

# KNOWLEDGE PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMME

## *Overview of Civil Society Engagement in the Post-2015 Development Agenda*

Youth for Unity and Voluntary Action (YUVA)

Wada Na Todo Abhiyan (WNTA)

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**Minutes**

**Session One (10:00-11:15 a.m.)**

***Overview of Civil Society Engagement in the Post-2015 Development Agenda***

The first session of the Civil Society Consultation around the Post-2015 Development Agenda commenced with words of welcome from Amitabh Behar Wada Na Todo Abhiyan / National Foundation for India, who especially noted the effort of participants who came from different parts of the country. Mr. Behar acknowledged that it had been a while since a large-scale meeting to discuss the issue at hand had taken place. He briefly listed the broad agenda for the day, which was mainly to identify the aspirations of the people within a common framework in general and within the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) frame in specific and to also list the possible replacements for the MDGs.

This was followed by a quick round of introduction of all the audience members, where representatives from Ahmedabad, Bihar, Mysore, New Delhi, Tamil Nadu, Bangalore, Lucknow, Maharashtra, Vishakhapatnam and Imphal among several others were in attendance.

Mr. Behar thanked everyone present for joining the initiative. He then picked up the idea of MDGs and spoke of how everyone invariably engages with them, calling them different things such as “minimum development goals.” They have also been referred to as a “diversionary gimmick” by feminist groups. Thus, it is apparent that people do not warm up to the idea of MDGs and see them as a reductionist frame. Mr. Behar pointed out how essential features such as ‘freedom from fear’ and ‘freedom from want’ appear to be missing from the MDG perspective. A clear need has emerged to engage in this particular arena, especially in terms of security discourse post the 9/11 attacks.

He spoke of how Wada Na Todo Abhiyan has been actively engaged with MDGs, constantly monitoring the performance of these goals in India and abroad and observing ways in which these initiatives can be strengthened. Marked importance has been given to the political promises enclosed in manifestoes and their efficiency in light of these development goals. Mr. Behar noted how the organization has not only succeeded in

monitoring MDGs on a national as well as on a global level, but has also attempted to review the progress of MDGs within a specific context, such as dalits and MDGs, women and MDGs and the like, thereby adding multiple lenses to their outlook. The initiative has thus been taken beyond a national level to sub national level with MDG platforms being set up in several states.

Mr. Behar then discussed the decisive shift that Wada Na Todo Abhiyan underwent in the past couple of years. Till 2011, the organization was mainly involved in responding to the MDGs given by the United Nations (U.N.) system and was focusing on making States accountable. However, post-2011, they felt there was a crucial need to look at possible replacements for the existing MDGs. This decision came at a time when Wada Na Todo Abhiyan was going through a shift in its engagement with the Planning Commission and adorning a greater participatory role by giving pertinent inputs in an effort to draw an ambitious people's agenda and bring people's aspirations to the forefront. The need for this was acknowledged in the U.N. Secretary General's report in 2010. The present movement thus has been exclusive in nature to a large extent with several groups having been left behind.

He stressed upon the need to center the attention of the U.N. and the government around this subject while being firm in expressing that there is tendency to be rather inward-looking while formulating strategies. The focus should not only be on issues pertaining to the country but must also take global processes into consideration. The centrality up till now of the Indian civil society is understandable, Mr. Behar noted, but with the rapid evolution of the globalised economy it has become important for the Indian society to engage at a global level – an endeavor for which 2015 appears to be a crucial window. It is clear that India is going to be a crucial actor in the post-2015 scenario and will be an important factor in deciding what is going to replace MDGs post -2015 along with countries like Brazil and China.

Mr. Behar explained how Wada Na Todo Abhiyan functions by creating a platform where different groups can bring in their inputs and converge at least in terms of broad strategies. He shared their findings from a recent meeting where it was realized that running a Google search on the term 'post-2015' brings up results that indicate the involvement of U.S. based groups in providing knowledge and shaping ideas relating to the same. Wada Na Todo Abhiyan however tries to provide leadership to Southern voices and strives to reach out to marginalized societies and groups across the country. This has resulted in the organization being possession of strong, credible data from the field in people's own voices regarding the direction and content of the post-2015 agenda. Incidentally, India has procured over one lakh questionnaires in regard to this, which is higher than the numbers reached any other country. There exists a need to put in greater energy for Southern voices and to

provide platforms for leaders, besides engaging in academics and the like so as to build support around knowledge-building.

Mr. Behar shared how the proposed mechanisms to engage the CSOs in the process of formalizing inclusion of other stakeholders in the post-2015 agenda-setting has still remained just a proposal and not been operationalised yet. This exemplified how the movement has been left behind in terms of influencing the government. The position of the Government of India has been disharmonious with that of societies and organizations in this regard. Mr. Behar sent out an open request to the government to take an active role in these issues and said that the role of parliamentarians was also going to be discussed later in the day in a different session.

The function of media was also discussed and a need to reach out to the media (including social media) was spoken about. The role of Youth Ki Awaaz was mentioned, as was the success of several Wada Na Todo Abhiyan publications in reaching the U.N. Secretary General's table. Mr. Behar expressed concern over an excessive dependency on the private sector for financing solutions and also said that it was important to look at the workings and politics of the High Level Panel (H.L.P.) for there are strong disagreements regarding certain aspects of the H.L.P. report, which have been compiled systematically and are to be presented at the General Assembly of the U.N. on the 25<sup>th</sup> of September 2013.

Mr. Behar brought his talk to an end by laying out two broad aims for the day's proceedings – one, to formalize and finalize a collective response ready to the U.N. Secretary General's report and second – to strategize the best possible move ahead. He also stressed upon the need to be cognizant of the idea of the merging together of MDGs and SDGs, for there appears to be a consensus on this merger in the U.N. Secretary General's report. The responsibility of this discussion has been handed to an open group by the U.N. Secretary General. Mr. Behar ended with a small reference to the Rio meeting and mentioned how his own engagement with the SDG pitch has been limited till now.

Pooja Parvati of Wada Na Todo Abhiyan then spoke on *WNTA / Civil Society Observations on the UN-U.N. Secretary General's Report, the UN-High Level Panel Report and Summary of Our Processes*.

