

Part Two

Basic concepts for the Social Organisers

Introduction to different concepts

Community

The term community refers to a situation in which all members of the group are in principle capable of knowing one another personally, and where everyone interacts with all others in face-to-face relationships. Those characteristics imply that a community is a comparatively small demographic unit. It is an informal and unspecialised social organisation which therefore stands in contrast to such formal and specialized organisation as a professional association or a private or governmental bureaucracy.

Historically the most common form of community throughout the world has been the small village or rural neighbourhood. Every such community is characterized by a certain “consciousness of kind,” expressing itself in a common language or dialect and common cultural traditions. Socially and linguistically the members of a community may be so close and distinctive as to have little or nothing to do with the adjacent or surrounding communities. The term *parochial* literally refers to a situation of this kind. It is an attitude that restricts community membership to those within the borders of a parish and excludes as aliens all those outside those borders. The attitude of “we” and “they,” of insiders and outsiders, appears to be characteristic of communities in many different cultures.

Throughout history communities in the above sense have been a major form of human social organisation. Had there not been other tendencies at work, parochialism would have precluded any wider social integration. But there were countervailing forces. With time, economic and other relations between communities tended to break down parochial barriers and to result in cultural osmosis and assimilation. Small communities became the component of larger social entities, so that eventually provinces and regions came to develop a “consciousness of kind.” It is only recently that local communities, provinces, and regions have been brought together in larger *national* societies. The nation-state is a modern phenomenon, as is nationalism – in the sense of a larger consciousness of kind that is supposed to supersede cultural and linguistic particularisms. Furthermore, the large national frameworks did not develop organically of their own accord.¹

The Social Perspective of Community.

A community is not merely a collection of houses but a social and cultural human organization. The houses, which are cultural products of humanity, belong to the technological dimension -- one of the six dimensions -- of society or culture. Also, it is not just a collection of human individuals; it is a socio-cultural system, which is socially organized. Social Animation (promoting community participation or self help) mobilizes and organizes a community. This means that the social organization of the community is changed, however slightly. The social organiser or animator, therefore, is a social change agent, or catalyst.

A social organiser must know about the social perspective of a community and society as it may be dangerous to dabble in changing something the SOs know nothing about. It is therefore the responsibility of the SOs to learn something from the sciences of anthropology and sociology. A Social Organiser is an applied sociologist and must know some important features of the subject.

The important thing for the SOs to note is the inter-connections between the cultural dimensions which comprise a community. While social scientists may disagree about the precise nature of those inter-connections, all will agree that the basic characteristic of society (and thus of the communities within a society) is the interconnection of cultural dimensions. A community, like other social institutions, is not merely a collection of individual persons; it is a changing set of relationships, including the attitudes and behaviour of its members.

Community is therefore a matter of kinship, neighbourhood, or friendship relations and the corresponding states of mind. Its main historical forms have been family, clan, and rural village life, regulated by folkways and customs. Society, on the other hand, is associated with modern urban life, with national and organisations and institutions and with a cosmopolitan as opposed to a parochial consciousness.

Society, historically speaking, comes into being with the growth of trade and commerce and the increasing expansion of money, contracts, and business. Society received its great impetus from the emergence of

¹ Irving M. Zeitlin, *The Social Condition of Humanity*, Oxford Univ. Press, N.Y. 1984.

industrial capitalism in the eighteenth century and from its continuing development since that time. Finally, society is associated with the development of modern science and instrumental rationality. Looked at historically, therefore, community tends toward society, toward large and complex social macrocosms.

The Problem of Order.

How does a society establish and maintain order and organisation? How does it ensure a minimal measure of internal peace and relatively stable patterns of interaction that will enable its members to make a living and attend to their other vital affairs? By what means does a community or a society seek to establish social stability and cohesive organisation? It is such questions that constitute the problem of order in social organisation. That problem has been a central concern of social and political theory from time to time and now this question haunts the development practitioners who are working for community empowerment through social mobilisation.

For many theorists, social order presupposes a measure of equality. Inequality, they believe, is generally at the bottom of internal warfare in states, for it is in theory striving for what is fair and equal that men become divided in a community or society. The best society is based not on the extremes of rich and poor but on a large class of the moderately well-to-do. In possession, "to own a middling amount is best of all," declared Aristotle. A good society should "consist as far as possible of those who are like and equal, a condition, found chiefly among the middle section."² When most men possess moderate property, they have a stake in the existing order.

