Theory of Change and Intervention Strategy to an Organization

Abstract:

1. **Background Information**

2. **Introduction of ongoing Program**

3. **The Problem which occurred during the Project Implementation**

4. **Major Causes for the lack of Conflict Sensitivity**

5. **Applying Change for Conflict Sensitivity**

   Creating Change in Leadership Thinking

   Change in Policy

   Change in on going Program and Implementation

   Advocacy to Change the Donor's Perceptions

6. **Conclusion**

Theory of Change and Intervention Strategy to an Organization

Abstract: *In general, rural or community development has to deal with conflict dynamics in rural areas. Conflict has always dynamics in character. The issues and actors in the conflicts today may not be the same tomorrow. If development project/s are not designed and implemented in accordance with conflict sensitivity, then there will be possibilities of emergence of negative conflict in the project duration or after. This paper deals with 'how the conflict sensitive perception can be incorporated from the policy level to the implementation level in an organization, how the change can be achieved, and what are the methods for "change"[1]'. To illustrate this, this paper analyzes a project, which was implemented in 1995-97 on Bonded Labor issue in Nepal.*

1. **Background Information**

In 1995, I belong to a group of Nepalese Engineers who formed a NGO named "Group for International Solidarity (GRINSO – Nepal)". Under this organization, we started working for those people who are left out from the main stream development process. Mostly these groups are 'Dalits', the so called untouchables, women and children, and Bonded Laborers[2]. Our focus was in rural part of Nepal. We received funds mostly from the Netherlands, Germany and Norway. Our main project was the "Integrated Program for the Liberation of Bonded Laborers" in Far-Western rural areas of Nepal. It was a three year project[3]. The main objective of the project was to support liberation activities of the Bonded Labors. To achieve this, we introduced different programs like advocacy, awareness building, economic activities support, trainings, etc. in the areas. In most instances, people who attempt to liberate themselves from the bondage system are forced to rejoin as Bonded

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[1]**Endnote:**
 According to Zaltman, G. and Duncan, R., change is defined as the relearning on the part of an individual or group (1) in response to newly perceived requirements of a given situation requiring action and (2) which results in a change in the structure and/or functioning of social systems. (P. 10)

[2] The Bonded Labor is the agricultural Labor who himself or his father/grand-father has taken loans from landlord for their daily needs or any of their cultural and ritual needs like birth or marriage celebration or death. For the loan, one of the family members must work in the landlord's farms, sometimes for generations because in some cases the loan can never be paid back by his annual salary due to the high interest rate. However in many cases, Bonded Laborers work a couple of years and get another contract at their cultural events, which are held in Feb. 1 each year.

[3] The project was supported by DGIS, the Netherlands government (Project No: NP 003601). The total cost of the project was $452,000.00 USD.I was the project coordinator and 27 people (including 17 part time employees) were working under me in the project.

Laborer because of the lack of employment in the areas. The project was there to address all these issues.

2. Introduction of ongoing Program

The program was divided in three parts. First: The Literacy and Awareness Program for Bonded Laborers and their family.[4] This program focused awareness on Human Rights, health & hygiene, environmental issues, gender issues, their rights as human beings, the present laws about the so-called untouchables and Bonded Laborers, use rights of the village's commons and forests, etc. Second: The income generation activities. In this part, the women and liberated Bonded Laborers were given income generation training. After training, an interest-free loan would be provided to them to establish their own small business. In addition, the project also developed a cooperative pharmacy and organized health programs for the community. Third: Advocacy, Lobby and Campaign work. These works were initiated by mobilizing intellectuals, politician, teachers, and social activist at local, regional and national levels.

3. The Problem which occurred during the Project Implementation

As we started the program, we came across several difficulties with the local people. Our program boundaries and local people's expectations (other than Bonded Laborers) were different. Some of the problems we faced were:

i)   The poor people other than Bonded Laborers demanded involvement in literacy and awareness program. Their logic behind this was their lack of access to formal education. In the daytime they either had to be in labor work or in search of work, so they could not attend the government's school or send their children to school.

ii)   The women from indigenous and poor families wanted to be a part of the income generation training and support program. They were not from Bonded Labor families, but in many cases, they were poorer than Bonded Laborers. In addition,

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[4] These classes were taken by local intellectuals/teachers who were equipped with 'Training of Trainer' (TOT). The classes were scheduled on late evenings so that they could come after their work. Most of the participants were women, because Bonded Labor men were usually not given permission to take the class by their landowner.

they also wanted to be members of the Pharmacy Cooperative so that they could receive concessions on medical facilities and medicines.

iii)   The rich and landlords were getting more and more suspicious day by day as we accelerated our activities. They started questioning whether the NGO was here to do developmental work or politics. They started to allege that the NGO is disturbing the peace as well as the culture and the customs of the agricultural labor system in the society. They were most distrustful of our awareness classes and the advocacy/lobby work. Often conflict with other locals emerged in our evening classes. Sometime we were forced to take support from village administration to continue the classes.

