Democratising South-North Relations

OUTI HAKKARAINEN AND SUSANNE ÅDAHL (EDS.)

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Learning from the association between Lokayan/CSDS (India) and KEPA (Finland)

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Introduction

This report documents and analyses the partnership between the Indian network organisation Lokayan, the Indian research institution CSDS (the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies), and KEPA (Service Centre for Development Cooperation), the Finnish umbrella organisation of CSOs (Civil Society Organisations) active in the field of development and international solidarity[1]. The overriding ambition of this partnership has been to contribute to the democratisation of South-North relations on all levels of society[2]. The partners have sought to realise this ambition through a critical analysis of the conceptual framework, political structures and concrete practices that define present relations between the South and the North, and through the invention of practical experiments with new methodologies and tools for their democratisation.

The partners have been involved in various forms of exchange since 1989, and the partnership has mainly been based on informal cooperation through political dialogue and ad hoc efforts of concrete collective action. But for four years (1998-2002) the partners carried out an analytical, experimental and politically ambitious cooperation programme based on formal cooperation agreements. This programme included four main categories of activities: activist exchange, seminars and dialogues, documentation and analysis, and networking. The information and analysis provided in this report refers mainly to this four-year period, and especially to the activist exchange component. This four-year period we call here the cooperation programme, and when we refer to general cooperation between these partners we use the concept of association or partnership. The origin, objectives, methods, funding, administration and decision-making of the Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA association and cooperation programme are presented in the first chapter of this report.

The prospect of widening the partnership beyond the original partner organisations and their constituencies – especially in other Nordic and South Asian

countries – has been an important part of the internal discussions of the Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA partnership. The partnership has been seen as part of an open-ended process of searching for alternative forms of South-North association based on solidarity and equality. In this context the concept of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (VK) was introduced by the Indian partners as a means to explain to potential new partners what we stand for and seek to learn and achieve together. VK is a Sanskrit concept which means the World is a Family. In our context the concept serves to highlight our shared trust on how the same values of sharing and solidarity can guide action from the family level to the global level. In order for this to happen, action needs to be guided by a rich conception of democracy. Our joint ambition is to create a forum for global responsibility that focuses particularly on five dimensions of democracy: political, economic, ecological, cultural and social democracy.

The aim of the VK is to create a global coalition for building radical and comprehensive democracy based on the idea that a strengthening of local democracy and local decision-making authority is essential to the democratisation of national, regional and global polities. Since 2002 VK has become the institutional hub of a continued and geographically expanded process that builds on and further develops the ideas and experience of the Indo-Finnish partnership that started in 1989. In India, the VK is a working group of Lokayan and in Finland it was formally constituted as a registered organisation in May 2003. In March 2006 the international VK network became a member of the International Council of the World Social Forum. The founding members of the VK network Ritu Priya and Vijay Pratap present the main ideas of VK in this report.

The activist exchange was a crucial part of the Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA cooperation programme. Through this the exchange activists from Lokayan/CSDS constituency visited Finland and the activists from KEPA's constituency India. They took part in the activities of the partner organisations for periods from a couple of weeks to four months. The main aim of the activist exchange was to strengthen and develop activists' political work through living in a different, Southern or Northern society and working with local activists and movements. Altogether five activists from India, one from Nepal and six from Finland participated in this programme. Also, various short visits (from one to three weeks) were realised during the cooperation programme, about six from the constituencies of each partner. These short visits were often funded from other resources than those

of the Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA cooperation programme. Finnish exchange activist Susanne Ådahl summarises and analyses in this report the experiences of those who participated in the activist exchange programme, on the basis of their newsletters and final reports. Vijay Pratap, the convener of the VK initiative from India and Anastasia Laitila, activist from Finland write about their reflections on their exchange experiences.

One of the main aims of the Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA cooperation programme was to develop new methodologies for more democratic interaction between the South and the North. Finnish researcher Tiina Kontinen from the University of Helsinki (the Institute of Development Studies), who is studying CSOs of the development field, especially partnerships between Tanzanian and Finnish organisations was invited to make an analysis on the methodology of the Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA cooperation programme and its further applicability in other cooperation processes. She is analysing in the final chapter of this report the lessons learned of the Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA cooperation programme in the context of development cooperation of CSOs. She has a special focus on the cooperation between the Finnish CSOs and their Southern partners but the issues are universally relevant for CSOs active in South-North cooperation.

The dialogic method is crucial in the Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA partnership. This method was also used to produce a self-appraisal report of the first three years of the Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA cooperation programme (1998-2001) as it reflects the centrality of democratic ideals in their partnership. The key actors of the partnership in both India and Finland produced the report collectively. The political nature of the Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA association makes it difficult and challenging to evaluate its outcomes. The results will largely be seen only during the years to come. Nevertheless, the aim of the self-appraisal was to analyse the outcomes of the Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA cooperation programme until 2001 as widely as possible. A summary of this self-appraisal is presented in the appendix of this report, the original version of the self-appraisal report is available from KEPA.

We wish you pleasant and inspirational reading!

Helsinki, Finland, August 2006
Outi Hakkarainen and Susanne Ådahl

Notes

1 Lokayan is a dialogue for the consolidation of democracy, for exploring the possibilities and principles of coherence within the explosion of democratic assertions, for equity and people's control over natural resources, women's empowerment, cultural plurality, health and well-being for all. Lokayan, meaning 'Dialogue of the people', started in 1980 as a forum for interaction between activists and concerned intellectuals through meetings, workshops, working groups and lectures. Lokayan is a network organisation that is based in Delhi but works country-wide in India and also has international contacts, particularly in South Asia.

The Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), founded in 1964, is one of India's best-known independent research institutes. Bringing together some of South Asia's best known thinkers and writers, the CSDS has played an important part in shaping the intellectual and creative map of India and South Asia. Research within CSDS has focused on democratic politics, cultures and the politics of knowledge, critical discourses on science and technology, and violence, ethnicity and diversity.

Founded in 1985 KEPA is a politically and ideologically non-aligned service base for Finnish CSOs interested in development work and global issues with over 270 members, both large and small, local and national, professional and ideological. KEPA has field offices Mozambique, Nicaragua, and Zambia, it also has staff working in Tanzania and Indonesia. It works with policy issues and campaigns in Finland to transform the structures that cause and sustain inequality in the world. It assists local organisations working on human rights', democracy, debt and environmental issues.

2 The programme partners share a radical and comprehensive conception of democracy as something involving much more than legal institutionalisation of universal suffrage and other core aspects of modern liberal democracy. Discussions about the meaning of democracy have been an ongoing part of the programme. These discussions and further reflections developed on the basis on them are partly documented in the publications listed in the appendix of this report. Documentation material will be available at: **www.saded.in** and **www.demokratiafoorumi.fi**.

Background of the association between Lokayan/CSDS and KEPA

Outi Hakkarainen and Thomas Wallgren

Origin and objectives

KEPA and Lokayan/CSDS were involved in a continuous exchange of ideas, sharing of political prospects and analysis since 1989. The exchange has been informal, but has nevertheless provided crucial, although mostly intangible, input into many social initiatives and political campaigns, as well as to a large number of articles and books published in Finland and India over almost two decades (see appendix). A deep sense of solidarity and political fellowship has also emerged at the individual level between many activists belonging to the Lokayan/CSDS and KEPA communities.

When the informal cooperation started, the political environment in both India and Finland was affected by many important changes. On a worldwide level, the end of the cold war, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the subsequent crisis of the left were important new developments affecting all political efforts. In India, hopes of maintaining the socialist project declined with the rise of the BJP (Baharatiya Janata Party) to power and the politics it represented. In Finland, the Nordic welfare state model of society and the commitment to neutrality and global solidarity in Finnish foreign policy came under pressure due to the increased hegemony in Europe and the former Soviet area of neo-liberal politics.

Another crucial background to the partnership between Lokayan/CSDS and KEPA is that it emerged at a time when the ideas and practices of solidarity were in a state of crisis. During the past decades the main paradigm of morally motivated cooperation between the civil societies of the South and the North was development cooperation. This typically involved technical assistance provided by Northern to Southern agents and a transfer of Northern resources, financial and others, to projects and programme work in the South. The development cooperation

model of solidarity has since its inception been subject to articulate intellectual and political criticism in South Asia, and also e.g. in South-East Asia and Latin America. This critique was, however, for long, not very well known in Europe, including Finland. During the 1990s, it became evident to many activists in the North that development cooperation is an insufficient and not always a beneficial response to the gross inequities in the relations between the South and the North. Economic policies, foreign and security policies and globalisation policies are often more important than development cooperation in shaping South-North relations. All these areas therefore require increased attention when CSOs and people's movements from the South and the North work together.

Moreover, in the late 1990s there was a general crisis of democracy in South Asia and Europe because the effects of economic globalisation, the rise of radical right wing groups and the continued crisis of the left had lead to a marginalisation of social movements for global justice. Another visible trend at this time was the extreme fragmentation and individualistic culture in activist circles, coupled with a lack of efforts towards coherence building. The whole global scene of activism had changed radically. There was intellectual turmoil in India with the old and new social movements changing. The peace movement was changing and issues such as ecology were seen through a cost benefit lens rather than as a human rights issue.

The Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA partnership is based on the view that there is an urgent need to work out new concepts, visions and practices of solidarity that adequately address the changing international context and build meaningfully and creatively on the mixed experience of the development cooperation model. Moreover, the partners have agreed that the key deficit in international relations is the lack of democracy. They have therefore decided to work together on the assumption that a democratisation of the relations between the South and the North at all levels of society is a key to real mutuality, justice and solidarity.

Indian and Finnish activists wanted to understand the emerging new political situation with its new threats and possibilities by looking at it from two different watchtowers; one in Europe and the other in South Asia. They reached the conclusion that an informal relationship leads to a lack of institutional learning and individualises the exchange. A desire to deepen the social and political impact urged them to establish a formal partnership. At the same time, objective

developments have made it imperative for Lokayan/CSDS and KEPA to seek new kinds of partnerships with Southern and Northern partners respectively.

During the renewal process of the KEPA's internal structure in 1996-1997 it was decided that KEPA should have more contacts with people's movements. The rather unpolitical development framework was replaced with a more policy based approach. Previously, KEPA had concentrated almost entirely on sending volunteers to three Southern countries: Zambia, Nicaragua and Mozambique. KEPA now established new contacts with popular movements in Brazil, Indonesia and Thailand. Lokayan/CSDS was at this point in time looking for new opportunities and possibilities to cooperate using a soft approach, which was not the usual type of advocacy initiative. This entailed building on public dialogues and in-depth exchanges as tools for mutuality. Indian activists had high regard for Nordic activists and have a firm belief in the possibility of creating a base for global democracy. Getting into partnership was seen as an opportunity to deal with globalisation.

D.L. Sheth of the CSDS explained the above-mentioned situation from the Indian perspective in April 2001 in the following way: "It was at a particular juncture in 1997, which was quite different from 1980 when Lokayan was established, that I saw this relationship as becoming mutually edifying for all involved: Lokayan, CSDS and I believed also KEPA. By the beginning of 1997 the whole global scene of social movement activism according to us had radically changed. We were at a loss and were looking for a better global opportunity by 1997 to counter hegemonic forces of globalisation whose impact had begun acutely to be felt. The cold war had ended for long. Soviet Russia had not only collapsed but also dispersed. It descended as a new triumphant paradigm. People declared that the age of ideology had ended. People declared that history had ended! We were all intellectually in turmoil. Social movements had changed their gears because the cold war and the nuclear threat had ended. In their view the third world had also changed. The social movements in the West were now not terribly concerned about the third world, because in a way the cold war logic had dictated a certain direction to these movements."

"In all this we were trying to assess and understand in Lokayan, in CSDS and in our own different ways how to re-relate with the changing world and with our old compatriots in the West. Earlier it was very easy. Alternative development

or development cooperation were fairly developed concepts. We always saw development cooperation as a kind of political relationship, where you received experts, you received money, you received ideas and implemented them for the benefit of the poor of the poorer countries. A sort of mutually exploitative relationship was already there, but that has also changed. In this process ecology was also getting redefined. It began to be seen more as a 'factor' to be balanced than as a way of life. So many things had changed. We came under a certain kind of stress. So our primary goal was to associate with some larger movement or to do something to counter the political discourse of hegemonic globalization in our country as well as globally. That was our primary motive, our primary interest while trying to explore possibilities in this partnership; that is why we liked the whole idea of publications, books, exchanges. So it was a softer aspect of programme implementation. It was not like the earlier development cooperation programmes that one was getting into. Neither was it like a clear advocacy programme which is happening today, where you have a particular brief – your own, somebody's or a joint one – for which you get money and you go out and say that let all of us go for a certain one-point programme. It was not like that. It was much more settled, but a softer kind of a thing where we thought that by associating with people whom we knew already, we would be able to do something to make the emerging global scene somewhat just and equitable through influencing the terms of global political discourse."

"Lokayan was also facing a similar situation, as an organisation and a movement. Lokayan was under tremendous pressure to redefine itself as a single-issue organisation or becoming a typical CSO. Because by the mid 1990s most organisations that easily receive foreign funding had become specialized CSOs: a women's group or ecological or human rights group. I am not undermining their importance. But Lokayan always had a self-image of a group that differentiated itself as a support organisation for grass-roots movements articulating so called 'local' issues nationally and globally. It always saw itself as a social activists' cooperative, engaged in changing political discourse not just on specific issues but in a more generic way. Because of the kind of financial and other pressures it experienced, it would have made sense to many if Lokayan had re-incarnated itself as a single issue group, say a human rights group or in the form of a Jan Parivahan (Public Transport) Panchayat. This has been resisted. So this initiative

came at the right time where we could think of continuing Lokayan in one way or another as a loose structure, a generic organisation differentiating itself, at the same time giving rise to more specialised movement-type organisations. So that was the second important consideration."

"The third important consideration was what I would call a certain doubt. A doubt about foreign funding. We thought an arrangement between CSDS/ Lokayan, where CSDS legally received, with a moral conviction, foreign funding and carried out activities of interest to Lokayan would in the long run help Lokayan to overcome what it experiences as a financial and moral predicament today. In the short run, it would keep Lokayan activists politically engaged in this crucial transitional phase. Moral consideration is very important. I feel it is a moral act if I get my share of responsibility and benefit from the global commons whether they are located in Finland or anywhere else. But that's a secondary point. The important point is that we had known people and activists in the Nordic countries and we have very high regard, inspiring a sense of possibility that by getting into a partnership we may recover and redefine globally some idea of social democracy that may be relevant for the globalising world. We are yet to reach this goal, but the hope is still alive. So that was another motivation. These were the kind of motivations and expectations that enthused me, and I am sure my colleagues, to get into this interactive process with our Finnish friends. Primarily we saw it as an opportunity to change the political discourse in a heavily loaded situation of hegemonic globalisation, which we still believe is a threat to democracy."

It was against this backdrop, then, that KEPA and its cooperation partners in India decided to engage in a cooperative search for new modes of interaction between civic actors in their respective countries and regions. The following aims were listed, on different occasions, to concretise the main objective of the programme, i.e. the democratisation of South-North relations:

1. To generally support the activists' personal political development, and through them also strengthen the political movements of the partner countries.
2. To deepen activists' and other people's (trade unionists, politicians, civil servants, students, workers, teachers, etc.) understanding of their position in their own society and in the present global situation, and also enhance these

through an understanding of the reality of a country in the South (India) and in the North (Finland).

3. To strengthen the base of the international solidarity movement and to broaden its understanding of South-North relations,
4. To increase democratic communication between Southern and Northern civil societies, as well as in the South and in the North,
5. To create and respect democratic practices in carrying out this cooperation,
6. To develop a method of cooperation that could also be of use in other cooperation agreements between Southern and Northern partners.

Methods

During the past five hundreds years, the exchange between the modern West, here referred to as the "North" and other cultural spheres, here referred broadly to as the "South" has been deeply shaped by the predominantly exploitative and violent practices of colonialism and imperialism. It is a compelling, but not an easy task to work out methodologies of exchange that will be deeply post-colonial. Present practices of economic and political integration such as in the WTO or the World Bank, and of scientific, technological and cultural cooperation often fail to free themselves from colonial structures of dominance. Even the best practices of political solidarity, as in development aid and cooperation, or in political solidarity work within the communist and socialist internationals or the efforts of agricultural producers or popular movements such as the women's and the environment movements, have often been dismantled because they have repeated the errors of the colonial structures they have set out to correct. Any effort to rebuild the South-North exchange in terms of solidarity and justice must therefore take the question of methodology seriously.

The Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA partnership has been built on a number of methodological assumptions. These assumptions relate to various levels of generality and their articulation has been subject to change as the cooperation has evolved and learning taken place. In 2001 they were defined as follows:

1. It is imperative for idealistic actors to study carefully and jointly the problems and possible shortcomings of those tools for solidarity that they have themselves been involved in, or closely affected by in the recent past.