When, in contrast, an entire society consists of some who possess a great deal and other who possess nothing, we can expect one of two results, or an alternation between them. Either order will be continually menaced by social tensions, conflicts, and revolution; or a tyrant from above will forcefully impose order. The poor, having nothing to lose, may easily become insurrectionist; while the rich, having so much to lose, will do their utmost to prevent over opposition and uprisings – or any effort to empower the poor and disadvantaged.

Thus, Hobbes saw human individuals as warlike in nature; he believed it is only in society and social organisation that their fighting and disposition to fight are restrained.³ The use of force and violence that disrupts social organisation is a learned behaviour, learned in the course of socialization in the context of social organisation. We have seen that various theories of innate aggression and rebellion against the social order in human are untenable.

If we reflect on society, our own and the many others we know about from history and in the world today, we can readily see that the *fear of power* is one important component of any social order. This fear could be from the empowerment of the weak or the excessive and abusive use of power by the already empowered. As we shall see, however, it is only one such component and not the whole story of social organisation by any means. There are some societies in which fear of the leaders and rulers looms so large that one would have to say that such fear is the key element. Individuals obey because they are intimidated and terrorized by the empowered. At the other extreme, there are societies and communities in which fear of the powerful, their agents, and the police plays a very small role in eliciting the obedience of poor and marginalized. One school of thought claims that a society cannot prevail unless it avoids all four of the following conditions:

1. the biological extinction or dispersion of its members;
2. the apathy of its members;
3. a war of all against all;
4. the absorption of the society into another society.

These functional prerequisites of a society are no more satisfactory to many others, either from a logical or an empirical standpoint. Other prerequisites also include

1. provision for adequate relationships;
2. role of differentiation and role assignment
3. communication
4. shared cognitive orientations;
5. a shared set of articulated goals
6. the normative regulation of means;
7. the regulation of affective expression;

² Aristotle, *The Politics*, Trans. By T.A. Sinclair (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1962), pp. 191, 172.

³ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Middlesex England: Penguin Books, 1968).

8. socialization;
9. the effective control of behaviour.

Social scientists and development practitioners should concern themselves with the question of whether certain social patterns and institutions operate for or against the interests of specific individuals and groups so as to bring them to the level of relatively stable patterns of interaction between the community members through different interactions. And this is the social organisation.

Community Organisation

In order to translate the principles of community development effectively into practice for the attainment of socio-economic and environmentally sound development, the formation of Local Community Organisation at the micro-level is vital for the whole process to follow at the meso-level. Such organisations are local institutions to decide, plan, implement and manage activities in the light of the principles formulated for the comprehensive community development. These institutions may be a mass coalition of village, or *Muhalla*, or an interest group, or a group of like minded people for promotion of the group interest in the principles of co-operation and democracy.

Such organisations can be created around a single activity of common interest of the community and it can be nurtured over the time by development activities. It is easy to organise but to keep them organised is not an easy task for the social organisers and the community members themselves. This is the point where the need for developing local, representative NGOs is seriously felt, as the SOs of external NGOs would not be able to stay with the communities for ever to keep them organised. Moreover, they will remain organised if it continues to convey benefits to its members through local set up. Otherwise they will get dissolved with the phasing out of external programme.

1 Necessary conditions for social Organisation.

The necessary conditions for initiating and sustaining the participatory institutional development process at grass root level are:

- It is important to emphasise that great care must be taken to ensure that these measures complement or build upon locally existing institutions and organisations rather than replace them. Problems of acceptance often occur when introducing completely new forms of organisations. Yet, the simple transformation or modernisation of "traditional organisations" can also be problematic.
- Field experience showed that it is most helpful if the SOs assist as catalysts in group development and in linking groups to government/NGO services. community leader or social organisers role is that of an advisor strengthening the groups' leadership, organisational and planning capacity, a participatory trainer, teaching basic problem solving and technical skills, and a link person facilitating communication between the groups and government/NGOS development services. Once groups reach maturity, community leader or social organisers withdraw from the groups.
- Financial support (government or external project) is necessary for financing training of support staff and providing seed money, and/or financial topping-ups to self-mobilised savings, and/or loans.

2 Functions of organisations

Functions and responsibilities of the local organisations are to:

- a) Mobilise saving to provide credit to the community members and promote local economic activity for income generation;
- b) Take-up social projects in order to create harmony and mutual understanding among the people;
- c) Arrange reclamation and development of land and irrigation facilities and other productive physical infrastructures and their regular maintenance;
- d) Supply agriculture inputs and other requisite o the community;
- e) Arrange and participate in developing human skills;
- f) Sponsor and supervise schemes of primary health with special emphasis on sanitation, conservation, cleanliness and portable drinking water;
- g) Encourage primary education and adult literacy; and
- h) Co-ordinate and co-operate with other departments and organisations .