4. **Major Causes for the lack of Conflict Sensitivity**

The project was designed to focus on the development approach. We, the designers of the project and the donor, were more concerned with employment and economic activities for the Bonded Laborers so that they would not have to rejoin the Bonded Labor system. The training and economic activities support program would not only solve their hand to mouth problems, but it would also create a positive environment for rural economic activities, and in the long run, all rural people would have benefited directly or indirectly. Because of this, we thought that the project was a Win-Win and would have been wholly embraced. We did not think about the above three problems, which occurred because of the rural power relation dynamics, and in many cases turned into negative conflict in the rural areas. The donor was also highly concerned not to do any politically sensitive activities in the areas. However, the issue of liberation from the bondage system was not simply an issue of development or economic enhancement activities but related to the conflict between the landlord who wants to continue the system for her benefits, and the Bonded Labor and the civil society at large. Therefore, in a broad sense, it is a political issue too. It shows that we, the project staff and NGO policy makers, and the donor[5] lacked the knowledge to analyze and develop strategies for addressing the conflict issue and its dynamics.

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[5] For me, it is hard to claim that, SNV has less involved in the issue of conflict due to the lack of knowledge or their interest.

5. **Applying Change for Conflict Sensitivity**

A 'theory of change'[6] helps to identify the issues a program will address, the participants involve, the target audience, the context in which the program will take place, and the strategies that will be enacted to achieve specific outcomes.[7] There are two types of change: planned and unplanned change. Unplanned change happens in the process of evolution whether we like it or not, whereas planned change is conscious, deliberate, intended and oriented to specific results. In every change and innovation, there are three types of forces occurring: "the pressure from top or from supervisor, interest to get individual favor from supervisor and to earn incentives"[8]. In addition, there are always driving forces and resisting forces inside the organization. In every change, certain people are always there to play a role against the change. There are numbers of reasons that people resist change[9]. The proponents of change should always try to reduce the resisting forces and encourage the driving forces for proper actions. A positive change occurs when either the resisting forces are reduced or the driving forces increased compared to one another, or when both happened at a time.[10] To make positive change in policies (at the high level leadership), programs (at middle level leadership) and implementations (in local level staffs and civil society, and in actions), there is need to do a series of work at different levels and with actors who have various concern. Some of these are:

5.1 **Creating Change in Leadership Thinking**

First, the high level policy maker, i.e. the Board Members and Executive Directors, should be sensitized to the conflict dynamics of the society where projects have to be commenced, so that they will be encouraged to rethink and reframe their policy towards change. A clear vision of change is necessary about why there is a need for change, what process and method of change is applied, and how the change is perceived by concerned actors. Lack of vision may result in failure. "One cause of failure for many

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[6] According to Church, C. and Roger, M.M. (2006) "theory of change helps planners and evaluators stay aware of the assumptions behind their choices, verify that the activities and objectives are logically aligned, and identify opportunities for integrated programming to spark synergies and leverage greater results."

[7] Theory of Change and Logic Models; http://www.evaluationtools.org/plan_theory.asp

[8] Banne, K. D. and Birnbaum M., Principles of Changing in Dynamics of Planned Change (P. 328)

[9] Schuler, A.J. in "Resistance to Change" describes top ten reasons to change: Risk of change, connected to old ways, people see no role in change, fear of competence, feel overloaded and overwhelmed, suspicious the success of change, fear of hidden agendas, feel threatens identity and status, etc.

[10] (Benne, K.D. and Birnbaun, M. (P. 330)

change programs is that the intention of the change is never clearly specified. The objective is simply to 'change' with little discussion about what this change means."[11] To develop the vision of change, the policy makers and executives are encouraged to participate in conflict sensitive workshops, seminars, experience sharing with other concern people and NGOs. Another effective sensitization process is to take all the policy makers to the concern field visits. In the field visits, policy makers would get opportunities to talk with local level staff, beneficiaries, local civil society's people and other concern actors interrelated to conflict dynamics. These field visits would help them to understand and realize the conflict dynamics in the project areas.

5.2 Change in Policy

Once the policy makers and executives are convinced the need for change, then programs have to be set. The central leaders have to define the context, set the direction and limitations, and provide adequate autonomy in work, and share knowledge and ideas about change at different levels. Conflict sensitivity training packages for central level and field level staff should be organized to equip them. To make change at individual levels, motivational actions, incentives, and/or promotion packages can be introduced. In addition, where possible, it is also useful to identify individuals within the policy structures that are sympathetic to your position and work to establish them as 'champions' for the cause.[12] A policy should be made, so that every future action and project must have conflict sensitive components. Developing appropriate and measurable indicators during the planning phase is the key to a sound evaluation.[13] Therefore appropriate indicators should also be developed during the planning and policy making phase so that visible change can be achieved and measured in future. The leader should communicate properly with all staff about the need for change in programs and projects and about their need to focus on the conflict sensitivity approach. For the short term, a consultant or advisor/s can be hired.

5.3 Change in ongoing Program and Implementation

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[11] Zaltman, G. and Duncan, R. Strategies for planned Change; A Wiley-Interscience Publication: (P. 6).