2. Relations between cultures are multifaceted. The most widely debated and most well known forms of inter-cultural exchange need not be the most formative ones. In their shadow there may be a wealth of positive experience of mutual respect, sharing and democracy in South-North relations. These experiences, which can also have a very long history, need to be closely studied and understood.
3. Despite the urgent need for action, it needs to be acknowledged that the task of developing new tools for democracy and mutuality may be time-consuming.
4. Any real democracy requires that partners of cooperation have an in-depth understanding of each other: in particular of the motivational forces that bring us together from our diverse backgrounds; of the political, economic and cultural resources and constraints that affect the cooperation.
5. South-North cooperation has often been based on the idea that exchange between cultures has the form of a rather mechanical transfer of resources, knowledge or know-how. The methodological implication has been that South-North relations have often been undertaken as an exercise where short-term effects are sought through short-term efforts (you teach me how to build big dams, I teach you how to dance the salsa or write computer programmes, I give you money, you give me your political support for this or that cause, etc.). The Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA cooperation departs from this idea. It takes it as an important fact of life that what people learn from an encounter with other cultures mostly has its deepest and most lasting effects and most profound significance through the life and work that people lead in their home culture. The insight is by no means new. Nevertheless, the sustained effort to make this insight central to its daily processes remains one of the most important and methodologically radical; features of the Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA programme. The concrete work done has not been designed to bring about development or other short-term effects. In fact, a focus on short-term achievements has been seen as a risk, rather than a possibility for the programme. Instead, the leading methodological assumption has been that an in depth sharing of political experience and analysis, of daily work, of grief and celebration will give those involved in the programme, whether intensely or more on the fringes, insights and experiences that will give solidarity depth and serve as basis for a partnership in which democracy is not an empty shell but a substantive practice.

6. The cooperation distances itself from atomistic notions of society and individuality. It has therefore been seen as essential to engage in the programme persons with a deep and tested commitment to collective action, especially in people's movements.
7. The cooperation is also based on a respect for the various forms that best analysis and knowledge takes. Therefore it has been clear in the daily work of the programme that activists may have as much to contribute to political analysis and creativity as established knowledge-professionals have.
8. The partnership has evolved around the notion that dialogue on social and political matters of crucial joint interest is a key method in the creation of democratic relations between the organisations involved and their respective constituencies. A democratic partnership between Lokayan/CSDS and KEPA has been considered necessary for their constructive, joint contribution to South-North democracy. Complete equality of the partners in planning, decision-making and implementing has therefore been sought, although the Northern partner provides the funds for the programme. Within KEPA, the cooperation programme with Lokayan/CSDS has been carried out by a part-time desk officer in cooperation with an active group of committed volunteers. The large role played by volunteers has been seen as a way to strengthen KEPA's role as a popular movement at a time when KEPA, because of its heavy dependence on state funding, runs a certain risk of bureaucratisation at the expense of broad-based participation.

There were four main components, or methods, of concrete work done. These are an activist exchange programme, seminars or dialogues, documentation and analysis, and networking. The quality of each component has been informed by the aforementioned methodological assumptions. All working methods have also, de facto, in actual day-to-day practice, been closely integrated. Therefore, the cooperation programme, as envisaged so far, could not be carried out properly without having all four components. Nevertheless, an effort will be made here to characterise each component briefly.

Through the activist exchange programme activists from KEPA's constituency went to India and activists from the Lokayan-CSDS constituency came to Finland. As short-term observers they took part in the activities of the partner organisation. Participating activists came from the non-party sector of politics,

including trade unions, movement groups and CSOs and from journalism and the academic world. It also involved activists in India and South Asia who would not otherwise have the opportunity to visit Finland due to economic constraints and the lack of connections with international groups that would give them access to travel to international conferences and meetings. The activist exchange is one of the first models known to KEPA and Lokayan/CSDS where there is complete parity in the physical travelling (total length of the Southern and Northern partners' visits in the partner's country is equal) and general reciprocity in the entire programme.

The Lokayan/CSDS cooperation process seeks to act as a countervailing force to the fragmentation and individualisation of the activist scene in the world. Therefore, one idea behind the activist exchange component of the cooperation was to create connections between experienced social and political activists in India and Finland who have a common ideological perspective that can form a base for building a wider network of activist contacts nationally and regionally (South Asia and Europe). It involved the sharing of views on political analysis and priorities, moral ideals and deep-rooted cultural aspirations. The aim of the activist exchange is to bring to the home country, impressions, insights, experiences and analytical skills for the benefit of the relevant political efforts at home and internationally. It aims to support both the spiritual growth of activists, as citizens, and the strengthening of relevant political processes in their home countries.

The experiences of the "activist exchange" were documented throughout the programme in the form of weekly newsletters and a final report at the end of the exchange period. The purpose of the newsletters was both to document events and activities that took place during the exchange period and to provide a space for reflection on activism, one's own motivations as an activist and personal reflections on life in another culture. The manner of writing and volume of text produced varied between the South Asians and Finns. South Asian political workers that were part of the exchange would typically have come from a background in which written reports in English were not a very high priority form of communication. For the Finnish participants the opposite would typically be the case, but not always.

Seminars held mainly in Finland and India are forums to analyse key points of common interest among the partner organisations and their constituencies but also with the representatives from other civil society organisations,

civil servants, politicians and other people interested in and/or relevant to democratising South-North relations. The aim is to organise open dialogues among different kinds of civil society groups on common concerns to create mutual understanding and tentative bases for future activities. The aim is to strengthen civil society capacities by uniting actors and forces, and, thus, breaking down possible disagreements among the civil society actors. Therefore, the process of verbal communication itself is relevant and important, and not only the documentation of these experiences.

Documentation and analyses of the activities are crucial in sharing the processes of the partnership for a wider audience in Finland, India and elsewhere. The aim was that proper documentation and analyses were an integral part of all the activities from the outset. The experiences are presented and analysed in newsletters, reports, visual materials and books. A further aim has been to offer materials for public media in the partners' societies.

Through networking in their respective countries, and internationally, the partner organisations search together for new relevant partners and share experiences of the Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA partnership.

Funding, administration and decision-making

The cooperation programme was financed entirely by the Finnish counterpart KEPA, which in turn gets almost all of its funds from the Finnish state through the Foreign Ministry. Hence KEPA had formal control over all programme expenses and a reporting responsibility towards the Finnish state. KEPA's reporting duty extends to the Indian counterparts in so far as they took on the realisation of certain parts of the programme on the basis of cooperation agreements with KEPA. Due to the trepidation Lokayan felt about the effects of foreign funding on creating truly equitable relations between Southern and Northern partners, a channel of funding was created through CSDS who became the formal fund-receiving organisation. KEPA and Lokayan/CSDS ran the programme jointly through complex procedures of consultation carried out in close conjunction with the programme activities.

The Foreign Ministry finances KEPA on the basis of a programme agreement that is worked out in consultation with KEPA. The agreement between the

Ministry and KEPA provides the framework for KEPA's own budget and activity plan. KEPA's annual meetings, at which all KEPA member organisations are invited to be represented, decide on KEPA's annual budget and activities within that framework. The preparatory work for KEPA's annual general meetings and the implementation of its decisions is the task of KEPA's board and staff. KEPA's board can delegate programme implementation responsibility to working groups consisting of volunteers, which will mostly be individuals active in any of KEPA's member organisations. Mostly, however, KEPA's professional staff runs KEPA's programmes. There are some specific working groups nominated by the board of KEPA, such as the India group. They are central in carrying out the activities and making proposals for the KEPA board but they do not have their own budgets beyond the responsible desk officer in KEPA in charge of this activity.

According to the agreements KEPA made with Lokayan and CSDS, the latter was in charge of certain tasks of editing, publishing, organising dialogues and taking care of related administrative costs, within the framework of the larger cooperation agreement. Funds for the realisation of this part of the programme were transferred from KEPA to CSDS, which decided about the use of these funds and reported back to KEPA in accordance with the agreement. As to all other aspects, the decision-making power concerning programme implementation rested with KEPA's responsible officer (who in turn is responsible to her/his superiors) within the formally accepted action plan. The same officer, together with the management group of KEPA's staff was also formally responsible for making propositions to KEPA's board concerning annual and longer-term budgeting and activity plans, as well as for reporting on activities undertaken and funds spent. In this work, KEPA's Asia desk officer supported the head of the field unit.

The decisions about programme implementation and the allocation of funds within the framework set by KEPA's annual meeting should generally be taken in meetings in which members of Lokayan/CSDS and KEPA (office and the India group) are both present. When this is not possible Lokayan/CSDS and KEPA each had discrete decision-making authority, to which, however, there was a mutual veto-right. If a decision made by the counterpart was vetoed new decisions were taken after mutual consultation.

In practice, Lokayan/CSDS in cooperation with KEPA's India group and Asia desk-officer were in charge of most tasks defined above. Lokayan and CSDS,

the members of the India group and KEPA staff were engaged in a complex process of ongoing discussion and consultation. This discussion was the locus of actual will-formation and therefore the real source from which the cooperation programme got its life. In KEPA's context this cooperation programme was of a special nature because volunteers together with the KEPA staff carried it out.

In India the boards of Lokayan and CSDS were the main bodies of decision-making on the cooperation with KEPA. Most parts of the activities were carried out by the CSDS, and especially through its Lokniti programme, i.e. the Institute for Comparative Democracy. As was noted above, CSDS coordinates the economical resources received from KEPA, and was responsible for organising the seminars or dialogues, carrying out the documenting activities and reporting to KEPA. Lokayan's role was mainly to take part in the planning and carrying out of the exchange activities in India and to cooperate with the CSDS in organising seminars and discussions.

The Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam intiative

Ritu Priya and Vijay Pratap

Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (VK) is an evolving idea rather than an organisation. Currently, many individuals and organisations in Asia and Europe are pursuing the VK agenda of comprehensive democracy. In India, the Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam network co-organised the World Social Forum in Mumbai in January 2004. Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam – or the Coalition for Comprehensive Democracy – is about furthering, strengthening and deepening democracy simultaneously in economic, social, political, cultural, gender and ecological dimensions of life, from local to global levels.

The democratic dream

Modern day dominant science, the social and economic processes, and the polity tend to fragment life, issues and people's ways of looking at them. Democracy has come to mean merely 'representative' political structures. Despite this dominant thrust of institutionalisation over the past 200-500 years, which has culminated in the present processes of monopolistic, hegemonic, and humanly disempowering globalisation, there is another perspective of democracy which is still widely espoused intellectually and intuitively. It is an idea about relationships being based on equality, mutuality and respect – in individual interaction between family members, between communities, between human beings and the rest of nature, in the market, between genders, and the nation state, and between peoples across the nations. The challenge for all of us is to build politics around this perspective to channel all institutions towards ever expanding and deepening democracy.

Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam envisages democracy as a process, a constant struggle for greater degrees of wholesome well being and beauty on

earth. 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' is a Sanskrit concept, meaning 'the World is a Family'. The basic premise of our VK world-view is that no state, no 'church' sect, religion, ideological group, class or socio-political formation, can claim a monopoly of the truth. The truth of each stream of thought is partial because each one is able to capture only some aspects of the Truth and not the Truth as a whole. This forms the basis for a democratic society; diverse truths having to come together to come to as close an understanding of our 'reality' as possible.

Conventionally, democracy is taken to be a political system in which the legitimacy of governance is derived from the electoral process and the right to vote. Such a narrow definition reduces democracy into a mere instrument.

Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam is an idea aspiring to redefine democracy from a mode of governance to a way of life. If democracy informs all levels and dimensions of life, this perspective of comprehensive democracy can be called sampoorn swaraj (full realisation of self-rule; 'swa'-'raj' = self + rule, a term commonly used by Gandhi and the Gandhi-inspired movements in India).

The idea of 'self-rule' goes much beyond the political. It encompasses life itself in a comprehensive manner that makes our lives more meaningful. Swaraj relates to all dimensions of human life and applies to relationships at all levels, from the individual to the global:

1. the relationship between nature and human beings,
2. the dynamic of 'the individual' and 'the community',
3. the dynamic inter-relationship of 'the self' and 'the other',
4. the relationship of individuals and various types and levels of collectivities with governance structures and
5. the relationship of individuals and collectivities with the market.

The striving for democracy within these relationships can be respectively termed ecological democracy, social democracy, cultural democracy, political democracy and economic democracy.

Humankind is striving to redefine all the basic relationships of human life. No single ideology or region can be identified as the vanguard in terms of striving for the above five dimensions of democracy simultaneously. The dimensions are obviously not discrete entities they are closely interwoven in the fabric of human life. We can spell out some common concepts that can knit these dimensions together and give direction to our striving.

- 'Swaraj' or autonomy is a primary striving at all levels: for the individual within the community, for different communities within a society, and for countries across the world.
- 'Swadharm' reminds the autonomous individual/community/country of each one's social role and the ethics of performing that role. (Swa + Dharm = self + ethical duty).
- 'Swabhiman' (self-respect) requires a culture that recognizes the intrinsic worth of each individual/community/society and thus social, political and economic structures as well as ways of functioning that ensure dignity of all.
- 'Sadagi' (simplicity in lifestyle) articulates the necessity of limiting consumption needs and requires the exercise of self-restraint in acquisition of material goods and power, whether over other human beings or over nature.
- 'Swadeshi' (of ones own country/region) roots us in our local ecology, production systems and economy as well as culture in a way that allows 'self-rule', but without iron or bamboo curtains that prevent interaction at all levels within our society or across the world.

Pursuing the democratic dream

There is a comprehensive democratic revolution in the making. The last century has witnessed a series of transformations. They have generated an explosion of human energies never known before, devoted to redefining human life. The praxis of 'new' social movements embodies a much deeper and comprehensive meaning of democracy than that understood and practiced in the mainstream political discourse. Never before in the history of humankind have such a large proportion of human beings worked for swaraj. Our task is contribute our might towards strengthening this striving.

Our method

To date Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam has been more a framework for connecting various levels and dimensions of political work in the manner that new forms of South-North solidarity and partnership could be worked out. It is not an organisation competing with other organisations in terms of visibility and constituency. It owns and considers itself part of the radical democratic movement. The more we dialogue and rub shoulders with each other, the nearer we arrive at a more comprehensive and shared understanding of our times and the possible modes of intervention. The organisational form that Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam takes depends upon the local context in which people come together. Several organisations in India have adopted a program on dialogues for comprehensive democracy, calling it 'the Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam programme'. Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam in India is not a registered organisation but a forum to develop the international dimension of radical democratic politics of the country to become part of the worldwide movement for deepening democracy. In Finland, the Democracy Forum Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam has been registered as an association.

Our method for democratic struggle has three aspects. One is 'dialogue', basically to recognise the contours of the present times. Through dialogues we not only recognise our times but also understand the calling of our times. Dialogue at all levels, including with the adversary, is possible only if we do not believe in the conspiracy theory and believe in the willingness of the human spirit for struggle and self-sacrifice against injustice. However, grasping the essence of the times will be incomplete if we do not simultaneously fight injustice. For this, the second component is 'non-violent civil disobedience' or satyagraha. The third component of the method is 'constructive action' to create structures, activities and life styles in consonance with the vision of a democratic society.

For more information about the VK, visit **www.demokratiafoorumi.fi/wsf.html.**

A taste of equality: Experiences of the activist exchange

Susanne Ådahl

Introduction

One of the Indian participants in the process, Dalit activist Amar Singh Amar, used the phrase 'A Taste of Equality' as the title of the report he wrote on his stay in Finland as part of the activist exchange of the Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA co-operation. It illustrates appropriately the essence of what the activist exchange was all about, its key principle being to have a truly equal partnership in the cooperation process between the partners in India and in Finland. It also refers to the deeply felt sense of equality both between organisations and people involved at all levels of the process. The issue of equality was also a salient part of the Indian activists' experience of the Finnish society. On numerous occasions in their letters written from "the field" they mentioned how they came across equality in terms of education, working relations, in how CSO funding is distributed, etc. For the Finnish activists equality served as a mirror to give us a better understanding of ourselves and our society. For the Indians and the Nepali it was an issue of experiencing equality on a concrete level in the behaviour of people and the way society functions. The South Asians reminded the Finns of how fortunate they are to have this equality as an integral part of their society.

The activists drew a cultural and social portrait of the societies they visited. Through the descriptions of their own experiences of these societies they pointed out the idiosyncrasies and quirky aspects of life, such as that in Finland there are designated parks for dogs, large boulders in the city for city children to play on, and that people living in the midst of welfare avoid helping a drunk man in distress. In short, the Indian activists reveal to the Finns what lies behind the glossy surface of the welfare society and point to the gradual process

of dismantling taking place before our eyes, the loss of rights that generations have fought to achieve through numerous movements. These movements are still alive in many sectors of the Indian society, because basic rights are far from being satisfied in large sectors of the population.

