

# Community Partnerships and Education: paving the way to sustainable development in India

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OIDA International Journal of Sustainable Development, Ontario International Development Agency, Canada

ISSN 1923-6654 (print) ISSN 1923-6662 (online) www.oidaijdsd.com

Also available at <http://www.ssrn.com/link/OIDA-Intl-Journal-Sustainable-Dev.html>

**Abstract:** With the vision of *Transforming the World*, the United Nations on September 25, 2015 adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to be achieved by 2030 as the successor to the Millennium Development Goals. With the key focus on sustainability, the SDGs aim to work with environment, economics, and society through an inclusive partnership at the global, national and local levels.

India has embraced the agenda of the SDGs through the National Institution for Transforming India or NITI Aayog and the Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS). One of the key agenda for the nation is social inclusion and 'empowerment of the poor for removing poverty through education and skill development... of turning distant dreams into immediate possibilities... of dignity through housing, power, water and sanitation for all'. Development measures in India, with its socio-cultural-economic diversity, demographic magnitude and the colonial baggage have not achieved the expected success since independence. The lack of success of equitable development is visible in the below poverty line population data which ranges approximately from 20-24% in 2015 depending on the data sources available and the increasing disparity of income among the rich and the poor.

The concept of social inclusion, represents a vision for "a society for all", in which every individual, each with rights and responsibilities, has an active role to play. NITI Aayog provides a platform for cooperative federalism and facilitates the working together of the Union and States as equals in providing policy interventions to the Union Government. Inclusion however, is a participatory idea at all levels of goal setting, execution of processes and its sustained outcomes for reduction of inequalities, discrimination, social justice and cohesion. For India, to ensure successful implementation of sustainable development goals, increased community participation is desirable. It is time to reconfigure the population dividend and emphasize its strength as human capital instead of developmental hindrances.

This paper outlines a further localized framework for community based partnership and proposes a strategy for development to take forward the UN mandate of "Partnership with community to develop strategy for development". The idea of this partnership is to move beyond the global and governing leadership to the local communities, wanting and expecting change, to actually mobilize resources. This can be achieved through asset and need assessments within the local community to enhance growth and capacity building for a long term sustainable growth and development. This ties in well with the key idea of SDG's to reduce poverty, hunger, inequality and promotion of health, sanitation and equality in all sectors for enhancement of human development and capacity building. Human development indices are associated not just with the macro-systems but also with the local or the meso-community level and its socio-cultural environment, and therefore needs to be approached from within the local system and parallel organizational and financial support from the government and other bodies such as the corporate and institutional sectors including education systems.

The paper will first outline the meaning and scope of the terms community and development in context of the SDGs, especially Goal 17. Further it will outline the strategy for community development in context of the Institutional Social Responsibility (ISR) and the scope that it represents in reaching out to the community, through the youth in academic and academia

affiliated institutions. The paper also aims to explore the scope of community engagement as a means of building human capital for charting the road to development in a sustainable manner. This contention that partnership with the community through ISR for transforming India by 2030 will be fortified through some case studies that have explored community partnerships for sustainable development. Though the suggested strategies cover the urban socio-economic setup of globalized India, nonetheless they reflect the problems faced by most countries across the world.

**Keywords:** capacity building, community partnership, education, human capital, sustainable development

### Introduction

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### Development

The Cambridge dictionary explains ‘development’, as a process in which someone or something grows or changes and becomes more advanced. The concept is almost as old as civilization and over two millennia has been a generic construct to delineate humanity’s well-being (Soares & Quintella, 2008). It is considered an inherent, infinite, non-linear goal of progress for all individuals and societies. Over the years, three specific perspectives on development have evolved. The first is the economic perspective, which identifies with development as a by-product of economic growth that would lead to the development of society, solving problems of poverty through the trickle-down effect

(Veiga, 2005:8 in ). The second approach rejects the belief in development by dismissing it as an ideological trap that was used to perpetuate asymmetrical relationships between societies; while the third or alternative route to understanding development is a synthesis between the first two understandings. This approach argues that for economic growth to be transformed into development (since the two terms are not on the same planes), it is necessary for economic growth to be thought out in the scope of a social project connected to a society's well-being (Soares & Qunitella, 2008: 109). For this group development is associated with three dimensions- efficiency as an economic dimension, equity as social and liberty as a political dimension (Universidade Estadual de Campinas [UNICAMP], 2005 in Soares & Qunitella, 2008: 109)

Amartya Sen's work (1985 & 1999) shifted the focus of development from economic indices and material well-being to the capability approach. In this approach, the Nobel laureate and economist goes beyond normative parameters for judging well-being, development and progress. Capability approach is being used in a variety of places such as welfare, development, social policy etc. The key factor of the capability approach is the focus on people and what they are able to do and have the potential to become –what Sen defines as their capabilities. The idea is to bring the focus of development theories to the people's capacity which will bring vast differences in policy prescription. Sen argues that social evaluations should be on what people are able to do, on the quality of life and on the removal of obstacles to freedom of choices to live life, this is explained through the concept of 'beings and doings' (Sen, 1989). Many significant changes in policy have been seen through the adoption of the capabilities approach such as the United Nations Development Programme and the Human Development Index.

The Human Development Index was developed to ensure that humans and their capacities remain at the centre of development and not purely based on economic growth and is calculated with three indexes, namely education, health and standard of living<sup>2</sup>.

The 1970's witnessed a new idea in theorizing development literature which looked at development as a transformation process which reconciled and reinforced present and future potential in order to attend to current needs and future aspirations through the idea of sustainable development (Becker, 1993 p. 49 in Soares & Quintella, 2008:110). The United Nations has unanimously accepted Sustainable Development as its roadmap for future global transformation based on inclusive and partnered change. Sustainable development appears as an alternative to promote social inclusion, economic well-being and the preservation of natural resources in a congruent relationship between economic, social and ecological spaces. Sachs (Sachs, 2004 in Soares & Quintella, 2008:110) outlines the basic principles of sustainable development as satisfying basic needs; solidarity with the future generations; participation by the population involved; preservation of natural resources and the environment in general; preparation of a social system that guarantees employment, social security and respect for other cultures.