3 Salient features of an exemplary community Organisation.

- ❑ The members of a local organisation have a clear understanding about the concept of self-help and self-reliance through community development and its own duties and responsibilities within a community organisation.
- ❑ The members of a community organisation have collective and participatory approach towards the solution of their common problems.
- ❑ They believe that “all are for one and one is for all” and have a sense of “we” feeling and collective belonging.
- ❑ The community organisation try to promote the common interest of its members and to facilitate them in the attainment of their needs. Minority benefits should be considered minor and secondary factors by community organisation.
- ❑ regular meetings and savings is a regular business of the community organisation in order to promote the habit of thrift and savings among the members and to generate capital for self-financing.
- ❑ Community organisation have the spirit of self-management, self-help and self-reliance.
- ❑ The community organisations are free of all political and sectarian issues and its sole objective should be the promotion of socio-economic interest of its members. They, however, must make the community members aware of their right to vote and their understanding as to how they can effectively exercise this right.
- ❑ The office bearers are devoted and dedicated leaders and sincere to develop their communities.
- ❑ The community organisation initiates some socio-economic activities from time to time from their own resources.
- ❑ It establishes links with other institutions and agencies for the comprehensive village development

4 Threats to community organisations

4.1 Resistance

Community organisations can encounter active and passive resistance from many sources, like local elite, political leaders, religious leaders and in some cases may be area administrators. To avoid such resistance the programme should have an equitable and supportive role for all walks of life and for all governmental and non-governmental organisations in the area. The community workers would have to use all organisational tactics to deal with all such people during his interaction and motivational visits.

4.2 Subordination

Some time the community organisation is dominated by the prosperous farmers, merchants and other businessmen and the organisation is converted to the services of vested interest people and not the whole community. Moreover, in some cases the main cause of the damage or effectiveness of a community organisation may be leadership; and today’s leadership might become tomorrow’s oligarch to use the local organisation for his own vested interest. The factor, which leads to dominate, is the lack of managerial skills between the leaders and the followers. The major measures for controlling dominance is the training of members of the local organisation in participation, decision making and other organised activities. Regular follow-up, general conferences of the representatives; papers on different activities and on performance of the local organisation and its wider distribution or reading in the general meetings can improve such situations.

4.3 Ineffectiveness

Community organisation might become ineffective to its members in due course to time. This is mainly due to lack of skills in organisation development, accounts and planning work. The other reasons include no risk taking nature of the rural people and un-certainties surrounding the rural life. The community worker will have to train the office bearers in particular and general members in book-keeping, organisational work and resource mobilisation from the community itself through their leaders. Fund raising through donation, and saving will considerably improve the effectiveness of a local organisation. Similarly, follow-ups by the social organisers are also helpful in keeping the community organisation effective.

4.4 Mal-practices

Dishonesty and lack of dedication are the common problems for the survival of a community organisation. Some time individuals use community organisation for their own interest or for the

interest of his friends and family, which diminishes the collective interest of its members. Sometimes the funds are miss-appropriated and used for the above purpose. Smaller groups, regular meetings and simplification of the procedure can overcome the mal-practices. In the smaller groups, there is more interaction and all members know each other through their names, faces and performance and such cases there is more group pressure to handle the funds honestly.

Similarly, general body meeting makes the representation more effective and prevents miss-appropriation. Simple bookkeeping procedures can enable the community members to understand the financial position of community organisation and their own liabilities. The important point for the sustainability of an organisation is to encourage and reinforce members' commitment to their organisation and to their sense of responsibility toward the organisation.

Social Communication

Social communication is vital for any activity in which the participation of local people is envisaged and sought. Social communication is about bridging understanding within a human community; it involves exchanging messages (communicating) to create meaning and enrich common knowledge, often in order to face change.

It is people who bring about development and manage natural resources. There can be no change for the better without involving them, mobilizing their capacities and energies and enhancing their knowledge and skills. Social communication caters to all these human dimensions. It is about fostering the discussion of problems, opportunities and alternative options for action, i.e. providing the conditions for informed decision making. Interpersonal communication—including one-to-one dialogue and group meetings—is a main component of social communication, and often has remarkable effects, such as raising morale, enhancing the sense of one's own value and dignity, and promoting social solidarity and collaboration.