Coming face-to-face with conditions of material scarcity, inequality and people's struggles to have their basic needs met was perhaps the most stark experience for Finnish activists in India. It raised questions regarding the structure and importance of the family, religion, ritual and solidarity in everyday life. In India Finns also came across habits and customs that are an integral part of Indian society, for instance drinking tea all the time, being curious about other people and asking direct questions, taking a lot of time to do everything, feeding guests large amounts of food and offering to be at their service.

The question of experience and the value it has in shaping social action is often underrated. Experience is hard to quantify and shape into a comprehensible unit of measurement. The outcome of activist's experiences and learning may be reflected in work they carry out immediately upon returning from the activist exchange period or it may gradually trickle into their actions over an extended period of time. What is certain is that experience is a vital building block of learning based on practical action and the production of knowledge that informs action.

This section is based on reflections on experiences that have emerged in newsletters and final reports written by Indian activists visiting Finland and Finnish activists visiting India. The structure of the publication has these experiences as its starting point and source of information. These experiences, which are at once political and personal, indicate how culture and cultural understanding shapes us as agents, individuals set on changing the world. Experience feeds the desire to make a better world and to respect knowledge that supports sustainability and equality in both human relations and the world at large.

Activists and activities

What activists are made of

Social activists are people who act as the conscience and voice of many individuals within a society. They address and challenge their nation and the world on ethical, moral and human rights issues and advocate change for the better. The impetus to become involved in social activism can be born from many sources. The activists that participated in the activist exchange came from a variety of backgrounds and had various reasons for becoming activists.

Indian activist Amar Singh Amar says that activism for him has sprung from his own experience, from the reality of his life at the grassroots. "I am from a low class and caste, and I know about everyday problems better than many others. We are learning and practicing on a mass basis. It is a kind of a laboratory where one experiments, finds theories and establishes laws. This is my kind of activism."

He explains that because basic human needs are not fulfilled for large portions of the population it is difficult for people to think beyond these issues and engage in activism. The connection to problems and issues at the grassroots is also an advantage, as Amar points out. Familiarity with the issues makes activism a quotidian learning process that both informs political action and fulfils human needs.

Indian activist Atal Behari Sharma, whose background is in a high caste family, is as an activist a product of his own childhood experiences. The reality around him and his need to work hard and study at the same time in his early teenage years made him become a social activist: "I became a social activist at the age of 13. The social, political and economic conditions around me drew me to an activist movement at an early age, while I was studying and working to supplement my family income. To tell the truth, not any particular ideology, but the conditions around me made me an activist."

These comments illustrate how activism is primarily about politics of the person, of life experience on the concrete level of living conditions that is transformed into political action on a grassroots level.

In Finland activists do not need to think about survival the way South Asian activists do. The motivations of Finnish activists move more in the sphere of global justice and making the world a better place to live. Because basic needs are not a primary issue for most Finns who are activists, the motivational factors affecting activism move on a more general level of basic rights, justice and solidarity with countries and people who are struggling to survive in a world where resources are unevenly distributed and market forces dictate the patterns of wealth distribution. Many of the Finnish activists have their roots in the environmental movement and have a background of studies in the social sciences and development studies. Marko Ulvila's comment on his motivation to become an activist illustrates this well: "The question that has occupied my mind for several years now is how we can find ways to challenge collectively the overwhelming forces driving humanity towards greater inequality and further environmental degradation. This joint question of poverty and environment has been a continuing theme in all of my adult life. I was addressing it primarily as an activist in several citizens' organisations such as Coalition for Environment and Development and Friends of the Earth Finland. Also in my studies at the University of Tampere I have selected disciplines and themes that have enabled me to learn more about these questions."

Activism also extends into the arena of local politics: "I was active in different CSOs and movements since the early 90s, but have lately concentrated on working in Friends of the Earth Finland - an organisation I helped to found and co-chaired for two years. My special expertise is climate change and related policies and politics. Back at home I am also busy taking part in politics in the Green Party and as a deputy member of the Tampere city council." (Oras Tynkkynen, Finnish activist and presently MP of the Green League)

For the Finnish activists, participating in exchange activism within the international solidarity movement is most often a product of the ideology of global equity with a focus on global economic and environmental issues. The Indian experience shows that there are two types of activists in India, largely reflecting the segregation of society found there and, for some activists, the difficulty in having to struggle to fulfil your own basic needs while doing activism. Due to a lack of democratic funding principles in India development funds are distributed on the basis of social, economic, political and cast considerations.

Amar Singh Amar points out these differences: "In India, I think there are two kinds of activists: Firstly the people of the elite classes, who have a lot of facilities like education, opportunities to develop and a rich family background. They address WTO, environment and such issues. They easily get funding from India and abroad. They have no problems with food or housing. The second type of activists in India are the tribals, indigenous people, Dalits and the Muslim minority. Because they are facing the problems they know them and the solutions better than other people. This is also knowledge gotten from being educated by the struggle. In India activists have commitment."

Differences in social class seem to dictate where the main thrust of one's activism lies. For those activists in India who do not need to be concerned with survival on a personal level the focus of their activism is much the same as among activists in Finland - it is concerned with global issues and to find solutions to local problems through issues on the global level. Rita Nahata summarises the issue of the differences within society as a fight for rights on different levels – the national or the global: "Of course our activism is fighting the injustices within, whereas activism in Finland is concerned with global issues."

With the Indian experience as a backdrop, when she came to Finland Rita wanted to learn about the society that produces highly committed and devoted activists, like the ones she met through the activist exchange in India. She admits that although she came to Finland with an open mind she nonetheless had very black and white ideas about Finnish society and hoped her visit would teach her a lot to correct her preconceptions. She also hoped she could share some of the heritage of Gandhian thought with Finnish activists, its techniques and methods of social reform.

Usha Tiwari mentions that also in Nepal activism is about a lack of basic infrastructure facilities – there is a lack of clean water, heaters, schools, good housing, parks. Activism is segregated into sectoral issues and groups of activists may be separated from each other. While attending a critical mass demonstration in Turku she noticed that a wide variety of activists were there and that the police were there to ensure security. In Finland religious groups and political parties participate in the same rally. In Nepal this would not happen, nor do the police protect demonstrators. Activism is also about practising what you preach. She finds it is significant that you, as an activist or leader, through your lifestyle

communicate the ideology that you support: "The president of the communist party in Finland comes to the office on a bicyle. Finns pay taxes to the Finnish government which in turn comes to Nepal. Here in Nepal, from that money, with further subsidies, the leaders of the communist party ride in a pajero (jeep)."

Oras Tynkkynen, while visiting Rita Nahata's parents, was impressed by their lifestyle as practising Jains. The ideology of respecting all forms life was clearly seen in the way organic waste was recycled as food to the cows on the street and not wasting any resources in the household. Despite the family being well off they used very little electricity and water. Activism, thus, should be seen as an issue of lifestyle or attitude that pervades all areas of life, where the private is not separated from the public. Commitment to the causes one struggles for and overall credibility is illustrated by how one adapts in everyday practices what one talks about in meetings, rallies or writes about in different forms of media.

Rita Nahata speaking at an international dialogue on the Finnish involvement in tropical forests, 1999. Indonesian forestry activist Hasrul Junaid listens.

Themes covered (types of activities)

For the purpose of clarity the aims and experiences of the activists were loosely placed within the dimensions of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (VK), as many aspects of the experiences could fit within more than one category at the same time. Most activists arrived in the partner country with a clear set of aims and in addition they followed a number of both planned and ad hoc activities to give them a broad perspective of the partner country's culture, society and the manner in which solidarity movements, organisations and politics worked, and followed the way in which partner organisations worked. A number of their reflections included personal journeys by following both everyday and special events. In this manner they were participants and observers - outsiders trying to gain some degree of cultural competence during their stay in a foreign culture. They participated in numerous events from demonstrations, sit-ins, informal meetings to seminars and conferences, parliamentary sessions. They also met people with particular expertise on environmental issues, vernacular knowledge, indigenous rights, Dalit issues, alternative energy, politics and political parties. Many of the insights and information came through informal discussions with people about society or by following current affairs. They also visited schools and universities to give general talks on subjects ranging from Indian society to globalisation. Some were interviewed by the press.

The seminars attended took up a variety of societal and civil rights themes: land disputes in Bodhgaya; the role of social movements; voluntarism in Nepal; empowerment of women; micro-financing and the case of the Grameen bank; AIDS, stigmatisation and weakening of basic health work; traditional science and technology (people's technology); relations between India and Nepal; agriculture and food; forest preservation; the WTO and its effect on developing countries.

Political democracy

A number of the Indian activists were interested in learning more about the political system in Finland and how it works. Of specific interest was to understand how a coalition government works. This learning was achieved by talking to political activists, politicians, members of political parties and by attending meetings and seminars in the parliament. In India Finnish activists became acquainted

with the Indian political system by reading newspapers and talking to Indian activists about the political developments in the society. The rise of Hindu nationalism through parties such as the Bharatiya Janata Party, also called the saffron rule, has been an issue of focus for Finnish (and Indian) activists in India. They also attended seminars dealing with political and administrative reform and the right to information in Indian society. Relations between India and Nepal were discussed at a seminar on the environmental, economic and strategic concerns of the two countries. The main problem areas identified were the melting of the Himalaya glaciers, caused by climatic change, as well as the impact of water schemes on the river systems of the plains of the Indian sub-continent. Additional factors that cause friction are trade barriers on exports from Nepal to India and economic pressures caused by globalisation and political unrest in the Seven Sisters region of Northeast India.

A large area of focus has been on funding relations and the changing role of voluntary organisations and the concept of voluntarism. In Nepal, modern CSOs are contributing to reducing the number of traditional voluntary activities, and they are part of the dominating structures of the upper casts over the indigenous nationalities. The Maoist People's War which started in the areas of indigenous peoples, has driven away the international and local CSOs. The international agenda of rights does not match local realities, and therefore many CSOs speak a different language from the people. Foreign funding has diverted attention away from struggle movements to advocacy where the issues have shifted from protest to awareness and education. In development aid there is an element of morality but it is tied to the power structures of dominance. Foreign funding has paralysed popular movements that contributed to the democratisation process of 1990 in Nepal and created CSOs without bases and often with very close links to political parties. Indian activist and scholar Professor D.L. Seth noted that in development aid there is an element of morality but it is tied to the power structures of dominance. In India there is what Indian activist Arun Kumar calls "the poverty of mind", by which he means that people believe that they cannot do anything without funding from abroad.

Another trend visible within the CSO sector is the process of corporatisation, which was very evident among CSOs in Bangladesh that Indian activist Rajendra Ravi and I visited. The world's largest CSOs are found in Bangladesh and it is an economy largely dependent on foreign aid with 60-70% of the national

budget consisting of foreign funding. In Bangladesh, CSO work is equated with social work and not voluntarism in the ideological sense. CSOs have political clout and are viewed as political actors by the establishment. The CSOs were originally established as a result of relief work initiated after the liberation war in the early 70s. Several of them were initially born out of movements. What started out as voluntarism today bears the label of professionalism, institutionalisation and a steady move into the corporate sector. CSOs are being co-opted into the world of liberal market forces under the guise of financial sustainability. They are now into sectors as diverse as telecommunications, real estate, transportation, and cold storage. Foreign donors have failed to push for a political dialogue on how market liberalisation is destroying income generating sectors supported by donor money throughout the 1990s. Development work has been carried out in isolation from social and political developments in society. Today, CSOs are building more active links to various sectors of society, including business and government sectors.

Oras Tynkkynen noted this corporate twist among CSOs dealing with climate and other international issues. Environmental organisations start to act like corporations and are located somewhere in the lobby space with corporations. The language - not only of climate issues, but globalisation, biodiversity and bio-safety and so on - is very technical and alienating for other CSOs and the public. The impetus for action and a drive to improve conditions in society that sprung from the grassroots and built on voluntary work is now moving into the corporate sector both concretely and ideologically.

Economic democracy

The gradual movement towards a centralisation of services, knowledge and power can be witnessed both in India and Finland. Decision-making is becoming centralised and the knowledge, resources and, it seems experiences of ordinary citizens are becoming increasingly marginalised. Daily we are witnessing how large structures are replacing the small, the local and the accessible. Small corner shops are turning into mega markets located miles outside the city, skills of the hand and knowledge based on learning between people is being replaced by automation and artificial intelligence.

Vernacular knowledge

In the Indian context the forces of liberalisation are gradually affecting the social fabric of a country with age old wisdom, ideology and practice of self-sustainability, vast resources and a large and resourceful population. Finnish activists were introduced to Arun Kumar, one of the central activists of the Patriotic People Oriented Science and Technology Foundation (PPST). The foundation's main concern is the loss of the use and respect of vernacular knowledge. It calls for a decolonisation of science and technology. Arun Kumar feels that Indians have not been able to confront colonial consciousness and to de-connect themselves from the colonial past. The technological skills of Indian artisans go back hundreds of years and, to date, a vast repertory of local wisdom lies in 'street technology'. The notion of universal science is destructive because in the process of the standardisation that it demands it leaves no space for local variation and adaption. Indian activists are critical of how western values and systems are imposed on countries such as India, a process called cultural transplantation. The media behind cultural transplantation include among others the use of English, the western notion of liberal values, technology and modern science.

Small scale technology was presented to Indian activists while in Finland through visits to eco-farms and a technology centre dealing with alternative energy. The use and recycling of basic technology was also represented by the Estelle fair trade freight ship project that some of the Indian activists visited.

Agriculture

Through discussions with Indian activists the Finnish activists in India became familiar with the plight of smallholder farmers, among whom there are masses of suicides out of desperation at being unable to survive by farming. They are powerless when faced with the high interest loans and rising production costs that started as a result of economic reforms introduced in 1991. The People's Science Congress on Food and Agriculture had as it aim to reveal the true agenda of the Indian Science Congress in its launching of an aggressive corporate takeover of Indian agriculture and agricultural research. Demands by the IMF and the World Bank made the Indian government re-tailor its agricultural policy in 1994. Although 70% of Indian agriculture consists of smallholdings, the opinions and

experiences of smallholders are excluded from policy making on agriculture. On a global level, mainstream economists have forgotten the people in economics and only talk of services, capital and goods. The belief that there will be only one market producing for all the people is a preposterous one. In India production should be by the masses rather than a move towards mass production through corporate farming and the industrialisation of food production.

The situation in Finland is of a different scale but, similarly, smallholders' livelihoods are threatened by agricultural policy making dictated by the EU and, in the last instance, the WTO. Indian activists learned that since Finland became a part of the process of economic liberalisation and a member of EU the problems in Finnish society have increased. Enormous changes have happened in agriculture after Finland joined the EU. Subsidies to small farmers were decreased and it is now difficult for them to subsist. EU policies benefit big farmers. Employment opportunities in rural areas in the farming and handicrafts sector are decreasing because of globalisation and at the same time opportunities in urban areas have diminished due to labour retrenchment and the expansion of multinationals.

Handicrafts

Deepa Sharma, an Indian activist working in the handicraft sector in India, says that as an Indian she had prejudices about handicraft skills in Europe, but revised her views once she came to Finland: "We have grown up thinking of Europe in the images of industry, machines and generally things large scale. In terms of skills and sense of colour and aesthetics the Finnish craft tradition is as good as the best we have."

What she found during her visit in Finland was that the state has played an imaginative role in keeping handicraft skills alive and has introduced the teaching of various craft skills in elementary school. She also became acquainted with community centres where craft skills are taught and handlooms are available for public use. But she found it disappointing that crafts can no longer be a source of livelihood because the price of craft goods is too high and only attainable to the wealthy. Unlike the older traditional crafts, the things made are ornamental and not for everyday use and perhaps cannot have a place in people's everyday lives. Making crafts unaffordable is a step towards making them slowly extinct, soon to become things to be displayed and seen only in museums.

Piia Saari who visited India to study the production of Indian handicrafts and the role of fair trade learned about the ways the British influenced the Indian weaving industry and the ways the present global culture and mass production destroys the real handicrafts of the area. Traditional craftspeople in Rajasthan, the area she visited, belong to certain castes, practise their profession at home with the whole family involved in the different tasks, buy the raw materials from and sell the final products at the local market. The cheaper, factory-made cloth and garments industry and the increasing demand of standard-sized products for export sales have meant a threatening burden of unemployment and the loss of the skills of generations. The middlemen play the main role in the chain as purchasers, wholesalers and exporters, and they are the ones who dictate to the artisans what to produce and at which rate to sell. For Piia, observing the living conditions and styles at each stage and the discussions with these people was an interesting lesson not only about crafts, but also about people's views of their profession.

