

Conversations Today

Your journal about the world of NGOs and Social Enterprises

RNI No.TNENG/2013/52428 | Volume 6 | Issue 3 | March 2018 | 12 Pages | For Free Circulation Only | www.msdsrtrust.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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FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Reader,

When it is March, we talk about “Women’s Day” and its celebrations across the globe. The reason is that we wish to bring to limelight the achievements of women across national, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, economic, or political boundaries. But, why during this month alone, and not every time?

In our day-to-day lives, and in our personal interactions, we see each other as individuals and the large problem of equality continue. Equality does not mean we are identical. It means we are equally valuable and equally deserving of respect and dignity. We all have our problems, our strengths and weaknesses, our successes and our failures. What really matters is that we are all human, living in the same world which our contributions define and create.

All of us should honor our mothers, our grandmothers, the strong women in our pasts who fought for their rights. We must also honor our daughters, our sisters, our granddaughters, and hope they have a world which does not determine value based on gender, but instead of hearts, souls, strength, and mind.

While we know that gender equality would not happen overnight, the good news is that women across the world are making positive changes day by day. There is indeed a very strong and growing global movement of advocacy, activism and support focusing on women.

Now, more than ever, there’s a strong call-to-action to press forward and progress gender equality. A strong call to #PressforProgress. A strong call to motivate and unite friends, colleagues and whole communities to think, act and be gender inclusive.

So, let’s create a better world. Come together, and demand change!

—Marie Banu

EDITORIAL

Latha Suresh
Marie Banu

Design: Blink Foundation

Looking into the unconscious

“When you were a monkey you did not decide “I’ll become human being.” Nature just pushed you on but now you’re conscious enough to decide “I want to evolve from where I am to whatever is possible.”-Sadhguru



Recently I was introduced to The Leadership Circle, a model that can be used to develop leaders. The first conversation on the basis of a 360 degree assessment is all about discovering “unconscious” beliefs that create reactive behaviors and therefore impact creation of competencies that enhance leadership effectiveness. I could see the mental tug of war that each leader was going through while looking at their assessment. The conversation on beliefs that underlie habitual behaviors was a new pathway for most, albeit one they experienced with discomfort. The conversation could help them name their beliefs, make them more “visible”.

The beliefs could be like “I am good if I am liked” or “I am important because of the results I create”. None of these beliefs are so well articulated in our minds—it is unconscious. How is it that we do not inquire into the unconscious? I realized that the unconscious has given us desires like being good, being an achiever and so on. However, such desires masquerade as purpose. In other words, the beliefs “run” us. So, there is no reason why one would inquire.

One would begin to question it when one begins to tune towards causing greater good, creating an impact in the society--- in such a situation one can step out of “I, me, mine” world and decide to change course. This is the first step towards questioning the unconscious. At this point, it is not abandoning our beliefs but to give it a larger context, a meaningful direction. One can still be good, not to fulfill a personal cause but causes that

would make a difference to the world; one can still achieve results with drive, now with a vision.

We cannot see the unconscious directly, and so we need some kind of mirror with which to see the dynamic forces that operate within us. Mandala art is one of the ways to experience such a mirror. Mandala means ‘circle’ in the Sanskrit language, and mandala art refers to symbols that are drawn, sketched or painted in a circular frame.

There are many ways to create a mandala, but first we would need to draw a circle on a sheet of paper or on a canvas. We can fill the circle in spontaneously, letting the drawing emerge step by step in a creatively unpredictable way. Within the circle we can capture important scenes from everyday life, or objects of fascination from the world of nature. Filling the circle in is the first step. When the mandala is complete, we have an interesting, often beautifully wholistic snapshot of what is going on within us and of our present reality. We can then look at the symbol with curiosity and wonder, figure out what the structures, colors, and interacting elements mean and thereby gain an expanded view of how our lives are working.

While making a mandala or meditating does give an opportunity to touch the unconscious, suffering too makes us aware of the unconscious and urges us to make conscious choices.

Would we want external circumstances to cause the inquiry into the unconscious or would we want to evolve from unconscious to conscious with curiosity and willingness?

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.

In resonance with nature

After assessing his interests, the available options and scope in market, Palani finally decided to produce and market vermin compost in Chennai.

“I facilitated training programmes on production, supply, and marketing of vermin compost. While knowledge and contacts from my business helped me reach these new destinations, I was marvelled by the scope it created.”

In recent times, the most ensuring trend is the interest shown by city bred youth in agriculture and its prospects. While health is one of the dominant reasons behind this, some also give in to the cycle of impact that entrepreneurship in agriculture can bring about. Mr Palani's pursuit is very much the case in point. Coming from the fishermen community, his childhood was replete with incidences that ensured that the future will always be towards nature and sustainability. Therefore, very early on, he was sure that he would start something on his own so that his children could carry forward the legacy.

Palani completed his school education in his native, Uthiramerur, Kanchipuram district. After his high school years in Chennai, he pursued Diploma in Mechanical Engineering. “I soon got a job in the industry and spent around fifteen years, learning all different trades through the cycle of job rotation. I kept working for my companies tirelessly. And then it struck hard that going on like this would consume my entire life. I had to build on my childhood dream. This was the time to explore my options. So, I resigned when I was 33 years old,” shares Palani.

