Rebuild, Revive

While Borderless World Foundation has spent the last two decades committed to work for children who have lost their families in the Kashmir conflict, its work in the valley doesn't end just there.

Think about Kashmir and the first two contrasting words that often come to mind are 'beautiful' and 'tragic'. It's strangely conflicting how the nation's most beautiful landscape has for nearly 70 years now, been at the forefront of the bloodiest conflicts in India's history. That's what Adik Kadam and Bharti Mamani discovered when they visited the valley in 1997. The duo surveyed 369 villages in the Kupwara district, only to discover that there were nearly 15,000 orphans, born out of the Kashmir conflict itself, many of whom were shockingly, young girls. "We had gone to Kashmir for a three-month programme, but I decided to stay back to help," says Adik, the founder of Borderless World Foundation, "It's been nearly 20 years since I took that decision and I haven't looked back."

The aim for Adik was simple: find a way to help those who were affected by the Kashmir conflict, most of whom were young girls. The first six years were spent in extensive research — understanding the conflict, surveying the kind of toll it took on the State's populace, and discover ways and means they could help in some way. When Borderless World Foundation was established soon after, the NGO's efforts were directed towards satisfying these needs. "Today, we have four homes for girls who lost their parents in the violence. We have children in our homes aged between a year and 22 years," says Adik, "We have over 200 girls, some of whom are even studying in cities like Pune and Nashik, today."

While Borderless World Foundation has spent the last two decades committed to work for children who have lost their families in the Kashmir conflict, its work in the valley doesn't end just there. "We realized that what Kashmir also needed was emergency medical care," Adik explains, "Last year, we began emergency medical services in the State." But the focus, for the organisation, continues to remain on rehabilitating children affected by the conflict. "Many

children under our wing have seen their parents die in cross-firing," Adik says, "A number of these kids have had their parents die in their laps." Caring for such children of conflict has helped the organisation win hearts. But it hasn't been easy.



"Being a Hindu who works in a Muslim-dominated State is the biggest challenge," says Adik, "The fact that we're working with girl children has only added more sensitivity and scrutiny to the work that we do. I have had to face challenges from religious clerics and from the general air of uncertainty that the valley faces." But the foundation adopted a well-thought-out strategy to countering such challenges. The first ten years were spent towards confidence-building measures. Once the situation changed slightly, for the better, Borderless World Foundation was able to expand its programme. "Kashmir has over two lakh orphans today," Adik says, "The aim is to guide them and bring these children towards the mainstream." While the organisation was focussed on research for the first decade of its operations, Adik took a decision to focus on the practicalities of what they were doing and not restrict BWF's job to merely writing proposals. That decision was an inflection point of sorts, as BWF's began making heads turn.

"One of the girls were took under our wing, has managed to enter politics and now has plans to build a computer laboratory in a village even as she runs a family," Adik recounts with

some pride, "Her uncles were terrorists who were killed by security forces. Subsequently, her father was taken in for questioning too, tortured and killed. Her mother's whereabouts are unknown." But Adik explains how the most awe-inspiring parts of this story is just how the girl isn't harbouring feelings of animosity or revenge. "She chooses to concentrate on development, instead," he says, "This is the kind of change we are seeing in the people we began to care for."

The journey, however, hasn't been easy in more ways than one. "Apart from facing flak from religious clerics and locals, working in area plagued by terror attacks is another huge challenge," says Adik, "Ultimately, I realized that there's something inexplicable that draws me towards Kashmir." And does his family support that decision? Adik laughs with some sense of resignation. "It's been 20 years and my family still doesn't believe that I'm on the right path," he says with a smile, "You can't blame them though. The news that normally flows in from Kashmir is only of death and destruction. So, they're worried about me, but I know what I'm doing and why I'm doing it." Kupwara incidentally, has been a hotbed of terror attacks even recently.

Adik has Borderless World Foundation's future course charted out. The next goal is to build a larger home for the girls. "We have fifty to sixty girls in a home and that is a problem, because our living quarters aren't exactly the largest ones around. We want to build a proper home for 200 children, spanning 16,700 square feet. I'm currently on the lookout for funding to satisfy that need." Once this does come about, and these plans bear fruit, Borderless World Foundation should realize a lifelong dream — to give Kashmir's people and its girls in particular — a better future even in a place torn apart by conflict and tragedy.