She gave a concise presentation about MDGs and discussed the structure and evolution of the same. The 10 specific recommendations of the Washington Consensus (1989) were discussed, which centered around a neo-liberal theory and called for stabilization measures, with economic development was seen as the only pillar which would help in achieving overall development. The First Human Development Report (1990) argued that this idea was flawed and that human development needed to be brought into focus as well. At the World Summit it was decided that social development is the key towards assessing

the parameters and structures of overall development.

The Millennium Declaration, a charter of the U.N. outlined key principles around which human development is to be measured and assessed and how these values can be translated into goals and formulated into an agenda. The six key values of freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for nature and shared responsibility gave a holistic perspective to the declaration.

Ms. Parvati refreshed the memory of all present by sharing all eight goals which constituted the Millennium Development Goals.

Goal 1, she said, can claim progress though there lies a problem with the policies that define it. The progress so far is thus fundamentally flawed to a certain extent. Goal 5 appears to be a disappointment, not having achieved much progress whereas in terms of Goal 8, climate, financing and other related concerns have been subsumed and taken up.

The merit of MDGs lies in their attempt to be simple and easy to understand, besides being the factor that brought consensus for the first time between BWIs and the U.N. Their general focus has been towards outcome orientation and the assessment of results.

However, these goals have left a lot to be desired. Their 'least common denominator' approach is not satisfactory and the measures they present is in terms of aggregates which do not move beyond a certain level and cannot be broken down into segments. Also, the national planning has been divorced from a global perspective and the government has clearly not put in necessary energies to maintain the required synergy.

The MDG goals seem to focus on comparing performances across countries instead on focusing on growth. Inequality remains a major concern and the dimension of safety and sustainability of water supply as well as the distributional and equality aspect all remain weak. Hunger still is a global challenge and the number of slum dwellers continues to grow,

In this context, Wada Na Todo Abhiyan attempts to give in crucial input towards the making of a new development agenda, for which a wealth of knowledge is already being generated. India remains a contradiction with its image of being a global economic power where poverty and inequality are rampant. These are issues which need to be focused on and expressed as much as possible, said Ms. Parvati.

Global processes were briefly discussed. It was noted that four meetings of the UN High Level Panel took place besides several online consultations and there emerged a conclusive HLP report. The brief response to the U.N. Secretary General's report was shared, which incidentally incorporates a lot of the concepts which have come from civil society.

Inequality emerged as a perpetuating feature that needs to be dealt with clearly. There is also inadequate attention being assigned to provisioning basic entitlements to the public. Corporate accountability also is a major concern.

The encouraging elements of the report included the formation of new goals and a vision demanding a life of dignity for all.

Three out of the five sections of the report were discussed in the presentation along with the four building blocks that the report lists.

The report also states that “decisions to shape next agenda lie with member states..” , a statement which is important and requires a good deal of attention.

The findings/discussions point towards 6 key elements, with the sixth point, that of “being fit-for-purpose” was one that added a new aspect and was proposed for later discussion among panelists and members of Wada Na Todo Abhiyan.

15 transformative, mutually reinforcing actions were also identified and shared.

Ms. Parvati ended the presentation here.

Mr. Behar thanked her and extended a warm welcome to Lise Grande, UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Representative. Her year-long presence in India has been a galvanizing force in the interactions between the U.N. and civil society, said Mr. Behar, and requested her to give her valuable input in terms of strategies and content and her views as an outsider on where and what to invest energy in so as to strengthen the momentum of the movement.

Lise Grande, UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Representative began the talk on *UN and Civil Society Interface – Opportunities and Milestones* by candidly expressing how she learnt more from Ms. Pooja Parvati’s presentation than she did from reading the report herself. She congratulated India for its role in the devising the post-2015 agenda and brought to light a document bearing a summary of national consultations from world over (released in New York on September 10, 2013) which showed an overwhelming response from the reports coming from India, indicating the country’s highly proactive role in the consultative process globally.

Ms. Grande spoke of how all that has gone on thus far regarding the debate surrounding the 2015 agenda could be turned upside down, for the U.N. is unique in the sense that it is an organization made up of countries of the world, where the bureaucracy’s actions are guided by the inputs of the member states. She voiced her appreciation towards the High Level reports but stressed upon the fact that the thirty countries that constitute the Open

Working Group will produce the framework which the other one hundred and sixty countries will then debate and discuss. This working group is co-chaired by Kenya and Hungary, where Kenya is represented by Mr. Macharia Kamau , whose efforts Ms. Grande commended.

She then explained how the U.N. clumps countries together, some of the existing groups being –

\*India, Sri Lanka and Pakistan

\*China, Indonesia and Kazakhstan

\*Algeria, Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia

\*Australia, Netherlands ,UK and Northern Island

Thirty such groups then form the Open Working Group, which held regular sessions where side events open to all are organized. Ms. Grande gave a brief summary of these sessions. The 1<sup>st</sup> session happened in March 2013, where officer bearers were elected officially. In April, a second session was held where on day one, the concept behind SDGs was discussed, followed by a session on poverty eradication on day two. In May's session, the issues at the forefront were food security, land degradation, drought and modern sanitation. In June, issues regarding social protection along with youth education and culture were discussed. This session also dealt with the issues of health and population dynamics. The upcoming sessions to be held on 25<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> of November 2013 will bring into focus sustained economic growth, international trade, external debt sustainability and industrialization, while the second half of the session will deal with energy. The December session is expected to discuss means of implementation, capacity building and global partnerships with special reference to landlocked countries and countries in conflict. Human Rights will also be a central issue, as will global governance and 'Right to Development'.

Ms. Grande noted how these countries appear to be tackling these big, tough issues directly. The January session, she said, is scheduled to discuss sustainable consumption and production, climate change, oceans, seas and biodiversity, social and gender equality and women's rights.

At each of these sessions, several side events are held by different countries. The fourth session had 14 side events, which were used as pressure points on the session. Ms. Grande explained how a one page application form has to be filled for the side event in case someone decides to host one.