After assessing his interests, the available options and scope in market, Palani finally decided to produce and market vermin compost in Chennai. With no technical knowledge in the field, he embarked on all contacts and opportunities to prepare himself for the journey. Since the idea of being close to

nature was already clear, it was easier for him to pursue his choice. He soon purchased earthworms from the Earthworm Research Centre in New College, Chennai and cultivated them in his backyard. As his proficiency in work grew, he felt the need to acquire a certificate so that lack of credentials did not affect his growth. He completed the four-day course from Gandhi Niketan in Madurai and also engaged in training SHG and farmers' groups in vermi composting. “I was drawn by the need to spread the knowledge to all those in the farming sector. Although I am a new comer in this field, these farmers have been there for years and this professional knowledge will enhance their productivity. Farming eventually gets you to think for the sake of the community,” he assures.

Gradually, Palani also trained farmers' groups in Kanchipuram and Thiruvannamalai districts in organic farming. “I was able to do it under the RSVY scheme – Rashtriya Sam Vikas Yojana. I facilitated training programmes on production, supply, and marketing of vermin compost. While knowledge and contacts from my business helped me reach these new destinations, I was marvelled by the scope it created. I began to dream of an organisation to create a wider impact,” shares Palani. Having seen the role and work of many NGOs during the training days, he was inspired to establish his own NGO that could work for farmers. He felt this was the best way to reach out

to more farmers than managing things at an individual level.

For any healthy society, food is the foundation and Palani strongly believes that chemical free farming will become an urge very soon. “I can sense this inclination from the response given by students in schools and colleges during my awareness programmes,” he adds. While he strives to use his reach to go out to schools and colleges, to sensitise future generations about the need for organic farming, he also endeavours to spread the knowledge on herbs for good health. Palani does not see this as a revival of traditional knowledge, but rather feels that good health has lost its value in the era of shelved food products. With this in mind, he ventured into production of unadulterated, handmade ghee.

With all this work backing his decisions, Palani established the Jayam Foundation in 2015. While the foundation was taking shape in its initial years, he learnt about the PGDSIM course at CSIM. “The course introduced me to different levels of preparation I had to go through to be able to realise my vision. CSIM not only strengthened my resolve but also helped me understand the potential of collective vision for social change. I can now see my work in perspective,” says Palani, who is now pursuing his Bachelors in Farm Science from Tamilnadu Agriculture University.

—Shanmuga Priya.T



Leader & Leadership Matters...

2. Responsibility: Action alone speaks



Meaning of Responsibility - A Leader takes responsibility for converting his/her dreams into reality, and (s) he owns the consequences of his/her actions – (LOI, www.discoverself.com)

The dictionary meaning the state or fact of having a duty to deal with something or of having control over someone. It also means being accountable or to blame for something.

Synonyms are authority, power, leadership, influence also blame, liability...

Rightly so the antonyms are immaturity, distrust, freedom, exemption and so on.

We continue our journey of mapping Leadership attributes and move towards Responsibility. A leader may have high aspirations, but they remain as dreams if there is no action that makes the dream or idea a reality. The dictionary meaning says it is to have a duty to work for or help someone who is in a position of authority over you. Interestingly responsibility is also used to blame! When things go wrong someone has to own up the responsibility. We can also understand the word as 'response' 'ability' – ability to respond to the situation. Action is therefore very closely linked to this value word. While responsibility has power and leadership connotation; it is also having the negative connotation through the antonyms being freedom and exemption. This has made responsibility seemingly like a bondage and control rather than an uplifting of self and path leading to learning and development.

To capture the essence of Responsibility as a value, let's meet B. Shivaprasad, Finance and Admin Manager of Arpitha Associates Private Limited. A young dynamic, ever bubbling with energy, Prasad has over 14 years of experience and has grown from the grass roots. It is a wonder how one can smile in any situation, never say 'no' to any new work, manage work and people in unison, ever ready to support and help keeping in mind 'what needs to be done' than 'what he wants to do'. He is being seen as an icon for handling Responsibility by his family, colleagues, superiors, vendors, customers and so on. He is the 'Go to Man' on anything, be it personal issues or work related jobs; be it admin or finance or advice on government related matters. In the office his name would be the one that is called the most during the day.

A little boy, 7 years old, coming from difficult financial background, studying in government school nearby, Prasad was introduced to responsibility right from grade 3. His mom, who has been his guide, friend and counsel, put him as an apprentice under a tailor who ran a small shop next to his house. Prasad never liked the tailoring job but he was not the one to doubt or resist his mom. When he is given a job by someone he values their trust in him more and gets into action rather than negatively question their intention. He has been used to long hours of school – work – study from the 7th year of life and it has continued with a belief that time has to be put to good use.

Prasad, what does the word Responsibility mean to you?

Without batting an eye, Prasad responds "Responsibility is the foundation for growth. It is the trust that the other person reposes in my competence and it is an opportunity to expand and grow myself". He adds that responsibility is the path

towards development and growth. It is the challenge that can push the individual to greater heights and make him/her learn from every job done or not done.

But, Prasad this is a very different definition and meaning. Many think Responsibility as more work and more burden. What do you have to say for this?

Prasad laughs and in vernacular he quips: "If I also had thought so, Madam, I wouldn't be where I am in life today. I began working at home supporting my mom; at the tailoring unit till I completed 10th grade in school; then again work and evening college through BCom, MCom, MBA and CS foundation I have been holding both study and work. Responsibility is not about doing a job. It is about being accountable for the trust someone has reposed or God has reposed by giving me the opportunity".

