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Teaching

Courses related to children are still titled 'Child Welfare'. This, in itself, is one indicator to the welfare orientation which is prevalent in social work education. The courses on children could include the ecological perspective (Laird and Hartmann, 1985), which emphasise the need to understand interventions with children within the context of the different systems affecting the child's life. Interwoven in this course could be the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and the situation of the child in India, within this context, as has been attempted in the earlier section of this paper. Courses which discuss interventions with children need to highlight the need for and strategies related to children's participation and empowerment. This ideology needs to be re-emphasised in the other basic social work method courses and specialisation courses.

Field Introduction

Institutions of social work could initiate demonstration field action projects focussing on issues related to children. The advocacy component could be highlighted in these projects. Students could be placed at these field action projects. Field placements would facilitate integration of theory into practice and replication.

It is only through conscious intervention in all three areas of teaching, research and field instruction will there be a shift in the perception of social workers about children — from beneficiaries to individuals in their own rights. This, in turn, would be able to consciously influence policy makers, opinion makers and the public at large, thereby creating a movement which aims at the empowerment of children and emphasises children's participation on issues relating to their needs and life situations.

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fact, 90 per cent of the landless labourers are Scheduled Castes (SCs) and a large majority of the Other Backward Castes (OBCs) would be either agricultural labourers or poor peasants and impoverished artisans. The fact that the SC and Scheduled Tribe (ST) women account for nearly half of all female agricultural labourers (although they make up only a quarter of India's rural female population), only indicates the pressures of survival and how unevenly it affects different sections of society. The 1990s have shown a tremendous increase of the informal sector with greater numbers of women and children drawn into this insecure exploitative labour force.

Under the four groupings of children's rights, that is right to survival, right to development, right to protection and right to participation the situation which emerges is indicative of how much more needs to be done than what has been achieved so far.

Right to Survival

While the Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) has improved from 129 deaths per 1000 live births in 1971 to 79 per 1000 in 1992, there are still two million children every year, out of 25 million children born, who die before their first birthday. There are variations of the IMR in different states/regions; in Kerala it is 17 and in Orissa, 114 (India, 1994).

With regard to nutrition, while 250 million people presently suffer from varying degrees of malnutrition, children suffer the most — 43.8 per cent of children suffer from moderate degrees of malnutrition. About 30 per cent of all babies born have low birth-weight, 2.2 million children are afflicted with cretinism and 6.6 million children are mildly retarded.

Every year, the UNICEF releases the *Status of the World's Children* and the *Progress of the Nation* reports to the general public. The report gives us statistics regarding the IMR — the numbers of children who have died due to low birth-weight, diarrhoea and other preventable diseases. However, none of the reports really tell you the whole story. Why are children being born with low birth-weight? Why are children dying of diarrhoea? More importantly, who are these children?

The reasons are not because children were not given ORS and therefore died due to dehydration. We need to state boldly that children become susceptible to diarrhoea as they are malnourished and there is not enough food to go around a family. For poor, malnourished and pregnant women, it is a vicious cycle beginning from a childhood of

Children's Rights: Challenges and Future Trust

RITA PANICKER

The paper first studies the status of children's rights in India under the four groupings of Right to Survival, Right to Development, Right to Protection, and Right to Participation. It then discusses related issues such as Rights versus Welfare approach; Child's Rights Campaigns in India; Trade Sanctions and Child Labour; and Partnership with Children. The paper critiques the role of the state, NGOs, funding organisations and other international bodies in the implementation of children's rights.

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Status of Children's Rights

There are approximately 300 million children in India in the age group of 0-14 years today, representing a little over one-third of the population in this country. Among these are several disadvantaged groups — street children, working children, child victims of prostitution, children of prostitutes and children belonging to economically and socially backward communities.

While dealing with the situation of children in our society, by definition, one has to deal with the plight of the families of which they are a part. One has also to look into the whole question of where these families are situated in the social structure, their access to basic productive resources and services of the society. This will be crucial in understanding the situation of children.

The Human Development Report (UNDP, 1993) states that 423 million people live in absolute poverty out of which 321 million are in rural areas. According to the NSS expenditure survey for 1987-88 (44th Round), 50.87 per cent of the rural population would be classified as poverty group population. A substantial chunk of the rural poverty group population would be agricultural labour households. In

under-nourishment and lack of proper health care, who then grow up to be under-nourished anaemic adults. Most of these women have a hard labour and deliver low birth-weight babies.