She also gave rather interesting information regarding these working group sessions, where before the commencement of each session there is scope of open interactions and dedicated face time with senior officials and the chairpersons themselves. Ms. Grande jokingly advised all interested parties to “cycle to New York” immediately in order to be heard. She also explained how the co-chairs also hold inter-sessional meetings between major groups and other stakeholders, where they discuss what everyone thinks should come out of the session. She stated how the opportunity to go for the next inter-sessional meeting is still open and urged audience members to go and petition, protest, comment and engage directly with the co-chairs in order to effectively use the opportunity influence the Open Working Group, whose manner of sequencing their topics shows their understanding of the process and concerns of the General Assembly. The Open Working Group, revealed Ms. Grande, is highly interested in the post-2015 agenda and has especially highlighted the eradication of poverty as one of its major concerns. It is also occupied with ‘universal human development’ (a concern that she credited to the original MDGs) and focuses on respecting dignity and protecting the planet.

Remembering the Rio report, Ms. Grande noted how the eradication of poverty has been a consistent object in all the reports. She identified the elements of the MDGs that have not been executed well as the departure point and expressed a desire to see targets differentiated and set by individual governments, with goals and targets that focus on outcomes and not the ‘drivers’. She identified human rights, participatory decision-making and rights-based approaches as drivers.

Ms. Grande also commented on the unsustainability of the consumption and production patterns being followed by the world and how the planet is at risk. For this to change, it is the rich countries which will have to take the bite.

She spoke of how some problems in the world are so ‘complicated’ and ‘interrelated’ that only international action can have an impact on them. Such problems, she said, ought to be brought to the forefront of the post-2015 agenda, which she expects to be very different from MDGs and their agenda. She went on to list five possible goals to focus on, mainly -

1. Poverty eradication
2. Food security and nutrition, which she said was all linked to desertification and drought
3. Water
4. Social protection and youth education
5. Health and population dynamics

Ms. Grande identified India as a big player in this agenda-building process and asked Mr. Amitabh Behar to continue attempting to engage with the Indian government as well as the Open Working Group. She also advised on how to build alliances with other countries and groups through the means of strategic side events at the Open Working Group. Lastly, she asked all concerned parties to not underestimate the influence one can have on the Open Working Group by means of direct interactions and through side events and mutual areas of concern.

Mr. Amitabh Behar thanked Ms. Grande for opening several doors for the audience and invited comments and questions from everyone.

Ketan Kothari from Sight Savers questioned whether global governance would look at transforming the current system of the U.N., to which Ms. Grande replied by explaining that the upcoming sixth session would look at this idea in detail, for global governance does include the U.N. as well as other financial and international institutions, but the specificity of this concept is yet to be worked out and is likely to be dealt with at the sixth session. This also depends on whether the member states of the U.N. agree to support radical reforms.

Another question which emerged from the audience was whether there can be new implementations without any new knowledge input and whether it is advisable to repackage the old existing ideas.

Ms. Grande replied to this saying that indeed they are not looking at a lot of new knowledge but are focusing instead on different prioritization, where a central position has been given to the issue of employment and to the Right to Development, the latter never having been highlighted as an international goal ever before. She called it an 'extraordinary' and 'significant' reprioritization, where climate too has emerged as a crucial issue. She then lightened the dialogue by sharing a common joke that tells the story of how four men went to the basement of the U.N. office, decided on a few MDGs over a cup of tea and went on a break before realizing that issues of the environment had been completely ignored and thus they came up with goal 7!

Certain things which were not in the initial agenda have emerged as major priorities, said Ms. Grande and mentioned how means of implementation and global partnerships would be in focus at the sixth session of the Open Working Group Sixth session, a crucial event where one can register and sit at the open sessions without having to deal with bureaucracy. The U.N. Secretary General's report reveals that in spite of not succeeding, the MDGs do list certain elements with add an important dimension when it comes to directing civil society.

At this point, Ms. Pooja Parvati shared how Wada Na Toda Abhiyan would be speaking in the upcoming UN Special Event on MDGs on September 25 as part of the 68<sup>th</sup> UN General Assembly. This declaration was met with enthusiastic applause.

Mr. Amitabh Behar added that it is indeed unusual to have space for civil society at the special session of the General Assembly. He expressed pride at the prospect of the organization's presence at the upcoming event, drawing session one to a close.

A short tea break followed.

## **Session Two**

Ms. Pooja Parvati introduced the second session in brief, which looked at examining *the UN U.N. Secretary General's Report on Post-2015 Agenda from Different Lens*.

Shireen Miller from Save The Children India acted as discussion moderator for the session and summed up the comments of the first session before laying out the agenda for the session that was to follow. She reiterated the U.N. Secretary General's emphasis on the inclusion of poverty eradication and acclaimed the eight sessions that Ms. Lise Grande had explained and stressed upon the aspects of climate change, human development and agricultural crisis. On this note, she invited Nafisa D'Souza from Indian Network on Ethics and Climate Change (I.N.E.C.C.) to speak.

Ms. D'Souza began by introducing I.N.E.C.C. and how the organization's key line is to bring in people's voices when it comes to policy choices, for the post-2015 agenda is seen as a crisis which all international organizations are striving to negotiate with whereas it is actually a concern of the people. Thus she described the journey of I.N.E.C.C. and expressed how they value their recent connection with Wada Na Todo Abhiyan, where sustainable development goals form the core agenda. She noted how the U.N.'s report appears to be forward-looking in terms of terminologies and appreciated Ms. Lise Grande's report and commended the effort put in by different groups towards pertinent issues, specially the urgency and high priority with which environment-related issues, conservation of resources and sustainable patterns of consumption have been highlighted.

She saw a window of opportunity in the way the U.N. Secretary General's report has been worded. Most reports coming from sources like the U.N. do not deal with why the degradation of resources despite there being awareness about the value of conserving them. The course and nature of consumption becomes central to these issues. Climate crisis, she said, is clearly human-induced as proposed in the 4<sup>th</sup> Assessment Report. The 5<sup>th</sup> Assessment Report which is to be released soon says with 95% certainty that this crisis is

human-induced. From this perspective, it appears that we are already far beyond the optimal level of sustainability and above the safe level of carbon concentration. The issue is thus gaining momentum in its urgency.

