
Sasha's role in Women centered Development

“If you have come to help me, you can go home again. But if you see my struggle as part of your own survival then perhaps we can work together.”

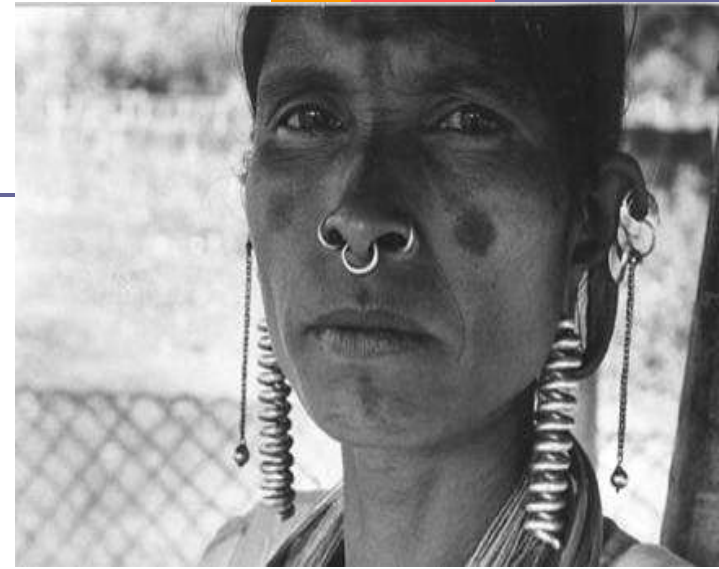
Australian Aborigine Woman

Edited extracts from the Manila Declaration on People's Participation and Sustainable Development (Philippines 1989)



INTRODUCTION

- ❑ Deprivation: Women produce 50% of the world's food. And they do two-thirds of the world's work. Yet development has bypassed women and in effect declined their socio-economic status.
- ❑ Inequality: Seventy percent of the world's poor are women. Women work longer hours for less pay and in worse jobs than men in every country in the world.
- ❑ Change: Today development paradigm is shifting from a welfare-oriented response to increasing emphasis on economic empowerment which is grounded in reality and sustainable



PEOPLE-CENTRED DEVELOPMENT- A FRESH DEVELOPMENT PARADIGM

- ❑ *Transition:* People-centered development is facilitating transition to a new order: the post modern, multi cultural era: a departure from ‘modernisation’ or ‘westernization’ of last millennium, championed and driven by western cultures.
- ❑ *Shift:* Conventional development included military aid, large dams, free trade zones and export economies that brings money to the contractors and aid organizations. That also results in massive deforestation, displacement of people, migration, pollution and diseases.
- ❑ *People-Centred Development focuses on real needs in life for the local communities (clean water, health care, income generation). It seeks to return control over resources to people for meeting their own needs.*
- ❑ *Synergy:* Sasha shares the vision of COMMACT that supports people-centred development. They aim to empower and enable poor and marginalised individuals, groups and communities to increase the control they have over their lives, livelihoods, assets and future.



PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN THEIR OWN DEVELOPMENT

- ❑ The model: Sasha builds on the inherent skill, knowledge and creativity of craft producers-especially women, leading to viable & sustainable economic enterprises founded on Fair Trade principles. Fair Trade has been a great enabler in women's empowerment and gender equity.

- ❑ Partners in change: Sasha's role has been of an assisting agency, as a partner in the process which is actually community driven and community owned.

- ❑ Facts:
 - ❑ Sasha works intensively with more than 70 producer groups and out them over 40 are exclusively women's groups.
 - ❑ Out of total artisans and producers Sasha works with 70% are women
 - ❑ All Sasha organisations (business, development, producers collectives) have majority women participation
 - ❑ Sasha is led by women in all key functions like marketing, exports, product development, production, co-ordination
 - ❑ Sasha committee has majority women participation both from the producer groups and from professional fields.



BUILDING CAPACITIES & ORGANISATIONS

- ❑ Organising: Over thirty years now, Sasha facilitated women centric development where women from depressing backgrounds of poverty, conflicts & subjugation have emerged as skilled craftswomen capable of handling their own business issues.
- ❑ Capacity building :SSA provided necessary capacity building inputs and market access, worked on product development and designs and stressed upon implementation which would ensure skills and resource maximisation.
- ❑ Sharing: These artisan communities were encouraged to strengthen the self-organising processes and to support one another's initiatives- Sasha facilitated formation of producer collectives based on their supply chain requirements as well as common interests:
 - ❑ Sasha Textiles Artisans Association,
 - ❑ Sasha Craft Services Co. and
 - ❑ Ruro-Agro Service Association.



DEMONSTRATIONS OF SELF-RELIANT COMMUNITIES OF WOMEN

- ❑ *Demonstrating*: Just organising is not sufficient. The real task is to challenge the existing structures from bottom up on a foundation of productive, sustainable communities.
- ❑ *It has been a journey of initiatives, perseverance and looking ahead.....building capacities, optimizing resources and creating opportunities.*
- ❑ *There are many success stories wherein small groups have grown into large collectives with an excellent understanding of Fair Trade principles, community engagement, asset creation, financial sufficiency and willingness to experiment.*



The story of Kolaghat women...

- ❑ Twenty years back, four young women of the village took a path breaking decision to come out of the village to take part in workshops organized at Kolkata by Sasha and its associates.
- ❑ Amongst them was Deepali, the young woman who single-handedly spearheaded the transition.
- ❑ Against all odds they struggled to continue their enterprise in embroidery and garment making- working in spaces let out temporarily by people.
- ❑ Their turnover increased steadily from INR 0.25 million in 1995 to INR 1million in 2000 to INR 1.8 million in 2004 to 2.1 millions in 2006-07.
- ❑ The growth was not so much in terms of volume as it was in producing more value added products and patterns- graduating from cottons to silks and chiffons- designer garments for Fair Trade shops in Switzerland, Italy etc. In addition to producing for Sasha's retail outlet in Kolkata.
- ❑ They saved money from business to set up own Workshed and machines and today 40 women are working in this exclusive women group.



THE MULTIPLIER EFFECT

Along with building robust community enterprises on indigenous skills, knowledge and creativity, these women brought in social changes in terms of-

Increasing family income and assets

-In all the 50+ units women work full time and earn fair wages to supplement & augment family income and asset – many of them over the years built own house and essential household assets.

□ Increasing awareness and action towards health and education in the family

-In all these families children attend school and even go for higher educations

□ Increasing financial security for the family and augmenting financial literacy at the community level

- Hundreds of women producers have insured themselves under Govt. subsidized insurance schemes and started savings themselves. Financial literacy programmes are being conducted at 15 communities this year.



Going beyond.....

- Developing social initiatives around their economic activities
 - Rural developmental programmes, micro credit programmes, environmental, educational and health programmes are run by relatively bigger women groups like KSEWS, UGLS, CSWS, Jeevika etc.

- Assuming active roles in local issues & concerns and influencing decisions
 - Groups like Durbar, Jeevika, KSEWS actively advocates in policy matters at local governance level



ENDNOTE

- ❑ These women are not just victims of inequalities & injustice. They are the ones who offer most effective solutions for poverty reduction and inclusive social development.
- ❑ As in microfinance so in micro enterprise development also, women can take the lead and broaden the scope of development into larger social and political contexts.
- ❑ Because of the the important roles women play in caring for the entire community, investments in women-centred and women-propelled development initiatives have far-reaching positive effects.
- ❑ We, at Sasha are committed to small, meaningful projects that the community actually wants, and that are sustainable over time.

We believe, women-centered approach to development promotes “human-centered development”.



Thank you



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