There are various types of communication media, including: traditional (e.g., the spoken word, writing, theatre, songs, the arts); graphic (e.g. diagrams, illustrations, pictures, compositions, maps); electronic (e.g. film, videos, audiocassettes, television, radio, the Internet)

Providing communities with the access and skills to control and effectively use both traditional and modern media is an essential component of community development, and thus of sound management of community resources for street theatre and community radio, two examples of participatory methods in social communication). Local media refers to communication material produced locally, whether traditional or modern (electronic). Development and natural resource problems place great strains on communities, and their local media are usually employed to channel the ideas and feelings that accompany their efforts and struggle for change. In fact, there is a close link between traditional media and local culture, including the social patterns to accommodate change.

The challenge of cross-cultural communication is to bridge local and outside knowledge. For expert professionals this challenge is mostly about learning to listen. This does not mean that expert professionals cannot set up information campaigns or training programmes— on the contrary! Such initiatives may be important as part of a social communication campaign, but they should be developed with respect, intelligence and care. In particular:

"Communication occurs when people have something in common."⁴ If we wish to communicate with people we need to understand the language(s) by which they describe their own reality, including fundamental beliefs, values and concepts (such as time, space, matter). Effective communication processes and tools do not discriminate against the weaker and less powerful in society (e.g. people who do not feel confident enough to attend meetings, who are not literate, who live far from main centres, etc.). In this sense audiovisual presentations, such as picture stories and community radio programmes, or "broad participation events", such as street theatre, are much less discriminatory than others.

Any information conveyed should be truthful, fair and reasonably complete. Information depends on context, and decisions are conditioned by the perception of available alternatives. Fairness in communication is thus a complex phenomenon, depending on completeness of information as much as on strict adherence of information to "facts". Most importantly, a social communication campaign should include plenty of occasions for dialogue and discussion, and the opportunity for everyone to express their own views, to ask

⁴ Fuglesang, A., About Understanding, Dag Hammarskjold Foundation, Uppsala (Sweden), 1982.

questions and to dissent. This, in fact, represents the main difference between social communication and conventional information, education and training initiatives. While in the latter information flows from one node to others, in the former information flows in all directions and is actually generated as part of that very flow and exchange (e.g. by social dialogue and debate).

Launching and maintaining a social communication campaign

A social communication campaign is basically an on-going flow of information and dialogue between the Start-up Team and the institutional actors, and among the institutional actors themselves. It can be launched by some specific event (a fair, a public party, a community meeting, a travelling theatre piece, etc.), but it should also include an on-going component, to take care of communication needs that come up through time. In the preparatory phase, a social communication campaign promotes the critical understanding of the need for, the objectives and the process of co-management for the natural resource unit(s) at stake. This may lead to the adoption of CM concepts and practices but even more importantly, should lead to their appropriation and transformation into the local socio-cultural context. In other words, a social communication campaign does not aim at "passing a message about an issue", as an information or education campaign would usually do, but at promoting its critical understanding and discussion in society.

To begin with, the Start-up Team may wish to identify where and how local people discuss and take care of NRM issues. Whenever applicable, the local media employed to convey this kind of information—from songs to gossiping and story telling, from sermons in a religious temple to drawings on walls—should be identified and possibly utilised (often within a spectrum of other media). As a communication campaign must make sense for the society much more than for the organiser of the campaign itself, the Start-up Team may have to abandon some favourite conventional means (e.g. pamphlets or microphone speeches) for more creative and effective ones (e.g. an environment-awareness game or lottery on local market days). Importantly, communication channels should always promote dialogue and discussion, and the Team should avoid any "teaching" or "preaching" attitude.

An important initial step in the campaign is the decision about a description (words, images, definition of problems, etc.) of the ecological and social issues to be tackled and the co-management process being promoted. For the latter, a culturally meaningful name or phrase in the local language, which would be perceived as appealing and inspiring (e.g. "Let's manage the forest together!", "Our community in the 21st Century", "Solidarity and wise use of our wetlands" etc.) should be tested and adopted. The terms and phrases should not be too trite or resemble party slogans; on the contrary, they should convey the spirit of a-partisan collaboration, solidarity, working together for the common good. In particular, the name of the process is a main entry point for local acceptance and success. It is important to avoid picking a "good name" from the top of the head of some professionals. Instead, the name should evolve in conversations with members of local communities and various potential institutional actors. Possible problems and inadequacies with the translation of the names and descriptions in the local languages should be carefully considered.

What is Culture?