Ms. D'Souza spoke of how we need to engage with the critique of the report and at the same time, appreciate its positives too. According to her, the two to be kept in mind when looking at sustainability from an environmental lens were -

were -

- \* the carrying capacity of the earth

- \* the placement of human beings at the core of this issue

She said it was a question of going beyond poverty and looking at the quality of life in more subjective terms. The carrying capacity of the earth, natural resources and carbon space, when seen in the Indian context, show that we are using twice the amount of resources we have, besides indulging in maximum groundwater exploitation. There is a clear need to look at the indicators of existing degradation, examine the development threshold of human beings and envisioning what kind of a society we want - from the point of view of conserving resources and from the point of view of carbon space.

Several discussions pertaining to the climate discourse begin to deviate towards what the budgets of different countries are and the like, which she sees as block in the negotiation. A good step would be to articulate issues of inequity and the environment in the U.N. discussions. "How do we articulate the alternative paradigm we speak of in real terms?" was the central question she brought forward.

She shared the findings of a study commissioned by I.N.E.C.C. which attempted to define a development threshold. Their analysis showed that if efficient steps are not taken, carbon usage will increase to 40 tonnes per person per year by the year 2050. Thus, there is a clear need to redefine wellbeing and examine how we want to be living forty years hence.

Ms. D'Souza also spoke of the general feeling that seems to exist amongst the population, where people believe a 'technology fix' will solve the problems of the world. Given the existing knowledge and limitations of this idea and the rate at which we are consuming fossil fuels makes a 'technology fix' seem improbable.

She ended by lauding the work done in terms of grassroot engagement linked it to policy-making.

Ms. Miller thanked her for her valuable input and spoke of the direct relationship between

human welfare and environment change.

Tom Thomas from Praxis was then invited by Ms. Miller to speak on community participation.

Mr. Thomas revealed how there is much disagreement on the theme of community participation, for though everyone agrees that it is a given and a must, how each one interprets the meaning of community participation is a different story.

Goals are impossible to achieve without the aid of drivers. Thus, drivers need to be looked at differently and not sidetracked. He found lack of true participation from the community to be one of the critical reasons behind non-achievement.

He listed three major points as his area of focus -

1. There is depth and sophistication in the understanding of the poor . People living in poverty and their understanding of issues are as good or better than that of policy makers. They can no longer be stereotyped as aspirants of '*roti kapda makaan*'.

Mr. Thomas cited the example of the 'ground level panel' they had organized to respond to the 'high level panel', which reiterated the fact that content generation amongst the poor is very high. Some interesting responses were gathered, where one individual they said that the policies that they are asked to debate over are 'all lies'. Another speaker said that when democracy binds everyone as a family, why is it that they are treated differently? Another individual afflicted with disability expressed his distaste by saying "Does the government not understand our issues that we have to tell them again and again? They choose to not respond." Another participant from the North East gave the analogy of a cat that is fed a minimal ration so that it stays hungry and fulfils its duty, which is that of killing rats. They are given enough to survive so that they serve a larger purpose. In the same way, he felt that the government has just been handing them crumbs.

*"Inaam nahi, naam chahiye"* ("A life of dignity and not just doles") was the demand put forth at this meeting. A detailed account of this report appears as a publication called 'Voice of Change'.

What the participants of this ground level meeting felt was missing in the analysis of the HLP agenda was then presented –

\*Poverty is an indication of the government's apathy and indifference (Goal 1)

\*Education should be a part of a common system and not be different for the poor and the rich (Goal 3)

\*Clean and free drinking water to be made available to all. Water is not something that should be privatized. It should be free like the air we breathe. (Goal 5 and 6)

\*Concern was expressed regarding the quality of food and not just the quantity. Natural and chemical manures were discussed.

\*The participants were clear on how the involvement of the poor in formulating policies is a must, for the government-corporate nexus must be broken.

\*Land acquisition by corporate giants should be controlled.

Mr. Thomas again pointed out the depth and capacity of people and their understanding.

2. The tools of participation are important. Participation should be a serious endeavour and must not end up becoming a waste of the community's time. The critical element is to ensure that participatory processes do not leave the community feeling stripped of their dignity. These engagements should stimulate their own critical consciousness.

3. It is not a luxury to hear community voices, but a must.

Ms. Miller thanked Mr. Thomas and agreed on how participation of the community is a non-negotiable aspect, for there ought to be a life of dignity for all.

Krina Shah (HAQ Centre for Child Rights) who has done extensive work with the government regarding Women and Child Welfare besides being personally involved in the issue as well spoke of the place of children as a marginalized group, mentioning how she recently viewed a 'propaganda' film lauding the development and progress of New Delhi and how it made her wonder how true this in light of the state of children.

She observed how there was an unnecessary note of positivity in the U.N. Secretary General's report, though India is not among the countries whose positive aspects are explicitly mentioned. Girls, women and children are constantly bothered by lack of safety, for the government makes laws and policies and acts but fails to ensure their implementation. She questioned whether it was worth having new laws in such a state of affairs and emotionally stated how the mother of a victim is more capable than a government officer.

She saw the government's stark lack of accountability and transparency as a problem and stated how in India, corruption is a hurdle that comes in the way of all policies. She questioned whether the RTI act is accessed without fear and whether the people of India are left with any scope for demonstration and challenging the government.

Ms. Shah spoke of how the government creates delays in the allocation of funds and allows NGOs to indulge in 'proxying', which then makes the government's work easier and increases the involvement of the corporate sector and encourages public-private partnerships.

The state is the primary duty carrier, she said, though it has a timeline where it has played only complementary roles. She expressed displeasure the government's shifting partnership with the corporate arena and spoke to how the government also needs to limit the intervention of the community and accept a more central and responsible role.

She called the report a document which seems to claim that "Big Brother will set everything alright." In conclusion she stressed upon the need to come up with brighter, better goals for the post-2015 agenda report so as to ensure that the country does get to play a crucial role. She saw this as a possibility only when the role and responsibility of the government has been spelt out and emphasized.