Nalla Manushyar Aanu”

Nalla Manushyar Aanu” – “They are good people.” This is a default comment that you will hear about the people of Kozhikode, Kerala. From its fabled auto drivers who return every penny of change, to its palliative clinic that provides free care for the terminally ill, to simple heart-warming selfless conversations, the tales of Kozhikode’s good hearted people are greatly cherished.

Now here is a reason why you will also chime in with some words of praise – Kozhikode makes sure no one in the city goes hungry! Be it the poorest, the not so poor, be it you or me – the hungry will be served food for free, with utmost dignity.

People in need can collect a free meal coupon from any of the distribution centres and walk into any restaurant in the city – a meal will be served, no questions asked, no explanations sought.

“We cannot ask a hungry person to get his hunger attested by a certified gazetted officer! That is why we insisted on the philosophy that ‘no questions will be asked’. If you ask for a food coupon, you will get it, it is as dignified as that,” says District Collector of Kozhikode, Prashant Nair, the chief architect of this project called ‘Operation Sulaimani’, eponymous of Kozhikode’s very own local black tea, served with a dash of lemon and cardamom.

The project was launched by Kozhikode’s District Collector, Prashant Nair, who envisaged this as a community owned and community driven initiative in



Prashant Nair

its entirety. The Collector’s office initiated it and the Kerala State Hotel and Restaurants Association roped in over 125 city restaurants to become a part of this.

But, there are no big sponsors nor do any government funds flow in. The small and big contributions by the citizens are dropped into little boxes with ‘Operation Sulaimani’ inscribed on them.

The volunteer team has placed the boxes across the city, into which nameless donations are made. This money is used to

reimburse the meal coupons that are collected at the restaurants. Interestingly, Team Sulaimani does not take a penny from the collected money to meet its administrative costs. This money is meant only to feed the hungry, they insist.

In April 2015, Operation Sulaimani made the free meal coupons available at the Collectorate, Village and Taluk offices. Coupons were also distributed along with newspapers with the intent that people who read newspapers can offer the coupons to those in need. An army of volunteers went around the city to spread the word and distributed the coupons.

Just two days after the launch of Operation Sulaimani, the Collector got a massive one crore donation offer, which he refused. Yes, he refused!

The team believe that the spirit of Operation Sulaimani lies in the collective responsibility taken by the people to care for each other rather than an act of benevolence by any individual or organization.

This collective spirit has proved to be indeed powerful by feeding 9000 people in the last one year, not running out of funds, and not showing signs that the city’s good spirit will allow them to run out too.

One of the striking aspects of Operation Sulaimani is the fact that it gets fulfilled within the capabilities of existing systems. No big kitchens to feed the hungry were built and no massive funds were sought in the name of hunger eradication. By leading people to any

restaurant in any part of the city, it blended the cause into the everyday function of Kozhikode’s restaurants.

The District Collector adds, “There is no food wastage nor do we have to worry about the safety of the food. If we had chosen to build a large kitchen to supply free food, we would have all these problems. But we just decided to use the existing system and make the best use of it.”

One of the restaurants in the vicinity of the city mental hospital feeds several people who come in with coupons. The restaurant owner says his life has never before felt so blessed.

Many restaurant owners like him do not want to take the reimbursements but Team Sulaimani insists that they are paid.

Some people doubt if such a facility will be misused, but the team is not worried about that. Rather, it is finding it challenging to reach more people who are in need. The members found that hunger is not just about the people on the streets, the homeless, it is also discreetly present within our communities. Reaching these people and making them aware that food is the last thing they need to worry about is what the team is obsessed with.

If you noticed, we haven’t got any quotes from any beneficiary of Operation Sulaimani nor put up their photos. Team Sulaimani believes that the dignity of the people should not be infringed on, and we salute that spirit.

Source: mattersindia.com

To Reussir Learning

Mental Health has been and is mired with myths, prejudices, stereotypical notions, that conditions which can be addressed during early years also go unnoticed. Lack of awareness and the stigma around mental health issues have kept families of the affected on a denial mode. Knowing and accepting the fact that the child is having such an issue is the first and critical step to help the affected children. Ms Shanthi Sathish, Founder of the Reussir Trust (Bangalore) did not learn this easily. As the parent of a child with learning difficulty, Shanthi's journey through Reussir is the answer to all challenges she had to confront, in the best interest of children like her son.