Culture consists of all those things, including actions and beliefs, which human beings (as physical animals) learn, which in a sense make them human. Culture includes learned behaviour, but not things, which are determined genetically. Culture is stored and transmitted by symbols; never by chromosomes. While some culture is learned in childhood (like how to talk, for example), other is learned by adults. When the SOs are engaging in promoting social change, they are promoting the learning of new ideas and behaviour. Adult educating skills are therefore needed.

This sociological definition of culture, which is society itself, is not the common everyday definition of culture, where people usually think only of handicraft, dresses and dancing, or only the arts (they belong to only one of the six dimensions of culture, the aesthetic). Culture is super-organic and understanding this concept is important in understanding a community. Just as the organic level is based on inorganic (living cells are made up of non living atoms, etc.), so the super-organic is based on the organic (society is not a human being but it is made up of human beings).

This means that, during mobilization and organization of a community, the social organiser must always be able to separate what is happening to the overall community itself, in contrast to what is happening to particular individuals. A community can be seen as being something like an organism (i.e. it is organized). It lives and functions even though its human members come and go, are born or die. Just as a living cell, plant

or animal, transcends its atoms, so an institution, a behaviour pattern, or a community, transcends its individual humans. A belief, for example, is believed by persons, but that belief may live on through other persons long after the first ones die. The same with an institution such as marriage, an organization such as an air force, a town such as Mardan, a custom such as shaking hands, a tool such as a hoe, or a system such as marketing. All of these transcend the individual human beings, which carry them.

A society, then, is a system -- not an inorganic system like an engine, not an organic system like a tree, but a super-organic system built up of learned ideas and behaviour of human beings. Although a community is a cultural system (in that it transcends its individual persons) do not assume that a community is a harmonious unity. It isn't. It is full of factions, struggles and conflicts, based upon differences in gender, religion, access to wealth, ethnicity, class, educational level, income, ownership of capital, language and many other factors. In order to promote community participation and development, it is the task of the Social Organiser to bring these factions together, encourage tolerance and team spirit, and obtain consensus decisions. For the SOs to promote social change in a community, it is necessary to know how that system operates, and therefore how it will respond to changes. Just as an engineer (an applied physical scientist) must know how an engine operates, the community facilitator (an applied social scientist) must know how a community operates.

Dimensions of Culture.

All culture (or social organization) has several dimensions. (It is easiest to think of six). Like the four physical dimensions of length, width, height, and time, cultural dimensions may vary in size but, by definition, permeate the whole. Each of these dimensions of culture are transmitted by symbols (not genes) and consist of systems of learned ideas and behaviour. These dimensions of culture include: **1. Technological, 2. Economic, 3. Political, 4. Institutional (social), 5. Aesthetic-value, and 6. Belief-perceptual.** All of these are systems within every social (or cultural) system. They are based on learned behaviour, which transcend the individuals who each learned parts of them. Like the physical dimensions of length and time, if any one dimension of culture is missing, by definition, all are missing. The SOs cannot "see" a dimension of culture or society, as the SOs can see an individual person. Every individual manifests each of the six dimensions of culture. To become socially aware, the SOs must be able to analyse all six of the dimensions, and their interrelationships, even though they can only see individuals, not those dimensions.

1. The Technological Dimension of Culture.

The technological dimension of culture is its capital, its tools and skills, and ways of dealing with the physical environment. It is the interface between humanity and nature. It is not the physical tools themselves, which make up the technological dimension of culture, but the learned ideas and behaviour, which allow humans to invent, use, and teach others about tools. When a SO encourages a community to construct a link road or a dug well, new technology is introduced. A well is as much a tool as is a hammer or computer. The social organiser must be prepared to understand the effects on other dimensions of culture by the introduction of a change in the technological dimension.

2. The Economic Dimension of Culture.

The economic dimension of culture is its various ways and means of production and allocation of scarce and useful goods and services (wealth), whether that is through gift giving, obligations, barter, market trade, or state allocations. It is not the physical items like cash, which make up the economic dimension of culture, but the ideas and behaviour, which give value to cash (and other items) by humans who have created the economic systems they use. Wealth is not merely money, just as poverty is not merely the absence of money. When a community decides to allocate water on the basis of a flat rate for all residences, or to allocate it on the basis of a payment for each container of water when it is collected, then a choice is being made between two very different systems of economic distribution. The SO should encourage the community to choose what it wants so as to be more consistent with prevailing values and attitudes. A good SO will not try to impose his idea: all members must come to a consensus decision.