Similarly, The Brundtland Commission, formally known as the World Commission on Environment and Development, in its report in 1987, defined sustainable development as "development which meets the needs of current generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". The idea being that economic and social development could not come at the cost of the environment<sup>3</sup>.

### **The need for social inclusion, social justice and inclusive growth**

The concept of social inclusion, represents a vision for "a society for all", in which every individual, each with rights and responsibilities, has an active role to play<sup>4</sup>. Inclusion is a participatory idea at all level of goal setting, execution of processes and the sustained outcomes for reduction of inequalities, discrimination, social justice and cohesion. The UNDP website states that social exclusion is the reason behind the growing inequalities in the world, as ten percent of the people owning eighty five percent of the world's assets and fifty percent owning only one percent. Till this staggering difference is mitigated, true development can never take place. Today, we find the concept of distributive justice, social inclusion and inclusive development and growth, being put forward by many a theorist including John Rawls, Pierre Bourdieu and Amartya Sen.

John Rawls in his book, A Theory of Justice (1971), puts forth the theory of Justice as Fairness, using two 2 core arguments. While exploring the way to achieve distributive justice, Rawls argues that each person should have an equal right to the most extensive basic liberty compatible with a similar liberty for all. The second major argument that he puts forth is that social and economic equalities are to be arranged so that they are both to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged and attached to the offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity. Therefore, these two considerations must be kept in mind when formulating any strategy to implement the SDGs for transforming India by 2030 as true development will never happen unless the strategies adopted and implemented, ensure distributive justice, which will lead to inclusive development. Rawls' concept of distributive

justice finds a place of importance in this paper as unless the benefits of development trickles down to the lowest echelons of the community, the goal of transforming India cannot be truly attained.

In his writing, *Forms of Capital* (1986), Pierre Bourdieu puts forth the thought that “Capital is accumulated labour which enables them to appropriate social energy in the form of reified or living labour. Capital in its objectified form takes time to accumulate and has a potential capacity to produce profits and to reproduce itself in identical or expanded form. Capital can be seen in three main guises as economic capital – money and property rights, cultural capital – which can be converted into economic capital in certain conditions and can be institutionalized in the form of educational qualifications, social capital – made up of social obligations or connections which can also become economic capital under some circumstances and can be institutionalized in the form of a title of nobility.” For the purpose of this paper, we will be looking at a combination of Bourdieu’s theory of cultural and social capital as the agency to bring about grassroots level community development and realization of the sustainable development goals by 2030.

The role of every modern nation - state, irrespective of their ideology, politics and economics is that of a welfare state. Given that, as well as the fact that the SDGs 2030 are aimed at the welfare of the entire nation and not that of merely the privileged few, it is essential to keep the parameters identified by Nobel Laureate economist Amartya Sen who emphasized that the focus of development has to be on social infrastructure for inclusive growth to take place. According to him it is this that will lead to economic growth of the country. Within social infrastructure, Sen has identified primary education and healthcare as the two sectors that require foremost attention in India. Further access to social infrastructure, active informed participation in politics and the process of economic and social growth as well as decision making of the community and all societal activities has been defined as social inclusion. As an outcome, it aims to ensure the reduction of inequalities, elimination of any forms of exclusion and discrimination and achievement of social justice and cohesion. Therefore, any strategy for achieving SDG’s for the country as a whole, must encompass the entire community; but the challenge lies in the implementation of an inclusive programme and an inclusion of the community in the process of defining the trajectory and line of development as well as in defining the notion of ‘community’ itself. The other issue that needs to be addressed is the emphasis on the role of the CSOs and NGOs as the only agencies of contact to reach out to the community to help bring the change that has been visualized in the SDGs and adopted by the national and state governments. A concrete strategy for inclusion of the nation’s demographic dividend to not just participate but actually guide and thrust the process has not been outlined.

When the world talks about development in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it often boils down to data and numbers put into complex graphs showing how effective or ineffective a certain top-down policy is. The one thing that often slips our mind is the fact that there is an inherent humanistic aspect that needs to be understood while crunching data as purely a numerical representation or a market sample. Development and more importantly, sustainable development cannot come through by overlooking this important aspect. While capacity building has been spoken about in the past, it often talks about building capacity of the people who implement certain policies and not necessarily those who are at the receiving end of them. It is important to have a capable workforce to implement policy, it is more important to build the capacity of the people who will carry it on. The importance of capacity building comes in when the goal is of sustainable development. In order to make a system sustain itself, the driving force must come from within the system itself and it is not something that can be imposed.

### **SDG’s social inclusion, social justice and inclusive growth**

Goal 17 “Partnerships for the Goals”, of the SDGs emphasize on *Multi-stakeholder partnerships* that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources, to support the achievement of the sustainable development goals in all countries, in particular developing countries (17.16) and encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships (17.17)<sup>5</sup>.

A tremendous scope for making the SDGs an attainable and workable agenda, lies with the youth in India. According to the UN Report on population in November 2014<sup>6</sup>, India has the largest youth population, 356 million between the ages 10 to 24, and it is this potential that we need to tap. Taking account of this potential, the *National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC)* as part of its requirements, gives importance to Institutional Social Responsibility (ISR) within academic institutions at the undergraduate level. Similarly, Higher Secondary educational institutions including the *Indian Certificate of Secondary Education (ICSE)*, the *Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE)* as well as State Boards, have a requirement of SUPW or Socially Useful and Productive Work. With an aim towards nation building SUPW and ISR requires students to reach out to the

community not only to help them through stop gap arrangements such as philanthropy, but also for social development and thereby development of human capital. These requirements have been incorporated with the dual perspective of building thoughtful citizens who contribute and understand the need for inclusive and cohesive nation building. Not only does the community to whom the students reach out to benefit from this, but the students themselves become better human beings by reaching out to the community, as Shakespeare put it:

*The quality of mercy is not strain'd,*

*... it is twice blest;*

*It blesseth him that gives and him that takes* (Merchant of Venice, Act IV, Scene 1)

Therefore, by reaching out to the community, not only do the students become more socially conscious and responsible citizens, the people they reach out to grow as well. An autonomous body established by the University Grants Commission (UGC) of India, NAAC assess and accredit institutions of higher education in the country since its constitution in 1994. The key core value of the organization is Contributing to National Development along with other competencies and value systems among students. The distribution of criterion-wise differential weightages includes 'Research, Consultancy and Extension' as one of the key element for grading the scores of higher education institutions. Inclusion of extension activities within the scheme of higher education points towards the nations intent towards inclusive development through community participation (NAAC, 2013) However, what seems to be lacking currently is the strategy and design for propagating this nation building process through community partnerships and possibly the idea of an inclusive community itself. To address the second aspect of the problem identified the paper will conceptualize the community itself before moving on to discuss the community partnerships and the strategy for community partnered inclusive development in concurrence with the SDGs.