In Finland not only handicrafts, but also small scale businesses in general are disappearing, multinationals take over and there is less national production and goods in shops, as Rita Nahata noticed of Finnish trade. She complains that there is a lack of "Made in Finland" goods in the shops and was pained to see deserted factory building and hear that many Finnish industries have died or are dying. Instead of corner shops with personal service there is a steady increase in mega markets accessible only by car: "The most shocking example of this is a Jumbo K-market. It is so huge that for a first timer it is very difficult to locate the merchandise he/she wants to buy without the help of a map."

City planning

Rapid societal transformations have raised living standards, causing serious traffic and parking problems in the cities because middle and upper class Indians can now afford to buy cars and some families even own more than one. The Master Plan of Delhi and the World Bank-funded "clean cities project" aims to remove polluting industries and making the city fit for foreign investors and the multinational corporations that, the government hopes, will follow in their wake. This mega project of city beautification involves the building of flyovers and of forcibly moving many industries to the satellite towns, making space for those

moving up the ladder of economic success. This also involves the removal of slow moving, but also non-polluting traffic forms such as cycles, rickshaws and bullock carts. In public areas such as the railway stations the coolie system will be replaced by the use of self-service luggage carts and street vendors will be removed from the streets. These are just a few examples of how public spaces for the poor are diminished. Lokayan has been addressing social and political issues that concern the marginalised and discriminated populations of India, rickshaw pullers being one of them. They have a working group called "Jan Parivahan Panchayat" (an organisation of Rickshaws, Cyclists and Pedestrians) convened by Rajendra Ravi.

Indian activists' experience of city planning in Finland was related to the use of public spaces and the functioning of the public transport system. They noted that infrastructure is good, roads are spacious and public transport works very well. Just experiencing buses arriving exactly on time was something new to them. Also, the availability of public transport at night was something that Usha Tiwari appreciated coming from Kathmandu where there is no public transport after 7 pm. The need to be mobile and the growth in consumerist values has initiated a new trend in Nepal. People sell property to buy a motorbike – it has become a status symbol. She also noted that although there are spacious roads in Finland, that space is being privatised because there are only one or two persons in a car. There are many other public spaces accessible to all citizens in Finland such as parks and market places. Rajendra Ravi was impressed by how street vendors are provided official market stalls in the open-air markets of Helsinki and that they are distributed, without discrimination, to anyone who wants to sell goods at the market. The public access to, use of and state of libraries was to them yet another indication of how public spaces are open to all citizens and sufficient resources were used to maintain them. Even dogs in Finland are provided with their own public spaces in the form of specially designated dog parks.

Ecological democracy

Finnish activists attended a number of forest preservation projects and a project to protect Lake Chilika, and learnt about the environmental effects of the Tehri dam project. What was striking was the innovative ways in which these projects had mobilised the local population.

Forest preservation

In the Doodahtoli forest of the Garhwal Hills an Indian activist had noticed that the forest in his local area was being felled by the government. So he set out on foot to get local people to join in the struggle to preserve the forest. The mobilisation technique involved talking to local women about their every day problems and how the lack of trees makes life difficult for them. Talks with one group of women eventually led to the birth of a whole movement, the establishment of tree nurseries and workshops.

Oras Tynkkynen noted that spirituality was also part of the preservation of nature – offerings are made to the Himalayas in a show of respect towards the greatness of nature. The importance of religious values became evident also in other protection projects. Oras found that people perform rituals to close the areas they want to protect and impose their own sanctions. They will also close one area at a time, use it for some time and move on to another one, which gives the forest time to recover and is a more sustainable use of resources. Holy trees near temples serve as seed banks for small areas. Sometimes, when a child is named the priest will bless a sapling with the same name. The sapling will be planted near the house and taken care of as a part of the family. Saplings can also be planted in memory of the dead. In projects of the Indian WWF branch myths about Krishna's life are used to create environmental awareness. Oras learnt from Devendra Sharma, the person in charge of the WWF Vrindavan Conservation Project that: "Arguments based on science that are commonly used in Northern countries might fall on deaf ears as many of the local people are illiterate and uneducated. However, all of them know the myths surrounding the life of Krishna. For instance, it might be difficult to argue to the common people why untreated waste should not be let to flow in the Yamuna. Instead of talking about

how waste pollutes the water, Mr. Sharma often reminds people of how Krishna killed a water demon residing in the river. Preventing the Yamuna from getting polluted is thus like killing the demon."

Climate issues

The effects of environmental destruction were most starkly visible in the cyclone-affected areas of Orissa. As a western activist Oras found it educational to see on a local level the effects of unsustainable consumption patterns in the North. The devastation of the Orissa cyclone of 2000 was largely manmade, and it was more devastating than before because of deforestation (cutting down mangrove forests that protect the coast line) and global warming (sea levels rising).

"Based on my experiences in India, it would seem that climate change does not feature very high on the agenda of the activist community as there are so many other, often more urgent things to deal with. The Southern countries will be the first to suffer and the devastation will be markedly more than in the North." (Finnish activist Oras Tynkkynen)

Oras suggests that the most equitable way to go about distributing the burden of emission reductions is to set a level of per capita emissions that is equal for all countries of the world. There could be a massive flow of resources back from North to South as industrialised countries would have to buy unused emission quotas from more frugal Southern nations. Indian activists feel that the climate justice movement is really unique and has overcome barriers, brought together people who would not have otherwise have come together, but that there still there remains a lack of political trust between Southern and Northern CSOs.

Pollution

An environmental concern in Orissa is the state of Lake Chilika, which has prompted the development of a movement to save the environment of the lake. One of the biggest threats to the lake is prawn culture, which started in the 1980s and adds to the lake silting up, destroys natural vegetation and pollutes the water with extra nutrients. To save their livelihoods, fishermen were actively involved in Chilika Bachao Andolan (Save the Chilika Movement). The movement

has raised awareness of environmental threats, organised public meetings and seminars, lobbied decision-makers and organised dharnas to highlight threats to the future of the lake. The movement has been able to convince the industrial giant Tata to withdraw from a prawn cultivation project. One of its greatest achievements so far is the Orissa High Court judgment banning intensive prawn culture in Chilika.

Another major environmental concern is the issue of pollution in Asia's mega cities. The rapid expansion of cities and rising standards of living for the upper and upper middle classes has witnessed a growth in industries in inner city areas and in the use of private cars. Oras Tynkkynen noted that whenever he talked with Delhites travelling on buses a popular topic was air pollution. Delhi is considered to be the second most polluted city in the world. The city's 12-or-so million people have more than three million vehicles, most of them two-wheelers. The number of vehicles tripled between 1981 and 1991 and nearly doubled between 1991 and 2001 to four million. On average five people are killed and 13 injured in traffic every day in Delhi.

Rajendra Ravi and I concretely faced the thick smog of inner city Dhaka while in Bangladesh. The city of 9 million inhabitants has been ranked as the most polluted in Asia. Exhausts from nearly 175,000 motor vehicles, including 40,000 auto rickshaws, saturate the air with 50 tonnes of lead annually. Chronic respiratory diseases are on the rise and an estimated 15,000 premature deaths and several million cases of sickness are thought to be caused by exposure to air pollution. Discussions with activists of the Intermediate Technology Development Group revealed that the government, in the name of free market forces, continues to provide import tax reductions on cars. It also welcomes a World Bank project that mentions in passing that pollution is a problem that needs to be dealt with. Of greater concern to these projects seems to be the reduction of traffic jams by banning what is considered unnecessary forms of traffic, such as rickshaws. No pressure groups are suggesting a restriction of cars entering the road network or an improvement of the public transport system. Rajendra Ravi and I noticed that it was difficult, if not impossible, to find organisations actively working with pollution issues and working in support of the use of cycle rickshaws.

Cultural democracy and dignity

Whether one is talking of societies in the South or in the North, there are groups of peoples whose basic civic right to a dignified life is unfulfilled. For Finnish activists an issue that has come to represent the hierarchical structure of the Indian society and the epitome of injustice is the situation of the casteless section of the population, the Dalits. Also, new groups such as gays and lesbians have emerged fighting for their rights in Indian society. Most of the Indian activists had an interest that initially was hard for the Finnish organisers to fulfil, which was to get in touch with marginalised groups in Finnish society and those that live in a situation of material scarcity. This was a challenge because there are no clear areas such as "slums" where these population groups are located. The organisations that most concretely work with marginalised populations in Finland are those working for the rights of homeless people.

Dalits

Although they number 160 million constitute a sixth of the population in India and their contribution to the nation is vast, Dalits ("oppressed") or untouchables still suffer from blatant prejudice, discrimination and, at times, also violence in Indian society. In many schools Dalit children are made to sit separately - provided, of course, that they get access to education in the first place. They may not drink from the same pitcher with other children and may have to bring their own pattis (carpets) from home to sit on. In many villages barbers refuse to cut the hair of Dalits and Dalit grooms are not allowed to ride a horse - a customary part of the wedding ceremony. They may be required to stand up when upper-caste people pass by and sometimes tea shops use separate glasses to serve Dalits and non-Dalits. Dalit leaders have appreciated the positive contributions made by modern education, science and notions of equality in the legal system, whereas tradition is marked by the inhuman treatment of Dalits. Today, the forces of globalisation are reducing one of the main avenues for regular income for the Dalits, the reserved jobs in government and public sector institutions. Dalit activist Amar Singh Amar when in Finland specifically noted all the central Finnish justice issues that differed from the situation he experienced as a Dalit in India. He was

particularly appreciative of the fact that in the Finnish educational system there is no discrimination in education and all citizens are treated equally.

Indigenous people/Adivasis

Another group in Indian society whose plight was highlighted to Finnish activists in India was that of the indigenous people. In Orissa Oras Tynkkynen visited two tribal villages and was told that the Adivasis there are the poorest and most backward in India: "What is most striking is the apathy and lethargy that has taken hold of the villagers. They do not seem to have much hope for the future and do not even try to improve their lot. The current rates of deforestation, climate change, population growth, corruption, alcoholism, crime and poverty already constitute enough problems. Knowing that these people have all but lost the desire to improve their lives, I really do not dare to think what their future will be like."

Lokayan, and particularly tribal rights activist Smithu Kothari, were actively supporting the process of self-governance among Adivasis. The Indian government blames the indigenous groups for denuding forest areas, although in reality forest cover in the Northeast of India has survived and has actually grown as a result of indigenous natural resource management methods. Smitu Kothari stresses that an important step in the move towards more democratic control over resources and decisions that affect the lives of Adivasis is the issue of self-governance. This is a process that Lokayan has been actively following and supporting.

During an informal visit to the home of another tribal rights advocate, Professor Roy Burman, I was told of another major threat to the well-being of indigenous groups. At the heart of the conflict is the fact that 80% of Indian mineral resources are in the tribal areas, as well as most of the country's hydroelectric and silviculture resources. Professor Burman has for many years been involved with Nagaland, a tribal area in North-eastern India located in the so called Seven Sisters region. The interest shown in the area by multinational companies has to do with the vast oil and gas resources found there. In a public statement made during a recent visit to the area the Counsellor General of the USA said the region should be made fit for foreign investment.

The homeless

A number of the Indian activists met homeless people in Helsinki. Amar learned that there is a total of some 10000 people without a home in Finland and 4000 of them live in Helsinki. He wondered how they survive living outside in a harsh climate and asked the homeless why they don't do anything about the situation: "Why don't you just go and build a house? There is a lot of land, you can make an organisation."

The homeless answer: "Oh, but that is government land. It is wrong, illegal. No, no, we can't do this as it will be against the government and the government is our friend."

Amar wondered why there is not a culture of fighting for a more dignified life by occupying land and thus defying a welfare state that does not provide for their basic needs. He wondered why people are like slaves of the welfare society. Finnish activist Marko Ulvila answered his question by explaining that because people in Finland view the state as a friend they find it is useless and counter-productive to fight against the state. Amar said the homeless should cooperate with an organisation like Oranssi, a housing rights organisation for young people, to solve their housing crisis. He also found that in a developed high-tech nation like Finland there are still poor people in society who are given free food by the state. Also Usha Tiwari came across people who live in a shelter. A homeless man told her his story of his business failing, having to sell his car, and how very difficult it is to get a permanent room in a shelter. "A person who lived in a shelter told me how a rich person can become poor in Finland. If I do not have a house or do not have money to pay rent I have to sleep on the street which is not allowed here."

Social democracy

By spending time in Finnish society Indian activists concretely experienced how the principles of social democracy work. They took an interest in basic needs provision in Finnish society such as health services, education, elderly care, sanitation, family structure, the transport system.

There are many factors that affect the civil rights situation in India such as the rise of Hindu chauvinist rule, increased crimes and abuse against women. There are women's organisations working to defend women's rights. Raped

women are ostracised as prostitutes or then cases are silenced completely. Perpetrators are protected by the increase in Hindu nationalism as leaders of this "Saffron Rule" portray women only as mothers and sisters.

Indian activists found that one of the concerns of Finnish activists is maintaining the level of social security and opposing the privatisation of government services. The welfare state is built on institutions funded by tax money and when a corporate logic starts entering the system the wellbeing of individuals, such as elderly residents, is threatened. The government provides citizens with a myriad of resources such as good public libraries, a well functioning and efficient public transport system and well cared for public spaces such as city parks. By being in Finland Indian activists were able to witness how globalisation and liberalisation affects Finnish society and in ways similar to those in India. It gave them a new found feeling of solidarity with the North.

Social Movements

The issue of rights and the struggle for rights in India has old roots through the work of various movements fighting for equity issues. Finnish activist Marko Ulvila talked about the development and importance of central Finnish movements – the labour movement and the agrarian movement – to groups of Indian activists. He highlighted the new challenges created by globalisation and the emergence and scope for international action. He also made an investigation into the history of one of the most central movements in India, the Jai Prakash Narayan movement. For many activists in Lokayan and other organisations and networks, the Jai Prakash Narayan movement has played a determining role in personal development. The energetic spirit of the movement and shared experiences in prison during the emergency period in India in the years 1975-77 has left a lasting impact on a generation of activists that are today leading numerous voluntary popular movements and organisations. Also, many present day politicians attribute the beginning of their careers to the movement.

During the past two and half decades India and the world have changed quite a bit, but most of the problems addressed by the JP movement in the Total Revolution agenda remain unresolved. The oppression of the tribals, Dalits and religious minorities persists and the economic policy of India is closer to capitalism

than ever before since independence. It can therefore be predicted that a new wave of broad people's movements will emerge, but it is difficult to estimate if this will be along the same lines as the JP Movement or if it will take different forms and directions. One expression of continuity is the National Alliance of People's Movement where the activists that were young during the JP Movement play a leading role. The NAPM is strengthening local struggles by bringing together communities, activists and organisations to make a stronger and more lasting impact on society. Its some dozen local struggles have yielded justice and wellbeing to hundreds of thousands of people in various subaltern communities. However, it has not been able to stay united and there were smaller and larger divisions into different, sometimes even antagonistic, camps and factions.

Dialogues continue... Atal Sharma (second from left), Marko Ulvila and Vijay Pratap (right) in a discussion on political parties and global democratisation in Delhi, 2005.

A learning process

Being different

Coming to a very different culture from one's own can be a challenge on both a practical and an ideological level. Because you are not socially and culturally competent in terms of expected and appropriate behaviour you need to come to terms with the issue of being different and of hoping your environment will understand and accept that you are different. Coming from a "conquering" country can cause apprehension and feelings of guilt and a need to prove that one opposes the methods and ideologies of the colonial past. The manner of being may also differ starkly from what one is used to.

Anastasia Laitila explains: "As the Indian culture is not very familiar to me I sometimes worry about my very European point of view. I belong to the cast of Europeans who carry the post-colonial cross of belonging to an over-priviledged race of conquerors who have a very narrow view of the world despite proving narrow or not. I also hope my ways of working will not feel too strange to the activists here. I like to observe first in order to get to know the working culture, the people and the topics before actively participating in discussion. It is also my way of respecting other people and their way of working, as I don't feel comfortable taking a strong stand in issues I might not know so much about. Also as Oras wrote in his report, I also speak little by Indian standards. In some way it feels great to go to the currency exchange and they will call you Madam though you smell bad, look tired and are uncertain about cultural behaviour."

Being a Dalit and subjected to discrimination in everyday life made Amar Singh Amar apprehensive of how he would be received by people in Finnish society. He felt an additional problem was that he could not speak fluent English and feared that people would not be able to understand him: "I was a little scared in the beginning after reaching Finland as I am neither a good orator nor do I have a good command of English. As I began to intermingle with the people in Finnish society I didn't even realize when I became integrated with them which washed away all my apprehension. One thing, which impressed me most, was that there is no discrimination between people belonging to different strata of the society

and everyone was given the same treatment. The intimacy and equal treatment of the people, replaced my apprehension and inferiority complex with newborn self-confidence."