3. The Political Dimension of Culture.

The political dimension of culture is its various ways and means of allocating power, influence and decision-making. It is not the same as ideology, which belongs to the values dimension. It includes, but is not limited to, types of governments and management systems. It also includes how people in small bands make decisions when they do not have a recognized leader. A Social Organiser must be able to identify the different types of leaders in a community. Some may have traditional or bureaucratic, others may be charismatic. The SOs must be able to help develop the existing power and decision making system to promote community unity and group decision making that benefits the whole community, not just vested interests.

4. The Institutional Dimension of Culture.

The social or institutional dimension of culture is composed of the ways people act, interact between each other, react, and expect each other to act and interact. It includes such institutions as marriage or friendship, roles such as mother or police officer, status or class, and other patterns of human behaviour. For the SOs to be successful, they must know what are the local institutions, what different roles men and women play, and what are the main forms of social interaction.

5. The Aesthetic-Values Dimension of Culture:

The aesthetic-value dimension of culture is the structure of ideas, sometimes paradoxical, inconsistent, or contradictory, that people have about good and bad, about beautiful and ugly, and about right and wrong, which are the justifications that people cite to explain their actions. Whenever an animator introduces new ways of doing things in the community, prevailing values, however contradictory, must be considered.

6. The Beliefs-Perceptual Dimension of Culture.

The belief-perceptual dimension of culture is another structure of ideas, also sometimes contradictory, that people have about the nature of the universe, the world around them, their role in it, cause and effect, and the nature of time, matter, and behaviour. The animator must be aware of what the prevailing beliefs are in the community. Some times, people of different sects (Sunni or Shia) live within a community. To be an effective catalyst of social change, the Social Organiser must make suggestions and promote actions which do not offend those core beliefs of these sects, and which are consistent with, or at least appropriate to, existing beliefs and concepts of how affairs of the society should be dealt.

7. All Six Dimensions Are in Each Bit of Culture.

In any society, in any community, in any institution, in any interaction between individuals, there is an element of culture, and that includes something of each of those cultural dimensions. All of these are learned from birth. The new-born child is like an animal, not yet a human being, but he or she begins learning culture (humanizing) immediately (for example, when drinking from the breast) by interacting with other humans, and thus starts becoming human. (Many say that this humanizing process begins in the womb). This process of learning, and thus of becoming, continues until death.

8. Interconnectedness Has a Practical Use.

For the social organiser, and for anyone who is engaged in any development activities, the important part of all this is the variety of interconnections between those cultural dimensions. They may be causally and functionally inter-related. Technology (in contrast to popularly held ideas), for example, both the tools and the skills to use them, is as much a part of culture or social system as are beliefs, dances, and ways of allocating wealth. To make changes in any one dimension has repercussions in each of the other dimensions. To introduce a new method of obtaining water, for example, requires the introduction of new institutions to maintain the new water system. Learning any new ways of doing things will require the learning of both new values and new perceptions. To ignore such interconnections while promoting technology transfer is to do so at the SOs' peril (unexpected and/or unwanted results may be produced).

9. The Interconnectedness Affects Social Change.

To change something in one cultural dimension not only requires changes in other dimensions, it causes changes in other dimensions. That is why social impact assessment should be made of all projects, large and small.

Conclusion: The Importance of Culture to Mobilization.

The inter-connections between these cultural dimensions are neither simple nor easy to predict. The social organiser must be aware that they exist, and continually encourage observation, analysis, sharing of ideas, reading, and attending lectures or seminars. By working with communities, the SO must learn more and more about their culture, and the dynamics of their cultural dimensions.

Social Problems

The definition of a social problem is fraught with difficulty for a variety of reasons. (1) Cultural relativism means that what is a social problem for one group may be nothing of the sort for another. (2) Historically, the nature of social problems has changed over time with changes in law and mores. (3) There is a political dimension, that the identification of a 'problem' may involve one group in the exercise of social control over another. Sociologists reject taken-for-granted views that social problems have an objective status like some organic pathology, and search for the socially created definitions of what constitutes a 'problem.'

Symbolic interactionists, for example, suggest that social problems are not social facts, and that some problems result simply from processes of social change that create conflicts between groups, when one

group succeeds in winning public acceptance of its claim that the other's behaviours should be labelled as problematic. Mass media, official agencies and 'experts' typically exaggerate the extent of social problems and over-react to social pressures. The concept of a moral panic illustrates how the media of communication help define social problems and create public anxiety. Other sociologists criticize the assumption implicit in many official definitions of social problems, particularly in the area of social welfare policy, that such problems derive from the personal characteristics of individuals rather than from structural features of the social system over which individuals have little influence. For example, emphasis on the 'problem' that many people are unemployed because they are 'work-shy' diverts attention from the actual causes of mass unemployment, some of which may be the actions of government.⁵