[12] Fitzduff, M. and Church, C. 2004 "Lessons Learned in Conflict-Related Policy Engagement" in NGOs at the Table: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. (P. 168)

[13] McCawley, P.F., The Logic Model for Planning and Evaluation (P. 5); http://www.uidaho.edu/extension/LogicModel.pdf

Before making any attempts to change ongoing program, it is necessary to do an assessment of the 'program and organization capacity'[14]. After assessment, it will be easy to implement the action to change. For example: to avoid the conflict between Bonded Laborers and their family, and other rural poor, an inclusive program like an Inter-group Literacy and Awareness class as well as Inter-group Income Generation Activities (training and support) programs should be launched. In the ongoing program, inclusive approaches to group (inter-caste group) formation and training should be made. Changes in relationships require learning new ways to perceive and engage others.[15] Inter-class activities through dialogue between Bonded Labor and the landowner should be initiated, with other local intellectuals and civil society members requested to participate. This will support change in the previously antagonistic relationship between them. For example, in the case of post-conflict Liberia, the inclusive mechanism for "Community Peace Council (CPCs)" supported peace process and in the case of post-conflict Kosovo, all groups has involved in the 'Dialogue', which has supported peace and strengthened relationships[16]. However, there might be a possibility that some staff as well as some locals may differ with the ideas for 'change' and try to react negatively. They may think the previous development approach is best. Therefore leader has to play a lead role as change agent. "The change agent must learn to intervene mutually and collaboratively along with the client into efforts to define and solve the client's problems"[17]. The project coordinator as leader for the local level of change has to address such resistance and staff's concerns properly. For this, motivation alone is not enough, but s/he must explain the actual learning and change mechanisms. The leader can not just announce a policy and plan, and launch a task force, and hope the change will happen. S/he has to "offer a dream, stretching their

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[14] Fisher, S. and others in 'Working with Conflict: Skills & Strategies for Action' suggest 15 checklist for program assessment (p. 84) and 20 point questions under Context, Program, Organization and Relationship for assessing Organizational Capacity (P. 84).

[15] Church, C. and Roger, M.M. (2006) designing for Results: Integrating M&E in Conflict Transformation Programs; Search for Common Ground (P. 5)

[16] For detail please refer to: DAC Network on Conflict, Peace and Development Co-operation report by Anderson, M.B., Chigas, D. and Woodrow, P. (P. 75 and 77).

[17] Benne, K.D. and Chin, R. General Strategies for Effecting Changes in Human System; The roots of Planned Change (P. 44)

horizons, and encouraging people to do the same"[18]. The project coordinator has to involve all the concerned actors including landlords in the process of change and try to raise their confidence in the project. For this, a joint advisory group comprising all of them can be formed for project implementation. This can minimize or resolve any conflict which might arise in the project execution. The bondage system interrelated with rural power structures, the caste system, poverty, lack of entrepreneurship training, unemployment, unequal land rights and the land regulations, lack of awareness and education in the community, etc. have deep root in the society. Therefore separately addressing the problems of Bonded Labor will not solve the problem. If only the members of Bonded Labor families benefit from the projects, then other members of the community (for example the poor and 'Dalits' as well as landlords) will definitely creates conflict. Therefore, there should be integrated-program activities to address the concerns of different actors. This includes: "The Individual Change Theory, The healthy Relationships and Connections Theory and The root Causes/Justice Theory".[19]

5.4 Advocacy to Change the Donor's Perceptions

There is also a need to influence the donor to change their policy, particularly towards the ongoing programs and future projects applied for by an organization. Reports describing the conflict dynamics of the project areas would be useful to motivate the donors. A visual documentation may be even more influential. If possible, a project field visits for donors make them realize the necessity of change. The sharing of experiences of other similar conflict sensitive projects is also fruitful to inspire them to include conflict sensitivity in the project.

6 Conclusion

Whether we like it or not, change occurs in the society as well as in any organization. However, to make it as positive, one has to shape it in planned changes with specific methods and strategies. Change in individuals' vision and attitudes are very difficult and lengthy processes. Individual behavior change leads to attitude change. The attitude (values and morals) change of a critical mass of people helps to promote positive

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[18] Kanter, R.M. The enduring Skills of Change Leaders; Leader to Leader, No. 13, Summer 1999.

[19] For detail please refer to Church, C. and Roger, M.M. (2006) P. 14

change in the culture of the organization as well as in the society at large. The culture of peace, the culture of settling disputes by non-violent measures like dialogues, meetings and relationship building, and providing respect and value to others' ideas, culture and identity, etc. are some of the major changes, we the peace workers try to achieve in the community. Change always accompanies resistance. However, "Changes or innovations should be made as compatible as possible with the cultural values of the change target in order to reduce resistance to change."[20] Therefore change should be designed according to the nature of the institution and staff, its target groups and focus. A change model for one specific organization may not be effective for another organization. Accordingly, methods and strategies for change also differ. The one has to design wisely to make it successful.

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[20] Zaitman, Resistance to change in psychological Barriers to Change (P. 88).