

**SUSTAINABLE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT:
A PROCESS OF PARTICIPATORY PARTNERSHIPS
FOR SOCIAL EQUITY AND ECOLOGICAL HARMONY**

Lonavala, India, October 4, 1994

Introduction

My dear colleagues, this is a very special opportunity to be together this week in Lonavala, in spite of the plague, at a global gathering of persons associated with the Institute of Cultural Affairs in order to participate in a dialogue concerning "Culture in the Transformation Process". This is a time to share (the reports yesterday were impressive and encouraging), a time to reflect, a time to change ones perceptions, a time to design the future, a time to celebrate and a time to recommit oneself to facilitating the whole system transition that is happening on planet Earth.

This transition involves profound changes, which are taking place at a dazzling speed, in the mental constructs with which we "create the world". For example, a major paradigm shift took place, a few weeks ago in Cairo at the UN Conference on Population and Development. Before this meeting people thought in terms of a "population crisis" and the need for "birth control" requiring interventionist strategies and resulting in a divisive debate about how births were or were not to be controlled and by whom. On the other side of the Cairo event we are thinking about how to empower women, through education, jobs, credit, political voice and health, to make choices about what happens to their bodies and to their lives. We have decided to think about the impact of development, not control, on population. This is a shift from a crisis/control model to an opportunity/empowerment model, from a hardware approach to a software approach. Another major paradigm shift took place in Rio two years ago at the Earth Summit, but I want to come back to this later.

Since April, when Mary D'Souza invited me to participate and make a presentation related to building partnerships for sustainable development, I have been thinking about this meeting. Since that time I have reflected on the twenty-seven years I have been engaged in international development immediately following graduate school, 23 of which in villages, slums and board rooms around the world as a staff member of an NGO network, called the OE-EI-ICA for all of which I am profoundly grateful.

Four years ago, a few days after I had been asked to work with the United Nations Development Programme, (UNDP), my wife Mary and I took a tour of the UN. Near the display on disarmament, we came upon a new exhibit about the role of NGOs that was just being painted on the wall. As we searched the list, we were excited to see on the wall of the UN, along with the other NGOs with ECOSOC consultative status, the name "Institute of Cultural Affairs International." Suddenly everything came together and we reflected that many of us had the UN, and what it could mean for our planet, in our minds and in our daily prayers for many years.

Today I want to speak to you, to think with you, about international development, as an international civil servant, as a staff member of UNDP. UNDP is the central coordinating and

funding body of the UN family of agencies and has offices in 131 developing countries. My work is with the Urban Development Unit within the Management Development and Governance Division at UNDP Headquarters and in particular deals with the Local Initiative Facility for Urban Environment - the LIFE Programme.

ICAI is an important global network of NGOs and private consultants, which has collaborated with UNDP in many ways over the years including in the International Exposition of Rural Development (IERD) which brought many of us to India 10 years ago. UNDP felt that this meeting in Lonavala was important enough to send a representative. And I thought that the themes of this event were intriguing enough to request that I be that representative. Mary had hoped to be here also but her studies and client schedule were too demanding at this time of year.

I. What is development? What is humanness?

In 1986 Dr. Joep van Arendonk of the UN Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA), a sister organization of UNDP, raised two profound questions at the ICA global meeting in Bilbao, Spain. He asked, "What is development?" and "What is humanness?" These two questions, coming from a UN official, stopped my world and captured my imagination. Joep said that asking people these questions, not providing answers, is what the world needs. Each country, each community, each person needs to answer these questions. The challenge is to catalyze a societal dialogue which allows everyone's answer to be heard and honoured in an integrated fashion. He also said that these questions must be connected with tangible efforts to improve people's lives such as a new water pump in a village.

In raising the question, what is development, let's step back and take a quick sweep through the "development" of our species - the particular evolution of a particular species on a particular planet. Science places our emergence some 2 million years ago, making us newcomers on a planet that is 4 billion years old and in a universe that has been evolving for some 13 billion years. Through trial and error, we developed dexterity, tool making, speech, community, agriculture, ritual and music. We developed towns, religions, cultures, history, cities and empires. We developed trade, politics, and currencies. We developed nation-states, industrialization, colonialism, science, atomic bombs, televisions, space ships and computers. And our evolution continues.