Social System

The Notion of 'system' is not peculiar to sociology, but is a conceptual tool with widespread currency in the natural and social sciences. A system is any collection of interrelated parts, objects, things of organisms. It is often seen to be purposeful or functional that is, it exists to satisfy some purpose or goal. In the work of T. Parson (1951), a *social system* is defined in terms of two or more social actors engaged in more or less stable interaction within a bounded environment. The concept is not, however, limited to interpersonal interaction, and refers also to the analysis of groups, institutions, societies and inter-social entities. It may, for example, be employed in the analysis of the university or state social systems which have structures of interrelated parts. There are two further features typically associated with the concept: (1) social systems tend over time towards equilibrium or 'homeostasis', because they are 'boundary-maintaining systems. In functionalism in the 1950s, it was common to draw an analogy between living organisms and social systems as homeostatic systems. For example, exercise in human being increases the blood sugar level, hear rate and temperature. We perspire, which has the effect of controlling our body temperature. It depends on a variety of such feedback mechanisms in order to maintain equilibrium. Similarly the part of social system are link together by media of exchange which include a variety of information –carrying symbols such language, money, influence, or commitments equilibrium may thus be define as a balance between input and outputs.

The concept of social system has been used most explicitly a self-consciously in modern functionalism, but it was implicit in much nineteenth –century social thought. Any social theory which treats social relations, groups or societies as asset of interrelated parts which function to maintain some boundary or unity of the parts is based implicitly or explicitly on the concept of 'social system'. For some theorists, therefore, the concept is inescapable as the basis of a scientific approach to social data.⁶

Socialisation

Sociologists use this term to describe the process whereby people learn to conform to social norms, a process that makes possible an enduring society and the transmission of its culture between generations the process has been conceptualised in two ways. (I) Socialization may be conceived as the internalisation of social norms: social rules become internal to the individual, in the sense that they are self-imposed rather than imposed by means of external regulation and are thus part of the individual's own personality. The individual therefore feels a need to conform. (2) It may be conceived as an essential element of social interaction, on the assumption that people wish to enhance there own self image by gaining acceptance and status in the eyes of others; in this case, individuals become socialize as they guide there own action to accord with the expectations of others. The two conceptualisation may be combined, as in the work of T. Parson. Socialization may be divided into three stages: the primary stage involves the socialization of a young child in the family; the secondary stage involves the school; and the third stage is adult socialization, when actors enter roles for which primary and secondary socialization may not have prepared them fully (e.g. becoming an employee, a husband or a wife, a parent).

In the mid twentieth century, particularly in Parsonian functionalism, sociologist displayed what D. H. Wrong called the "over socialized conception of man"; that is, they saw socialization as all-powerful and effective rather than as a more tentative process that influences but may not determine actors' behaviours and beliefs. Symbolic interactionists have also criticized the conventional usage, emphasizing socialization as a

⁵ Merton, R.K and Nisbet, R. (eds) 1961, *Contemporary social Problems*, New York, Harcourt Brace.

⁶ Buckley, W.(1967) *Sociology and Modern Systems Theory*, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, Prentice-Hall

process of transaction between individual and society, in which both are mutually influential. It is now accepted that individuals are rarely totally moulded by the culture of their society.⁷

Social Organisers

Social Organisers are eyes and ears of a programme. We consider the change agent is the community level field worker - Social Organisers. Usually, Social Organisers are the direct link between the community and some outside support from government, aid agencies or self-help groups. Social Organisers are:

- those who start the process of critical awareness and generate people's action and initiate tile changes at different levels required to transform the present structure of society leading to integral human development;
- primary social organisers initiate change and work at the local community level, whether they are members of that **community** and start working with the people or from other communities to bring about change;
- Intermediate social organisers, work in voluntary or extra governmental organisations at the district, provincial, or national levels and provide support to the field based social organisers and community organisations;

Some of Social Organisers come from within a community and such Social Organisers may know a lot about the people and problems in that community. Some of Social Organisers come from outside, and they may know a lot more about aid and other resources that can be sent to communities. Many others are local volunteers who mainly want to help in their communities. Where a community worker acts as an extension agent, he easily acts to supplement his/her role as a community organiser. Instead of trying to know what is happening to the community, the supervisor/management should try to find what the village worker is doing. Community worker is not only community organiser but is multi-purpose worker. He needs training in a large number of trades like agriculture, animal husbandry, health, sanitation, credit and banking, marketing etc. The advantage of a multi-purpose worker in backward areas are obvious from the fact that people of the backward areas are so backward an average worker can tackle the community on the spectrum of their needs. If the felt need approach is accepted as the cordial principle of rural development, there should be only one person to operate them. Since they receive information/directions in overlapping fields, the people are likely to get confused.