It was also found that one-fifth of pre-school children were suffering from clinical signs and symptoms of protein energy malnutrition. A staggering 43.8 per cent of children suffer from moderate and another 8.7 per cent from extreme form of protein energy malnutrition in India. About 60,000 children become blind every year due to deficiency of Vitamin-A and protein energy malnutrition or Vitamin-B Complex deficiency. Iron deficiency anaemia is a very common nutritional disorder for which figures vary from region to region.

The National Nutrition Monitoring Bureau (NNMB) Report of 1988-90 (Indian Council for Medical Research, 1991) shows that only 10 per cent of children aged 1-5 years had normal weight for their age and 90 per cent were malnourished when measured against largely acceptable standards.

Quoting again from the NNMB survey (ICMR: 1991): 'At the aggregate level, there has been little change in the average calorie intake of rural households during the last 15 years (1975-79 and 1988-90) and it continues to be below the Recommended Dietary Intake.' There has been a decline in the household consumption of cereals, pulses and milk products, the latter two already being below the Recommended Dietary Intake. Remedial measures of providing ORS and supplementary food to children does not really touch the root causes as to why children die or are malnourished. In recent times, it has been discovered and proved that Vitamin-A deficiency clearly increases the risks of child mortality of not only malnourished children but, also among adequately nourished children.

The most direct and horrendous consequence of the endemic malnutrition that is prevalent was felt when 316 tribal children died between July and September, 1993, in the Melghat region of Amravati district in Maharashtra. This happened when the wheat-based nutritional supplement, which was distributed under the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), was abruptly withdrawn. Fifty-eight children were reported dead till the end of September. Prior to 1993, the chief executive officer reported that 162 children under the age of six years had died between July and September 1991 and 152 children had died over the same period in 1992 (*Economic and Political Weekly*, 1993: 2626).

Endemic malnutrition, resulting in various dietary deficiencies, obviously means greater vulnerability in the face of massive epidemics. The following report on the outbreak of cholera and gastroenteritis in epidemic forms in the Sabarkantha district of Gujarat in 1988, is typical of what happens to the poor (who form the majority) in the event of epidemics.

Three voluntary organisations prepared a report titled, 'The Diseased and the Dead', on the epidemic (Dogra, 1988). Three years of consecutive drought had preceded this epidemic and the lack of nutritious food had decreased the resistance power of the people against the disease. The highest number of deaths were among children. Out of 691 deaths, 386 children were upto five years of age, while 87 were in the age group of 5-15 years. What is significant is that almost every village in the area was covered by the ICDS. Commenting on this, the study says:

Despite the fact that the entire population of the area is covered by medical facilities, almost every village has an ICDS centre and the district health administration has an immunisation programme, the information regarding the spread of epidemic and deaths does not seem to have reached the district health authorities and even if it had reached, the authorities did not provide any medical relief till September 26, 1988. This shows the callous attitude of the administration to these poor people. It also raises the question for whom these services are meant for (sic). More specifically "the attitude of the health staff towards people and the inaction of the district administration to take immediate steps in such a situation" have led to the high number of deaths.

The investigation team which went to Sava village in Barmer district found that 'undernutrition and malnutrition had played an important part in causing these deaths. While a normal adult needs about 2400 calories in a day, many people were subsisting on 1300-1400 calories. A survey of families, where one or more deaths were recorded, showed that children below 10 years of age were found to be suffering from florig scurvy and Vitamin-A deficiency. In general, children suffered from protein energy malnutrition, Vitamin-A deficiency and anaemia. The maximum number of deaths took place among the poorest — Muslims and SC families who lived in small and congested houses where disease spreads fast (Dogra, 1988).

Right to Development

As per official statistics, there has been progress in the education sector: recognised primary schools increased from 2,09,671 in 1951 to 5,72,541 in 1993; the number of teachers went up from 5,38,000 in 1951 to 16,37,000 in 1991; and enrolment figures improved from 19.2 million in 1951 to 99.1 million in 1991. During 1990-91, although 99 million children were enrolled in schools, only 52 per cent reached the fifth grade. However, some under-age and over-age children are also enrolled at these levels. The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for primary and upper primary levels are, therefore, estimated as enrolment at each level divided by the population of the corresponding age group.