We entered the 20th Century full of the belief in the inevitability of progress. It took two world wars and a global depression to shatter this expectation. After the second world war, the victors set about developing the vanquished. The United Nations was born with the declaration that "We the people" must put aside the option of war and seek peace and development. During the Cold War, international agencies, both governmental and non-governmental, including the ICA, were created to bring development to the "undeveloped", the "under developed" and the "developing". (What a grand mission!) We have seen great gains in longevity, in literacy, in basic services delivery, in economic development which included the emergence of the Asian tigers, in trade, science and technology. In the 1980s we experienced the lost decade of development with some nations particularly in Africa sliding back into the bush. And now in the post-Cold War era we are raising the question anew, what is international development cooperation? And in the 1990s we are assaulted by the HIV/AIDS epidemic, jobless economic

growth, the degradation of the environment, civil wars, ethnic hatred, massive migration, the collapse of the family, donor fatigue and growing poverty. Poverty, disease and violence carry no passports. When the North becomes aware of this fact, its inextricable link to the South is clearly exposed.

In summary we are experiencing both break down and break through, or what Jean Houston calls "whole system transition".

And as for the question of "What is humanness?", what is it that is developing, that is evolving, that is unfolding? What is the essential nature of our species? Are we, first and foremost, economic animals of production and consumption? Are we driven by the desire for power, sex and greed? Are we controlled by our fears and angst? Must we be controlled by a hierarchy of authority lest we spin out of control? Or are we spiritual beings? Are we "the universe become conscious of itself." Are we made in the image of God? Are we love incarnate? Or are we all of this and much, much more? Our answer to this second question is critical to our understanding of what is indeed developing and how we go about "development". For me an anthropology of the "consciousness of consciousness of consciousness" is the most all embracing and profound, but again, each individual, community and nation must answer this question as manifested in ones daily existence.

II. Sustainable Human Development (SHD): A New Paradigm of International Development Cooperation

At the beginning of this decade UNDP began publishing the annual Human Development Report (HDR). This independent analysis raised the question of human development and began to shift the debate within the development establishment from a singular focus on macro economic indicators, such as GNP, which the World Bank and others had promoted, to a range of social and economic indicators, including longevity, literacy and adjusted GNP per capita. The HDR suggested that the question which must be raised is "how are the people faring?" not "what is a nation's gross national product per capita". Wide disparities were noticed between GNP and real living conditions of the people. Some nations such as Sri Lanka, with a lower GNP per capita than say Brazil, had a higher Human Development Index (HDI) - a composite of longevity, literacy and GNP per capita adjusted for distribution and purchasing power. The HDR suggested that human development had to do with increasing the capacity of people to make choices about their lives. Many groups, including the ICA, had two decades ago already made this shift to human development, but it was now entering the mainstream.

Then in May 1992 the Earth Summit took place. This event was a global wake up call to sustainable development. We saw that the planet was imperiled. After centuries of unrestricted industrial growth with its accompanying pollution and environmental degradation, and the persistent and massive poverty of the human family, our common sense began to shift. If human beings do not care for the water, the soil, the air, the forests and the diverse species of planet Earth, including our own, then we and indeed all living beings are at risk. People began to see the Earth as a whole system and even as a living organism.

A new paradigm of development was being born on the global stage. As stated in the

July 1992 high-level meeting of ECOSOC, there is an "emerging vision of development as human-centred, equitable and socially and environmentally sustainable". And as James Gustave Speth, the Administrator of UNDP said last year: "At UNDP we are calling this new vision 'sustainable human development (SHD)'. We must wed sustainable development and human development, and wed them not just in words but in practice, every day, on the ground, around the world. Sustainable human development is development that doesn't merely generate growth, but distributes its benefits equitably; it regenerates the environment rather than destroying it; it empowers people rather than marginalizing them; it enlarges their choices and opportunities and provides for people's participation in decisions affecting their lives. Sustainable human development is development that is pro-poor, pro-nature, pro-jobs, and pro-women. It stresses growth, but growth with employment, growth with environment, growth with empowerment, growth with equity. Sustainable human development is not just a UNDP slogan, it is a unifying concept for all of us engaged in the business of development cooperation."

Sustainable human development is people-centred development that is socially just, ecologically sustainable, politically participatory, economically productive and culturally vibrant. What is most significant about this is not that you and I agree with this statement but that it is the global consensus of the international community.

Within this comprehensive framework, UNDP has decided to focus its efforts on five impact areas - poverty alleviation, productive employment and livelihoods, advancement of women and other disadvantaged groups, environmental regeneration and participatory governance, which undergirds the other four. Within each country, strategic entry points are being identified by the government and the civil society. These can be, for example, HIV/AIDS, basic education, the urban environment, the role of the private sector, gender, public sector management, and so forth. From a given entry point, dialogue is stimulated among the relevant social actors concerning new policies, programmes and projects that link the five impact areas and move the society towards social equity and ecological balance. Harmonization of the social system and the natural system is what is needed.

