

Mainstreaming Human Rights Based Approach in Grassroots Organizations; *Experience and Challenges*

INTRODUCTION

Public Advocacy for Rights and Values in India (PAIRVI) & MISEREOR invites you to the three day workshop on "Mainstreaming Human Rights Based Approach in Grassroots Organization; Experience and Challenges". The objective of the workshop is

The lack of experience, prescriptive ideas, and knowledge on implementing RBA in specific contexts and local settings of grassroots organizations, has led to a varied understanding and more diversified approaches in development sectors. Challenges in terms of integrating human rights principles and standards to development work, building meaningful partnership with communities and stakeholders and creating tools for empowering communities to shape their relation vis-a-vis state, have held a number of organizations from adapting to rights based approach. Equally challenging has been living human rights principles of non-discrimination and equality, accountability, transparency, justice and rule of law. Notwithstanding these challenges, many organizations have gathered valuable experiences and varied degrees of success in the quest of implementing RBA. They have overcome these challenges in their particular institutional, cultural and political setting to change the existing power structures and bring about change in the lives of communities, which is worth sharing and learning. The workshop intends to share the learning and understanding of the rights based approach, gather best practices and experiences in operationalizing RBA at grassroots, and exploring the solutions to the challenges faced.

CONTEXT

Development and human rights were considered two separate spheres with diverging strategies and objectives until 1990s. Despite a clear relationship between the two as laid down in the UN Charter (1945), governments, bilateral donors, international NGOs were reluctant to recognize the convergence between human rights and development. The perceived dichotomy between the two meant that development organizations placed little or no emphasis on the protection and promotion of human rights. The separation between human rights and development was mainly an outcome of the ideological differences during the cold war.

Towards the end of the cold war many ideological barriers to the governments' recognition of the human rights were removed. Around the same time, traditional development approaches also began to be challenged due to their inability to address global injustices, poverty, and deprivation. As the development community came under sustained criticism for failing the poor and the marginalized, it was forced to re-evaluate its strategies to make the development more inclusive and expand its ownership among the socially and economically deprived classes.

The UN formally recognized the relationship between human rights and development (Declaration on the right to development, General Assembly resolution on, 1986). The Vienna Conference (1993) further reiterated this synergistic link. The World Conference on Population and Development (1994) confirmed that "development and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms are interdependent and mutually enforcing.

Since Vienna Congress there has been a general shift in the development thinking. Today most of the organizations acknowledge the legitimacy of human rights and their value in their development work. Many UN agencies notably UNICEF and UNDP have officially adopted the RBA. Many governments including United Kingdom and Sweden as well as many NGOs including Oxfam, Action Aid, Save the children and CARE have taken an explicit rights based approach in their programmes.

The rights based approach envisions the poor as actors with the potential to shape their own destiny and defines poverty as exclusion and powerlessness rather than want of services and economic means. Instead of focusing on devising short term alternatives through provision of goods and services, it seeks to identify key systemic obstacles that keep people from accessing opportunities and improving their own lives. The main thrust of RBA is on structural barriers that impede communities from exercising rights, building capabilities and having the capacity to decide and participate in the decision-making. It articulates development as "extension of fundamental rights and human freedoms" and emphasizes social along with economic indicators in determining development.

It assumes that poor people have dignity, aspirations and ambitions and that their initiatives are being blocked and frustrated by persistent systemic challenges and non functional state social services and its delivery mechanisms. Strategies to overcome are anchored in realities of local context and underlines local instrument and stake holding to sustain the development.

MAINSTREAMING HUMAN RIGHTS BASED APPROACH

Mainstreaming rights based approach among organizations is a complex process. Neither it is a one shoe fits all formula. The organizations need to deepen their understanding on the philosophical principles included and how they apply it on the ground in the local development context. The available knowledge in applying rights based approach is mainly limited to international institutions such as UN and international NGOs and bilateral donors. Unfortunately, their prescriptions do not apply to grassroots organization, which are far apart in their scale of operation, outlook and philosophical underpinnings.

Besides programmatic aspects, the conscious choice to work in rights based approach and to emphasize economic, social and cultural rights represents a major shift in the institutional dimensions of organizations. It calls for a complicated and candid review of organizations own internal mission, vision, objectives and policies, systems and structures created to achieve those ends.

The novel approach to development is gaining ground in the international community, influencing the development policies and programmes of many major donors and international NGOs. Though popular in development discourse, the ubiquity is not matched in the practice. A number of reasons have kept organizations from fully adapting the RBA. Conceptual clarity on how development organizations translate these lofty notions in their specific context and their programming is still missing. The practical aspects of operationalizing rights based approach to development and the means by which universal goals and vision are integrated in the programmes is still in the realms of ambiguity.

PROGRAMME DESIGN, OBJECTIVES, OUTPUT AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The goal of the workshop will be enhancing theoretical and operational understanding of rights based approach. The learning objectives of the workshop will be to

- Discuss the key principles that guide RBA
- Explore how these principles have been applied to organizations, programmes and specific thematic areas such as right to food and livelihood, capacity building, women's and children's rights, environment and climate change and other areas of interest of the participants
- Focus on current debate and dilemmas around RBA
- Investigate methods of settling common challenges encountered in applying RBA
- Develop step guide for implementing RBA for implementation of rights based approach

After the workshop the participants would be able to, define and understand RBA, devise methods for mainstream RBA in their development work, and develop indicators for assessing impact of rights based approach in their own thematic areas.

PAIRVI

Public Advocacy Initiatives for Rights & Values in India (PAIRVI) is a non-profit Advocacy Support Organization, which seeks to facilitate and strengthen social advocacy in North and Central India. PAIRVI goal is to promote peoples agenda by creating a supportive climate for advocacy efforts across the region. It is committed to enhance capacity of grassroots organization in human rights practice and advocacy with the objective of strengthening human rights infrastructure.



WHO WILL PARTICIPATE?

The target audience has been selected from different areas (themes) so as to bring in varied experiences. The participants will represent development organizations, international NGOs, and practitioners. The facilitators will include development practitioners, academia, people from law and justice, international NGOs and representative from the state. The participants are required to have strong inclination to work with the knowledge network created from the workshop.

DATE, VENUE AND LOGISTICS

The workshop will be organized at Sanskriti Kendra, MG Road, New Delhi on 9-11 April 2009. The participants will make it convenient to reach the venue by 17.00 on 8th April. The workshop will end on 11th April around 16.00. The participants will be provided to and from train fare (AC II) from their place of invitation to New Delhi.

REGISTRATION AND CONFIRMATION

Participants have to pay a nominal registration fee of Rs. 500 towards training kit (payable at the venue). Please note that the actual per participant cost of the workshop is much higher. The participants are requested to confirm their participation earliest. The confirmation may be sent to pairvidelhi@rediffmail.com by e-mail or by telephone on 91-11-29841266/91-11-65151897.

MISEREOR

MISEREOR was founded in 1958 as an agency "against hunger and disease in the world". In its capacity as the overseas development agency of the Catholic Church in Germany, it offers to cooperate in a spirit of partnership with all people of goodwill to promote development, fight worldwide poverty, liberate people from injustice, exercise solidarity with the poor and the persecuted, and help create "One World".