Ms. Miller then spoke about the idea of exclusion and inequalities and how the most vulnerable have been left behind, citing the example of South America where inequality has been rising critically with 1 billion people struggling to survive on less than one dollar a day.

The most vulnerable and most marginalized groups are still untouched, while the issue of gender across the states and across socio-economic groups is a long way from being resolved. Malnutrition too must be looked into, she said. Environment and sustainability are clearly at the forefront of the coming sessions. Ms. Miller called the January session on biodiversity and oceans an opportunity and noted how issues such as caste continue to dominate endemic issues like poverty, and how there exists an intrinsic link between exclusion and discrimination.

The session then opened up to the audience and the following questions/comments made their way to the panelists -

1. Ketan from Sightsavers pointed out how disability forms an excluded group even within the excluded group and has barely been mentioned in the report. Even when mentioned, it is done so in an apologetic manner. The diversity within disability is so large that goals in this specific group cannot be achieved without a 'herculean effort'. Differences such as caste are artificial in the sense that they will hopefully be gone one day, as opposed to the permanence of disability.
2. Reni Jacob called the presentation insightful and threw some light upon the expected role of civil society organizations, saying that though they will demand greater allocations, it will not completely solve the problems being faced.

3. Praveen Kumar (VSO) spoke shortly on climate change, saying that though carbon reduction and related issues are discussed often, seldom does one hear talk about the vicious cycle associated with them. The tribal population is specially affected most terribly by carbon usage. He voiced his concerns regarding the method of tracking the affected population in the post MDG agenda. He also drew attention to the fact that rarely in India do we see the participation of disabled individuals in gatherings such as these. 15% of the world's population has some kind of disability. India itself has a disabled population of 70 million people. This is thus a crucial area that needs to be examined as well.
4. Ashok Nanda, who is associated with an NGO in Orissa, spoke to the audience about the need for equity in education, which has undergone commodification to a great extent. As far as climate change is concerned, the existing growth model needs to be questioned with the idea of carbon-emission based tax being given serious consideration. He also stressed upon the idea of promoting sustainable growth for debt-ridden individuals and those living on charity. There is also a need to create more employment in rural areas in order to curd urbanization. There ought to be a reduction in the tax benefits allowed to corporate companies, he suggested, along with controlled allocation of resources and the treatment of minerals as common wealth and not private wealth.
5. Richa Singh discussed how communities are not really empowered, and the State in return seems to have taken a backseat with related work being outsourced to NGOs. She also pointed out how communities are not undifferentiated for there exists a gender divide and an income divide. This is linked to the idea of governance and how public accountability is sidelined. Women specially are used as invisible agents and unpaid or underpaid workers who serve the purpose of the community.
6. Thomas Pallithanam felt that an idea which deserved to be challenged and understood was that of participation becoming a mere footnote in the larger scheme of things. He cited examples from Gopal Krishna Gandhi's book relating to participation and how it can serve as a measure of development. Mercenaries, he felt, can do better job than 'conscience keepers'. He stressed upon how there is no need to be apologetic when it comes to participation. The means to an end, he said, is as important as the end.
7. Anil Singh, a WNTA senior member asked a question regarding the basis on which consumption patterns are to be judged. He mentioned the 1995 World Summit at Copenhagen and discussed how poverty has a dynamic definition. Mahatma Gandhi for example, was culturally and politically 'richer than anyone in the world'. However, when seen in economic terms, his status fell below the poverty line. He also wondered aloud whether anyone, including civil society is ready to change their lifestyle in a time when we are all guided by materialistic aspirations. Many civilizations, he said, like Harappa and Mohenjodaro have disappeared off the face of

the earth due to climate change. This, for India, climate change has been a pertinent issue since a long time and has not emerged only after a disaster like the Hurricane Katrina.

8. Thomas spoke of how 'intersectionalities' are continually discussed and stressed upon the need to realize that even prisons across the world are filled with the poorer section of society. At a certain level this indicates a failure of the system. There are several examples of human rights violations related to developments, and there has been a decrease in the capability of people to stand up in the face of despoliation. He saw a clear spatial disconnect in how human rights are discussed in Geneva and development-related issues in New York.
9. Pavneet from VANI spoke about the problem of corruption in India and said that the RTI is a good act and as far as the current debate regarding its implementation goes, it is corruption which needs to be curbed and not the act itself. Another point she made was how the private sector has a completely different ideology regarding development and their ideas should not be allowed to dominate.
10. Laurent (EU) described the gathering as 'positive' and commended their good collective work. However, he presented the audience with a word of caution and asked them to not look upon the private sector with evil eyes, saying that there exist some very good people amongst that specific sector just as there exist some disagreeable elements within civil society. The credibility of this cause, he said, comes from discussions and the voices of the southern world, and the private sector too can be a part of this realm. Citing the example of mining in Orissa, he explained how there is scope for the government to make a deal between communities and corporate, creating a win-win situation for all. He ended by requesting a second time to not portray corporate companies as 'the bad guys'.
11. Bina (National Campaign of Dalit Human Rights) said that the report did not include marginalized and gender aspects, giving rise to a need for more significant discussions around the two. She also posed a question specifically to Krina, asking whether it would help to be negative about public-private partnerships which have become a trend, saying that a more positive perspective would perhaps help.
12. Pradeep from WNTA noted how in the last 10-15 years, the nature of rights has changed. They rights, which advocated the cause of individualism, have been promoted by the media and by civil society. He also raised a question regarding the methods to be used to reconcile carbon usage and climate change.

Nafisa gave a collective response to this, saying that equity within the Indian context has emerged prominently. In terms of climate crisis, she said that our current policies do not address the issue at all. The government does talk of negotiation on the basis of equity but does not follow it through. Alternate paradigms require alternate visions. Also, the disparity within India is so great that an alternate scenario is needed to build a pathway

that allows a majority of Indians who are below the poverty line a way forward and beyond. Research is being conducted to examine the carbon budget of the country and analyze the lifestyle pattern that needs to be adopted. She emphasized on how challenging and confronting the existing system is the best way to construct a post-2015 approach.