But this vision is not just a UNDP vision. Because of the positive response of the other agencies of the UN system to this vision, the Secretary-General has asked the Administrator of UNDP to coordinate all UN development activities within an SHD framework.

Once the concept of SHD is somewhat clear, the question becomes, how can it be operationalized? But SHD is a holistic vision. Some of us at UNDP have argued that we cannot simply operationalize a vision, but that each country and community must first analyze its enhancing and inhibiting factors, and create strategies and action plans for implementation in policies, programmes and projects. This process requires activities both upstream at the level of policy and systems' design as well as downstream at the project, problem-solving end. I have suggested that this be called "facilitating a process of participation and partnership for sustainable human development".

One example of SHD is the LIFE Programme, which I had the privilege of designing along with my colleague Shabbir Cheema, and for which I am the technical coordinator. With the entry point of urban environmental improvement, LIFE promotes "local-local" dialogue of

the social actors - the NGOs, local government and community-based organizations (CBOs) [participatory governance], income generation (poverty alleviation and livelihoods) and the advancement of women, at the local/national, regional and inter-regional levels. At the local/country level, LIFE supports small-scale projects such as canal rehabilitation in Songkhla City, Thailand, sewerage improvement in Mitha Tiwana, Pakistan, garbage removal campaigns in Beni Suef, Egypt and environmental education in a in a Rio de Janeiro slum. Each pilot country has a national coordinator, usually from an national NGO, and a national selection committee which is a partnership of local government, NGOs, CBOs, national government, the private sector and international organizations. At the regional and inter-regional levels LIFE is supporting documentation, interchange and transfer by NGO networks and cities' associations of successful approaches of urban environmental improvement, including the transfer of the garbage pickers organizational model from Cairo to Bombay and Manila. At the global level, LIFE is a partnership of UNDP, WHO, the Governments of Sweden, the Netherlands, Germany, Denmark, the UK and the USA, and global NGO networks and cities' associations.

One critical dimension of SHD is the building of national and local capacities. Recently, at the request of my divisional director, I prepared a paper which suggested that the three skills most needed by national and local actors are systems thinking, strategic design and catalyzing multi-actor modalities of dialogue and action. Systems thinking allows holistic analysis, escaping narrow sectoral thinking. Strategic design moves beyond problem-solving to designing the future through strategic planning such as the Technology of Participation. And catalyzing multi-actor partnerships involves the identification of the stakeholders in any issue and facilitating their ongoing "multilogue" and collaboration to address specific issues or cross cutting ones. In addition, of course, other skills are needed by local and national actors, including administrative and financial management and infrastructural maintenance.

III. Role of NGOs in SHD

What then is the role of non-governmental organizations in operationalizing SHD? To answer this we must review the complementary roles of each of the social actors. What is the role of government, the private sector, community-based organizations and NGOs? The role of government is to provide a society with legislation, with an executive, an administration, a bureaucracy, with a judiciary. The role of government is to be concerned about all of the people, whether rich or poor, whether powerful or weak. The role of government is to set the rules of the game and to maintain orderly conduct in relation to those rules. The role of government is to be responsive and accountable to all of the people. The role of the private sector is to provide goods and services, to promote economic activity, to provide trade and commerce, to provide jobs, to produce and to distribute. The role of community-based organizations (CBOs) is to promote the interests of local people, to promote the perspective of local people, to care for local neighbourhoods, families and individuals and to express the uniqueness of local people. The role of NGOs is to protect the interests of a particular group of people, to advocate policy options, to act as an intermediary between other social actors, to provide training and capacity building, to provide services which are not being adequately provided by the other sectors, to implement pilot projects to test approaches of problem-solving or future design.

The challenge is to maintain the complementary interplay of these various social actors.

This is an emerging definition of governance - the facilitation of a healthy interaction of the social actors towards sustainable human development. Each of the social actors has a role to play in governance and a responsibility to seek good governance and to move the society towards SHD.

There is a growing awareness within the international community of the vital importance of a vibrant civil society for a healthy nation or community. A civil society is made of a wide range of NGOs, CBOs, trade unions and interest groups. Countries with a high Human Development Index invariably have a highly developed and active civil society. In the past few years the UN has sought the active participation of NGOs and CBOs in UN conferences and in UN programmes and projects. NGO presence was a powerful force at the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992 and the Population Summit in Cairo in 1994 and will be a powerful force in the Social Summit in Copenhagen and the Women's Summit in Beijing in 1995 and the City Summit in Istanbul in 1996.