Shanthi's son had difficulty in reading and writing, he was a left hander too. His schooling was not as exciting as his parents expected it would be. Being forced to write with his right hand created disinterest in attending school. "He was harassed," she recalls. Shanthi then shifted him to the Montessori system and here again there was no significant progress "But, he was happy! We could revive his interest in going to school," she adds.

Shanthi then zeroed in on a school that used traditional methods of teaching under the Montessori system. The teachers understood him better. "We got to know that our son was verbally very good, but had difficulty in writing," she says.

In class 1, he could not take the pressure to learn cursive writing and almost declared that he would no longer go to school. "All this while we were clueless, we did not know what was happening. He would also not play with his friends. All that we knew was another school could help him and again changed his school, but admitted him in a lower grade. Kannada classes introduced in class 4 took us all by shock. He saw it is a drawing class and the letters were designs according to him," shares Shanthi, who then got to know about dyslexia from different sources.

"The hindi movie – Taare Zameen Par – was an eye opener," she admits. But now that the issue is identified, Shanthi was again lost like every other parent of a child with learning disability. "We did not know the intensity of this problem, we did not know where or how to get an assessment done. This is when I took a break from my 15 years long career in the Human Resource Management," she says.

Disheartened by the responses she got from some of the mainstream schools and the limitations in accessing special schools, she decided to work on creating awareness on learning difficulties that will sensitise parents and teachers alike.



The reach of the first workshop she organized at Palace Ground was phenomenal. "I had expected only around 100 participants, but more than 250 turned up. We also saw parents like us who had no idea of how to help their children," says Shanthi who felt the urge to support them.

Her first concern was the absence of a standard tool of assessment in India. NIMHANS assessment tool was limited as it was meant only for children below 14 years of age. With no parent knowing what an IQ was and what to infer from such assessments, the task of identifying a special educator further complicated the choice for their children. There were few special educators – some charged very high while others who were affordable lived far away. If one thought of resorting to remedial classes to help children post school hours, nobody knew where these were. In rare cases, where all these fell in place, the economics of this system were an added burden on the parents.

In her effort to pool in support systems for children with learning difficulties, Shanthi also learnt that the Government of Karnataka's policy accommodated such children by making the evaluation process flexible. But most of the schools were not open to adopting this system as it entailed additional responsibilities. Given such an atmosphere, Shanthi felt the need to establish an organization that can help parents support their children with learning difficulties. This required the parents to know what was going on with their children and that every child had their own way of interpreting or understanding things. Reussir – named after the French word which means 'to succeed', therefore prioritized organization of training cum awareness programmes for schools, parents and educators who intended to work with special children. Reussir manages to organize five to six such workshops in a year.



Conscious of the need for adequate number of special educators, Reussir introduced the five month certification programme in collaboration with Times Foundation and Pearson. Participants get to learn new training tools, tools for screening children, methods to identify problems like dyslexia, launching children into reading, working memory, IQ related tools and others from this programme.

Launched in July 2015 with 21 trainers on board, the programme was successful in introducing the participants to new teaching methods. During the course, educators screen a child and based on this screening, they develop an individualized Education Plan. After completing this course, educators work with two children and then present their case studies. This facilitated discussion on case studies allowing the group to learn new methods of teaching from each other. "This was an amazing exercise. We all learnt that the concept of planet could be taught using an onion. Some taught mathematics using straws. The educators were very creative in finding out child specific ways of teaching concepts. This is a huge success for us. Parents who came crying to us found their own unique ways of teaching their children," shares Shanthi.