In 1991, the GER for the primary level was greater than 100. This is possible for two reasons — due to the over-age and under-age enrolment of children and due to the government grants depending upon the number of students in primary schools. So obviously there is a tendency to report greater numbers of enrolment than the actual figures. However, the impact of this increased enrolment would flatten out unless other special efforts such as improved school infrastructure, quality education, mid-day meals, creches and health care are made to accelerate primary education and literacy, backed up by reduction of mass poverty. Otherwise for the hungry 30 per cent plus retention of children in schools and making adults literate would remain a pipe dream. As studies have shown school dropout rates are high for girls and children of SCs and STs (Shukla, 1994).

The disparities in literacy level are regional, rural-urban, gender, caste/tribe and economic. Most official data overlook economic basis of literacy deficiency or disparity. The nearest one can get to this is to notice that the states of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan are also among the poorest (although the most literate state, Kerala, is not the richest).

Another indication is that this disparity is shown in 155 of the 246 districts where female literacy rates are lower than the national average. These are situated in Uttar Pradesh (51 such districts), Madhya Pradesh (38), Rajasthan (27) and Bihar (39). This is, of course, also a measure of gender differential. Female literacy varies from near hundred per cent in Kottayam district of Kerala to 7.68 per cent in Barmer district in Rajasthan (Shukla, 1993-94).

There has been an increase in the financial outlay for education by 4 per cent of GNP from a mere 2 per cent at the time of Independence.

This increase will not improve our track record in any way and bring about increased enrollment and retention level in primary and elementary education as, in most cases, the money will be under-spent or under-utilised. Thus, even if the overall education outlay may increase, elementary education would stagnate. In recent years demand for compulsory primary education for children is growing. The underlying belief being compulsory schooling could be an effective strategy in eliminating child labour. However, for this strategy to be effective, the government would have to impart quality education to the children or else there would be a high percentage of school dropouts. The demand of the poor is accessibility for quality education.

Right to Protection

Millions of children are denied basic services and their right to childhood. More seriously, they are exploited and abused. Figures of child labour vary — the NSS estimated 17.36 million in 1983; ORG estimates were 44 million in 1983; and NGO figures vary from 55 million to 130 million, based on children who were not enrolled in schools. Street children estimates are five lakhs in seven major Indian cities. Figures of child prostitutes and children of sex workers are not known. These figures do not indicate the extent of abuse implied in child bondage, hazardous conditions of work of child labour and sexual exploitation of child prostitutes.

The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) statistics of 1993 (India, 1993) show an increase in sexual assault against women irrespective of age. There has been an increase of 6.1 per cent in 1991 as compared to 1990, which was 3.8 per cent. If we disaggregate these statistics according to different forms of assault, we find that although there is an increase in eve-teasing and molestation, it has increased less rapidly than the more violent and heinous forms of sexual assault such as rape.

The percentage of child victims below 16 years as is compared to the total numbers of rape victims was as high as 27.8 per cent, that is two out of seven victims were children below 16 years in 1993. In other words, every 155th minute a child below 16 years was raped and every 13th hour a child below 10 years was raped. The increase in the number of child victims below 10 years has been tremendous — 172 per cent. The most horrifying aspect of this data is the increase in the number of victims of paedophilia.

A critical analysis of NCRB's statistics (India, 1993) on rape show, that for all age groups, Madhya Pradesh (21.8 per cent) heads the grim record of most cases of reported rapes in 1993, followed by Uttar Pradesh (14.6 per cent), Maharashtra (9.4 per cent) and Bihar (9.2 per cent). Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Rajasthan, and West Bengal had registered more than 500 cases each. These eight states put together accounted for nearly 80 per cent of the total rape cases reported in the country.

New advances in technology, particularly in information technology, have increased the risk children face today. Cyberspace is today being used by paedophiles to transmit child pornography. It has been reported that in Denmark, where pornography is not illegal, the paedophiles have created an 'India-file' on the bulletin board in the internet which is accessible to an interested paedophile anywhere in the world. The file is said to contain 100 pornographic pictures of Indian children in various sexual acts with adults.

Right to Participation

Children are rarely seen as individuals. Even children from better off communities and families do not necessarily enjoy these rights. The situation is worse in poorer communities and in cases of children in difficult circumstances — child labour, street children, child sex workers and institutionalised children. The approach in government-supported programmes is top-down and patronising, where no scope is left for children's participation. Similar is the case with most of the NGO programmes, though a few NGOs are now promoting child-centred approaches which facilitate children's participation.