But participation in global and national dialogue is only part of the role of NGOs. As indicated earlier the world community is reaching a high degree of consensus on what constitutes sustainable human development and NGOs have been involved in creating that consensus. What is needed now is for NGOs to design their own strategies and action plans in order to implement the global consensus at the national and local levels. The battle is no longer at the conceptual level but has shifted to the placing of SHD into projects, programmes and policies. NGOs are being called to act as facilitators of the process of participatory partnerships towards sustainable human development. UNDP has recently prepared a strategy paper on the role of NGOs in development and is working to allow NGOs to not only implement UN programmes through sub-contracts but to act as an executing agency or the primary contractual party which heretofore has been reserved for UN agencies and national governments. This will mean that NGOs will be able to design and manage UN programmes.

IV. Role of the ICAI in SHD

This leads me naturally to the role of the ICAI in facilitating processes of participation and partnership towards sustainable human development. As you know very well, the ICAI has a great legacy of approaches for which the world is desperately in need and is actively searching. Every day in my work I see that the world needs contextual re-education, social re-formulation and spirit re-motivation. The world needs contexts which are comprehensive, futuristic, archaic and intentional, effective methods of discussion and planning, imaginal education and depth reflection, an enabling style that affirms the inherent possibility present in every organization, every community and every person and a profound stance of gratitude for the mystery of life and compassion for all beings. UNDP, for example, among many, many organizations, is beginning to utilize the Technology of Participation (ToP).

For example, when I left New York last week, Eunice Shankland was designing a training course at UNDP on Sustainable Human Development which will be a pilot for use with all of our 131 country offices and had just helped design and facilitate a briefing session for 18 new Resident Representatives and a training course, along with Mirja Hansen, for our new Sustainable Development Advisers in 30 country offices, each of whom had a copy of Winning Through

Participation. When I return I will facilitate the module in this course on Governance. Jan Sanders last month facilitated the International Workshop for the LIFE National Coordinators. The LIFE National Coordinators are asking for more training in participatory methods. Kevin Balm and Raul Jorquera recently facilitated a regional workshop for the Global Environment Facility's Small Grant Programme in Latin America and the Caribbean. Richard Alton and Bryan Fischer facilitated a similar programme for GEF in Africa. And Kevin Balm also facilitated the GEF regional workshop for Asia and the Pacific. In January of this year, Mary D'Souza helped facilitate the Global Advisory Committee Workshop in Stockholm for the LIFE Programme. Before that Mary helped evaluate UNDP's global programme promoting the role of women in water and sanitation projects. ICA Egypt designed and trained the facilitators for the LIFE National Consultation in Suez last year. Vaughn O'Halloran has also recently facilitated two workshops at UNDP Headquarters. UNDP has been in discussion with John Patterson about strategic management programmes in Mongolia. And Goran Hyden helped prepare a paper for UNDP entitled "A Practitioners Guide to Operationalizing Sustainable Human Development" in which the critical concept of "social capital" was put forward - the building up of relationships among people, i.e., partnerships. UNDP is becoming more aware everyday that it needs methods of facilitation if it is to help facilitate SHD with 131 programme countries and among the host of UN agencies.

Conclusion

In conclusion I would like to say that the New Paradigm has arrived. We don't need to wait any longer. The only challenge worth taking is the challenge of the "how". How does each national ICA, each individual consultant and colleague within his or her particular context and assignment help operationalize sustainable human development? Whether one is concerned with building partnerships for sustainable development, grassroots approaches in transforming education, transformation designs for 21st Century organizations or recovering depth human culture, what is needed is increasingly clear to more and more people and groups around the world. How to do what is needed is far less clear. Here is where there is a need to step into the fray and offer ones best question, ones most comprehensive context, ones most intriguing gesture, ones most passionate social artistry. The world is beckoning. What is being called for is the courage to risk and give our all in this the greatest adventure of whole system transition. Facilitation of national and international policy dialogue is needed as well as community-based projects. To do this requires forgiveness or acceptance of the seemingly rigid social and organizational structures, the inflated egos, including ones own, the unsettling despair and the rampant cynicism of the now. We must facilitate nothing less than the re-invention of society. We have invented poverty and environmental degradation and we can invent social equity and ecological harmony. We are called to use our social artistry to facilitate whole system design of the future.

Eight years ago Joep van Arendonk called the ICA the "People of the Question." Today I would like to expand on that by saying that the persons associated with the ICA are the "People of the Context, the Method, the Style and the Stance" - the people who will respond to the call to facilitate sustainable human development in every situation and in every opportunity. In every structure there are the sensitive and responsive people. A vast movement of awakened and caring people is networking in a kaleidoscope of partnership around our blue planet.

This is the moment. We can do no other. How does that go again?

These are the times! We are the people!

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