### **What does the term community imply?**

For the scope of this paper, a geographical or spatial understanding of the term 'community' adds to the practical relations that need to be built between community partners inclusive of institutions of education (which includes students, teachers, curriculum, policy etc), other support groups along with the receiving community and the interventions that will be operative at several levels. This however, does not restrict us in associating the idea of community to the wider trans-geographical understanding especially keeping in mind the fact that development is a global and transnational aim for all members of the global community. The aim of this paper is to try and bring the community to harness its own human and social capital in building human capacity for a more developed society. The concept of social capital being part of the institution needs to change to a wider lens. In more anthropological and sociological terms, social capital uses agency to change habitus.

There are many definitions and parameters for defining 'community' that have evolved over time since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and the debates around the terms *Gemeinschaft* meaning community and *Gesellschaft* meaning society from Weber (1921), Tönnies (1935), and Durkheim (1972) to a more recent understanding as outlined by Patrick and Wickizer (1995), MacQueen et al. (2001) and Phil Brown (2004) in the community service and research sector. Patrick and Wickizer (1995), identify community with an integrated geographical and spatial concept of: a place or a geographically bounded location; with social interaction, networks and support systems as decisive to the idea with political and social responsibility, involving political and social motives in the formation of communal groups. MacQueen et al. (2001) in their work "What is Community? An Evidence-based Definition for Participatory Public Health", focus their empirical research on the understanding of community and outlines 5 core elements in their definition: "*community is a group of people with diverse characteristics who are linked by social ties, share common perspectives and engage in joint action in geographical locations or setting*". Further in their words, "in anthropologic terms, the elements constitute a common cultural domain".

Phil Brown (2004) in his work "Who Is The Community? / What Is The Community?" further explains the five core elements as outlined by MacQueen et al. (2001):

- 1) Locus as a sense of place, referred to a geographic entity ranging from neighbourhood to city size, or a particular milieu around which people gathered (such as a church or recreation centre).
- 2) Sharing, common interests and perspectives, referred to common interests and values that could cross geographic boundaries.
- 3) Joint action, a sense of coherence and identity, included informal common activities such as sharing tasks and helping neighbours, but these were not necessarily intentionally designed to create community cohesion.
- 4) Social ties involved relationships that created the ongoing sense of cohesion.

- 5) Diversity referred not primarily to ethnic groupings, but to the social complexity within communities in which a multiplicity of communities co-existed.

In an integrated understanding Brown (2004), outlines ever-changing elements of a community as:

- 1) a variety of geographic (bounded) and trans-geographic (un-bounded) groupings and often a blend of both;
- 2) that function effectively only through social support through social networks;
- 3) and 'generate collective social action, but are also formed as a result of such action'.

This definition is a model for understanding the concept of community in contemporary global and urban context especially since the examples studied and analysed belong to the urban socio-cultural and economic set up. Patrick and Wickizer (1995), MacQueen et al. (2001) and Brown (2004) have worked within the community health sector grappling with the challenges of the ever-changing identity of the community. The authors of this paper feel that in furthering the idea of strategies for achieving the SDG's the concept of community outlined above will come in extremely useful.

A community in the practical sense of the contemporary space, urban or rural include the government, educational institutions and non-profit organizations, corporate sector organizations and the people within a defined yet a transient geographical space that comes together for development initiative and inclusive growth. A self-reliant community will be realized through partnerships in development that is guided by a vested interest of the diverse groups that form a community within the plans and strategies for their own future. Encouraging partnerships between governments and local bodies are the key to the success of the SDGs<sup>7</sup>.

### **Community participation and community development**

The United Nations since its conception has been crucial in not only constructing the vision of an integrated international community but also in encouraging and facilitating community development at all levels. In 1999, then Secretary General Kofi Annan examined the concept of 'international community' in an address on the 52nd DPI/NGO conference, exploring the diverse and unique nature of each community and the constant change in how communities are formed and designed and fact of a shared vision which binds the community. "*What makes a community? What binds it together? For some it is faith. For others, it is the defence of an idea, such as democracy or the fight against poverty. Some communities are homogeneous, others multicultural. Some are as small as schools and villages; others as large as continents. Today, of course, more and more communities are "virtual", discovering and promoting their shared values through the Internet.*"<sup>8</sup> Further emphasizing on community development, he speaks of the partnerships that need to be developed between NGOs, civil society, governments and private sector (UN defines the Civil society as the "third sector" of society comprising of civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations, along with government and business.

Community development as understood by the United Nations is '*a process designed to create conditions of economic and social progress for the whole community with its active participation*' (UN, 1955). The key ideas include a holistic progress with an active participation of the community itself and is based on the expressed needs of the people with local government and administration along with voluntary non-governmental organizations. This fundamental understanding of what makes a community and the responsibility of community development further guides the development of Sustainable Development Goals. The project of successful Community Development is not only wells, roads, schools, other community facilities, and new crops; it is, more properly, the development of stable, self-reliant communities with an assured sense of social and political responsibility (Miniclier, 1969, p. 9; quoted from Su Braden and Marjorie Mayo, 1999).