Rights Approach Versus Welfare Approach

Children's issues are often approached from narrow perspectives, most often 'child focused', without considering the larger socioeconomic and political factors. It is also presumed that each single issue can be looked into separately and individually, thereby trying to conceal the structural links that bind the different factors together.

It is this fragmented way of looking at child's rights issues that has led us to ignore the relationship between children and their families, communities, societies, nations and the international system. NGOs, over the years, have seen children as a soft subject and if we were to review some of the pioneering work done on child welfare, it has most often been in health care, nutrition, pre-school and primary education.

We have never questioned as to why infant mortality rate was so high or why children died due to low-birth weight. More importantly, who are these children? Children are merely seen as targets of welfare programmes and concerns of philanthropy and charity. A holistic vision of development is almost always lacking.

Campaigns in India for Child's Rights

Every new issue relating to children has been a subject for campaigns and there have been as many NGO networks. In these networks and campaigns promoted by NGOs, there is not necessarily an ideological base for coming together, but that all members work with the same target group or are concerned with the same issue or for reasons of mutual benefits derived by being part of a large network. Unfortunately, the whole effort is reduced to numbers: which network is larger, which network has a bigger membership, and so on. In any collective struggle, the fundamental requisite to succeed is that there must be an ideology which forms its bases or rationale which is agreed and subscribed to by all members including the 'community' that is affected families and children. Without this common ideological base, and a membership including the affected families and children, a campaign would have no teeth nor would it be a force to reckon with and will thus be vulnerable to state or international pressures.

The child labour issue is a good example which has inspired a number of networks, campaigns and movements of NGOs working with child labour, both within and outside the country. Most of them do not have an ideological base nor do they have the affected families and children as part of their forum, although some have a definite agenda linked to a covert international scheme of things.

Many of the networks, if not most, are promoted and supported by international agencies and, therefore, none of them have any features of a movement inspired from the grassroots. NGOs, with its focus on developing projects and activities, are not necessarily equipped to organise people for their struggles.

Funding agencies find it easier to market networks as against single NGO and their initiatives. In the case of the former, it is presumed that the network is addressing an issue regionally, nationally or internationally. In such networks there is no process of dialoguing, discussing with grassroots NGOs or the community on the issue itself, nor coming to a common understanding of the issue. Not having this common understanding is what makes the network weak, ambiguous and con-

tradictory. At most what such networks/campaigns do are to organise 'events' — long marches, protest rallies, signature campaigns, graffiti, and so on. Sometimes they organise regional, national and international workshops and meetings and sometimes children are asked to give testimonies. No sustained efforts are made to follow-up on these events, resulting in a one time event. The tragedy is that such networks then become the recognised spokespersons for the disadvantaged; in this instance children. All international NGOs zero in on them and interact with the leadership of the network with the understanding they represent the voices of all children and NGOs in the country. Sometimes the leadership (NGOs) itself might not have a grassroots link or it slowly loses its grassroots character to become 'international'.

What needs to be understood of these issue based networks is how a particular issue is selected. Who selects these 'issues'? Let us take the example of child sexual abuse and trafficking of children. Today it has become an international problem only because of the rampant increase of reported cases of child sexual abuse in Europe and North America. Since the 1970s, there was off and on information on children being sexually abused in the Philippines, Thailand and Sri Lanka by foreign paedophiles. Some local NGOs did try to create national and international pressure against sex tourism, but somehow it only gained momentum in the late 1980s. The reasons are obvious: after all it was happening to a foreign child. It did not hurt so much nor was it seen as an horrendous act to be condemned. Today it is happening in their neighbourhood and, therefore, there is an international chorus on it. The chorus is important, but we need to educate ourselves on the best possible ways of preventing such abuse and rehabilitating children who have been victims of such abuse. It is not enough to raid brothels and rescue children, but also to seek answers on how best to prevent and rehabilitate them or we might be left with a similar scenario of bonded child labourers being released from bondage but without a follow-up to what happens to them after their release.

Trade Sanctions and its Link to Child Labour

Child labour as a single issue has been in the forefront of national and international debate for the last 6-7 years. The sudden American and European interest and concern for poor child labourers of the Third World is suspect. Why this sudden love and concern for our children?