Reussir also introduced intervention

classes that could help children after school hours, reinforcing the learning process. They follow a transparent system here, informing the parents of every child's strengths, weaknesses and interests, which the parents use to facilitate learning process at home. Thus, the teachers and parents work as a team in helping the child's progress. This centre also sends a similar report to school teachers so that they can also use the suggested methods that the children have gotten used to, thereby maintaining the learning continuum. The latest experiment at Reussir is the introduction of Robotics. In this programme, children with and without learning difficulties are brought together to work in pairs to complete pre-designed modules on assembling the robot's parts. "Children with learning difficulties are very good at hands on tasks. Their confidence increases and fine motor skills improve. Significantly, this exercise helped in improving their handwriting by helping them gain a better grip. They will soon be able to represent words in writing," explains Shanthi. The best part is where the children learn sequencing through this exercise. "Sensory integration develops. Our children can now button shirts without any confusion," she adds, hoping to procure more kits soon.

Reussir wants to see the day when parents stop coming here and accept learning disability just like other ailments like myopia, which can be treated effectively. They want to prove that inclusive education is holistic and not just about grades. "Once such an understanding develops, the system will naturally give way for a stress-free environment, where every child enjoys childhood. It is we who stress our children," asserts Shanthi who has designed all programmes in such a way that Reussir can operate sustainably. Her vision has been to develop Reussir into a one stop support centre. As the first step in this direction, Reussir has launched the eduportindia.com website, which provides an exhaustive list of special schools, special educators, doctors, therapists and will soon list NGOs which cater to children, education and vocational training. They all can enroll and avail others' services through the website.

"I found it very difficult to find an appropriate school for my child. Not all parents have the resources to do the same. Nor do they have contacts to build their support systems. They need help at just the right time. Eduportindia.com is the answer from Reussir and we intend to develop this into a mobile app soon," she signs off.

—Shanmuga Priya.T

Portfolio and Program Management for Social Enterprise

In the previous series of articles, Projects and Project Management has been discussed in detail. Most endeavor of a social entrepreneur begins with an idea or a small intervention attempt. Gradually it may grow from idea to an enterprise. The challenge lies in the ability of the social entrepreneur to expand the project and scale it to reach to the maximum number of recipients. This may demand multi location, multi projects and multi intervention strategies. There is a fear of dilution in the original intent and carrying forth of the vision and values due to expansion. Further, the scaling up of the scope of the idea may require certain changes in approach, methodology and people profile. The purpose of most ideas has to be the ability to create replicable models that the world can benefit. The multiple projects may be under the same umbrella, but to retain the original intent and purpose it requires a strong governing structure. To not lose the purpose, a good governing structure becomes essential for higher level of understanding and connect.

When the scale is small and well within the control of the social entrepreneur, it is fairly easy to control the quality of output. But when the scale expands, the players in terms of stake holders increase, there is likelihood of deviations. To ensure that there is a good aspect ratio in expansion and maturity of the processes, there is a requirement to establish a clear understanding of the project – program – portfolio connect. The meaning of project and dimensions of a project has been discussed in detail in the previous articles. We will take it further to discuss the program and portfolio requirements in this article. There is a need to understand this little deeper so that, the management and people who are leading these initiatives can connect to that appropriate level and then take measures to monitor and track progress. Given below are few insights about Portfolio and Program management.

Whenever we have multiple projects being done under a single objective or purpose, it is called a program. E.g. NASA Program; Community Development Program; School leadership development program and so on.

A program implies that to achieve the objective, there are many sub projects that are to be done. For example to do a school leadership development program, there are many levels and layers of intervention like developing concept and curriculum; identifying and training facilitators; Train the trainers run by the facilitators for educational officers; trainers training the Head teachers; head teachers doing the projects in their schools. While the program was one, there are several sub-projects which involve different layers of



people.

When there are multiple such Programs, it becomes a Portfolio management. Portfolio covers vast bandwidth and focus. E.g. Educational portfolio covering many programs within the government; Bangalore City development, or Swatch Bharat as a portfolio, where there are many sub programs under this big portfolio. When there are many sub programs, the players are also many and so are the stakeholders.

In Tactical (project) management, the focus is on the tactical completion of work. It deals with the tasks, issues, scope, risks, etc. that have to be managed to deliver the project on time, within budget and scope.

Program management is about the grouping and management of projects that are interrelated and oftentimes overlapping. In Tactical/strategic (program) management, a program manager has to oversee the projects to ensure they are being managed to meet their tactical goals. But in addition, s/he needs to ensure those projects are fulfilling their strategic initiative such as containment of risks, achievement of economies of scale, cost optimization, integration of product deliverables, etc.