Prasad adds Responsibility also means we take up stretch goals and achieve them. It is not about doing what one is merely capable of at the minimum. Responsibility is willingness to take up goals that are challenging and achieving them through action. "Assuming the accountability for the action," he adds.

When did you become aware of the value called responsibility connected to accountability, Prasad?

Prasad had some significant instances which made him question foundational beliefs on responsibility. The first was as a 7 year old when he hated to go to the tailoring unit after school and work. But at the end of the first month when he saw them give him money as the compensation, he realized he was playing a bigger role in supporting his mom to run the family.



The second was when his sister was to be married and it involved buying some housing site at very high expense that family couldn't afford. As a teenage boy, he saw his mom stretching for a higher commitment in spite of all relatives discouraging her. In a decade time, the land value grew over 10 times more and he realized taking responsibility brings being accountable for the stretch goals. He adds, "I am in a joint family and today my entire family looks up to me and expects me to handle the responsibilities efficiently. I have

become a mentor, guide, mediator, pillar to many elders and youngsters in the family".

The third incident he says that transformed him was when he lost office cash of Rs10,000/- in a fraud case at the HDFC bank right in the second month of his job as an accountant at Arpitha Associates. "I was fooled by a fraudster, and I had no way to prove to my office. My parents and relatives asked me to quit the job and take up something non-finance. But, the Management trusted me, retaining me in the same position and giving me an opportunity to continue and prove my honesty which transformed me. I realized I will grow only when I can take accountability for my actions. It has been over 14 years now since then in finance position."

Prasad, what are the qualities a person should possess in order to handle responsibility with accountability?

- First and foremost, live a life without fear. Have the courage inside and a trust on self to give one's best to life. "I should trust myself and my efforts whether success or failure"
- Patience, he says is the best friend of Responsibility
- A deep desire to learn makes responsibility a thrilling challenging ride in life. Easy to give up and lose learning. Quitting responsibility is like quitting learning and enveloping stagnation
- Willing to push self and team gives meaning to responsibility
- High energy and willingness to get up and act without thinking of success or failure. Doing what is appropriate and result would be in line with what is needed
- Planning is most important if actions has to bear right results
- Never to put boundaries and close doors for opportunities waiting to reach us.

"Patience + hope + confidence + continuous effort + accountability is the mantra for responsibility", he says smilingly. "Ownership comes with taking Responsibility".

Prasad, what is the one thing that blocks Responsibility? The worst enemy?

"Negativity and Laziness!!," comes the immediate answer. "We ourselves are the biggest blocks to our own growth. When we nurture negativity and failure inside, every responsibility becomes a burden. I never dwell in negative thoughts. I also avoid discussions and people who dampen my hope and spirit. I also do not allow laziness to creep in. I shift my thoughts to positive ones and draw energy by focusing on the challenges whenever I feel I may fail to deliver results."



Prasad, Are there no failures? How do you handle faults and failures while being responsible?

"I see the root cause and not run away from failures. I seek alternatives and options rather than get caught in the emotion of failure. I usually do not give up. Giving up is a bigger failure than failing in delivering results", Prasad confidently answers. He says, when he

thinks and feels he has been right in his actions, he has no fear. He adds, failure is also a learning; then, why should responsibility be a burden or blame? He continues to work under a tough Boss whose expectations are high and there are times he has failed to deliver as expected. He attributes his key learning from failures and scolding to his colleague by name Jaya, who taught

him how to avoid getting caught in emotions while dealing with job challenges and failures. He learnt to think through problems, find options and stop blame game and passing the buck. He realized when he passes the blame, he actually passes the opportunity to grow and improve. He becomes the ultimate loser.

Prasad, do tell us how do you handle the large work challenges that you take up and why do you stretch with a smile on your face through the day?

"I plan first, Madam. I ensure I have identified all resources available and put efforts in exploring them. I never deter from the commitment I make to my Superiors. I think I will be letting down their trust, if I fail in commitment. There will be sometimes errors, but never get defensive about them. It is better to accept and see corrective measures than justifications. I look for safe options than any option that is available. I surround my mind with positive and success possibilities. Engagement and involvement are the biggest supporters of responsibility. Finally, Action is the only face for responsibility".

Having begun as an accountant, Prasad handles finance, construction project management, administration and many more without a border around his portfolio is. He has managed some of the tough constructions even as a procurement manager. He is more concerned about what he gives than what others give him for his work. He



says "Taking up responsibility has given me tremendous learning, continuous challenges, growth, leadership in office, a purpose to live for and highest respect in office and family, not only for me but also for my parents. My father in law loves me for this quality. What more can I ask for from life"?"

Prasad has indeed given the perspective of a Leader's choice towards Responsibility and Accountability. His main struggle has been in spaces of Optimization of energy, effort and ROI.

Stay tuned for our next discussion on the Leadership attribute 'Optimization'.

—Dr. Kalpana Sampath

Responsibility



A disciple came riding on his camel to the tent of his *Sufi* Master. He dismounted and walked right into the tent, bowed low and said, "So great is my trust in God that I have left my camel outside untied, convinced that God protects the interests of those who love Him."

"Go tie your camel, you fool! And be responsible for yourself and your things" said the Master. "God cannot be bothered doing for you what you're perfectly capable of doing yourself."

Explicit Learning

- A. Frequently we expect God to be responsible for what we are capable of handling ourselves.
- B. To cover up our irresponsibility, we make God responsible for what we are.
- C. In the name of God, we breed inaction.