It is, however, interesting to note that their hearts started bleeding for the poor children of the south only after the liberalisation process

began and today practically all nations of the south are caught in the web of globalisation. The 'free market' is what sets the agenda and priorities. The Tom Harkins Bill introduced in the US Congress in 1992, which denies import of products into USA made by child labour, is one such instance, or rather strategy, to put controls on world trade. One of the stated objectives of the Harkins Bill is to safeguard the interests of American workers. The Bill only takes into consideration non-agriculture 'export oriented' sectors for the ban. It conveniently closes its eye on the tea industry where we have large numbers of child labourers (20 per cent of labour in tea gardens comprise child workers) as after all the tea industry is controlled by the multinationals. Moreover, tea is a commodity which is consumed by every class of society — from the working class to the elite whereas handknotted carpets are a luxury item in demand only by a section of the elite population. The US Department of Labour officials were in India in 1996 to identify export items that were produced by child labourers to put on their list of banned products.

The garment industry of Bangladesh, who feared that their produce would not gain entry into the American market (due to the Harkins Bill), summarily dismissed nearly 45,000 girl child workers from the garment factories. A study sponsored by international organisations took the unusual step of tracing some of these children (who were dismissed from the garment factories) to see what happened to them after their dismissal. Some were found working in more hazardous situations, in unsafe workshops where they were paid less, or in prostitution (UNICEF, 1997).

Legislations such as the Harkins Bill (the German Parliament has also endorsed a similar Bill) fails to address the crucial point why these children are working thus totally ignoring the issue of 'work for survival' which is central to the problem of child labour. In fact, the UNDP's *Human Development Report* (1993) documents a 250 per cent increase in violations of child labour laws in the US between 1983-90. Reportedly, in New York city alone, 1,50,000 children are employed in the garment industry — some of them as young as ten years. In the US, the majority of child workers are employed in agriculture, and a high proportion of them are from immigrant or ethnic-minority families. In a three-day sting operation in 1990, the US Department of Labour discovered more than 11,000 children working illegally. The same year, a survey of Mexican-American children working on New York state farms showed that almost half

had worked in fields still wet with pesticides and more than a third had been sprayed, either directly or indirectly (UNICEF, 1997).

Pressure to withdraw children from the labour force must ideally come from the consumer movement from within the country. Consumer movements in Europe and other countries can help in creating an environment supportive to Indian movements committed to the elimination of child labour. Such pressure brought about by legislation of foreign countries effecting exports of developing countries quite clearly encroach on ethics of trade and cannot be acceptable. However, one must not have any reservations against international movements which have the participation of developed and developing countries for prevention of all forms of abuse of children as long as it does not have any other agenda except the best interest of the child.

The Northern Governments, through the World Trade Organisation, would at some time or the other link trade (including trade measures and sanctions) to the environment and to labour standards in a manner that is likely to be inequitable and thus harmful to the South. There will also be attempts to link even more issues to trade measures, possibly including 'trade-related women's rights', 'trade-related judicial systems', and so on. This linking of issues to the possibilities of sanction under the clever device of attaching a trade-related prefix is likely to be used in future efforts, either to further liberalise Third World economies or to reduce their competitiveness in the scramble for world market shares (Ker, 1996).

It is unfortunate that we NGOs have become specialists wherein we address a particular issue so narrowly that we refuse to see the various dimensions of a problem. It is this lack of holistically looking at a problem that has resulted in formalising strategies that are either limited or faulty: for example, advocating compulsory primary education as a sole remedy for eradication of child labour or even demanding a total ban on all forms of child work. The child rights activists sometimes do not even pause to think that children do not live in isolation, they are part of the family. 'Child Rights' is used by the west to prove a point to us by saying we are such barbarians that we do not care for our children and do not look after them. Therefore, they need to intervene in bringing about sanctions and legislations to force us to be civilised. It is really pathetic how we — both NGOs and academicians — have fallen into the trap wherein we too sing in chorus as to how poor families exploit children.

It has to be noted that national governments of Third World countries are rapidly losing their credibility of truly representing the causes of their people, mainly because of growing corruption within such governments. Such a scenario is leading to international development agencies moving towards partnerships with NGOs and NGO networks as against their earlier exclusive partnerships with national governments. It, therefore, becomes important for NGOs to be on the side of the poor and the disadvantaged and not fall into a trap of supporting policies or programmes that, in the long run, would be detrimental to the very people we are trying to support and help.