Community participation occurs when a "community organizes itself and takes responsibility for managing its problems including identifying problems, developing actions, putting them into place, and following through while *at the same time* the professional partners build the community's capacity to make informed decisions and to take collective action (Cheetham, 2002). In the context of development, community participation has been identified as a sustainable means of development since the 1950's. The seminal work by Samuel Paul in the 1980's has influenced all later work on community participation that revolves around capacity building and empowerment (Korten, 1984; Botchway, 2001; Brett, 2003; Bigdon & Korf, 2002; Lyons, Smuts, & Stephens, 2001). Paul (1987) refers to "an active process whereby beneficiaries influence the direction and execution of development projects rather than merely receive a share of project benefits." He identified five major objectives of community participation; project cost sharing, increase in project efficiency, effectiveness, building beneficiary capacity and empowerment.

Capacity building is emphasised through project planning or through formal training and consciousness raising activities and integration with higher level organizations while empowerment is explained as seeking to increase the

control of the underprivileged sectors of society over the resources and decisions affecting their lives and their participation in the benefits produced by the society in which they live (Paul, 1987 from Bemberger, 1988:6; Brager, Specht, and Torczyner, 1987; Westergaard, 1986, Armitage, 1988). Post liberalization, international donor agencies have emphasised local beneficiary participation to ensure sustainable development (Gonzales, 1998). Bemberger, (1988) however identifies costs of community participation such as delays in project start-up, increasing costs, conflicts and loss of efficiency due to inexperience of the participants.

Bemberger (1988: 5) further identified three different kinds of community participation:

- beneficiary involvement in the planning and implementation of externally initiated projects, or community participation;
- external help to strengthen or create local organizations but without reference to a particular project, or local organizational development;
- spontaneous activities of local organizations that have not resulted from outside assistance, or indigenous local participation.

Chowdhury, (1996) linked community participation to well- being in the sense of income, security, or self- esteem while Oakley and Marsden (1987) link community participation to a growing sense of responsibility among the participants for their own welfare, capacity building to contribute to the community's development.

Community participation is a complex process influenced by multiple social and cultural factors. To achieve success the development programmes must be viewed as a mutual learning process with open interactions between community members and partners regarding obstacles, perceived value of the project or low levels of participations (Ndekha et.al, 2003). Though community participation is defined as a key to sustainable development, the reality of social and economic diversity and its influence on the success of the project has not been studied in depth.

Community participation leads to building community capacity, which is the combined influence of a community's commitment, resources and skills that can be deployed to build on community strengths and address community problems and opportunities (Aspen Institute, 2000) leading to community development. Thus, for community development to occur, people in a community must believe that working together can make a difference and organise to address their shared needs collectively (Flora et. al. 1992). Community development occurs when a group of people in a community reach a decision to initiate a social action process to change their economic, social, cultural and environmental situation (Christenson et. al. 1989) to exercise control over resource, harnesses local community resources to increases choices. The resulting changes could be towards stimulating sustainable economic activities, increasing employment or other socio-cultural changes. Social development hence, creates an environment where people can exercise their full potential to lead productive, creative lives (Ron Shaffer (pers. com.)). It is also a process where people are united with those of governmental authorities and other agencies to improve the economic, social and cultural conditions of communities and communities are integrated into the life of the nation enabling them to contribute fully to national progress (United Nations, from Biggs, 1999 in Cavaye, 2015)

Community participation especially in the non-technical decisions is associated with higher project outcomes Khwaja (2003a) and plays an important role as a means of providing and accessing information (Wasilwa, 2015) with regards to the community's preferences and optimal choice. A top down approach based on information sharing and consultations leads to poorer results (Narayan, 1993; Zazueta, 1994; Cleaver, 1999; Mosse, 1997) as unfortunately it takes responsibilities away from local people (Toulmin, 1995) while participation is a means of exerting influence or bargaining power (Grossman and Hart 1986; Hart and Moore 1990) and a higher agency to the micro and meso agents leading to an augmented stake in the project undertaken leading to higher success ratio with capability and capacity building. Strong partnerships of the community, local groups, committed local staff and collaboration with other departments in multi-disciplinary planning and implementation yield quicker results (Pretty, 1995; Eckbom 1992).

Development projects undertaken with community participation from developing nations have reflected success rates higher than the top down approaches wether organised by local or international agencies. Some examples of the success stories include irrigation projects undertaken by The National Irrigation Authority (NIA) in the Philippines, (de los Reyes & Jopillo 1986; Bagadion & Korten 1991), the Orangi Pilot Project in Pakistan that worked on sanitation problem in a slum in Karachi and reduced the district's infant mortality rate (Uphoff, 1997, Pearce, 1996), community-based Grameen Bank in Bangladesh that pioneered lending to the landless poor to support local entrepreneurship (Chowdhury, 1990; Fuglesang and Chandler, 1993) and community- based forestry projects in Gujarat, India to reduce forest related offenses and promote planting and protecting teak and bamboo trees.

Development in the past has had a patron donor relation where the community at the micro level is essentially passive, taking in the benefits of the larger macro changes without participating in the direction of change at either the macro or the micro level. Community participation within larger macro policies has been a model followed in the recent past to enhance development at the local levels in areas and agendas that have been identified and charted at the macro level. However, the community's perspective or direction of change though is generally in alignment with the macro agenda in the long term, short term goals seeking change address immediate concerns. These concerns in most cases are a fragment of the macro policies, but at the micro and the meso community level require preferential treatment for the well-being of the community within the immediate future. To take an example, healthcare is a global agenda and policies and projects are in place to work toward achieving the goal whereas a communities' need to deal with sanitation and its health related issues may be a higher local priority to ensure that women and children are safe to seek opportunity to foster their human capital and well-being. This is where the idea of restructuring the identity of the community and community participation needs to change.

Literature on community participation however is reflective of development projects within infrastructure, agrarian and conservation areas. There seems to be lack of information on community participation towards human capital building and education. Our work emphasises on this aspect of development which, is important within the Indian scenario keeping in mind the demographics of the country that needs to be transformed.