For him, being treated differently than he was used to at home was a positive and empowering experience. Amar was also apprehensive about being criticised by other Dalit activists when he returned home, but admonished him for having taken a trip abroad, because for them a real activist should primarily solve problems at home.

Difference was also marked by dietary customs such as being a strict vegetarian. Atal Behari Sharma worried about how he would cope as a vegetarian while in Finland: "Another big fear I had was my strict vegetarianism. I thought how will I survive in a predominantly meat eating country. Brought up in a traditional Brahmin family where, till recently, eating out of house itself was considered a defiant behaviour, eating at the same table where meat, fish and eggs are served was a sacrilege. Moreover, I was always worried about the cooking medium, what if they use animal fats and other products in preparing the 'so called' vegetarian food items! It was impossible to know whether a particular vegetarian preparation was a right kind of food item for me, especially when instructions and ingredients were written in Finnish, Swedish or Russian languages. I very soon developed my own survival kit of eating."

To his surprise Atal noticed that there were stricter vegetarians like vegans and fenno-vegans in Finland who do not even touch milk products which are considered vegetarian in Asia. Some of these vegetarians and vegans will only eat food that is naturally/organically produced in Finland.

Because of the ideology of egalitarianism we were raised with Finns expect to be treated "just like everyone else", but coming from a wealthy "western" country places one in a different category at times, as Anastasia Laitila felt on occasion in India: "So many people want to talk to you because you're a foreigner, and often it's nice but I was fairly upset when I again realized that no matter what I do or am in reality, in the South I will first and foremost be a possible donor agency simply because I come from a prosperous part of the world. But I am trying very hard to understand the debates and the discourse and not to be socially illiterate. Sundarlal Bahuguna said that the essence of culture is that life is everywhere and that pollution of our minds and hearts will destroy the world, that the

East sees divinity in nature, life that should be respected and worshipped. When people accuse the Western culture, I feel they are pointing their words to me, as if I represented the West simply because I come from Europe."

Fears and prejudices are important ingredients of a learning process because they not only teach us about the values of another culture, but also give us vital insights into ourselves and how we are situated in relation to others.

Learning from different lives

Many ways and customs may also be liberating and eye-opening in the sense that they reflect back, like a mirror, on how things are done in one'sown society: "I was trying to observe the cultural differences here – like for example people working nightshift will sleep when they are tired, which is impossible in Finland. I'm so glad I can take my shoes off in this country and nobody cares. People are more curious and social and will come up and talk to you, at least if they know English." (Anastasia Laitila, Finnish activist)

Hospitality and food culture

One aspect of Indian culture that the Finnish activists commented on was hospitality and the ease with which one was brought into the private and family lives of Indian families because family in a comprehensive way is more important in India than in Finland: "Everybody wants to invite you to their home. Indians will feed you more food than you have had in your life in Finland. Food is for survival but how to say that you really can't eat more or don't want to although the food is great? I couldn't figure this out the last time and I have no idea if this can be done since I am here as a guest and everybody looks after my well-being. I get told that for Hindus a guest is like God, but sometimes I can't help feeling spoiled when all I have to do is sit and people will say "my wife is at your disposal". (Anastasia Laitila, Finnish activist)

In Finnish culture we are used to managing on our own and being faced with overt hospitality and a will to serve can be an overwhelming experience. Food culture in general seemed to have a more prominent role in Indian society as compared to Finnish society. The practice of drinking tea everywhere and all

the time became a kind of trademark of Indian socialising. Being informed about the historical background of this central institution in Indian society makes it easier to understand the consumption pattern: "Tea. Again. It's a bit funny how much Indians drink tea. According to an agricultural survey by The Hindu, India is the world's largest consumer of tea. Ritu was telling me yesterday how tea came to India through the British military about a hundred years ago: in army rations there would be a portion of this addictive drink, so little by little tea replaced traditional drinks from herbs and spices. Traditional drinks were usually cool drinks and varied according to season. In the same way alcohol imports have overcome traditional mild alcohols and replaced them with hard drinks and a hard drinking culture." (Anatasia Laitila, Finnish activist)

The family

Many of the institutions and social traditions that have and continue to be the backbone of Indian society are threatened by change and the effects of an increased move towards individualism. Both Finnish and Indian activists reflected on the changing role of the family. Nepali activist Usha Tiwari noted that the situation in South Asia today is the same as in Finland 50 years ago – people married only one person and it was common to have many children. They have the feeling that in America and Europe you can have any kind of relationship with anyone. There is a disintegration of family structure taking place both in India and in Finland.

In Finland youth are on a quest for independence and are faced with a number of problems such as unwanted pregnancies, drugs, neglect shown by parents towards children that may lead to them being harassed at school. Self-esteem is based on independence, but it requires sacrifice, which is leaving your parents' home when you become an adult. There are many obstacles to marriage – young people feel they need to do so many things before they tie the knot. First they need to build their independence, have a structured life with a job and a home before having a family. In India everything comes ready made by your parents and in-laws when you get married. When Usha Tiwari learnt that in Finland it is not common to live with in-laws, that the divorce rate is 50% and the suicide rate is high she wondered if the reason might be that people have many personal

frustrations because they have too much choice. “For us it may be easier to understand that deformities come along with development. Like in the developed countries there is the problem of frustration and suicide. One thing that could be done is to bring the frustrated people to Nepal and tell them about the situation there, arrange a tour for them and ask them to campaign among the marginalised. It might make their frustration vanish.”

Some Indian activists had the opportunity to visit welfare institutions like government run retirement homes and were pleased to find that there are many facilities and that the inhabitants seemed to be doing well, leading an independent life. Despite the good conditions, the situation is ambivalent for many elderly people because most wish for a life with their family members as they age.

In India most elderly people are still cared for at home by their children. The disadvantage with this arrangement is that children may neglect elderly parents at home. The advantage is the mutual gain of a symbiotic relationship – women care for the elderly and the elderly care for grandchildren. Neglect of the elderly is also due to family dynamics. Families need the money earned from two wages in order to maintain a consumerist lifestyle and women want freedom so they enter the workforce. Usha Tiwari questions why elderly people stay in an institution, but realises that the situation is changing also in Nepal: “Why are elderly staying a in a hospital? Fifty years earlier the parents and children all lived together in Finland like we do in Nepal now. There used to be a joint family, but there isn’t any more. When people living alone get older who will look after them?”

Religion and ritual

Finnish activists noted that religion and ritual are very much an integral part of these people’s everyday life unlike in protestant Finland. The intellectual, the political and the private are woven together in a deeper way than in Finland. Thomas Wallgren witnessed how the Indian activist community reacted to the death of a colleague by coming together at short notice to attend the funeral: “The immediate, collective and self-evident nature of this response to the death of a co-worker impressed me as one vivid example of an over-all pattern of life which strikes me as different from what I am used to. Social life is more integrated here

than in, say, Finland. Intellectual journeys, political activities and family life are closely knit together. I have a growing sense, strengthened by my experience at the Yamuna ghat that the holistic way in which various levels of activities and aspirations are conjoined has profound and diverse implications for almost all aspects of politics and culture here, including e.g. the notions of democracy and the responsibilities of intellectuals."

This stands in contrast to the situation in Finland where there are very sharp boundaries between professional and private life and a very rigid conception of division of labour in professional life. Death as a ritual in India is still connected to an idea of philanthropy, of celebrating the life of a deceased person by distributing food: "The notion of death as something as inevitable as birth is actively communicated in the Indian society. The karmic belief makes the concept of life a fluid one, not confined to only the one lived at the moment. The custom of giving food to the poor on the death anniversary - this concept of good deeds and social responsibility through a redistribution of wealth - is a tradition that teaches us how we are all connected to each other in a very concrete way. These organic institutions are changing also in India. The growth of individualism threatens the social fabric." (Susanne Ådahl, Finnish activist)

Egalitarianism and civil rights

One aspect of Finnish society that impressed the Indian activists was the upholding of civil rights and a general ideology of egalitarianism in society. Amar notes how equality is integrated into the Finnish society, marvels at the fact that a director of an organisation, KEPA, treats him as an equal and that people do all types of tasks in an office: "Talking to the Chairman/Director of KEPA, I felt as if I am talking to a close friend. The one aspect of the KEPA office which impressed me most was that every person had their turn to be responsible for various work tasks in the kitchen, right from preparing tea to washing the dishes. It implies that both physical and mental labour was treated equally and there was no discrimination. Here there are no peons or servants in the offices for taking files from table to table or providing water and tea but everyone does one's work oneself."

Also in political life these features come to the fore, as Indian activist Atal Behari Sharma notes: "I became particularly appreciative of Finland's egalitarian

political culture. It will remain an ever-lasting memory in my mind- the Finnish Foreign Minister Ms Tarja Halonen collecting money at the City centre in front of the Students House near the three smiths statue for Kosovo war victims to help the refugee fund of Finland's Red Cross. Nearby a couple of hundred people were protesting against Nato's bombing of Yugoslavia, demanding an end to war immediately. It left a lasting impression on me."

The situation of women in Finland stands in stark contrast to that of women in India. It is very difficult to be a single woman with a child in Nepal; the norm is to get married. In the South, people are taught that the joint family is good and has its advantages. The transformation of society in Finland has made it impossible to live in a joint family. Inheritance practice also is gender neutral – all children inherit property, compared to South Asia where in places it is still more commonly the male offspring in a family that inherit family property. In Finland women can manage as single mothers because they get support from the government.

Amar Singh Amar was very impressed by the plight and strength of the single mothers he came across in Finland: "I got the impression that women in Finland are very courageous and their feelings have to be respected. This is not the case in India, where there is no freedom of choice for women, or in many cases neither for men. The parents decide about education and marriage and in villages people cannot take up jobs outside their cast tradition. One thing I found very shocking was how women are left alone with children. In Finland women have a lot of freedom and can go around the world alone. In India this is not possible, even to go outside the neighbourhood. Finland is more advanced than us. Dr. Ambedkar had said that the parameter for a developed society is how many women participate in any function of the society. My society is not so developed."

Indians also envied the fact that in Finland the national language is used in the entire social and political life. For Indians who are suffering from the aftermath of English colonialism it was a matter of great importance to experience this.

Care for the environment through the sorting and recycling of waste and the use of wood in utensils impressed Usha Tiwari. She notes that even though she lives in a country with forest cover there is little organised recycling and wood is not used as a resource the way it is in Finland.

Information technology

Finnish activists noted that keeping in touch with friends and family at home was not a problem because Indians are fast adopting the fruits of the information revolution. India is a world leader in software exports and the urban middle classes almost all have e-mail accounts. Many movements and groups are using the internet as a tool of liberation. But, the use of technology can also create distance between people. Anastasia Laitila: "The question of technology is very interesting. Western CSOs are so dependent on the Internet and mobile phones we seem to spend most days just staring at the monitor. When technology fails, we get dysfunctional. We do meet people, but I'm afraid we're losing ourselves in the Internet not doing so much action as writing emails. So on some days one might call a weak connection a blessing. What I admire here is especially the time Indian activists spend in real face-to-face discussion and the effort in building broad networks."

The use of information technology in the form of mobile phones is a feature of Finnish society that was noteworthy to Indian activists. Atal Behari Sharma talks of mobile phone use among youth in Finland and how global trends play a leading role in shaping youth culture: "The other thing that amazed me were the teenagers with "their hei-hei, moi-moi, jo nijo, noni" on mobile phone in trams, busses, the metro, in trains, restaurants, market places and even elevators etc. and the wide use of email. Teenagers have also been taken over by the culture of Pepsi, McDonald's and Spice Girls. They have their hair coloured and have pierced their lips, tongue, eyebrows and belly buttons. Is this a new folk culture or cultural imperialism?"

Oral culture

Although talking on a mobile phone may be considered a form of oral culture it is quite different from the oral culture encountered in India. The practice of singing and playing music at events is very much alive. The situation is different in Finland: "In Finland oral culture is not upheld among people unless you have a special interest in e.g. music, sing in a choir, work with music or sing with your children. It is a kind of a resource loss, an important means of communication that has lost its place in the stressful pace of modern life." (Susanne Ådahl, Finnish activist)

Oral culture in India is also tied to oratory practice, face-to-face dialogues and encounters based on talking about issues, which is different to what Finns are used to: "Another thing that never ceases to impress me, since I come from a country where people don't speak to each other, is the fact that since face-to-face discussion is the only way to communicate and campaign properly in rural areas, these people travel often extensive distances and sit down with the people." (Anastasia Laitila, Finnish activist)

There were many other small special features that Finns and Indians alike noted about each other's society, such as the fact that the Finnish cherish an intimate relationship with the wilderness and celebrate and enjoy the sun after a long, cold winter; that the effect of the forces of nature is present in everyday life in India such as earthquakes and cyclones; that the practical aspects of life are difficult to deal with in India and it tests your patience. Rita Nahata wondered about the apparent de-politicisation of society despite 100% literacy: "Another thing that I could not understand and appreciate is the de-politicisation of the Finnish society. We in India have had the opinion that education will lead to a more aware and active society. Finland is already 100 % literate and has a high level of education. What happened? Why is the society getting depoliticised then? This question is very important for me as in India also the youth and the upper middle class is getting depoliticised at a pace which is alarming."

The exchange provided an opportunity to enjoy unique experiences and insights about the self. Following a visit to a Hindu Tempel in Helsinki, Usha Tiwari noticed that activists need enjoyment in their leisure time, spirituality to provide a break from reality. She also drank fresh cow's milk for the first time in her life on a farm in Finland. Rita Nahata revised some of her preconceived notions about everyone being rich in the North, but stressed that a hand to mouth existence does not worry people because it is possible to live with less money in a welfare state. One does not need to earn and save for retirement the way Indians do. A memory that will stay with Oras Tynkkynen is a visit to a remote village in the Thar desert, staying overnight in a hut made of cow dung and straw and being met by people with genuine smiles and friendly curiosity. Amar Singh Amar learned about equality through the Finnish tradition of going to the sauna. Because you go in there naked the message is that everyone is equal when socialising in their "birthday suit" in the heat and harmony of the sauna.

Reflecting on the method

There were some difficulties and misunderstandings felt both by the visiting people and the host, but that is an essential part of the learning process. The purpose of the stay in the other country is to gather experiences for more effective work in movements and organisations back home. To all the activists the exchange was a very important, educative and useful experience that they felt deeply enriched by, and this involved a fair amount of learning. They also felt that their learning would help them in their activist work at home.

"My visit to Finland under the KEPA-Lokayan exchange programme has provided me with an opportunity to learn about and understand Finnish society, its culture and politics closely. My association/participation in KEPA's and its member organisations' activities has broadened my understanding of the issues of development cooperation in the new context of globalisation. I came to know about some intricate issues pertaining to the WTO which will help me a great deal in my activities related to this in India." (Atal Behari Sharma, Indian activist)

Also, Indian activist Vasanti Rahman stressed the importance of exchanges in supporting the practice of dialogue, both within one's country and between countries: "In my opinion such exchanges are not only extremely useful, but also necessary to a further dialogue between the South and the North. Moreover, what is notable about these exchanges is that they help to foster the dialogue process within India as well."

Nepali activist Usha Tiwari regretted that there was not enough time to meet people such as farmers and homeless people, visit hospitals and just follow the everyday life of Finns close up. She finds that often the official picture presented to a foreigner of a society excludes showing the poor and the marginalised. Being a journalist she says that you want to know about the everyday life of people. Her suggestion is that it would be good with an exchange between photographers that would be connected to an on-going movement. Considering the state of development funding in Nepal, she finds it would be useful if activists from Finland were involved in long-term, in-depth evaluations of development funding and projects in Nepal, because at present evaluations are made in just a few days time.

Piia Saari was concerned that right from the beginning she had the feeling that no one really knew what she was supposed to do practically while in India. The aims of the programme, as expressed in the contract (democratising South-North relations etc.), are rather abstract, and perhaps then also the tasks needed to meet these aims cannot be very practical either. For Piia, who comes from an organisation engaged in very practical activities, it was a bit frustrating, at least in the beginning. She feels that the tasks for the activists, both for Finnish and Indians, should be clearly defined and there should be a person in each organisation to help the activists to create their work plan. At the point when the exchange included other South Asian activists who visited India it became clear that they expected a little more guidance and more of a fixed program than the Finnish activists since they did not know how things worked in India.