In Strategic (portfolio) management, the programs and projects are viewed at the organizational level with an aim to align the projects with not only the company's overall financial and strategic plan, but also with the company's mission and core values.

Portfolio management, therefore is an integral part of the organization's overall



strategic plan. While project and program management focus on “doing the work right,” the purpose of portfolio management is “doing the right work.”

There are standards set for Portfolio and Program management. The Standard for Portfolio Management — Third Edition offers the most up to date information regarding accepted practices in portfolio management. There are

- three knowledge areas that address
- Portfolio Strategic Management,
- Portfolio Performance Management,
- Portfolio Communication Management.

In the portfolio management, the defining process group was added to address defining processes;

The Authorizing and Controlling Process Group replaced the Monitoring and Controlling Process Group that was there earlier.

The Standard for Program Management—Third Edition provides a detailed understanding of program management and promotes efficient and effective communication and coordination among various project management groups. There have been some updates which include: Program Life Cycle which has been assigned its own chapter for the third edition to provide the details of the unique set of elements that makes up the program management phase. The third edition highlights the full scope of program management and clarifies the supporting processes that complete the delivery of programs in the organizational

setting. A more detailed definition of program management within an organization is provided, including the fundamental differences between project management and program management.

One of the best practices seen in the industry and governments is to have body / team who will primarily manage this entire Portfolio, Program and Projects in a more systematic and structured way. This is called Project Management Office.

Typically headed and governed directly by the top management, this team ensures to have appropriate:

- Project Prioritization
- Project Scope and Integration
- Project Planning
- Project Monitoring and Control
- Project Quality Management
- Risk Management
- Standardization- Policy and Procedures
- Benchmarking and Best practice setup

It is a good practice and recommended to have people who are experienced and certified to handle the PMO office. One of the certifying body is Project Management Institute (www.pmi.org). They certify individuals at different levels based on the capability and experience of handling projects.

Having these certified / trained professionals can also add significant high value in the proposals and ability to raise higher funds and brand value for the projects. The accreditations are connected to the positions that can be held in the PMO office. The project management certified would be qualified to become the PMO Head and MD. The Program management certified would be qualified to be Project Directors and the PMP certified can be the Project managers.

Given below is a sample recommended organization structure that can help manage projects and PMO office efficiently.

While the idea scales up to become a model that can be replicated and expanded, the people processes as well as systems need to be expanded too. There are no prescribed or fixed ways and methods to run an efficient project, it is contextual to the setup and complexity. Given above are few best practices, guidelines and standards that are used by globally reputed and successful social and corporate organizations. It is recommended that the key people should have a formal training and understanding of the framework and standard so that all the important knowledge areas required to run the projects efficiently and effectively are covered.

—Dr. Kalpana Sampath and Prathaap B

Certificate course in entrepreneurship

Certificate course in entrepreneurship was inaugurated at village Pathrota of Itarsi, with first session on historical perspective of entrepreneurship by Dr. Kashmir Uppal (Retired principal and expert of labor laws). The program was conducted for seven days covering subjects like opportunity identification, market strategy, budgeting, financing, business planning etc. and was taught by practitioners and academicians. The program also included two months of telephonic mentoring. 20 participants in the age group of 18-52 years from states of Assam, U.P., West Bengal, Maharashtra, M.P. attended the programme.

“We want to create a platform where entrepreneurs not only get trained but will also get the real time experience with entrepreneurs; this batch will be developed as a network supporting each other,” said Sandeep Mehto, Co-Founder of Bharat Calling.

The program ended with business plan presentation developed with the support of business investors, bankers, community, and development sector professionals.

“I am excited to walk away with a business plan,” said Ms. Moumita, a participant from Kolkata.

“Meeting a diverse set of entrepreneurs in a natural green environment i.e. the training hall has been an exciting experience for me,” added Mr. Vinayak another participant from Mumbai.

The program course module was designed with the help of Dr. Satyajit Majumdar, Chairperson, Centre of Social Entrepreneurship at TISS Mumbai. The certification has been offered by Centre for Social Initiative and Management.

You can find more details at- www.bharatcalling.in/certificate_course.html.