Introspective Learning

- A. What is the nature of 'Responsibility'?
- B. Why do I shrug my responsibilities?
- C. How much am I willing to own the consequences of my actions?

INCLUSIVE, INTEGRATED, INSPIRING

“Our goal is to ensure that there is a community living made possible for the inmates of Anbagam with the local villagers, share and care for each other, create a model village atmosphere with primary relationship built in between the neighbourhood residents.”



Almost all homes for the elderly are merely what they claim to be — homes that house aged men and women, offering a life that has been laid out for them taking into consideration, their age. Seldom does one find experimental models where a home for the elderly goes beyond mere housing for a certain demographic, choosing instead to become an integrating force between the elderly and the youth. In a nutshell, that is exactly what Manonmani Trust does and has been doing in the last 12 years of its existence. In its relatively short time span, the Trust has also inspired many to realize that there is a great deal of potential that goes beyond being a mere shelter or a home for the elderly.

What began as an attempt at family counselling is today an institution that helps bring about self-sustainability for elders. In one sentence, that’s pretty much the story of Manonmani Trust, established in 2006. Over the course of the last 12 years, the Trust has grown from strength to strength, catering to various strata of those in need — the elderly, families and children. “We began as a family counselling centre at the premises of one of our trustees, Saraswathi Varadarajan in Anna Nagar,” says Sudha Ramalingam, Managing Trustee, Manonmani Trust. “It was only after we moved to Perungalathur in 2007 when we started running a home for the needy.” The project in question is the Anbagam Project (translated to mean: home of love), which is perhaps Manonmani’s greatest success story till date. Manonmani Trust runs Anbagam as an experiment towards making elders self-sufficient and cognizant of their self-worth. The shelter houses 20 - 25 men and women on an average, extending admission on a short-term basis to women and children who are victims of domestic violence. The Trustees initially struggled with finding premises to house an old-age home. They could not get any premises for

rent since owners were prejudiced against shelter homes and also fearful that market value of their property would depreciate if an older person died on their property. They set up Anbagam in Perungalathur and were overwhelmed by the support of its neighbours. Manonmani Trust resolved that in addition to helping its residents, Anbagam will also give back to the neighbourhood and be an important resource to the community. “We ran a tuition centre for the underprivileged children in the neighbourhood and conducted free summer camps in the local schools in Perungalathur,” says Sudha.

While Manonmani Trust may have only been around for a mere 12 years, its experimental with its model has made heads turn. An integral part of its experiment lies in encouraging interaction and engagement between elders and the youth, to revive traditions, culture and values between the two demographics. When aged persons are constrained to move out of their families and enter an institution or old-age home, they suffer severe mental and emotional distress

and trauma. They feel stripped of their self-worth and dignity. Manonmani Trust’s experimental model has volunteers interacting with aged inmates, thereby helping their lives get a tad better while benefiting from what Manonmani Trust calls “wisdom of the aged”. Through sustained interactions with the youth, and engaging in socially productive activities, the aged residents gain self-confidence and regain self-esteem. Through family counselling, Manonmani Trust has also been able to help reconcile elderly persons with their families. The focus was clear: do not institutionalize the needy, but support them and integrate them through counselling.

In 2016, the Trust oversaw the construction of a new building, which saw Anbagam shift base. “We built a new building in the Thirukandam and moved Anbagam to this facility on October 2, 2016. We continued housing senior citizens in these premises, alongside victims of domestic violence,” says Sudha. Thirukandam is a lush, green village in Thiruvallur district in the outskirts

of Chennai city - about 35 kilometres from Koyambedu. The building was made possible due to the generous contribution of individual and corporate sponsors and friends of Manonmani Trust.

Often, social organizations forget their responsibilities towards their neighbours and are unable to integrate themselves into the community. Manonmani Trust is cognizant of its footprint in the neighbourhood and has been devoting its time and energy to integrated community development. It has been conducting a demographic survey, with the assistance of trained social workers, to understand in a bottom-up manner, the needs of the village. Preliminary results showed that a significant number of middle-school and high-school students of the village drop out of school. To encourage such students to continue in school and inspire them, the Trust has been inviting college students and young professionals to the village to conduct talks and interactions with the youth. The Trust also has started a free tuition centre that around 40 students attend every day after

school. In addition to a trained teacher, residents of Anbagam also volunteer at the tuition centre to help students in their academic endeavours.

Through all these exercises, especially the emphasis on integration, Manonmani Trust has made its focus clear: inclusivity. As Sudha says, “the main focus of Manonmani Trust is to ensure that the old and young interact together and care for each other and share their ideals and values.” This is again indicative of the trust’s conscious attempts to move beyond the usual and be different in its initiative.

Sudha sums it up quite aptly by saying: “Our goal is to ensure that there is a community living made possible for the inmates of Anbagam with the local villagers, share and care for each other, create a model village atmosphere with primary relationship built in between the neighbourhood residents.” In striving towards that target, Manonmani will continue to do what it does best: create inclusive living spaces where various demographics of the under-privileged can be housed as part of one system. In the success of this model, also lies the possible testament that homes for the elderly or the under-privileged can certainly venture out to go beyond their basic purpose, and turn into communities of inclusive, integrated and holistic living.

In addition to Anbagam, Manonmani Trust conducts human rights training programmes for government school children across various districts in the State and conducts capacity building programmes for NGOs. The Trust provides uniforms and infrastructure support to Panchayat schools and continues to run family counselling centres at Thirukandam, Red Hills and Perambur.