The issue of communication was of central concern to all the activists, Finns and Indians alike. At times they felt they were "illiterate" both in terms of linguistic, social and cultural understanding. Throughout their visits they sought to improve their social and cultural competence, to gain "literacy": "Communication across two different cultures and in a foreign language seemed to create at times ample room for misunderstandings. Learning to read cultural codes took some time." (Oras Tynkkynen, Finnish activist)

Preparing dinner for friends in Helsinki 2002: Olli Kursi and Amar Singh.

Concluding note

As outlined in the introduction of this report article, the activist exchange component of the association initiated between KEPA and two Delhi based organisations, CSDS and Lokayan involved the sharing of views on political analysis and priorities, moral ideals and deep-rooted cultural aspirations. The aim was to bring to the home country, impressions, insights, experiences and analytical skills for the benefit of the relevant political efforts at home and internationally. The purpose of this analysis of the experiences of the activist exchange has been to briefly summarise and select the main points of focus found in activist experiences, to show how these experiences were seen by those involved and illustrate what political issues arose from it that could be of use in later political work in the home countries of the activists.

Experiences recorded showed that the reasons for being involved in activism are either tied to one's experiences of struggle in the society of one's home country, as in the case of the Indian and Nepali activists, or, in the case of the Finnish activists, it was an issue of adhering to an ideology and belief in the need to achieve global equity, particularly in terms of poverty alleviation and protection of the environment. For the Southern activists activism was also an issue of unequal access to resources and possibilities to engage in activism beyond the purely local level of action, that there were differences within the countries concerning what resources were available for attendance in events abroad. A different way of looking at the world was something that activists both hoped to both bring to and take with them home from the host country. Economy and ecology arose as the major areas of focus with a wide range of issues that received special attention; the effect of industrialism on skills of the hand and small-scale enterprises, and the importance of people's participation in the design and implementation of environmental protection programmes on the grassroots level, as well as the relationship between high levels of fuel emissions and city planning. Developments in India, Nepal and Finland showed that handicrafts and people's technology to an increasing degree have to give way to large, industrial scale initiatives of mass production where all levels of producers are involved. A similar type of development can be discerned in the voluntary sector – the gap is growing between grassroots level organisations and CSO's operating on an international

level, funded by large donor supported budgets. Corporate ideology is also entering some levels of the voluntary sector. On the level of personal growth, activists gained insights into customs and the nature of the family and social relations in a new environment.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to measure outcome of a programme of this kind. By its very nature it was not a typical development project, but a process with specific methods aimed at ensuring equity at all levels of cooperation. As an exercise in communication and exchange it indicated a different way of understanding development, through a process mode over long durations of time. The experiences of these individuals are one component of a wider process and they covered a specific time period in the histories of our societies as part of a global arena. The issues focused on during the exchange periods draws us a map of the relationships between global and local equity. It opens our eyes to how different yet similar are the issues we struggle with and where it may be necessary to further bridge the gaps in communication between the South and the North. The things that they have brought to our attention through their dialogues, experiences and comments show a part of the state of the world today. As an effort in building equity between the South and the North it was one that greatly enriched all those involved and can serve as a constructive example of a different way of engaging in South-North cooperation.

Reflections on the impact of the association between Finland and India

Vijay Pratap

The exchange programme has given me ample opportunity to connect with sensitive EU-critical perspectives. As a result of the formal activist exchange, Indian activists gained a greater understanding of European Social Democrats and developed links with the Socialist International, the Global Greens and the new social movements. We met with radical theology groups who are KEPA members, but could not be in contact to the extent we would have liked. When we spoke of the eurocentricity of perspectives, the Finnish groups supported us and helped us in developing the critiques further. It also led to active participation in the Network Institute for Global Democratisation (NIGD).

Among the South Asian exchange activists who spent a considerable amount of time in Finland, there were many with a modest economic background who got passports made for the first time for the journey to Finland. For these persons, visiting Finland and making various contacts was a significant experience. Many of the people they came in contact with, including Päivi Ahonen, Vickan Hedengren and other KEPA staff, had exceptional human qualities and commitment, going out of their way to make them feel at home. It was because of such people that they were able to learn about Finnish society and work for the span of time they spent there.

Other significant contacts were forged with political actors such as Satu Hassi, Erkki Tuomioja, Oras Tynkkynen and Folke Sundman who have developed enduring relationships with the senior leadership of social movements in India.

The informal activist exchange

I became involved in the activist exchange in 1989 during the two-week Third World Connection programme. At the conference held in Karjaa, I made the basic point that the mainstream interaction between the activists of the South and

the North undermines the cultural self-confidence of the activist community in the South. The Finns who were on the verge of launching a funding agency collectively changed course and reconsidered the idea of setting up a donor agency committed to the empowerment of the societies of the South. This viewpoint was supported by an activist-intellectual from Mexico, Gustavo Esteva and sisters from the Bolivian church groups working on issues of justice. As my belief was that understanding each other's reality is a way of helping, I presented the launching of an activist exchange funded from personal funds and donations and not from tax payers money. At that time I did not know that taxes are high in Finland and that one values that there is no competition within civil society to mobilise civic political philanthropy. There was no space for this type of thing particularly before aggressive globalisation became a normal economic activity. Now there must be a much larger number who, through the Finnish multinationals, have the possibility of sparing some funds for political philanthropy.

Two years after the Karjaa workshop the Coalition for Environment and Development (CED) organised a tour in Baltic states, Germany and Poland (this was the period just after the breakdown of Berlin wall). We went to Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia and also attended the European Nuclear Disarmament Conference in Tallinn. Activists paid for the trip through their savings and per diems given to them. During this first informal non-institutionalised activist exchange there were also several other Indians: Subhash Medhapurkar, a leading activist from the Himalayan region, the present CSDS director Suresh Sharma, a leading environmental democracy theorist, Kishore Saint and Sudesh Saint. After that Subhash Medhapurkar accompanied us on the 'padyatra' (literally a long journey on foot) in Finland while others returned for India.

As things moved on after these first encounters the formal cooperation programme between Lokayan/CSDS and KEPA started in September 1998, when an agreement was signed. In this programme we have compiled a lot of material through the dialogic method on issues of South-North democratisation, on the impact of foreign funding and on the voluntary sector in India. The dialogue reports and interviews are valuable compilations, in both Hindi and English, although we have not found the arrangements, time and money to publish them. Many of the core activists on both sides have benefited from these debates. This kind of semi-academic or research work has helped in enhancing the sensitivity of the Finnish activists regarding issues and ideas of the South.

VK and the dialogic method

The second encounter with the Finnish activist community was related to managing the cooperation programme between KEPA and Lokayan as coordinator of its working group on international issues, Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (VK). The third segment of this encounter was after the programme was discontinued due to unforeseen changes in KEPA. It continued through the institutional and non-institutional spin offs of intellectual, political, and organisation-building partnerships. The organisational partnerships with the Finnish activist community includes building up VK, as an organisation for comprehensive democracy with an international secretariat in Finland and headquarters in Delhi. This is a unique organisation that has learnt from the experiences of Lokayan's dialogic methods. Through this method they recognised the present day limitations of the existing claims of transformative ideologies and organisations such as that of the Indian Socialists, Ambedkarites, Sarvodayaites, Gandhian movement groups, working class movements, people's science movements and organised left parties. Still, they did not deny contribution of these groups in the journey towards democratisation and empowerment. The uniqueness of the Lokayan method is that they have not just recognised, but also built on the strengths and the significant contributions made by these diverse streams, and learnt from them by forming dialogic organisations where agreement on basic values of various dimensions of democracy and the ultimate dreams of a more humane and just world are assumed. In the VK forums, the schema and details of dynamics of transformation is to be worked out and debated in a participatory dialogic method. They are then to be put into practice through various allied activist organisations, both in the civil society and party political domains.

Further influences on my activist work

The KEPA cooperation programme helped us to connect with Indonesian and Thai activists who participated in the Asian Social Forum on themes relating to Islam and democracy. At the time of the forum, then executive Director Ville Luukkanen made a significant contribution in sensitising the KEPA governing board and Finnish activist community regarding the centrality of the challenge posed by aggressive Hindutva communal forces in India. Risto Isomäki has contributed immensely

through his interactions and writing essays and books for the activists in India especially on issues of South-North partnerships, globalisation, ecological democracy and especially his book on trees. Olli Tammilehto also contributed in refining our understanding on ecological democracy.

An extremely important contribution was to the World Social Forum process. It was during the summer of 2001, when Indian activists Ashok Rao and Neena Rao were in Helsinki as part of the exchange programme that they participated in discussions, along with myself and Brazilian and Finnish activists, who proposed bringing the WSF to India. The NIGD then invited four South Asians to participate in their seminar at the WSF 2002 at Porto Alegre in Brazil. These four persons later played important roles in the WSF process in India, culminating in the WSF being organised in Mumbai in 2004. A group of Finnish volunteers assisted CSDS, Lokayan and the VK network immensely in their work during the WSF at Mumbai.

VK would not have come into being as an institution and probably its Indian and International network would not have played such a strategic role in bringing in the WSF process to India had it not been for my encounter with Finnish movement groups. The Finnish VK network under the leadership of Marko Ulvila and assisted by Jarna Pasanen mobilised a large contingent of participants, speakers and volunteers for the Mumbai WSF 2004. Incidentally, Marko Ulvila was the first Finnish activist who was in India under the Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA activist exchange. He had a singular role in establishing various practices and conventions in the exchange and also ensuring a continuity of cultural encounters between the two communities of activists in Finland and India.

Subhash Medhapurkar, Risto Isomäki and Vijay Pratap in 1990 examining pieces of the demolished Berlin wall.

Prof. D.L. Sheth and I have with the help of KEPA connected with Eurostep, a federation of secular NGOs in Europe, NIGD – an international think-tank on democratisation and with peace, environment and Gandhian movements especially in Sweden, Denmark and Finland. Rajendra Ravi from Lokayan connected with ecologically sensitive transport groups in Europe as well as in Bangladesh with the help of Susanne Ådahl. Usha Tiwari, a photo journalist from Nepal connected with a large number of Finnish and European human rights alternative communication groups. Prof. D.L. Sheth and I reinforced our contacts and learnt a great deal in the workshops organised by Marko Ulvila in Nepal and Bangladesh. Prof. B.K. Roy Burman was through Outi Hakkarainen (CED, CRASH - Coalition for Research and Action for Social Justice and Human Dignity) connected to indigenous groups in Mexico. A contemporary global perspective and internationalism has become part of my activist self. I have been a member of the NIGD board, attended international council meetings of WSF and attended meetings of the Socialist International as well as the Green International, was chosen as member of the Helsinki group and now am member of the Consultative Advisory Network of the Helsinki Process.

Among declarations, reports and banners: Ritu Priya and Sathya Mala at the World Social Forum in Mumbai, India 2004.

Influence on a personal and political level

Luckily for me, personal, political and professional are all integrated into one being as different dimensions of my existence. My encounter with the Finnish activist community has made me more of a normal human being than before. Because all the activists who came to India as part of activist exchange enhanced our understanding of the dynamics of idealistic civil society and building bridges, social action and desirability of South-North partnerships in the process of global democratisation. Finnish activists, political actors and KEPA staff have become part of a single international community with our Indian counterparts as equal and valued members in the struggle for democratising globally.

Usually activists with a long track record (I acquired an activist mentality since my initiation in the youth socialist movement in 1968 during my last two years of schooling) tend to acquire an attitude of (an almost self-destructive) sense of self-righteousness, purism and arrogance. But in Finland extremely idealistic persons seem to be almost totally free from these weaknesses. Probably their 'absolute' commitment to democracy as a way of life makes them normal human beings with a simultaneous sense of self-confidence, idealism personal autonomy, respect for others' spaces and autonomy. Their humility, almost with a sense of self-doubt, makes them exceptionally decent human beings. My association with such people through the exchange programme obviously moderated some of the negative qualities in me and made me a little more aware of my own limitations.

Nevertheless, the activist exchange has made me a different person also because of the kind of political perspective I have developed. I may not realise it consciously all the time, but it has shaped my consciousness and my political priorities in a big way. Without this experience I wouldn't have been an activist with whatever little understanding of global perspectives I have acquired today.

Five years of political association with Indian activists. What have I learned?

Anastasia Laitila

I started studying social policy at the open university of Turku in the fall of 2001 thinking that I soon would no longer involve myself in activism on a full-time basis. Soon after starting university I was given the opportunity by KEPA and its Indian partners to go to India through the activist exchange programme. I suspended my studies for the time being and left for India.

I was asked to join the activist exchange because I had for a number of years been actively involved with trade policy issues, particularly within Friends of the Earth in Finland. The Indian partner organisations of KEPA were organising a seminar on trade policy issues, which the Executive Director of Kepa Folke Sundman was to participate in. Through the activist exchange KEPA wanted to send with him to India an activist familiar with trade policy issues whose political work could be of benefit to the Indians and who would benefit from cooperating with them.

The next ministerial meeting of the WTO was drawing near. It was held in Doha, in Qatar, in March (2001). It was a politically critical phase of the process and India was becoming an ever more central actor in the WTO negotiations. On the agenda was a possible new round of trade negotiations and issues to be negotiated that different groups of developing nations had for a long time opposed, such as investments and competition. After the infamous failure of the Seattle Ministerial Meeting (1999) the next meeting was held in a country where it was exceptionally difficult to organise demonstrations. In addition, the participation of civic organisations was restricted. It was extremely interesting to follow in India how the situation was developing seen from the view point of civic organisations and the media.

The decision to join the activist exchange turned out to influence my life in a much broader sense than I could imagine. During the past five years I have visited India five times. Twice I attended the activist exchange, once I joined

KEPA's delegation to the Social Forum in Mumbai and once, supported by KEPA, I helped the Indian partners prepare for a meeting linked to the Helsinki Process. In addition to how the India connection has played a role in my activism, it has also become a part of my studies. My last visit to India was a practical placement period, which is an integral part of polytechnic studies.

Now India feels like my second homeland. Many Indian activists have become my close friends and important political cooperation partners.

Thoughts and experiences on India and the activist exchange

The activist exchange was not only a cultural exchange, but also an exchange in working culture; broadening your horizons; making ones own work more concrete, and understanding the life and living environment of one's colleagues. For some of the individuals who participated in the exchange it mainly served their own political work, for some of us it was or became part of it.

Already during my first visit the exoticism of India soon disappeared. It became ordinary. Yet there are situations and issues that I will never get used to, such as hierarchy and the fact things are made more complicated than they need to be. For someone used to the straight talking manner of Finns the Indian way of saying things one does not actually mean is confusing. The Indian way of expressing things is not as stark as the Finnish manner of doing so. Sometimes I have unintentionally offended people with my straight talking manner where one easily leaves out deferential expressions. Learning to speak Hindi has helped this situation.

India is the land of extremes and it tests your patience. Being enthralled by and enraged by India and Indians has, nonetheless, become a permanent part of my life. In all of my diaries from my trips to India I have in one way or another jotted down the following thoughts:

"I have so many ambiguous feelings about this country. Sometimes I like being here and I enjoy "intellectual political discussions" and sometimes I feel that I definitely can't stand being in this bloody country." (Diary, 31.10.2002)

People get used to things happening immediately and without complications - that an email or SMS will take care of everything. In Finland, people assume

that everyone is constantly checking their email or that they can be reached by mobile phone. Sending an email, one believes, means the matter has been dealt with although no one has the time to read all the email messages they receive.

During my first visit I met two local representatives of the WTO campaign. One of them was an old, sick man. Both of them travelled around villages in North India talking about the WTO and the activities of the campaign. I was impressed. I had myself started to tire of the civic activism of the 21st century which to a large extent is about socialising with a computer. There seems to be no time for anything else when electronic communication and papers consume all your energy.

Five years later I met my Finnish colleague in India who was visiting India for the first time. He had been visiting an organisation in a rural area of central India where it seemed that the major part of the workers' time was spent drinking tea and socialising in the back yard of the office. One of the staff members told him he had previously been a university teacher: "I taught a few hours a day maybe four days a week. Here I have a six-day working week and a 10-12 hour working day. Working in an organisation is much heavier." My colleague laughed and said this person had at that moment just had his seventh cup of tea in the evening sun and that we would do well to have this type of a mentality in Finland.

In India communication has traditionally meant that you visit someone. If one travels some distance for a visit the visitor cannot present his or her business in a quarter of an hour and leave straight away. Interaction requires certain courtesy and formalities: exchanging news, visiting the elderly or important people of the village, drinking tea in every house one visits, reserving time for eating and conversation. There are remnants of these traditions also in the culture of civic organisations in India. I sometimes long for this type of a practice in Finland.

India has also taught me mental survival skills: large and small issues come and go. One manages to deal with them in one way or another and then move on. Above all, things are done in a persevering way and not even broad goals are thought to be impossible. In Finland one speaks of perseverance as long distance running, and that is what it is – running. No one has the time to sit down and meditate occasionally. It is with sorrow that I note that this same trend is taking place in the big cities in India.