Tom Thomas responded by saying that drivers are as important as goals themselves and that participation is all about power and is rendered meaningless in its absence. Issues of caste need to be looked at while dealing with poverty and in no case must there be an apologetic undertone to any confrontation.

Krina Shah continued from where Tom left off and said that the HAQ Centre too has been working towards similar goals and the organization draws its energy from the positivity of the people who associate themselves with their cause. She felt the need for an efficient monitoring mechanism to be in place and for the system to be strong in nature. She also spoke of the necessity of budget allocation and the need to ensure that in terms of private-public partnerships, the private does not exceed its power limitations. She also reiterated the importance of the role played by officials and ended by saying that if the government looks towards MNCs and the like for funding, then a clear problem exists. No partnership should thus be allowed to take on the role of the government.

Shireen mentioned how disability, gender and exclusion were scheduled to be part of the Session but had to be cancelled due to speakers cancelling in the last minute. She called both disability issues and women and child issues very valid and supported their inclusion in the report which is to be presented at the upcoming session. Ms. Miller encouraged everyone present to register for the New York and concluded by saying that at that end of the day, the state needs to acknowledge its responsibility and indulge in greater participation.

Amitabh thanked Ms. Miller and said that the next session would focus more on strategies and responses to the report. He spoke of the need to critique certain points from the report, and mentioned how there have been some valid points, some that need to be reworked some misses which then need possible replacements. He called upon the audience to focus towards translating aspirations into action with a renewed perspective.

A lunch break followed.

### **Session Three**

Paul Diwakar acted as moderator for this open house session, which aimed towards ***Consolidating Civil Society Response to the UN-SG's Report on the Post 2015 Agenda***. He introduced the session by saying that the aim now was to look for key responses and

reactions and decide upon the broad politics of the report ahead and to also look into specific critiques and lapses and gaps in order to finally arrive at a final set of points.

He first asked the audience to share their general feelings about the report. (At the request of an audience member, some of Ms. Parvati's slides were presented again.)

Rohit from Mysore brought the Lise Grande's talk from the morning session and asked whether the council of 30 Working Groups should be their prime target or should that be included with other aspects as well, saying that a good starting point would be issues which were previously absent from the agenda but have been identified in the current thinking.

Mr. Diwakar asked whether the general consensus was to take up the expansion and evolution of the proposed ideas and not reject the report outright.

Richa stressed upon the avoidance of adopting the vision of a multi-stake partnership, after which everything else appears diluted. She also said justice did not seem to be deeply entrenched or in the foreground of the report.

Pallavi from Maharashtra pointed out how there is no mention of asset creation in the report, and aspect that needs strong emphasis specially when seen in the light of nomadic tribes that are rendered landless.

Other comments from the audience included how there is a strong resonance of western economy and western concepts in the report; and the inclusion of social development in order to teach children how to live and to not just be alive. The move from poverty eradication of exclusion eradication was commended. There was demand for more specific information regarding need to identify the poor globally, be it agriculture labour, indigenous societies and more. The inclusion of economic justice at a primary level was also advocated.

Shashi questioned the monitoring of the accountability of the corporate sector in the context of the impending global governance, especially international partnerships, and the kind of guidelines to be used to assess their social responsibility. She also brought up the need for an accessible global platform to facilitate the sharing of grievances at a time when global governance is established fully.

Mr. Diwakar noted that the general feedback showed that interventions and changes are needed in the existing report and there is an apparent discomfort in leaning towards the corporate sector.

Nasreen said that along with naming the poor, there is also a need to name and identify internally displaced individuals and migrants. Though the idea of exclusion is present in the

report, there need to be clearer policy measures regarding the same to ensure affirmative action in order to change how deeply exclusion is entrenched within our system.

Regarding this, Mr. Diwakar mentioned how it is important to look back historically at the approaches adopted in order to assess what worked out and what did not. The assessment of poverty has been a need that India has widely recognized. There is a constantly evolving multidimensional poverty index which in time to come will allow an accurate assessment of the numbers. It is a scientific way of measuring poverty which includes features such as spatial differences, political influences and lack of opportunity.

A significant point raised was that the MDGs were created at a point the situation of the world was different from what it is now. Some goals came as a chance to take care of things that were contemporary to that time, while which purely economic in nature need to be looked into since old alliances have been broken and new ones formed and an economic upheaval has taken place. There now exists the luxury and the environment to think beyond the terms the MDGs laid out.

Mr. Diwakar then welcomed Anthony Smith, International Director – DFID & UK Sherpa for the Global Partnership on Effective Development Cooperation and briefed him on the events of the day.

Points regarding the need to monitor equity and the politics of food and the problem of malnutrition were brought up. It became clear that accountability mechanisms have not been efficient and there also exists the problem of manipulated figures which then project a more positive picture which is far removed from reality. There was general agreement to not compromise on the post 2015 agenda.

Mr. Diwakar mentioned how nations and their domestic accountability has not been brought to the forefront of the report, an important aspect which the U.N. Secretary General did not touch upon.

Questions expressing concern about how the deep-rooted cultural practices and communal disharmony in the nation were going to be addressed were expressed. Another member spoke of how the U.N.D.P.'s construction makes allowances for exclusion, be it regarding health, education and more. This adjustment is greater in developing countries than it is in developed countries. In India, the mortality rate is high and inequality is rampant in the fields of health and education. Though we have achieved massive reduction in slum areas, this has been done through the means of exclusion. A structure of urbanization must be presented in order to absorb the large number of extra labour forces that are expected to grow in the coming years.

Richa stressed upon the importance of deciding how to locate ourselves and strategize, for the dilution of multi-stakeholder partnership is not the solution. Instead, there ought to be a non-profit motive behind these partnerships

Praveen suggested looking at citizen's monitoring framework, and gave some good examples of the same. In times when technology advancement is moving rapidly, the use of technology to bring forth the participation of the community should be a vital underlying theme.

Ketan spoke strongly for the cause of disability, saying that despite the availability of a primary health centre in every village, the access and coverage of the same is futile if a person is unable to reach it due to his/her disability.