Donations to the Manonmani Trust are exempt from tax under Section 80G of the Income Tax Act. Manonmani Trust is also registered under the FCRA and is thus also allowed to receive foreign contributions. For more information, please visit: <http://manonmanitrust.org/>

SOCIAL IMPACT: SHOULD WE BE TALKING PROCESS OR PRODUCT?

I was reminded recently of the story about Jason and his quest for the Golden Fleece. It is the well-known story of a young man with a goal in mind but in order to achieve that end, he has a long, challenging and arduous journey. It was an adventure, and throughout the journey Jason grew as a person, became wiser, tackled problems and overcame obstacles. Although the final product was obtaining a prize, the process involved in trying to attain the prize was equally important.

The lesson learned from this story being...the journey is as important as the destination. In today's media parlance – we were on a journey and it was a bit of a roller-coaster but we got through it!

With a bit of a stretch of the imagination it is similar with social impact reporting. The activities that are done to understand the degree that one's organisation is making a difference can be as important – if not more important – than the resultant social report.

I have been involved with social accounting and audit for many years. Working with others, we developed a PROCESS to help organisations collect relevant quantitative and qualitative information relating to their central purpose. This happens each year in the same way that financial accounts and 'books' are kept.

Organisations then bring this information together and report on their performance and on their impact on their stakeholders. The process is internal to the organisation, owned and controlled by the organisation – thereby empowering it to self-monitor and self-evaluate.

At the end of a year the organisation will produce its own social impact report – this is the PRODUCT.

Thus, the process can be regarded as the 'journey' and the social report is the 'destination'.

With social accounting and audit there is a wee sting in the tail in that the product is externally verified with an audit – again similar to financial annual accounts. The audit ensures that the final product of the report is valid and a true interpretation of what the organisation has, and has not, achieved during the year. On passing the audit, a statement is issued – not golden fleece I am afraid – just a signed certificate.

Organisations who regularly keep a set of social accounts and subject them to audit report a number of significant benefits.

The PROCESS helps them understand more clearly what they do to achieve an overall purpose; it forces them to listen to a wide range of different stakeholders; it can keep them on track; it can help them in explaining more clearly what they do; it can be used in organisational record-keeping and learning; it can get people to work together more effectively; and so on.

There are benefits too from producing a report – the PRODUCT. It can be summarised and distributed widely to stakeholders and the wider public; it can be used to report back to funders; it can be the basis for future planning; it can track change that an organisation has had to deal with; it can be used, in part, to brief outsiders; and so on.

So in social accounting and audit both the PROCESS and the PRODUCT have value.

The Social Audit Network (SAN) was set up to help third sector and community organisation to introduce social accounting and audit into their organisations – and to help them with the process of social accounting as



well as producing a social report.

Within SAN we often have the debate – is process more important than the product or vice versa.

I fall more into the process 'camp'. For me the final report does have value and I can see the advantages of having the statement endorsing the social accounts. But it is going through the process that can have a more influential effect on the organisation. It can help all parts of an organisation not only to take stock on a regular basis but also to reflect on what the organisation is trying to do and how it is doing that.

So many social and community enterprises see a need, respond to it, try and address it, and then get caught up in delivering whatever it is that they do. Building into the annual organisational cycle a process of data collection and stakeholder engagement to quantify outputs and to understand and to be able to report on outcomes, can be hugely beneficial. Is the organisation doing the best it can? Could it be doing something better or more effective? How can it change? How can it plan to improve?

The folk in the product camp stress the value of a report in that it can be used as the central document in an organisation. It can be used to prove or evidence the work that has been

done by the organisation in achieving its ends.

Now if you are a process-type person, you have to be able to accept that processes can be messy. Through trial and error...and trial again, one learns – and through that learning a deeper understanding begins to emerge.

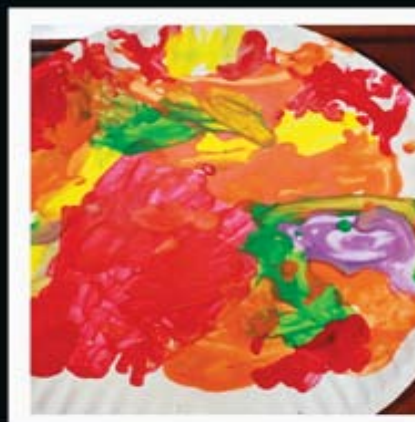
In researching this blog I came across a website – Prek and K Sharing which deals with working with children to create art. They argue that in encouraging art the PROCESS of doing is more important than the final PRODUCT.

In the picture below the process is messy and undefined but reflects the learning, while the well-structured neat product is more presentable and more accepted.

It is the same with social impact reporting. The process of collecting, collating and making sense of information and opinions can be messy – while the learning from it can be immense.

So which would you choose? The process (read Jason's adventurous journey) or the product (read 'golden fleece') or both...

—Alan Kay
Co-Founder,
Social Audit Network, UK
www.socialauditnetwork.org.uk



PROCESS --- PRODUCT

Representing marginalised women



Deeply concerned about the disconnect between the kind of work men-headed organisations did for women and what women actually needed, Renuka felt that a human rights based organisation exclusively focussing on women issues was the need of the hour to lay the foundations of a gender just society.