9/11 brought Islam into my life

11 September 2001 affected my trip to India in unexpected ways because the United States started bombing Afghanistan shortly before my departure from Finland. For me it was a new experience to be in a place where people experienced American imperialism on a personal level in their daily lives, particularly as attacks on Muslims. I remember one group of Muslims proclaiming a fatwa against North American products. The fear of biological weapons in the form of anthrax sent in envelopes through the mail, which started in the United States, resulted in a 24 hour emergency telephone line being set up in New Delhi for those fearing anthrax attacks. Even national news channels talked of nearly nothing else than the bombings during the two weeks following the incident.

I remember how India offered generic anthrax tests to the United States at a much cheaper rate than the German company that held the patent. The Doha Ministerial meeting of the WTO was coming up and the United States was at this stage even more actively interested in multilateral trade systems. The TRIPS agreement, which deals with patents and intellectual property rights, made it impossible to bypass the license and the United States was not able to, at a time of crucial trade negotiations, break the rules that they had so strongly backed up.

The bombings were the impetus for different types of protest actions ranging from street theatre to the publication of books. I participated in a cultural night organised by the students of the Jawaharlal Nehru University that included street theatre opposing the Bush administration and music in Urdu as a show of solidarity towards Muslims. The university is located near the airport and during the whole programme airplanes passed by above us. It felt as though they might at any moment drop relief packages of the United States army, or bombs.

I had had very little previous contact with Muslims. In Finland I was not well acquainted with any Muslim people, nor was I familiar with the different interpretations of Islam. In the European context Muslims are usually treated as a single mass equated with Arabs. The "War on Terror" has given this mass the face of bin Laden. To me the faces of Muslims are varied and diverse, of ordinary people.

Two activists from KEPA's partner organisations in Thailand and Indonesia participated in the activist exchange. Both of them were Muslims. The prayer times in the evening of the Ramadan month became for a short while part of my daily

life. The Indian handyman of the activist exchange, presently my close friend, was born a Brahmin who later in life converted to Islam. His interpretations of Islam are based purely on writings and the Quran and he willingly shares this information with others. Once when he was talking about Islam to a group of people, one man had wept when hearing about the loving and merciful teachings of his religion. Different quarters constantly stress the differences and conflicts found between different religions while the good and tolerant aspects are forgotten.

It seems as though Islam is more linked to politics, democracy and human rights than to religion. As a religion it gives very down to earth instructions about how a believer should live. As a philosophy of life it teaches righteousness. The Quran says that God has many names, that it does not matter what you call him because he/she is one and the same God. The fact that God has many names is a way of testing people who should be able to live together peacefully and respecting each other. Once I talked about respect with my Brahmin Muslim friend and he returned once again to the Quran: God should be respected, but although you should fail to do so he forgives you. Nonetheless, even God cannot forgive the fact that you do not respect your fellow man.

After having met people who are Muslims and hearing about the teachings of the Quran from them it is difficult for me to understand why meeting Muslims in Finland is so hard. Muslims quickly become labelled as being mainly terrorists. In the United States, the fear of terrorism went so far that Indian Sikhs working in the service sector were asked to shave off their beards and refrain from wearing a turban so that they would not be mistaken for Arabs. Can people really become such strangers to each other because they call God by a different name? In the end, religion is only one part of our identity. I was pondering whether the reason for this could be that in the rapidly urbanised industrialised countries people's bonds to their roots were severed and they no longer understand even their own culture.

India and my studies

When I started studying to become a bachelor of social services in a polytechnic college in 2003 I felt as though I did not fit into my group very well. I was the only one among the 60 students who had a long experience of working in an organisation outside the health or social sector. I was also the only one who missed classes to

attend the UNEP meeting in Nairobi as a representative of the Finnish delegation or to attend the Mumbai World Social Forum.

However, I longed for something concrete, to deal with real people instead of papers. I wanted to get the perspective of the users and producers of services in addition to that of competitive tendering of those services. I also needed a professional degree that would enable me to finance my activism. I had officially been mostly registered as unemployed during the preceding four years, although I was not idle for a moment.

Instead of integrating my studies to my previous experiences I integrated my activism to my studies. I was now and then asked to lecture on competition or the negotiations on the Constitutional Treaty of the EU, and I received a credit for my participation in the Social Forum in Mumbai. I arranged a three-month trainee position for myself in India to boost my old experiences and contacts as well as to bring something new to my studies. My plan had been to link my thesis to either the projects of the Fair Trade organisation or those of the Siemenpuu foundation in India.

The subject of my bachelor's thesis started to take on a life of its own. In the thesis I wanted to make use of my experience of civic organisations and the contacts that had sprung from various networks, both at home and abroad. Because I generally always attempt to look at everything holistically and the people influencing these matters as actors, I chose experiences of empowerment and understanding how these experiences are duplicated as the subject of my thesis. In other words, I aim to study experiences of empowerment among women who in their own communities are in a weak position. Gandhian? Yes. One of my perspectives on empowerment is Gandhi's term swaraj.

"Today I finally completed my last interview for my thesis on the women of Bhalaswan. I was already fearing that it would not happen. This has from the beginning been my favourite group and after I had been sitting for a few hours on a plastic mat listening to their experiences it felt as though it was worth all the trouble and organising. I hope someone can translate this into English. Its funny how many similar issues came up in these women's experiences as in those of the women living in villages in Tamil Nadu although people are always stressing that there are big differences within India. Even some sentences were exactly the same." – Blog 25.1.2006

I reckoned that I understood enough of both Finns and the Indians to be able to combine the experiences of women in both countries. The challenge is yet

to be faced, but the Indian interviews were very interesting. Indian activists said to me that it is not worth doing interviews both in North and South India because the areas differ so much from each other. The same of course applies to Finland and India. I defied this manner of thinking and the results are striking. In South India I spoke to village women and in North India slum dwelling women that had never met each other or visited each others part of the country. Despite this they had nearly identical experiences of how they were treated differently by people in their surroundings as they discovered new dimensions of themselves. In both locations I came across a woman who previously had not been able to leave the village without her husband's permission. The situation has changed as they have become active and had empowering experiences of success. The villagers have started paying attention to them instead of their husbands, and even asking "are you the husband of Mrs So-and-So?" An issue of a lot of pride was that people had started respecting them and their families based on the women's activities and achievements, rather than on their social position.

There can be big differences in the perspectives and life situation of women from different cultural backgrounds. For a Finnish woman empowerment may mean the freedom to work, while for a Bangladeshi woman it may mean the freedom to stay at home. But they have a common goal: a good life. Even though the idea of what a good life entails is defined differently and is based on different needs in different cultures, the goal is the same: to improve one's quality of life. A good life is always about redressing a currently experienced need or injustice. Is it possible that Finnish and Indian women also have common experiences?

Some of the women I interviewed talked about the importance of helping others and raising awareness. Empowerment is not only about the individual, but also about disseminating consciousness and solidarity. As one of the women I interviewed stated: "We want to empower others with so much knowledge that they never have to struggle like we did."

My own learning

"I also wonder why development aid or other similar initiatives are so attractive to bring over here. Maybe because the needs are so big it makes you cry and the concrete results of ones work can readily be seen. On the other hand, some of

these problems are a result of the fact that we are incapable of properly caring for our duties at home and that is why we need both." – Diary 3.1.2003

India has by coincidence become part of my life, both on a private and public level. In this way it has inevitably become part of my family's life. My mother, sister as well as my grandparents have become interested in India and follow what happens there in a different way than before. My retired grandmother asks me if she can help homeless children or cows and my mother has become a sponsor of an Indian child. My husband dreams (but maybe not so seriously) about setting up a Finnish restaurant in India. The visits have also affected what I do at home. I became active in the work of the Siemenpuu foundation and became a more active member of the Fair Trade and Worldshops movement. I had something different to offer than before.

While writing this I started thinking about the significance of coincidences. For years I have spoken about the importance of the choices we make and taking responsibility for our own actions. The ability to choose requires the chooser to be aware of the consequences and options of the choice made. My own activism is based on a series of informed choices focused on the possibility of having an influence, but I did not plan the totality of these choices and how they would influence my own future. I am more interested in finding ways of influencing than having a career through which I could influence the same things. It may were a naïve perspective, but it was real and honest, and I still depend on it.

A few years ago I tried out party politics by running as a candidate in two elections. I rejected or postponed my possibility to influence party politics because I did not find the honesty and genuineness that I was looking for. My interaction and experience with Indians has brought me back to the grassroots. I find it is important to meet people on their own turf, on their own terms and give them the opportunity to be heard and the space to find their own solutions and options. In India, the level of activity and action found in people is an enormous resource for both those organisations working on the grassroots level and for other communities. On the high levels of politics it is easy to lose sight of everyday reality and time is spent on making strategic moves in negotiating rooms. If I believe that the voice of the marginalised ought to be heard in India why should I not believe it ought to be heard in Finland too?

Anastasia Laitila celebrating her birthday during a visit to ODAM in Tamil Nadu, 2005. The organisation's director G. Jeyraj is to her right.

Also, my thesis and the interviews consolidate the idea of change initiated from below that spreads from one person to another. It is slow, but change always requires a long-term perspective. This is perhaps the most important thing that Indians have taught me.

Despite this, it was surprisingly difficult to write this article. My experiences of India are filled with alleys dotted with tea stalls, trips in packed busses and endless train journeys, touring the countryside and slums of Tamil Nadu, brave people, long conversations on the balcony in the late night hours, the constantly praying proprietor of my corner restaurant and cows emerging out of the fog. It was difficult to single out from all my experiences what could be interesting or significant to an outsider, especially since I am not done experiencing yet.

I can in any case note that in October 2001 when I set my foot onto Indian soil for the first time I was to everyone I met always referred to as "madam". My friendship and cooperation ties have deepened to such an extent that those who have used my first name have added the familiar and respectful "ji" ending to it. When an Indian colleague visiting Finland in April 2006 told me that everyone had sent greetings to Anastasia-didi (sister) it felt as if I had reached an important milestone. I had succeeded in combing these two so very different worlds in my own life.

Exposing yourself to learn

Fishermen, artisans, dalits, activists, peasants, slum dwellers, school children, religious leaders, adivasis, politicians. Vrindavan, Johdpur, Delhi, Bhubaneshwar, Agra, Garhwal Hills. Right to information, climate change, gay rights, traditional knowledge, reforestation, transport, fair trade, gender equality.

Now that I look back at my time in India, the array of people, places and issues I saw and experienced seems exhausting. Trying to understand a subcontinent with a billion people and an ancient culture in just three and a half months is almost an insult. Yet it seems surprisingly many things can indeed be encountered, if not grasped.

From the start I had no illusions about my role. I definitely did not go to India to teach and I hardly thought I could help. What could I, a 22-year old Finnish student, possibly offer?

I went there for what some might call a selfish reason: to learn. To learn so that I would be better equipped to continue my work back home in Finland.

Many of the things I learnt are hard to pin down. They are attitudes, ways to frame issues and feelings rather than words or numbers.

Understanding, learning from and working together across borders and cultures is vital for the well-being – and even survival – of humankind. The question is not only about nuclear proliferation, climate change and terrorism, but also of issues like religious tolerance, caring for the elderly and sustainable livelihoods.

At my work in the parliament I often see inability to see the world through the eyes of others. Why do they pollute in India? Why do they use child labour? Why don't they eradicate the caste system? Paternalism is not only insulting; it is politically ineffective and often counter-productive.

The best way to fight paternalism within is to expose yourself to the supposed other – and see that there is no other. There is just us: people with different backgrounds, different lived experiences, different stories to tell, but people nevertheless. And with these people we can dialogue and negotiate, laugh and cry.

The activist exchange in India was without doubt a key experience in my life. Political activists should make living in another culture part of their curriculum. It may not have to be on the other side of the world; it may be the remote rural area in your country or the impoverished neighbourhood in your home town.

As long as you go there and expose yourself.

Oras Tynkkynen, member of parliament and exchange activist in India in spring 2000

Lokayan/CSDS–Kepa association: reflections on the methodology and its further applicability

Tiina Kontinen

Introduction

Background

This analysis looks at the methodology used in the cooperation programme between Lokayan, CSDS and KEPA from 1998-2002. The methodology is reviewed in order to reflect on the possible "lessons learned" from the programme for other South-North cooperation processes of CSOs. Thus, the analysis of the methodology of the programme is discussed in relation to the debates on CSO development cooperation and especially the emergence of the "partnership" paradigm within it. As such, this analysis distances itself from the discourses on activism and solidarity. It represents an outsider's view of the process and is complementary to the dialogic self-appraisal conducted by the activists themselves (see appendix). The main audience of this study are Civil Society Organisations engaged in one way or another in South-North issues.

The cooperation programme between KEPA, Lokayan and CSDS that started in 1998 was an explicit effort in exercising democratic South-North cooperation. Further, it was an initiative that aimed at extending the discussion of South-North relationships out of the development cooperation arena towards wider debates of global asymmetries. The ambitious aim of this effort was to "increase the democracy between South and North at every level". The background of this effort can be identified in the increasing discussion on the challenges of South-North cooperation and the perceived needs for changing the forms and nature of cooperation in a more equal and democratic direction. Recent debates on improving the quality of CSO development cooperation as well as developing

methods for identifying the impacts of development efforts have also pinpointed the improvement of the relationship between Southern and Northern CSOs as a central factor.

The Terms of Reference indicated two main aims for the study:

- to assess the methodological input and applicability of the methodology to other organisations engaging in South-North cooperation
- to include descriptions on methodologies and cooperation models that could be useful for different types of cooperation and recommendations on what kind of cooperation they would suit.

This study is not an evaluation of the Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA cooperation programme. It does not consider whether the original aims of the cooperation were fulfilled or what final impacts the cooperation might have. The starting point of the study was consideration of whether the methodologies of the programme could be used to find solutions to the challenges of cooperation encountered in the development cooperation between Southern and Northern CSOs.

Methodology

The overall theme of this study is approached by using the following exploratory questions:

- What kind of methodology was used in the programme?
- What were the aims of the methodology?
- What kind of assumptions were in the methodology?
- What were the instruments used in the methodology?
- How was the methodology realised in practice?
- How can this model of cooperation programme be applied by other organisations involved in South-North cooperation?
- What are the typical problems and dilemmas in the development cooperation of CSOs and how were these solved in the cooperation at hand?
- What kind of South-North cooperation exists in Finnish associations and what kind of lessons can be learned from the Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA cooperation programme?

The data used in this study was the correspondence between the organisations, the cooperation programme agreements and the publications produced during the cooperation period. A document review was conducted. Additionally, the first draft of the report was evaluated by some main actors and the report was developed in line with the comments. Important discussions relating to the partnership paradigm in CSO development cooperation, as described in research literature, were reviewed in order to identify the more general discussion against which the lessons learned from the Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA cooperation programme were to be considered.

Review of the methodology of the Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA cooperation

Firstly the methodology used in the cooperation programme from 1998 – 2002 is reviewed. The cooperation between individuals has existed since the late 1980s, but in 1997 discussions about institutionalising the cooperation under the KEPA programme started and the first formal agreement between the organisations was signed in 1998.

The aims and the means of the cooperation programme

The issues of the cooperation programme were political from the outset. Political in this context refers to civic action and public debate mainly beyond "traditional" and formal party politics. The contents of the programme addressed the concept of democracy that was understood to have five dimensions: ecological democracy, social democracy, cultural democracy, political democracy and economic democracy. In relation to global issues, the issue of having a critical stance towards the World Trade Organization (WTO) emerged as one of the main contents of the cooperation programme. Additionally, the themes of the impact of foreign funding on Southern movements, urban poor, public health and activism were central. In the Finnish context central themes were motivations behind global solidarity and the practice of solidarity in one's personal life.

The methodological aims were closely connected to the content aims and were actually the most important and explicit ones. The overall methodological aim was to develop a novel method for South-North cooperation. In this novel model one aimed to shift from the paradigms of "helping" and "idealism" to changing unequal structural elements in order to make South-North relationships more democratic. Although the aim was to influence the relations at all levels, the first step was to create and respect democratic practices in carrying out this particular cooperation programme by continuous analysis, innovation and sharing. The aim of democratising relationships was not restricted to Finnish-Indian cooperation, but also to expanding the programme and involving other South-Asian countries as well as other Nordic and European countries at a later stage.

The assumptions in the methodology

The main assumptions behind the methodology of the cooperation between Lokayan and KEPA can be characterised as the following:

(a) The importance of process over outcomes.
Special attention was placed on the quality of the cooperation process. It was not aimed at specific outcomes, for example in terms of development, but wanted to contribute to altering unequal relations between South and North. The process of cooperation was more important than the immediate outcomes, although there were also identifiable short-term outcomes such as seminars, publications and activists' visits that contributed in one way or another to the larger aim of the programme.