—Sandeep Mehto



Towards Social Entrepreneurship



“Social Entrepreneurship is an interesting and a unique concept and such efforts towards understanding social entrepreneurship is a great leap and this will be the key point in bringing the entrepreneurial change in society” said the Chief Guest, Mrs. Veda Prabhudesai, during the inauguration of “Towards Social Entrepreneurship Program 2016” in Devrukh, Ratnagiri, Maharashtra on 25th April, 2016. TSE 2016 will be organized by DISIM, Devrukh Institute of Social Initiative and

Management, through exclusive workshops on decoding the core aspects required for running a social enterprise effectively and to harness the dormant entrepreneurial skills within you, to manifest a potent formula which will create the sought after Social Impact in the society. This is a first of its kind concept to be started in here in Devrukh with the beginning on two exclusive workshops on “What is SE?” on 25th April and “Designing a Social Enterprise” on 26th April, 2016.

The workshops are designed with CSIM, Center for Social Initiative and Management; an expert body in Chennai working exclusively towards training social organizations since past two decades. In his key note address Shri Ajit Telang, said “This country has enough land which is fertile to produce the crops and this culture has enough hearts fertile to produce the

passion and compassion towards the noble causes in the interest of human community. There were enough people with passion to start noble work but could not sustain their efforts due to various barriers on their path. It is said that “faith can move the mountains” but at the same time the hard reality of life is that it requires a bull dozer which moves the mountains. Without them no mountain can be moved even an inch, no matter how brilliant the idea could be. Similarly only passion and compassion can’t support the brilliant social idea to succeed. One needs an institution do the work.” Describing Devrukh he said “This is a divine land which is considered to be the hub of divinity and education in Maharashtra. A small seed of a Banyan tree (Vatavrukhsa) has been sowed. I have no doubts that the seed one day will become a huge tree capable of providing a shed and shelter to many

on the noble path”

In his message to DISIM, P N Devarajan, Founder, CSIM, emphasized the importance of networking, “Remember the phrase Network is Networth”. He further reiterated the need of SE, “We need to spread the concept and knowledge of social entrepreneurship like an epidemic. We need to groom more innovative social entrepreneurs to build our Nation and solve all the social issues looming in our nation.”

The Inaugural function was attended by the eminent Social Workers, professionals along with the participants. The program received an excellent response marking a bright step towards Social Entrepreneurial revelation.

—Anand Adsul

“The hallmark of Social Entrepreneurship is the capacity of creativity and ideas that can be channeled into a particular service for people.”

Dr Raja Samuel shares with Marie Banu the need for social entrepreneurship in education.

Dr. Raja Samuel is the Principal of Madras School of Social Work. Born and brought up in North Chennai, witnessing poverty and deprivation and experiencing it to some extent, Dr. Samuel has grown up in stature to head one of the premier Institutions for social work education in the south. In his childhood, devoid of access to books for extra reading, he used to read whatever he came across in print. This habit of reading laid the firm foundation for his language skills. He attributes his success in career to the hard work and investment of time he made in all his endeavours and the blessings of his parents and the Almighty. He is also fortunate to have the support of his wife and two sons.

In an exclusive interview, Raja Samuel talks with Marie Banu about the need for social entrepreneurship in education.

About your education, and interest in research?

I studied at Don Bosco School in Perambur and did my UG in English Literature as well as PhD in Loyola College. Fortunately, Loyola College has PG in Social Work and therefore I pursued this course specializing in Community Development. From then, my career has been linked broadly to social work and social development.

The years I spent at Loyola College was very fruitful. The Social Work Department gave its faculty full freedom to take on funded research projects from outside. They offered space and computer to work on data analysis. This was around 1992 when we were migrating from DOS to Windows. I had huge support from my teachers and colleagues, Mr. Arulraj and Mr. Sarvesan, who taught me about computers and research respectively. I used to read a lot of books on data analysis and explored research software.

I had the opportunity of conducting a state level study at M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation on ‘Women in unorganized sector’ and that is how I established a connect with MSSRF and landed there later on. The years at MSSRF, in Project ACCESS, further consolidated my research expertise and also taught me how research can be converted in to a tool for advocacy.

What are the changes in mindset or perspectives that you see in students studying social work today?