Women's position as leaders represents a mixed scene in India. Politically, their representation has been varied over the years, at all levels. However, what this encouraged is their emergence as leaders in all other spheres. With a multitude of programmes and schemes targeting their ability to lead at the micro level, women's representation has transcended new heights. And wherever there was a skewed gender representation, new entrants broke the stereotypes and paved way for gender balance. The Centre for Women's Development and Research (CWDR) in Chennai narrates how women's leadership evolved in the civil society. "Only two percent of NGOs were women-headed way back in early 90s. This resulted in a big vacuum in representation of women's issues in forums available then. CWDR was established in 1993 to fill this vacuum," says Ms Renuka Balakrishnan, Founder Trustee and Executive Director of CWDR.

Deeply concerned about the disconnect between the kind of work men-headed organisations did for women and what women actually needed, Renuka felt that a human rights based organisation exclusively focussing on women issues was the need of the hour to lay the foundations of a gender just society. According to her, women's rights cannot be established in the absence of a women's movement. However, with lesser women active in public space, there weren't many role models for her to look up to. "Nor did I have family support. But I believed in my perspective. I wanted CWDR to make way for women's leadership in fighting for women's concerns," she adds.

CWDR started by training different NGOs and organisations on women human rights. In line with the belief that sensitisation was the first step to change, Renuka and team organised many training programmes but were soon disappointed to see that these trainings had no impact – not in redefining the vision of organisations nor in their efforts to reach out to women in their project areas. As this became more apparent, CWDR decided to engage with women directly through their projects. That was a time when Renuka herself was not aware of terms like domestic violence and harassment. "Out there, when we decided to explore women's issues, every day was as enlightening as the previous one. Some issues which we believed were cultural part of our lives, were actually social concerns rooted in patriarchy. Domestic violence is one such instance which

emerged to be a grave concern in the five slums we chose to work in," introspects Renuka.

Soon the news about CWDR's work in counselling and facility arrangement for women affected by domestic violence spread and women from other slums began to approach Renuka's team. She believes that encouraging women to approach authorities and seek solution to their predicament was instrumental in triggering a wave of change that led to women come out and speak their stories. CWDR now had the responsibility of leading women from 20 slums. Their strategy was to form women's groups and empower them to act against cases of domestic violence in their respective slum. As women's voices began to come out, there was an increased incidence of violence, which further encouraged women to speak against the menace.

Now, the women were grouped into committees without men's knowledge and this committee began to act whenever there was an incidence of domestic violence. "An elderly woman came out and cried aloud, inviting other women to question the incidence. We only needed a trigger to initiate action and this had to be invisible. If the idea of a committee was known, am sure community would have tried to suppress with new means," she recalls. With domestic violence being addressed at different levels, it was now time to think of productive means of engagement for women that does not drive them back to dependence on men. CWDR's evaluation of their skill training project in 2003 helped them choose new inroads. Some of the key observations from this evaluation led them to refine their engagement with women from the community. Having seen that all their efforts disintegrated into activities but failed to evolve into a process, CWDR decided to analyse characteristics of its target group.

Beyond the fact that they were all women, they realised that they were dealing with marginalised, unorganised domestic workers, who were hardly covered under government surveys. With this realisation began the new phase of CWDR as an advocacy organisation. CWDR's first fight was to get domestic workers included in the list of Unorganised Manual Labourers recognised by the Ministry of Labour, Government of India. The achievement was no less than a milestone for CWDR and the women it engaged with. Tasting the fruits of advocacy, Renuka and team pursued more specific goals that could redirect the lives of

women work force in the country. Trade union for domestic workers, welfare schemes and minimum wages for domestic workers, decent representation of women work force, including domestic workers in mainstream cinema and other such demands were pursued at all levels for over a decade.

In 2005, CWDR celebrated the establishment of Manushi Unorganised Women Workers' Trade Union, the first of its kind in India. In 2007, CWDR succeeded in forming a separate board for domestic workers under labour administration. "Every stage in advocacy was a milestone for us. Our only demand that stands unmet today is the idea of minimum wages for domestic workers. As the nature of work varies with every worker, estimating minimum wage for domestic workers is very difficult and hence the obstacle. As an organisation that was built to work as a women's movement, CWDR moved on with all other concerns," adds Renuka. CWDR not only represented the women it worked with but evolved to be the face of every marginalised woman in the unorganised sector. It was one of the eleven organisations that came together to present a memorandum to the Indian Parliament in 2009, in response to the then Labour Minister's apathy towards domestic workers expressed at the ILO convention. Consequently, Government of India became a signatory to the International Labour Convention 189 on domestic workers in 2012. "We fought for the convention to be signed. Now, we insist on its effective implementation. For unorganised women, who are doubly discriminated, nothing comes easy," she remarks.

While the years long advocacy efforts go on, CWDR actively manages four other sister groups looking at the concerns of specific groups of women.

1) Maitri—an association for single women that follows a similar advocacy model. However, no significant policy level changes have been achieved yet. 2) Snehidi, established in 2003, focuses on creating awareness on sexual reproductive health among adolescent girls. Snehidi has 12 recreational centres for girls who have dropped out of school after puberty. Since the programme resulted in all girls attending school regularly, these centres were closed in 2007. 3) Thalir was initiated in 2007 to work with girls below ten years of age and were vulnerable to incidences of child sexual abuse. Many awareness programmes have been conducted in schools and communities to enlighten the girls about good and bad touch. 4) Nanban was established in 2014 to reiterate the role of men in empowering women. Many sensitisation programmes were organised and the response shocked Renuka and team.