Population can either be considered a bane or a boon depending on the structure and quality of the population. The boon or the dividend from the demography occurs only when the population has a strong workforce not only in terms of numbers, but as educated and skilled workforce. As far as demographic transition is concerned, India is currently experiencing high population growth, a growing economy, a shifting of the population from the rural to the urban and increased urbanization and industrialization (Datt & Sundaram, 2015). The challenge therefore for India is how to transform this both young and newly urban population which cuts across all economic strata into a demographic dividend by building human capacity and capability.

Indian socio-geographical space consists of diverse populations in terms of class and economic capacity and to a large extent has a symbiotic relation where local communities depend on each other for development (this at no point is denying the caste, class, gender issues which also lead to increasing disparity). In comparison to many western societies the local communities and neighbourhoods are not segregated in terms of geographical space, though schools and institutions of higher education are comparatively specific to economic groups (which often reflect caste hierarchy) as there are multiple education providers in the country.

### **Education and sustainable development through community partnership**

Keeping sustainable development in mind, what needs to be emphasised is the dual role education ideally should play in building human capability and capacity and building. The first is where education helps knowledge, skill and capability and capacity building for the global techno centric world while the other is the social consciousness education is expected to create. The social consciousness through education needs to translate into community partnerships for meso level community development, economic and social. This consciousness is an understanding of the concepts of growth not in the narrow economic sense but a wider and inclusive idea which is a manifestation of macro and micro development of the individual, nation and the local communities at the meso-level<sup>9</sup>.

Education is derived from the Latin word *educātiō* meaning breeding, bringing up or rearing and the purpose though many in academic and philosophical literature can be identified as preparing young people for life, work and citizenship<sup>10</sup>. This includes the 'process' (Dewey, 1897) of knowledge building, skill building and critical consciousness. The role education whether at school or the higher education level seems to constantly emphasise societal purposes, including good citizenship, shaping students into productive members of society, thereby promoting society's general economic development, and preserving cultural values (Winch and Gingell, 2008:10–11).

Borrowing from the ideas of John Dewey and his concept of progressive education, it is important to relook at education as a mode of social reform and enhancement of skills both for the personal development and social change where the 'individual who is to be educated is a social individual and that society is an organic union of individuals'. The role of education in social reconstruction, social progress and reform is strongly emphasised by Dewey in the needs of education to build 'social consciousness' where the individual inherits the 'funded capital of civilization' and acts as a member of 'a unity' and 'conceives of himself from the standpoint of the welfare of the group to which he belongs'. Thus, the educational process has two sides - one psychological and one sociological (Dewey, 1897).



According to Dewey, “through education society can formulate its own purposes, can organize its own means and resources, and thus shape itself with definiteness and economy in the direction in which it wishes to move. To achieve this, he emphasises on ‘experiences’ to deepen the connection of knowledge being imparted (Dewey, 1902). A community in the practical sense of the contemporary space, urban or rural include the government, educational institutions and non-profit organizations, corporate sector organizations and the people within a defined yet a transient geographical space that comes together for development initiative and inclusive growth. A self-reliant community will be realized through partnerships in development that is guided by a vested interest of the diverse groups that form a community within the plans and strategies for their own future. Community participation in the recent past has brought together the government agencies, NGOs, CSOs, and the specific community that seeks support, however what is largely missing is the role of the academic sector beyond the ideational and advisory support system. There are educational institutions that have integrated their curriculum with the community service through Community Service Learning and research and are contributing immensely to inclusive growth through the student dividend that is also the community’s youngest partner.

*In a report submitted by the Sub-committee on ‘Strengthening Community Engagement in Higher Education in India’ the 12<sup>th</sup> Planning Commission quoted Dr Montek S. Ahluwalia, Dy. Chairman, Planning Commission where he emphasizes the role of institutions of higher education in promoting deeper social responsibility amongst students and teachers by enabling closer interactions with the community<sup>11</sup>.*

Increasing socio-economic diversity in student enrolments creates a heterogeneous population and an opportunity for students to take the benefits of this education and give back to the community. There is a need for integration of theory and practice, from the classrooms to the society. At a time where India has invested highly in the education sector, the percolation to human resources is expected in a short period of time. Community engagement activities have been undertaken in Higher Education Institutions, however, the report points out the flaws in this approach and pushes for a mutually beneficial partnership between the Institutions and the communities. The report highlights some of the different groups which are involved in community-university engagement across the world and in India such as The Global University Network for Innovations (GUNi); projects like *Samarth Bharat Abhiyan* programme and Tallories Network undertaken to directly reach out to the community. Others like Living Knowledge Network in Europe work to bridge the gap between various stakeholders of the community; while the Global Alliance for Community Engaged Research (GACER) acts as a global network between universities and the community. The examples and initiatives cited, including those within the country, speak of the will amongst the various stakeholders, and the strategy suggested brings together these initiatives within the framework of Higher Education Institutions (HEI) through academic research as well as direct engagement with the community that will benefit a larger community.

Since independence till date community engagement in India, both teaching and learning have been through add-ons such as that of the National Service Scheme (NSS) but as its scope is very limited what is required is an innovative methodology of integrating the students within these developmental agendas without pushing it forth as social work but as systemic and scientific mapping, analysis, problem solving and execution as part of the integrated developmental agenda for all sectors- bringing together education and work, theory and practice, university and society.

What is needed is the students’ integration within the community to engage with the ground realities of people’s lives and through their knowledge both theoretical and practical bring in sustainable change. The idea is not to enforce an outsider’s perspective or a rather top down developmental ideology but a participatory understanding and problem solving of issues through community based research, and service learning programmes. What is needed is not sympathy or philanthropy but an empathetic yet a positivist understanding through Participatory Action Research, Asset Based Community Development through a needs and asset mapping. If students are exposed to the such ideas of research based community service through a structured curriculum built within courses through the various disciplines that they engage with, change will be speedy and sustainable.

### **Recent case studies**

Our own research in this area has brought forth some case studies which reflect the need among the community; students, educational institutions, non-profit organizations etc. to work for development of the less privileged.

