

## First Report From TARAA★

*"Until one is committed there is hesitancy the chance to draw back...the moment one definitely commits oneself...all sorts of things occur to help one that would never otherwise have occurred."*

*William H Murray*

This is the very first report from **TARAA** and we endeavor to present very briefly the story of the initial steps of **TARAA** that were a bit slow but gradually picked up pace on the road to building capacities for development.

Events and situations in 2007 provided, my colleagues and me, moments of deep introspection and reflection leading to a shift in paradigm of engagement in the process of human and social development.

In a fascinating interplay of serendipity and design, we reached a decision, to quit the well-trodden path of employee-ship and step on to a trek of entrepreneurship that is directed by the values of compassion, integrity, achievement and inclusion. The operational markers, agreed upon by the founding group, are accountability, rigorous planning, and critical thinking and questioning.

Green **Tara** the female representation, in Tibetan Buddhism, of the doer, the nurturer, the enabler was the inspiration and the Blue Lotus emerged as the symbol of what we aspire. **TARAA** Human Development and Facilitation Consultants Private Limited is therefore the name of the consultancy company.

The last quarter of 2007 was largely devoted to preparing for this new journey and establishing the route map and procuring necessary permissions and essential documents. 2008 was a year of beginnings, of interesting processes that threw up many challenges and each one brought opportunities to unravel the theme of building capacities for development.

However, a chance meeting at the airport with Dr. Gry Synnevåg Country Representative of Norwegian Church Aid, NCA, opened the passage to Afghanistan and **TARAA** conducted a comprehensive Gender Self Assessment and subsequently a Strategy for implementing the mandate of Gender Equality through Equity in the NCA Afghanistan programmes and organization.

In India, volunteering has been a major force in the delivery of services and for spreading social messages and activism. The take over by the state of the welfare services and the subsequent privatization of the same services as the state rolled back made these services expensive and mostly beyond reach making citizens into consumers of services and products. In this process there has been an erosion of the interaction between the citizen and the state, in fact

even in the inspiration, aspiration, motivation and skills for active citizenship. Voluntary Services Overseas, VSO, India contracted **TARAA** to conduct a study on the scope of National Volunteering for promoting Active Citizenship. The Study has informed the programme on National Volunteering which VSO India is operationalizing through the partner organizations.

Water is one of the major resources that are in abundance in Ethiopia but in short supply leading to socio-economic stress and political crises. Water Aid Ethiopia commissioned a study to appraise the capacities of its partner organizations in making their water sanitation and hygiene programmes gender responsive. This exercise straddled organizational development issues, gender issues and governance aspects as well as water, sanitation and hygiene aspects. Summaries of the three reports are available in another section of the website.

Interestingly the three Country Directors/Representatives with whom **TARAA** worked in the first year were females. It has been heartening to work with them, as they are an effective blend of strong and insightful leaders, adept managers and very wonderful human beings.

The learning from the three principal assignments was about facilitation especially in cross-cultural contexts; building citizenship especially among youth so that they are engaged in the broader issues of society; ensuring participation and building stakes of all concerned in managing using natural resources, which are being increasingly commoditized, and to keep a watch on the changing contexts that throw up different aspects of gender relations and gender justice. We also reconfirmed that “one size and style does not fit or suit all” and had to adapt in each specific setting the frameworks and tools that were used.

We learned that to work in any development context especially in post conflict, cross and multi-cultural settings a facilitator must possess a few personal characteristics and be skilled to practice them with ease. These are thorough preparations, patience, perseverance, assertiveness, perceptiveness, humor, postponing judgment, and ability to enquire without offending. The facilitator must have all six senses including intuition tuned on.

We, at **TARAA**, would like to acknowledge the support and encouragement from many individuals and organizations especially CDRA Cape Town, Context International, Utrecht, Context India, Bangalore, Centre for Social Research, New Delhi, SANSAD New Delhi, senior faculty from Indian Management Institute, New Delhi, Janani Programme in Bihar, India, friends in Bhutan, Nepal, Ethiopia, Bangla Desh, Afghanistan, friends from the Human Development and Capabilities Association. Unstinting support from the home team made the unlit patches in the journey easy.

Inspired by Goethe's “Whatever you can do or dream you can begin it. Boldness

has genius, power and magic in it" **TARAA** is looking forward to the next phase of the trek that is reaching a steep gradient.

Jyotsna Roy

Director and CEO