The victims of the current development process are the agricultural labourers, peasants, marginal and small farmers, workers and the self-employed in small cottage industries and the informal sector. Majority of our children come from these communities. It is, therefore, imperative for us NGOs, to form a broad alliance with all social forces. If NGO networking is restricted to include only child-related NGOs, it will not succeed. Children do not exist in isolation as mentioned earlier. If these networks and campaigns for child rights are to be effective, they must take in and partner with NGOs who are concerned with human rights, women's issues, conditions of backward classes, environment, trade unions, academicians, and so on. To bring about a change in the situation of children, changes need to be brought about in poor communities, in allocation of resources, improving workers' conditions, enhancing women's status, and so on. Academic institutions can do their part by helping to bring these different groups together.

Partnership with Children

Children's rallies have become very popular and they might relate to any issue, not necessarily concerning children. Almost always, children are being 'used' and their participation is in response to the instructions of adults. Most often children do not even know why they are participating in a meeting. One witnesses occasions where children are invited to meetings to either garland the chief guests or to relate their life stories after which they are ignored for the rest of the day of the meeting or workshop. It shows a lack of sensitivity and respect on the part of adults who make use of children and show case them for their benefit.

Children's participation being the 'in thing', it has also resulted in NGOs inadvertently creating an elite group of children (who are vocal

and articulate) to represent their organisations in various seminars and conferences across the country and overseas. These groups of children and adolescents slowly lose their ties with their peer group and the concerns they represent to become professional conference goers.

There have, however, been a few rallies and meetings in which children's participation was sensitively promoted. Children held discussions on the theme, purpose and objectives of the rally and participation was voluntary. While there can be a danger of tokenism while involving children in rallies and in promoting children's associations of various kinds, it is important that serious and organised efforts are made to progressively involve children in networks and campaigns on issues that affect them. The process should first begin within organisations working with children before one can realise a movement of children.

The Two Worlds of Academic Institutions and NGOs

There is an underlying mistrust of academicians by NGOs and social workers. The reasons are many. Social workers put in solid work on the ground testing theories, refining them and sometimes discarding a few. Responding continuously to field situations and crisis, social workers usually find it difficult to also pursue academic interests. Therefore, although he/she, or for that matter, the NGO, has excellent field experiences which could enhance the body of social science knowledge, it is lost as no one has the time nor inclination to collate these and feed into the academic world. The academic institutions do feel the need of accessing this knowledge. However, the modalities pursued raise some questions. Academicians drop in, gather the information and disappear. The process is neither participatory nor NGO-friendly; the NGO gains nothing in the end.

There has to be a continuous dialogue between academicians and NGOs to come forth with a studied response to social problems. It is not enough to generalise on the basis of micro successes. Some strategies might work in a particular cultural or regional context, but need not necessarily succeed elsewhere. It is, therefore, important to understand the various complexities of a problem, thereby being able to respond to it effectively through appropriate campaigns or collective actions.

From an adversarial position between academicians and NGOs, can there not be a meaningful and long-term partnership between the two on the issue of children, in general, and mobilisation for the protection

of children's rights, in particular? Academic institutions can share their expertise with NGOs, particularly in the area of documentation, compiling statistical analysis, partnering in action research, assisting in conducting evaluations and so on. The approach should be 'doing things together' rather than 'they' studying 'us'.

The academic institutions can also help in facilitating networks and campaigns. They have the facilities which can be offered to NGOs to come together and meet, discuss and exchange information and sharpen our thinking to critically look at issues. They could also help in documenting innovative developmental approaches, various movements, campaigns and networks in partnership with those who are actively involved in such approaches. Such documentation can help in the promotion, sharing and dissemination of information. However, the danger to be avoided is of patronising the activities by the academic institutions.

Another challenge to academic institutions is to be a learner at times and accept the NGOs as teachers. Academicians often try to learn from NGOs but rarely allow them to teach. Such a change of attitude would definitely attract more NGOs to consider working with academic institutions. NGOs also need to shed their mistrust of the latter. We need to also learn and educate ourselves on various issues. This education is important if we truly want to advocate on behalf of the disadvantaged. There are no simple solutions; it seems simple only because we have not understood the complexity of the problem. Such healthy interaction and partnership would bring about a strong alliance of social forces that would be based on an ideological framework and, therefore, could become a force to mobilise public opinion or pressure on the state.

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