#### TEDx Hyderabad

TED is a global foundation devoted to *Ideas Worth Spreading*. Founded in 1984, this non-profit media organization started as a conference to bring together people from three worlds: Technology, Entertainment, Design. TED is now

a platform and a global movement focused on meaningful change through the power of ideas. TEDx was created in the spirit of TED's mission, but designed to give communities, organizations and individuals the opportunity to stimulate dialogue through TED-like experiences at the local level. TEDx Hyderabad is one such non-profit license holder of the TED global foundation in the city of Hyderabad. It is devoted to building a community of Thinkers, Enablers and Doers within the city of Hyderabad. TEDx Hyderabad believes in the power of community and wants to build it – one idea at a time. Among their numerous projects, three of them look at involving the student community as a means of helping them achieve their goals.

1. Save 10K Bores – This looks at a Do-It-Yourself project of recharging the dry borewells in the residencies and housing societies of Hyderabad city through water harvesting solutions at a minimal cost of 15000/- rupees. This initiative was showcased at HUM - Hyderabad Urban Makeover conference and adopted by HMWSSB (Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board) as part of a larger campaign for water conservation. This project which targets recharging of ten thousand borewells in the city of Hyderabad, looks at students as volunteers, to create awareness of the possibility of reducing water costs and better management of water and water conservation by meeting management committees of the residencies and housing societies and making them aware of these options.
2. 100K First Responders – The aim of this initiative is to train one lakh people across Hyderabad city in emergency response to help victims of any emergency between the time that the emergency occurs and the ambulance or other emergency service providers arrive. The First Responder training has been imparted to different people across the city including medical college students, Uber cab drivers, and residents at a few residential complexes. The involvement of educational institutes in this initiative would help take this goal forward and help address the apathy that has developed in modern societies.
3. Extension of She Teams to Colleges – SHE teams have been introduced in Telangana state with a motto to provide safety and security to women in Telangana state with a motto to provide safety and security to women in Hyderabad and to make Hyderabad a safe and smart city. This project is in its initial stages where TEDx looks at acting as an agency between the Police and the colleges where students would be trained and there would be centres in colleges which will act as a go to place for any kind of harassment suffered by women.

The rue of TEDx Hyderabad is that they do not find sufficient volunteers to take the project ahead and see a complete fruition as had been visualized by them. If junior colleges and undergraduate colleges could reach out to agencies who are dedicated then the change in the community would be much more visible. Ekta Verma, a core team member of TEDx Hyderabad opines that once students are sensitized and become socially conscious and responsible young adults, they will not only take this message out to the world at large, but with successive generations, an entire community of citizens will develop who are deeply involved in helping the community that they are a part of as it will become part of their DNA<sup>12</sup>.

### Design for Change

Design for Change (DFC) is an international movement that encourages school children to take on social issues that bother them and change them through an organized framework of “Feel, Imagine, Do and Share”. Over 200,000 children from across 35 countries register with DFC and take on the one-week challenge of feeling about what they would like to change in society, imagining strategies to implement that change, and executing their plan and sharing their story with Design For Change. Several powerful stories of change have emerged from the initiative which rewards the students with awards and provides them assistance and a global platform. Children in all corners of the world from India, Bhutan, Chile, Qatar, USA, Netherlands and so on are doing inspiring work from helping their immigrant peers, stopping child marriages, cleaning up their villages to working towards abolishing untouchability. The Good Project at Harvard did a study on the work done through DFC till 2012 and found 16 key diverse causes that were taken up. Further, DFC has created curriculums that aims to inculcate the values of empathy and working in the community in students. Harvard's research on the curriculum once again found that it has a substantial impact on the student's development<sup>13a & 13b</sup>.

### Symbiosis International University (SIU) and Symbiosis Community Outreach Programme and Extension SCOPE

Symbiosis International University, in 2012, started the Symbiosis Community Outreach Programme and Extension (SCOPE) as per the prescribed guidelines by the UGC with a view to positively impact and help the communities that exist around its various Institutes. The main areas of focus were healthcare where the Symbiosis Centre for Health Care setup Mobile Medical Unit (MMU) and the Family Doctor Care (FDC) facilities. Other areas of interventions came about through the other institutes of the University and were also added to the SCOPE activities.

The healthcare initiatives take place in villages and some construction sites in the areas around Pune. The facility is a well-equipped one with medical professionals that conduct many preventive, curative and promotive services for the people who need to avail of these facilities and are often unable to do so otherwise. SCOPE has grown to engage with different government and private initiatives to help undertake activities such as monthly immunizations, pre-natal check-ups, treatment camps and other support. Through the course of its engagement with society, SCOPE also aims to undertake research and survey related activities with different Symbiosis colleges. The University has also adopted 14 villages around its main campus where it works to improve health, education, sanitation and waste management in keeping with its responsibility to help the development of society. These endeavours that the University undertakes also enriches the minds of its students developing sensitivity by and bringing in the perspective of social responsibility<sup>14</sup>.

#### Symbiosis School for Liberal Arts (SSLA)

Symbiosis School for Liberal Arts, a department of Symbiosis International University has incorporated a Community Outreach Program into its course structure. This provision requires its students to complete 100 hours of community service during the course of their education. These outreach programs are undertaken predominantly in the fields of education, healthcare, women's empowerment and political awareness in different areas of the country. Projects like these which involve and enhance the interaction between students of more privileged backgrounds with those not as fortunate aim to nurture sensitivity among the students as well as brings positive change for those seeking upward mobility. The aim of these exercises are to help different communities not through charity but in ways that have a long term effect on building sustainable practices. Another such example of community outreach collaborations between SSLA and Aman Setu for English as a Second Language (ESL) where students of the college volunteer to help the children from the school learn English. The endeavour aimed to bring about increased communication by the child in English and boost confidence in being able to speak the language with ease<sup>15</sup>.