"We saw men telling us that they didn't know women had an organ called the uterus. Some did not know that rape resulted in unwanted pregnancies. From such levels of ignorance, we had to help women with household work, stop men from causing physical harm to women. Every time women shared the changes they noticed in their families, we at CWDR realise that sensitisation is a multi-layered phenomenon, that might require different approaches at each level. And with each such learning, we continue to move forward towards a gender just society," smiles Renuka.

—Shanmuga Priya.T

Breaking the silence on child sexual abuse

Waging a war against the silence and ignorance surrounding child sexual abuse, Cactus Foundation aims to raise awareness on the issue to create a safe and healthy environment for India's children.

Every 15 minutes, a child is sexually abused in India, according to the National Crime Records Bureau.

A survivor of sexual abuse, Nusrat Khan Pahade started the Cactus Foundation to teach children the difference between a “safe” or “unsafe” touch, and raise awareness.

By urging the country to break its silence on the issue, Cactus hopes to give children a healthy and safe childhood.

Lend your voice and help break the silence.

Read on for the full story.

“My uncle, my father and my grandfather keep shoving their hands into my private parts.”

These are the words of a four-year-old.

Every 15 minutes, a child is sexually abused in India, according to the country's National Crime Records Bureau. Yet, when it comes to sex and sexuality, “we just want to brush it under the carpet,” shares Nusrat Khan Pahade.

Fighter, mother and a survivor of child sexual abuse, Nusrat is determined to ensure no other child experiences the physical or emotional trauma of such horrendous acts.

Thus, Cactus Foundation was born. Waging a war against the silence and ignorance surrounding child sexual abuse, the foundation aims to raise awareness on the issue to create a safe and healthy environment for India's children.

Run by volunteers, many of whom are homemakers, this NGO also consists of a core team that has supported Cactus for more than 16 years.

People like Rameshwar Madhukar Irabatti make up this team. He not only manages the photography, videography and social media for the foundation, but is also a key trainer. Even Nusrat's mother, Nafeesa, joins in during training, and sometimes advises Nusrat during discussions at home.

The foundation faces considerable hurdles — one of them being families who attempt to shush their children when made aware of such incidents.

“Since the perpetrators are usually known to the families, the members will urge to bury the issue,” says Asif Iqbal, the principal of a school partnering with Cactus.

“If it's a female child for example, the family worries about what the society will think, or whether people will look at her with the wrong intentions. But people should remember that it is not the



child's fault. It is the fault of the cruel wrongdoer,” he added.

Contrary to popular belief, boys have been found to be at an almost equal risk of sexual abuse. In a 2007 report on child abuse in India by the Ministry of Women and Child Welfare, 52 per cent to 60 per cent of children who were sexually abused were boys.

Citing this figure in another report published in 2017, researchers found that boys were simply expected to outgrow the experience of sexual abuse due to their “superior” gender. This, they said, was holding them back from receiving psychiatric help.

Forced to remain quiet by their own families, it is no surprise that boys and girls alike sometimes hesitate to come forward, and continue to suffer needlessly. This is also what gives perpetrators the courage to continue. But by working with teachers, schools and parents, Cactus is allowing them to have conversations with children that are otherwise avoided.

The foundation teaches children to tell the difference between a “safe” or “unsafe” touch, what is considered

sexual abuse, and what they should do in case they find themselves in such a situation.

This can be tricky, since even adults can be unclear on what is sexual abuse — many assume it is purely a physical act.

But the law states otherwise — making a child watch objectionable content, and making any form of inappropriate gestures or sounds with sexual intent, is a form of sexual abuse, according to The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012.

Educating children on this is an important first step to prevention.

Wahida Begum, a teacher with a partnering NGO, has noticed the positive results of such conversations. “The children now know the difference between a safe and unsafe touch. They no longer feel shy or ashamed to share about the issue, and know what to do,” she says.

She adds: “Now they tell us: ‘We will tell our parents. If they don't listen, we will tell the teachers. We will speak until someone listens.’”

And that voice is growing.

In February 2017, 20,000 teachers,

parents, children and other concerned citizens marched on the streets of Solapur to draw attention to the issue of child sexual abuse.

Calling for the suffocating silence to be broken, men and women alike came together to demand basic protection for the country's children, and collective recognition of what survivors went through.

“At the end of the day, it is just the first step we are taking to try to create this awareness,” says Nusrat. “Maybe not this generation, but I'm sure the next generation will be bold enough, will be courageous enough to fight and stop child sexual abuse, and to talk about it.”

It would provide hope that in spite of what they endured, these brave children are not only able to survive, but also bloom.

Just like a cactus.

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

Centre for Social Initiative and Management (CSIM)

COURSE REGISTRATION for Academic Year 2018 -2019



Post Graduate Diploma in Social Initiative and Management - PGDSIM is a one-year full-time course offered bilingually in Tamil and English and is meant for graduates who aspire to start their own NGO/Social enterprise organization or currently leading a NGO/Social enterprise. Participants will have to attend two days of contact sessions in weekdays. Classes are conducted at CSIM Centre at Alapakkam, Chennai. *For socially motivated people who have work experience in the NGO sector, but do not have a degree, we offer a Diploma course in Social Initiative and Management.*

Social Entrepreneurship Outlook Programme (SEOP) - a four-month part-time course conducted on Saturdays' 2.00 P.M to 5.00 P.M. This course introduces the principles of social entrepreneurship with specific emphasis on criteria, processes and values required to become a social entrepreneur. The module is broadly classified into: Sessions which deals with the concepts of Social Entrepreneurship and sessions that provides insights into management tools that support Social entrepreneurship.