Thomas Pallithanam backed the idea of distributive justice that Amitabh Behar spoke of and expressed concern over how the states will address the issues that will come up.

While the issue of exclusion was deemed paramount by several audience members, inequity and justice too were given prominence. India however should not emerge as the only country in question and the need for a global context was expressed. The right of development, as mentioned earlier by Lise Grande emerged as an important thing to note, though the U.N. needs to clarify what exactly the term includes. The issues of domestic and transnational trade ethics was also brought up.

Prof. Amitabh Kundu briefly spoke on the interconnectedness of the issues and how there has been a greater recognition of the southern of late, and how north-south collaboration would be welcome. He cited the example of his own organization's experience to show how street bureaucracy is highly inefficient.

Amitabh Behar spoke of the need to re-emphasize the red flag statement from the Bali meeting.

Mr. Diwakar spoke of how the general feeling seems to be that the direction of the report is welcomed but certain shifts need to be made in terms of social exclusion, old age, disability, redistributive justice, domestic accountability, the special focus needed on vulnerable communities and the over-involvement of the corporate sector which then hinders the role of the state government.

Ms. Parvati then summed up the session's observations as part of reflections on the UN-SG's Report in the following points –

To begin with, we welcome the UN SG's Report and would like to find ways to engage more proactively with the government at the national level in taking forward the

recommendations of the UN SG's Report.

We also appreciate the fact that the Report is largely explicit on human rights and social justice and makes it a central argument throughout the document. However, some concerns remain:

\*The over-reliance on private and corporate actors appears to be constricting the role of the state. The undefined accountability of this sector is cause for discomfort.

\*There is a need to understand how the multi-stakeholder framework can be harnessed for a more positive outcome. There exist certain grey areas which demand clarity. The emphasis should be on multi-stakeholder solidarity and not multi-stakeholder partnership.

\*While there has been emphasis on social justice, there need to be many more discussions surrounding the issues of re-distributive justice, social exclusion and inequality.

\*Trans-national issues relating to trade, water issues and climate financing have not been articulated clearly and need to be examined further.

\*Excessive emphasis on ending extreme poverty may possibly lead to a large section of the population being left out. It is important to move away from focusing only on the most-excluded but also look at those that are poor (and form a huge majority of population in the developing countries). A universal approach is called for.

\*The accountability of multi-stakeholder partnerships is of central importance, along with a clear need to define what role we want to see the state adopt in terms of carrying out responsibilities in a fair manner.

The special guest, Mr. Antony Smith, had joined the group in between and following this brief presentation of broad observations around the UN SG's Report, began by giving a brief introduction of the work being done by his ministry and the role they play in policy issues. He spoke of his role within the DFID and their engagement with organizations like the U.N. . Mr. Diwakar added how Wada NA Todo Abhiyan's initiative to engage with the post-2015 processes has been made possible due to the support from DFID.

Mr. Smith said he was glad that the basic response to the report has been positive and that in his opinion, the Secretary General seems to be trying to initiate a debate within the General Assembly through his report. He welcomed the fact that the report wants people to be collectively ambitious and appears to realize the importance of clarity in communication. The manner in which the challenges ahead have been framed by the Secretary General and the delicacy displayed in his idea of dealing with the multi-faceted nature of poverty and climate change was lauded by Mr. Smith. He spoke of international

communication and how the parallel tracks which the parties involved have been moving on need to converge. He stressed upon the need to put pressure in order to ensure hard work so that there will be no need to wait till 2016 and let matters delay. At the same time, there is no need for rushing into agreements, for we are being given only one chance to get it right. It is clear that all must focus strongly on resolves and not allow the postponing of debates.

He said that the Secretary General's report is a good place to start and spoke of how it includes a paragraph on inequality and exclusion. This however will be a difficult policy to formulate because there are differences globally over how to deal with the same.

The more specific we try to be about our policies, the greater is the realization of how poor our pool of information regarding the policies is, he said. While a lot of the elements of the MDGs seem authoritative, the footnotes tell a different story. Local statistics are particularly poor, with the national statistics too being unsatisfactory. Statistics, information and content all need to be fixed before serious work can be conducted regarding the policies.

Citizens should be allowed to hold the government to account, for national accountability is the foundation if the agenda that is being worked on. In terms of enforcing accountability on a global level, there arise many limitations. This can be remedied to an extent by holding a summit meeting every five years. On a national and regional level though, accountability needs to be even stronger.

A legal framework must be enforced and companies must operate strictly within its boundaries. The workings of the economy and international businesses need to be understood so as to assess the use of political pressure in ensuring smooth functioning.

Mr. Smith noted how MDGs do not work very well in the current framework with respect to partnerships. He expressed how his hopes rest on the next framework which will aim towards stimulating partnerships that 'feel real'. He also spoke briefly on how certain types of partnerships and coalitions on health and climate may prove to be effective.

He touched upon the financial aspects involved in this venture and also referred to north-south cooperation. Civil society, he stated, has daily engagement with organizations and is thus better informed than big businesses who do not particularly involve themselves in the same sort of engagement.

Mr. Diwakar spoke of the difficulty faced in deciding targets and then ended the session by thanking Mr. Smith for his presence and his inputs.

#### **Session 4**

## ***Strategy Planning towards the UN Special Event on MDGs***

Fr. Manuel Alphonse opened the day's final session and started by speaking about the need for a clear focus on what we need to do and need to not do with special reference to the role of civil society.

Ajay Jha, the first panelist then spoke and referred to how there has been extensive talk regarding solutions but there has not been any improved analysis so far, for solutions provided will always have intermittent problems and these problems can only be solved with growth in the southern countries. He referred to the 600 page UNEP report which acknowledges that problems are indeed being faced and too much has been invested in real estate and in the energy sector in the last two decades, while issues pertaining to the climate have been neglected. Only 2% of the global GDP can solve these problems he analyzed, saying that the markets have been misinformed and they perform on the basis of faulty information which has led to crisis situation.