In tune with the ISR requirements of NAAC, as well as the ideals put forth by SSLA for the development of its students, one of the projects that was undertaken was the study of an urban slum with respect to certain aspects of their lives where the institution could be of help. It used Community Based Research with a focus on Need and Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) as a means of conducting this study. The study was carried out by the students of Applied Anthropology at an urban slum known as the Yamuna Nagar basti in Viman Nagar, Pune. The students focused on three main issues which were identified through preliminary research of the community which were the areas of Education, Sanitation and Food Systems. Using the different methodologies that was taught during classroom hours, the students were able to collect data and analyse it to form potential solutions that can be undertaken by the University to help build the community further. The students also learnt how to place views and perspectives against the cultural background and hence thought about interventions based on the same which is an important aspect of bringing about social change. It is also one of the things that a top-down approach to community development cannot achieve. Most communities are heterogenous in their existence and each individual in the community has varied needs and equipping them to reach the path to finding how to meet these needs is something that comes through Community based research at the grassroots level.

#### **Strategy for change**

To ensure integrated development keeping in mind the needs of the aspiring community, the focus needs to be grass-root connectivity to the state and central agencies through dedicated channels of the higher educational institutions, which have the academic and human resources / capital to partner in national development. NAAC or the National Accreditation Council, which has been referred to before in this paper, is an autonomous body funded by the University Grants Commission that assesses and accredits institutions of higher education in India. The NAAC guideline and manual of the self-study report for affiliated/constituent colleges for assessment and accreditation manual highlights the first *core value* as that of "contributing to the national development"

*"Contributing to National Development has always been an implicit goal of Indian HEIs. The HEIs have a significant role in human resource development and capacity building of individuals, to cater to the needs of the economy, society and the country as a whole, thereby contributing to the development of the Nation. Serving the cause of social justice, ensuring equity, and increasing access to higher education are a few ways by which HEIs can contribute to the National Development. It is therefore appropriate that the Assessment and Accreditation (A&A) process of the NAAC looks into the ways HEIs have been responding to and contributing towards National Development"* (NAAC, 2013: 4).

The seven criteria-based assessment of NAAC is the mainstay of the A&A that analyses the “core functions and activities of an institution and broadly focus on the issues which have a direct impact on teaching-learning, research, community development and the holistic development of the students”. The agenda of Institutional Social Responsibility (ISR) is one of the key criterion (point 3.6) for “Research, Consultancy and Extension” (Criterion III) for securing grades and national certification. ISR is one of the learning elements for developing sensitivities towards community issues, gender disparities, social inequity etc. and in inculcating values and commitment to society (NAAC, 2013:17). ISR focuses on institution led programmes or ideally is “built into the curriculum which intends to help, serve, reflect and learn”. According to the publications of UGC and NAAC, ISR and extension activities have been given a major weightage in the assessment of an educational institute. Although numbers vary in different reports, the percentage that ISR and extension activities carry for the gradation of a college or university is high (Institutional Accreditation Manual for Self-Study Report, NAAC 2013).

The action plan we suggest identifies the local, state and central governance bodies, NGOs, CSOs, civil society and the educational institution as key partners with the aspiring community and drives change through a structured and partnered programme.

#### **At the Local level**

1. Promotion of the idea of a community that is organically bound within parts of cities, towns, *kasbas* and rural area to promote the idea of a singular cohesive inclusive group for propagating integrated development for all. These geographical and organically sketched areas preferably should be based on the existing communities and markers within cities towns etc rather than recreating new distinctive boundaries.
2. Build partnerships to include or build in relations between the citizens, civil society agencies such as retired and senior citizen groups, women’s groups, local political groups with aspirations of change in the area. These groups within the Indian context are often motivated to bring in change but lack the competencies to strategize.
3. HEIs should be able to promote themselves as a partner in this endeavour for change with the aspiring community. It is through the resources here that research and community building strategies will be outlined. Higher Educational Institutions and students need to be outlined as key inspiring and guiding factors for development as they have access to academic, research and the methodological base for working with the community.
4. The essential component of this strategy is a vibrant role played by the community aspiring change. As discussed above since the community may have diverse interests and aspirations, it is extremely important to address all agendas from the community’s perspective. To ensure the community is not fractured on agendas to be addressed a plan of action should be discussed outlining the stages (if more than one is required) of action to achieve the set goals. The plan for action should definitely work with the resources identified (if any) within the community itself to enhance the morale and a sense of self-dependency of the agents. The application of needs and asset analysis ensures that the community also has vested interests in the developmental plan.

#### **At the Institutional level**

1. HEI’s need to employ or identify individual/s with competencies in the field of community service programme has and have experience in research and working with the community. These experts could be from the field of anthropology, development studies, sociology, etc to ensure that the social issues are addressed from a 360 degree perspective as a blinkered or tunnel vision approach to solving issues till date has not achieved much success. New methodologies for study, concepts within the discipline and the cultural context of the community partners play an important role in the success of any such programme. Tailor made programmes keeping in mind the realities of the community that one is engaged with is, in most cases is the key to success.
2. To collaborate with the student partners, it is important to build in Community Based Research learnings within the disciplinary / subject curriculums and the larger vision and mission of the HEIs. This strategy is well accepted in many developed nations to resource the student dividend for community development. CBR curriculum allows the student to understand the organic reality of the problems at hand and work with possible solutions integrating disciplines.
3. ISR therefore need not only be carried out as a separate or extension activity but can be embedded and incorporated in the education curriculum. This is something that is yet to be taken up as a practice in most Indian Universities. If the learning is incorporated in education institutes, then once the students graduate,

they can carry this forward as part of an imbibed culture, ethic and consciousness. and then branch out and create new associations for community engagement.

4. The Corporate Social Responsibility Act of the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Government of India (Section 135 of the Companies Act, 2013) with its mandate of corporate partnership and "corporate citizenship"<sup>8</sup> tries to integrate corporate responsibility for environmental and community welfare and development. As part of the expected 2% CSR mandate, funding partnership can be established with the corporate community for a comprehensive growth<sup>16</sup>.
5. At the institutional level, facilities can also be offered for building up social capital. Use of the library facilities, computer labs, under guidance of senior students can all be looked at to benefit those in the community who do not have access to such facilities.