Social Entrepreneurship for Vocational Rehabilitation - a four-month part-time course aimed at developmental and managerial aspects of disabilities. Sessions on disability and its effect in the social and psychological context, management of adults with disabilities are the key components.

Social Entrepreneurship and De-Addiction Treatment Techniques is a 40-hour module focusing on Counselling and communication skills, community Approach, Group therapy, Dry drunk syndrome and relapse manifestations.

To register, Please contact: Mr. S. Jothi at 9841641813 or Mr. Karthik at 8220700841 or email chennaicsim@gmail.com



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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“Women should have a social responsibility to empower other women.”

Smt. S.P.Lavanya talks to Marie Banu about the need for gender equality.

Smt. S.P. Lavanya is the Additional Superintendent of Police, Special Investigation division, Crime Branch, CID. She hails from Chennai and has pursued her graduation in Computer Science and Public Administration.

Lavanya looks after special investigation—cybercrime in particular. She joined as Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) in 2009 and served in Vellore District as DSP Ranipet for three years. She then joined as DSP Cyber Crime cell CBCID in 2013 and was promoted last year.

She has completed all levels of courses on cybercrime investigation and is a regular faculty at TN Police Academy and Judicial Academy.

In an exclusive interview, Smt. Lavanya talks to Marie Banu about the need for gender equality.

What are your thoughts on HeForShe Campaign? What steps should we take towards achieving gender equality?

The United Nation's 'HeForShe' Campaign has been very effective as it invites people around the world to stand together to create a bold, visible force for gender equality. It asks men and women to take active steps in promoting gender equality and women empowerment. It aims to achieve equality by encouraging men and boys as agents of change and take action against negative inequalities faced by women and girls.

I believe that gender equality will be achieved in our country when women have equal rights in their home, do not experience domestic violence, and are represented at the highest levels of business and politics. For this to happen, we need the support of men.

Both men and women should know what they want for themselves as well as what they want for the

society. They should also understand the field realities that prevail for women – not only in cities, but also in remote villages – so that they can come out and engage in activities that promote women empowerment. This should be gauged.

Campaigns should not be restricted to urban areas alone. Statistics reveal that most urban women are aware of their rights and are improving in a lot of fields. Government and non-government organisations must therefore organise campaigns in rural areas, focusing on education and sanitation for women. Once a woman is educated, she becomes aware of her role in the society.

What do you think is the role of women and youth in enhancing social responsibility?

A majority of our population fit into the youth category and women form a sizeable number. Women should have a social responsibility to empower other women. Today, many women are coming out in the form of NGOs or entrepreneurs and including women in their programmes. They need not have to go out of their village or city to engage in such acts, but can start working from their own neighbourhood.

Once a woman realises her responsibility to develop the potential of other women and children in her vicinity, she can definitely bring about social change.

During the Chennai Floods in 2015, many youth volunteered to help the affected people. We should tap their potential and streamline their efforts towards certain social causes, more specific to our State. All these will lead to a change in the role of women and youth in our society.

About cyber crime scene in TN when compared to other States?

The cyber crime scene in our state is much better when compared to other states. As technology grows, and people carry one or more gadgets in their hand, the intensity of cyber crime also increases. It is not that someone has to hack or steal your data for it to be a cyber crime; a simple abusive message is also one.

In Tamil Nadu, where we have less cyber crime cases reported when compared to other states, the number of affected people are on the rise day by day. Specifically, they can be categorised into two types – financial implications, and non-financial implications where the social media is involved. When we say financial implications, I mean cases where

victims reveal their bank account details, OTP, PIN or CCV number to the accused. Although a lot of awareness has been created, people are still falling prey.

I advise people not to panic when they receive phone calls stating that their card will be blocked. They should immediately contact their bank customer care number or visit their bank in person.

In my experience, banks do not generally call their customers and inform about blocking their card. They convey such information only in the form of a letter. Be careful while using e-wallets and the money you deposit in it. It is good to choose trustworthy e-wallets.

About non-financial crimes - like sending abusive messages, stalking, voyeurism, social media offences – almost 70 percent affects women and children. The usage of tabs and mobile phones are on the increase amongst women and children, even though there are age limits specified for certain websites.

What is your advice on use of social media?

Women and children generally believe that people around them are good. Criminals study about them from the social media before making contact. So, be careful while revealing your personal details on the internet. If you convert your details into zeros and ones; anything you post on the internet will stay for ever.

We are a conservative society, but as the social media is on the increase, we tend to disclose a lot of issues without understanding the ramification of it. It is like literally putting up a banner on the street about yourself.

As a parent, watch what your kid is doing and check their internet usage. The best suggestion is to spend quality time with them and notice their behaviour pattern. If at all they fall prey to cybercrime, don't blame them as they are too young to understand. Instead, help them to come out of the issue.

I will not say don't use internet or social media; I will rather say use it for the purpose of it. Never make technology use you; make use of the technology. Definitely it would create a social circle and you can learn a lot as it creates an international platform.

Make sure to whom you are talking, more specifically in chat rooms and social media. Be careful about what you are posting. Ask yourself: what am I posting? Why should I post it? Is it necessary? Is it hurting my sentiments or that of others?

What are the social issues you are passionate about?

Self-awareness is the key for any development. At first, one needs to understand who he is; his capabilities, capacities, role in the family, and role in the immediate society. More specifically, I am interested in issues related to safety and security of women and children.