Some General Principles For SOs

Following are some general principles which an SO should keep in mind while working in the field to ensure strengthening and sustainability of the organisation. Working on these principles will help the community reach the stage of self-reliance and they would start enjoying working in a collaborative and participatory manner, which as a habit will remain even if the programme withdraws after its specific period of operation in the area.

1 Efficiency: For an SO it is not enough just to do his job. He/she must do it efficiently. This means the SO should help the greatest possible number of rural people in the shortest possible span of time. One way to be efficient is to choose easy problems and solve them before attempting hard problems. In general, it is best that the social organisers choose the communities where work can be done relatively easily and quickly. An SO may select an "easy" community and more or less finish his work there rather quickly - say, in two years. In ten years the SO could thus bring help to five "easy" communities. If the SO were assigned to a "difficult" community, however, he/she might spend all ten years in one place and still not make very much progress. By working only in easy communities, the social organiser could thus help five times as many people. Another way the SO can be efficient is to choose the proper community leaders through whom to work.

2 Both understanding and motivation are necessary: The social organisers must know what is meant by development, sustainable development, self-reliance and how to take certain steps towards community organisation. But this alone is never enough. They must also get the villager to place a sufficiently heavy value on this need for participation, so that he will be willing to make changes in his present ways of behaving, and take steps even when it is not convenient. He must both see the reason and appreciate the value.

⁷ Danziger, K. (1971) *Socialization*, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books.

3 Get voluntary co-operation: Usually that authority must be a desire on the part of at least some of the people in the community to become the first drops of the rain. If this desire is not already present, it is task of the social organiser to create it by applying different motivational techniques.

4 Do not unnecessarily interfere with the people's customs: The SO should try to change the people's way of life so that they will be more organised in tackling their problems, but they should not unnecessarily or carelessly upset the traditions, which they love and respect.

5 Train the people in democratic methods: To date, rural people have had but limited opportunity to participate in democratic processes concerning local problems. Community development programs, like poverty alleviation and health programs in general, open up an opportunity for rural people to learn how to participate in local democracy. While the primary goal of a social organiser is to make communities more aware and organised, a very important secondary goal is to provide opportunities by which rural people can gain democratic experience. This democratic training must, however, be *gradual*, or else the development program would fail because there would be no local leaders who know how to lead without help.

6 Get the villagers to help themselves: The rural development programmes' aim is to help the people to help themselves. If the people want and learn to help themselves, then when the programmes withdraw from the community, the people can continue to help themselves. For example, they should be made part and parcel of all the activities and their participation should be ensured in such a way that after the withdrawal of the programme the people can use that skill and carry on their activities.

7 Keep the programme practical: The Social organisers should never ask the people to do something that is impossible or very difficult.

8 Make the programme convenient: Everybody likes convenience. The so should try to find some innovation that programme objectives with convenience. The activities should not be a burden on the community. They should rather make their living easy and comfortable.

9 Build and maintain momentum: Once a program is started, it should gather momentum and keep it. Once the social organisers have stirred up local interest in the program, they must keep persistently in touch with the people and not allow their interest to lag.

10 Plan for permanence: The social organisers should try to institutionalise the concepts and programme activities with an objective to make them permanent and automatic part of the target community.

11 Make it self-expanding: All the development workers together can never directly reach more than a small percentage of the total population. Therefore, the community chosen must be centrally located so that other people automatically have a chance to see the program, learn from it, and gain a desire for replication and adaptation. For the same reason, the social organisers should choose only the natural leaders, and among them only the most educable, with whom to work closely. The leaders, one educated and motivated, can in turn reach other people.

12 Make it fun: Try to capture the spirit of fun that villagers have when they transplant or harvest together in gangs. Try to find group activities, which combine singing, kidding - and eating and drinking together when the work is finished.

13 Make the program the "modern thing to do": Many rural people will look up to the social organisers simply because they are modern, educated persons. Often they can secure their acceptance of a new practice just by showing that it is modern and progressive, provided they know the social organisers are not looking down on them. But if the SO looks down on them, the result might be resistance instead of acceptance.

14 Get the local leader/Imam to help you: Traditional leaders, like *Imam* or *Malik* of a community can help the program greatly by informally praising it and asking support for it from influential villagers, or even by making formal appeals at public meetings.