#### **At the Governance level, both Central and State:**

The need for improving the social index of a nation requires not just the local bodies but the institutionalization of certain frameworks from the government, that will sustain the project long term. NSS was institutionalised nearly five decades ago and though today it still works with the student body to bring change through direct service, the need of the hour is research based, community partnership for inclusive sustainable development in all sectors. To realize the SDG targets, the government needs to move beyond 'think tanks' and create partnered frameworks that flow naturally / organically between the national agenda of achieving the SDGs and the local needs and aspirations as outlined by the community based research.

What we perhaps need is an organization that will bridge the gap between the government framework – its vision mission and goals, and the institutes of higher education, so that both work together in a cohesive manner and their partnership is also ensured. This organization should not be a mere administrative body which functions in a clerical manner, but should also possess a competent research forum that will analyse and assess and take decisions on the needs of the local communities as identified by the institutes.

#### **Conclusion**

The authors of this paper feel that when we talk about social capital, the community becomes important and for community to be defined, for the purpose of bringing in community participants to engage in a community based development programme the consideration is essentially geographic. Yet, when we talk about community development, the concept of space and geography becomes transient through the communicative participation of the various partners in development. For example, in the case of the community based research at the Yamuna Nagar tenement, we can identify Yamuna Nagar as one geographical space and a community, while Viman Nagar needs to be looked as part of the larger space within which Yamuna Nagar seeks partnership for equitable development; therefore, the concept of community is a constantly shifting and reconstituted space. Further, to take an example from the SSLA initiative, social capital from within the SSLA community becomes the key to change in another community space but not without participation from within the community partner that seeks development and change. Therefore, when we speak of social capital, we are aiming to build human capacity and bring about social development through an already existing pool of social capital. The social capital needs to move from its defined confines of an institution into the larger community to change the existing socio-cultural and political space. Through this process there is a re-creation of social capital within the larger geographical and community space. Social capital therefore changes habitus through agency while through ISR, we bring in the government agency, formalize and institutionalize it. There is scope for this because we have the social capital but not the financial capital. The financial capital comes from CSR which is already institutionalized or from the government.

According to the UGC Annual Report of 2009 – 2010, over 14 million students are enrolled in Universities and colleges across India. Therefore, given the huge number of students that graduate each year from higher education institutions, the figure translates itself to the amount of social capital generated by the country each year and is an actual indication of the potential. The challenge of population, not only in terms of numbers, but also diversity, may prevent top down solutions working in India; however, as each region has its own share of institutes of higher education, the potential of the student body to reach out to its immediate neighbourhood and bring about change is enormous as they understand the local conditions and needs and can communicate in the local language thereby reaching out to the people in a non-invasive manner.

One of the major challenges lie in bringing together the various agencies for community building as most of them exist and function in isolation and silos. If we are able to link each of them properly, what we aim to reach in the next 15 years becomes easier. They Institutes while multidirectional in their initiatives can over time be focused on the same goals, but accepting and functioning on multi-pronged ideas. As a result, the institutes and the students can

work on and focus on for different fields like health, education, gender etc., depending on their USP and areas of specialization. We suggest that the various institutional members present within the community whether private, governmental or NGO, should all be linked through the concept of a community where they exist and not as isolated, hierarchical bodies but as partners invested in local and national development through the agenda that is set forth by the SDGs. Since the issues at hand such as poverty, sanitation, health, education, and employment are interlinked and cannot really be understood in isolation of each other, the strategy required also needs to be multipronged and multi-partnered to resolve them in a sustainable manner.

In conclusion, the scope of partnering with the community through the mandate of ISR and CSR in institutes of higher education is tremendous and this can best be taken forward if institutions work together as per their strengths with an agency which will bridge the gap between the government and institutes and foster a partnership between the two to resolve the multi-pronged problems of the community and work towards achievement of the SDGs in order to transform India by 2030.

#### Notes:

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/globalpartnerships/> retrieved 5.01.2017

<sup>2</sup> <http://niti.gov.in/india-s-commitment-to-the-sdgs> retrieved 14.01.2017

<sup>3</sup> <http://niti.gov.in/> 14.01.2017

<sup>4</sup> Social Inclusion, Poverty Eradication and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: [http://www.unrisd.org/80256B3C005BCCF9/\(httpAuxPages\)/0E9547327B7941D6C1257EDF003E74EB/\\$file/Dugarova.pdf](http://www.unrisd.org/80256B3C005BCCF9/(httpAuxPages)/0E9547327B7941D6C1257EDF003E74EB/$file/Dugarova.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg17> retrieved 5.01.2017

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-in-school/india-has-worlds-largest-youth-population-un-report/article6612615.ece>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.un.org/press/en/1999/19990915.sgsm7133.doc.html>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.un.org/en/sections/resources/civil-society/index.html>.

<sup>9</sup> <https://canadianglobalresponse.ca/cause/community-development-general-fund/> UN, Report 1955

<sup>10</sup> United Nations, Economic and Social Council, Social Commission (Eleventh Session), Concepts and Principles of Community Development and Recommendations on further Practical Measures to be taken by International Organizations, Ekistics, Vol. 4, No. 26 (November, 1957), pp. 92-96, Published by: Athens Center of Ekistics

<sup>11</sup> Planning Commission Report, Fostering Social Responsibility in Higher Education in India, <http://pria.org/unesco/?p=274> retrieved on 1.02.2017

<sup>12</sup> <http://tedxhyderabad.com/team-tedxhyderabad/> as retrieved on 30.01. 2017

<sup>13a</sup> [http://designforchangeindia.com/public/files/DFC\\_HARVARD%20GOOD%20WORK%20RESEARCH\\_2009-2012.pdf](http://designforchangeindia.com/public/files/DFC_HARVARD%20GOOD%20WORK%20RESEARCH_2009-2012.pdf)

<sup>13b</sup> <http://www.dfcworld.com/research.html>

<sup>14</sup> <http://siu.edu.in/social-initiatives.php> (siu scope)

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.ssla.edu.in/explore/community-outreach> (SSLA Community Outreach)

<sup>16</sup> <http://finance.bih.nic.in/Documents/CSR-Policy.pdf>

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**Note:** The paper is based on the preliminary and ongoing work at the conference Transforming India 2030: Strategies for Sustainable Development Goals organised by Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Symbiosis International University.