In Tamil Nadu, as in the rest of the country, we have Human Resource Management (HRM) attached to Social Work making it a mixed bag. A lot of students apply thinking that social work is all about HRM. This trend is quite worrying and must be reversed. Some



Institutions have made the course generic or have separated HRM from Social Work. However, I find that whoever opts for the MSW course is committed to social development.

In terms of intention, commitment and attitude to work, I don’t see much change compared to now and then, though I wish that all students who opt for MSW have the zeal for it.

About Outlook ranking MSSW as third best institution in India? What makes your organization unique?

Outlook based on popular perception and user survey has ranked MSSW as third best institution in our country. It is getting more difficult to maintain this image as there are a lot of colleges now. Staying on top is a real challenge.

We revise our curriculum thoroughly every three years and also make changes annually. Our curriculum pattern is the best and there are many institutions within and outside the city who borrow the papers we offer. We have a very good Board of Studies in which we have external members from the industry and social work organisations who offer excellent suggestions. We also bring in elective papers on new themes like social entrepreneurship, corporate social responsibility, etc. What makes us unique is our willingness to experiment within the boundaries of academic freedom and the quality of our students who are generally vibrant and give their best to any activity.

What is your take on Social Entrepreneurship?

Social Entrepreneurship (SE) is something that has tremendous potential,

not only in terms of actual entrepreneurship possibilities outside but also in terms of training within the college. Today, funds for NGOs are coming down in several ways and the welfare model is phasing out. In fact, people in Tamil Nadu are better off when compared to other states. So, what is the substitute for development activity to take place?

Development involves a lot of participation and intention to develop oneself. That is where it matches with Social Entrepreneurship which focuses on helping people develop and where people participate not only physically but also monetarily. When one pays for a particular service, even a token amount, the value of the service goes up. This is where Social Entrepreneurs come in. The hallmark of Social Entrepreneurship is the capacity of creativity and ideas that can be channeled into a particular service for people.

Traditional social work or social service or welfare never had that opportunity. They had a package of services which we think need to be offered. But, SE comes from the needs of the users. In that way, there is tremendous scope for SE and we at MSSW seized up this issue and integrated SE in a major way. Some departments have a paper on SE, some departments offer an elective, and some offer certificate courses in SE. We may not be ready to have an exclusive course on SE immediately, but we think time is ripe for it.

We are also in the process of launching a Skill Lab with CSIM. The social incubation centre which is part of the Lab will motivate few of our students to start up a social enterprise.

About Social Work today?

A lot of professionalism and diversity is getting into this area today. Participation of social workers in human rights advocacy is also on the increase. However, several others without social work qualifications also operate in that space. That poses a challenge. We are re-examining what exactly is our core domain and where we can pitch in. Social Work’s core domain earlier was working with individuals. However, we focusing more on communities as our problems are large scale.

Although our overall focus is on development of individuals and communities, one of the main challenge is the recognition from the government of what Social Work can do. In India, we do not have a council for Social Work like the Bar Council or Medical Council. MSSW is closely partnering with Professional Social Workers Forum and we are trying to see whether we can move towards a Council and talk with the government.

Recently, the Government of Tamil Nadu has asked MSSW to conduct a study on Government children homes. The government wants us to look into the conditions of the children homes and recommend measures to improve them. This is a great opportunity not only to improve the situation but also to reinforce the role of social workers.

Your advise for student who wish to study at MSSW?

MSSW is a place which offers several opportunities for learning. We would like applicants to be focused on what they want to do and come prepared. Then, there is a likelihood for them to join our institution. I would say: “Don’t apply if you are looking at obtaining a generic degree in MA or MSc.”

We have a UG as well as PG in Social Work. We have a lot of students applying for UG in social work and psychology. We encourage diversity in several ways, and welcome applicants from other states.

About the fees and scholarships offered?

The fees is affordable and we have a variety of scholarships. We also have scholarships instituted by our alumni, which was one lakh rupees last year. We have a strong alumni network and our recent meet was attended by 300 alumni. Our Parent-teacher association is vibrant and we have many parents who offer support for students. The best outgoing student award is offered by our PTA. Thus, MSSW offers one of the best opportunities for students to prepare for a career in Social Work and Human Resources.