Mr. Jha spoke of the available avenues left for engagement and pointed out how, at times, we sometimes come up with more problems than we can solve. The Open Working Group realized after two sessions that the involvement of civil society organizations is important, leading to alterations regarding the same in the upcoming sessions, and adding importance to side events. He also expressed little faith in the High Level Political Forum, saying that it is only mentioned in small letters on pages 84-86 in small print in Rio summit-related documents. He called the HLPF a subsidiary to ECOSOC and the General Assembly based on peace-building commission. His suggestion was to have a major stakeholders' advisory group to further the attempt towards engaging with bodies and delegations of other countries. He said that in terms of India's own future engagements, there is not much that can be done at a global level until there is greater involvement from the government's side. On a national level, the crucial issues are centered on sustainability, urbanization and development. National and regional processes should be given great weightage, and besides engaging with the Open Working Group and HLPF, state action plans should also be included within the framework.

Mr. Alphonse added that the crux of the challenge they face is how to break 'market fundamentalism'. The plan to focus greatly on the Indian State is also a challenge, and the situation demands a shifting in gears in order to explore collaborations with the government.

Following this, Anshul Tewari from Youth Ki Awaaz spoke of this unique venture where a website serves as platform to voice issues of the youth and generate conversations among the website visitors. The content on site pertaining to the MDGs revealed that there is not enough awareness among people, a fact that the organization is trying to amend by

generating more information and views on the site and involving the youth directly in the process of understanding the issue at hand by asking them for solutions. Their attempt has mainly been to sensitize people and in the process they have gathered some crucial inputs and suggestions. Mr. Tewari stressed upon the need to break down data and share it on a common platform in simple terms so as to facilitate greater understanding and engagement as far as the common man is concerned. He emphasized on the importance of telling stories, sharing accounts, engaging with these issues on a personal level, reaching out to people and conveying information via social media. He said experience has taught him that the youth is not given adequate chances to engage with such issues sufficiently. Curiosity-building through personal stories is one particularly effective means of provoking people into leaving their comfort zones and speaking of issues that they want to address. The organization's is attempting to make a compilation of the youth opinion generated which can then be taken to high level meetings in order to facilitate greater representation.

Mr. Alphonse called India a country of contradictions, where we claim to be a country of the youth yet we fail to give them enough space or voices. Though social media is a crucial tool through which the youth express themselves, such tools rarely enter dialogues such as the ongoing one.

Ketan then questioned how one assesses the age of a person posting on Youth Ki Awaaz. Mr. Tewari in his reply explained how analytics are involved in the process and though they cannot ensure the only people of a certain age use their platform, primary participation does come from youthful quarters.

Paul Diwakar described the recent Youth ki Awaaz poster as 'pleasantly surprising'. Mr. Tewari said that the posters are an attempt to engage directly with their audience and to make people think and respond to questions such as whether people from SC/ST/OBC/Dalit background have lesser or equal opportunities, and how caste discrimination can be completely eradicated from India. They have received mixed and intriguing responses so far and some very concrete solutions have indeed been brought forth. Specific solutions and personal stories have also emerged.

Another question that came from the audience was regarding the window and avenue available for engagement in global processes. Rising new problems have not been met with new financial commitments and at this juncture, political and social commitment are perhaps even more important than financial commitment.

Mr. Jha drew attention towards the fact that India's consumption of energy is proportionally far greater than that of the U.S. Also, in the 2002 monetary consensus there appears to be no mention of domestic accountability at an international level. To amend this, one needs to make use of every opportunity of engagement.

Mr. Alphonse commented on how the debate on the financial aid given by developed countries to developing countries is an important aspect.

Amitabh Behar then took over the floor and spoke of MDGs with reference to Members of the Parliament. The state currently does not consult MPs while building an international agenda and several such officials have expressed a keenness to express their views to executives. Their goals include trying to help parliamentarians understand the idea behind MDGs and the central debate around them. He then urged the audience to come up with more interesting inputs and strategies and acknowledged the need to shift focus towards the national government.

The High Level political Forum Meeting scheduled for 25<sup>th</sup> September was seen as another platform for creating influence. Though the UNDESA was not discussed, it is expected that they will work on the actual setting. Mr. Behar said that the inputs regarding collaborations with the government were extremely useful. Social media, though effective, is only one of the ways of working with the youth and more strategies should be adopted in order to reach out to the youth at all levels. He stressed upon the importance of representing the southern voices so as to bring forth a strong southern perspective. The discourse on environment, he concluded, could use some more attention and depth. In their capacity, the WNTA has also tried engaging with FICCI and CII.

At the upcoming U.N. General Assembly, WNTA will have the opportunity to conduct a side event which will then act as an opening to strategic inroads. It will be a fortunate prospect indeed to be a part of the General Assembly among all the heads of states.

Some comments that emerged from the brief open floor session that followed indicated how the focus has shifted from national to international levels and due focus is going to be given to communities with consultations being proposed as a means of engaging with community members. A ground level panel report, much like the high level panel report ought to be prepared to facilitate smoother working with the government.

Reni Jacob mentioned how 24 districts in Tamil Nadu are all scheduled to have consultations soon, while Thomas Pallithanam shared his organization's plan to cover 2260 villages. Paul Diwakar stressed upon the need to re-energize civil society's engagement with the media and to be more active in terms of issuing press releases and media statements and to ensure greater reportage.

Amitabh mentioned the research pieces that WNTA has been working on and said that in the context of MDGs, the next one year is crucial.

Ashok mentioned how India is a large country and should collaborate with other countries

at open forums. Thomas spoke of the possibility of access to open working groups through ECOSOC.

Amitabh raised a pertinent point , saying that the work happening on the ground at the most basic level should also reach everyone and be circulated, with the focus being not only on the reaction to the High Level Panel but also on things such as building synergies, greater pro-activity with the media, greater engagement with Nordic countries and with ECOSOC. He then brought the consultation to a close, commenting on how the day had been an interesting one, replete with rich discussions which were to be converted into a reaction that would be shared with all audience members. Though the open working group had not been a part of the initial plan, its recurring mention assured that it would be added to the cause.

Saswati Swetlena from WNTA then thanked all the panelists, speakers, moderators, officials, participants, the rapporteur and everyone at the WNTA secretariat.

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