(b) Analysis and sharing increases consciousness.
One of the ways of working was by analysing local and global political issues. The sharing of this analysis was one of the important features of the cooperation programme because there was an assumption that it increases consciousness on political issues and, in this case, especially on unequal structures. There was also an assumption that consciousness increases both on an individual and institutional level.

(c) Increased consciousness leads to learning and change of relationships.
The very ambitious aim of democratising the South-North relationship on every level assumed that these relations could be changed through conscious ways of acting. It was expected that the exchange, analysis and dissemination of information would lead to increased consciousness and that this consciousness would lead to changes in action within these relationships making them more democratic and equal.

(d) Personal experience of and contact with other cultures and societies creates understanding of others' situations and global connections
Within the activist exchange it was thought that personal experiences, staying in other cultures and participating in everyday life in other countries leads to a better understanding of the situation of others and global issues than, for example, reading publications and policies.

(e) Learning leads to change in one's own day-to-day life
Accordingly, there was an assumption that when consciousness on both sides increases and learning takes place it will also lead to a change in one's personal life and the actions within it. One of the explicit goals was to change one's life so that one exercised more solidarity on an everyday basis.

The means of the cooperation programme

These overall general aims were realised through three basic means: exchange of activists, arranging dialogues and publishing books and other materials.

a) Exchange programme for activists
At the beginning of the process KEPA thought of sending a liaison officer to India in line with its new policies in a number of other countries. This idea was criticised by the Indian partner, who suggested sending merely a "visiting fellow" and experienced activists who would be willing to engage in the activities of Lokayan/CSDS and share discussions. Gradually, this idea developed into an exchange programme where activists from Finland were invited to India and those from India to Finland. The activists stayed in the respective countries from a couple of weeks to a number of months. During the exchange period the activists were paid a salary and given accommodation.

b) Arranging dialogues

The method of arranging dialogues on diverse subject matters exercised by Lokayan was one of the central means of the cooperation programme. Here dialogue means a kind of workshop or a seminar where as many different views towards the issue as possible are generated. In the framework of this programme four major dialogues (and a number of smaller ones) were arranged. Two of the dialogues were arranged in India, one in Nepal and one in Bangladesh touching upon the issues of activism, social action and voluntarism. In Finland, three dialogues were arranged on the themes of development cooperation as mean of solidarity, personal motivations for solidarity, the alternative forms of solidarity and solidarity in ones personal life.

c) Documentation and publishing

At the beginning of the process the main idea regarding publications was to publish a book reflecting on the impact of foreign funding on activism in the South. This issue was something that the individuals engaged in the cooperation had been also previously interested in and is an important issue among the Indian activists. However, the documentation and publications had wider aims of contributing material on diverse issues for the activist community, administrators and researchers to use. The documentation included newsletters and final reports written by the activists taking part in the exchange programme and edited books based on the dialogues. The publishing component of the programme seems to have been the most difficult one to put into practice – a lot of material was gathered, but there was not enough resources to complete the editing work.

The methodology in practice

Learning

One of the basic assumptions of the methodology was that the programme would provide avenues of learning within both an individual and institutional framework. The methodology implied that in the activist exchange individuals would learn from the experiences they have in another country. The dissemination of information on

these experiences was expected to lead to learning in the organisations and movements the individuals are engaged in. The exchange also provided learning possibilities to the hosting organisations and the people who had contacts with the visiting activists. The dialogues arranged were spaces for learning for the participants and the surrounding society on certain issues. Additionally, the overall process itself was seen as an avenue for learning and strengthening the institutional capacity of Lokayan/CSDS and KEPA. The methodological experiments were also expected to lead to learning in the wider context of South-North cooperation.

The newsletters and final reports of the activists provide a good forum through which to explore the learning of individuals by asking what was learned and how it was learned. The learning experience of the individuals varied, for example, according to the amount of previous personal experiences they had of Southern/Northern countries. For those who travelled in South Asia/Europe for the first time in their lives much effort was put into coping with a new environment and culture. Staying in a completely new culture provided a means of learning about one's self. For example, one of the Finnish activists said he discovered "what kind of middle-class brat he is". One Indian activist talks about how the exchange period taught him a new kind of self-consciousness and strength for activism. The learning of Finnish exchange activists had its focus on certain global or Indian themes they wanted to learn in addition to learning from Lokayan and its activists. The Indian activists focused more on learning about Finnish society and activism in general, often through comparison with their own society. One important aspect of learning for Indian activists was breaking the sometimes quite negatively constructed stereotypes of Northern actors. As the co-ordinator of Lokayan describes in his report dated 15.3.2000: "Normally, we, the Southerners, oscillate between two extreme attitudes towards the Northern solidarity gestures. These two extremes are an extreme sense of inferiority and dependence or extreme sense of arrogance, indifference and attitude of rejection of any gesture of solidarity from the North."

In addition to the individual learning of the activists the exchange programme also provided spaces for learning for society and institutions. In Finland the Indian activists gave a number of lectures and talks to a wider public and they were also introduced in the media – in newspapers, magazines and radio. One of them arranged a photo exhibition. These events gave people a chance to

learn about issues of Indian life and Indian activism. For example, themes such as the Dalit movement and vegetarianism were covered in the Finnish media.

When Finnish activists travelled to India they usually had a certain topic they were interested to learn about during their stay, such as climate change or traffic issues. Learning about and within the work of Lokayan, the struggles of people and the method of dialogues sometimes did not take place as much as Lokayan had anticipated. However, the representatives of Lokayan were of the opinion that Lokayan as an organisation benefited from learning from specific issues such as fair trade and climate change.

The mechanisms of more lasting institutional learning are more difficult to identify. Many activists participating in the programme were not closely affiliated to KEPA or Lokayan/CSDS and there is not much documentation on how their experience has affected the associations and movements they are active in. The institutional learning was also connected to the experience of activists taking part in the programme. Activists travelling from Finland to India were young and not very experienced. This sometimes led to situation in which the emphasis of the learning was on a personal level and not so much on their contribution to institutional learning in Lokayan.

It was assumed that in the process of cooperation both partners will learn. This learning took place in practical encounters, discussion, analysis and the practical management of the cooperation itself.

Trust

The Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA programme was a process of institutionalisation of more informal and individual-based relationships that aimed at equality and democratic relations. The attempt seemed to be one of keeping up with informal and flexible connections while at the same time institutionalising the idea. In organisational terms, such flexible network relations can be seen as based on shared commitment and mutual trust rather than bureaucratic and hierarchical relations based on control, command and well-defined roles and responsibilities. Developing trust in a relationship requires time and experiences of a number of situations where the counterpart has proved to be "trustworthy". Additionally, it has been said that the greater the geographic and cultural distance between those co-operating, the more difficult it is to build a trusting relationship.

In the Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA programme, the trust between the individuals had already developed over some ten years of partnership before institutionalising the programme. The sharing of similar kinds of values and political commitments enabled the emergence of trust. The books written and edited together before beginning formal cooperation had shown the commitment and trust created on both sides of the cooperation. However, bringing KEPA into the cooperation as an organisational actor created novel kinds of trials of trust. KEPA itself as an organisation had a more bureaucratic structure, rigid planning and reporting system as well as a well-defined division of responsibilities. In the cooperation programme the informal and network-type of organisational form of Lokayan and, more precisely, the cooperation between the working group designated for this task in Lokayan/CSDS and the informal India group in KEPA encountered the formal structure of KEPA. However, from the beginning KEPA's formal structure seemed to trust the individuals engaged in the programme. This, in turn, can be seen as a result of long-lasting informal and individual relationships of people engaged in the cooperation.

One example of this trust in relation to funding was that KEPA paid half of the budget after signing the agreement. In many cooperation processes the funds are disbursed activity by activity.

Organisational identity

According to the literature of the partnership an equal relationship between Southern and Northern actors requires that both partners are able to maintain their organisational autonomy and identity. In this programme, there were interesting features related to organisational identity. At the beginning of the cooperation KEPA was changing its activities from the sending of volunteers towards forming partnership programmes with different countries. The cooperation with Lokayan was only one part of this reform. It could be seen as a kind of pilot cooperation that was part of KEPA's identity building as a South-North "partnership organisation".

The fact that the programme had certain political goals at some stage became problematic to KEPA's organisational identity. As an umbrella of many kinds of organisations, KEPA had not been very actively involved with political issues at the time the programme started. The shift from an organisation sending development volunteers to an organisation that has different kinds of partnerships

in diverse countries has not been a smooth one and sometimes this kind of approach was not seen to fit KEPA's organisational identity.

On the other hand, in some instances there were discussions on issues that seemed to be a threat to Lokayan's identity. For example, Lokayan has an identity as an organisation that does not accept foreign funding and receiving money in this programme would possibly have affected the legitimacy of Lokayan in the eyes of other Indian movements. In this case, Lokayan did not receive money directly from KEPA. The money for arranging dialogues and editing publications was channelled through CSDS. Similar kinds of issues were discussed in relation to the Finnish activists visiting Lokayan. At some stage there was a question of whether the specific themes that were of interest to Finnish activists suited Lokayan's political image.

However, it becomes quite clear that some individuals participating in KEPA's India/South Asia group and Lokayan activists shared from the beginning quite similar identity as local and global civic actors and considered that the partnership strengthened their identity. Similar kinds of interests and attitudes towards, for example, development and globalisation facilitated the maintaining of organisational identities even in phases of intensive cooperation.

It becomes evident that unlike many other South-North relationships in the cooperation between KEPA and Lokayan neither of the counterparts dictated the substantial agenda or organisational form of cooperation even if funding of activities was provided only by KEPA.

Reciprocity

An equal relationship, or partnership, requires some kind of reciprocity. This means that both partners both contribute to and benefit from the programme. It should satisfy some of the needs of both partners and the efforts and benefits should be equally shared. In this programme reciprocity was an explicit aim, which was realized in some way in every activity of the programme.

In the activist exchange the programme aimed at parity in terms of the number of activists visiting Finland and India. This kind of reciprocity is rare in many South-North cooperation processes, which tend to include more travelling from North to South than vice versa. The equal exchange contributed to reciprocity in a number of ways. Firstly, it offered activists from both South and North

possibilities to experience life and activism in other contexts. Second, when the exchange programme is a two way process the labour needed for hosting the visiting activists is shared.

In dialogues and publications one important feature of reciprocity was the idea of sharing the information coming from North to the South and from the South to the North. One standard critique given by Southern organisations is that even if they have to gather and disseminate a lot of information on their society and their organisation to Northern counterparts they rarely get any comparable information from the North. For example, the dialogues arranged in Finland on the motivations of Finnish activists and the book published on it presented exceptional material about the motivations of Northern actors to their Southern partners.

In relation to providing resources to the programme the idea of reciprocity was not evident. In terms of financial contributions, the funding came from the North from KEPA's budget (KEPA receives its funding from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs) and no explicit financial contribution was required from Lokayan. However, Lokayan contributed by offering office space, for example.

A lot of voluntary work was put into the programme on both sides. Hosting the visiting activists, arranging dialogues and gathering material for publications required numerous hours of voluntary efforts both in Finland and in India. Especially hosting visiting activists seemed to be a laborious effort resulting in having to employ a co-ordinator in India. At a later stage, the capacity of Finnish activists to host Indian activists was also questioned, and the question of employing somebody to take care of it was raised. Becoming conscious of the time and effort that hosting visitors took reflected one aspect of reciprocity. In programmes and projects where Finnish counterparts are continuously sending visitors, trainees, planning and monitoring missions to the South it is rarely acknowledged how demanding it is for the hosting organisation to take care of the visitors in addition to their own daily work and family duties.

Administration and management

In terms of management, one can speak of the management of the cooperation programme itself and the internal management of the organisations engaged in it. These two aspects affect each other since the internal management structures of organisations appear in the management of the cooperation for example in terms of defining who communicates with whom, who is eligible to make decisions about the cooperation and what kind of reporting mechanisms are used.

During the programme there were sometimes very lively discussions on the management of the cooperation. The main issue was the discussion on whether the organisation and management should be informal or formal – the programme aimed at the former but had to deal with the latter. KEPA is quite a large organisation run by public funds so it has to abide by bureaucratic rules in terms of decision-making, responsibilities and reporting. Since the funding for the cooperation came from KEPA it had the same reporting and documentation systems as other KEPA programmes. There was a yearly working plan and reports to be handed to KEPA.

However, the special character and history of the programme made the management of the programme slightly different from other programmes. In KEPA there was a desk officer responsible for the administration of the programme, but the day-to-day contacts and decisions were made by an unofficial working group called the India/ South-Asia group (the working group was officially nominated by the KEPA board only in 2001). At first the group had some 30 members but the membership reduced during the course of the programme. One reason identified for this was that administrative issues took too much time during the meetings. The core group of the "founding members" remained in the group and sometimes there were complaints that the actual decision-making power lay in the hands of two to three active people. When the cooperation proceeded there were increasing demands of making the decision-making structures more clear since the decision-making seemed to happen in "hidden" mutual interactions and that the India-group meeting was only informed about the decisions.

In Lokayan the management structure is more of a network type and it has had no explicitly written rules in regard to decision-making. However, in

some stages of the cooperation in Lokayan there was also an expressed need to make some rules about management. As for the management of the cooperation it seemed that the working group in Lokayan/CSDS had quite an autonomous position regarding decision-making and communicating. The coordinator of the project seemed to have the main decision-making power and communication relations with Finland.

At the same time, the aim was that decision-making in the cooperation programme should be shared between the Indian and Finnish partners. This aim was however not always successful – for practical reasons it was very difficult to arrange meetings where representatives from both parties would be present. Even if that happened - whether in India or in Finland - the other party was usually represented by only one or two people. Making decisions both in Finland and in India sometimes led to gaps in information sharing. To reduce this gap, there was a lot of discussion on administrative issues in an email-list that included both Finnish and Indian actors.

Money

When ideas are put into practice resources are always needed. In this kind of cooperation, based on idealistic and political goals, quite a lot of money was needed to buy flight tickets, pay salaries and allowances, arranging dialogues and seminars and editing and publishing books. In this cooperation programme the financial resources required came from KEPA. However, there was a clear tendency to conceptualise the funds as shared funds allocated for the process. For example, both counterparts openly contributed to budgeting.

In a number of cooperation processes the funds from Northern CSOs to their Southern partners are disbursed activity by activity. This kind of practice often causes delays in implementing the activities and hinders flexibility. In the Lokayan/CDSD-KEPA case, half of the funds were disbursed right after signing the agreement and the other half after the mid-term report. This practice kept the Southern partner well informed about the total amount of funds to be used.

In terms of sustainability of this type of programme one can observe that the programme was build upon the idea that money is continuously available in the KEPA budget and even increasing. This kind of a situation is rare in many of the cooperation processes presently based on the project-idea, where it is common

that the project itself should have components to enable it to acquire income to ensure continuity of the processes. That has, of course, often been the most difficult part of the partnership and resulted in the gradual termination of the activities or searching for alternative funding bodies.

Handling of conflicts

One of the characteristics of an equal relationship is an open and constructive handling of conflicts. If there are no disputes or disagreements in cooperation at all, it might not be a very open cooperation in the first place. Based on the documentation, the handling of conflicts in the process took place in an amazingly open way. People both in Finland and in India raised many critical issues for discussions that were often raised in the joint email list. Some of these disputes seemed to reflect misinterpretations, or rather, multiple interpretations of similar events. For example, one of the Finnish exchange activists in an email wrote that he is not very sure about his role and that the leaders of Lokayan seem not to have expressed their wishes to him. This message was interpreted as an important complaint by the Indian counterpart and led to a long discussion about the excepted contribution of the Indian coordinator as well as the visiting activist. However, the lesson from Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA cooperation programme was that the relationships can withstand both a strong critique and collusion of viewpoints and still continue fruitfully.

Power

The phenomenon of power was already discussed to some extent in the section that dealt with decision-making. Explicit decision-making about the selection of activists, the use of funds and other administrative issues is one quite evident form of power. One can also explore power as a more implicit process of setting the agenda where the decisions are made, and, even as a process of forming a larger framework in which the agendas are set.

The South-North relationships that were of specific concern to this process had been characterized by asymmetrical relationships in terms of economic and political power. Additionally, asymmetry in the value of knowledge has been pointed out. The relationship in many South-North cooperation processes easily

reproduces these differences. Cooperation becomes a process where the North commands and the South obeys, where more "valuable" and advanced knowledge is transferred from North to South. This relationship is often constructed by both partners and might emerge even if the Northern partners explicitly oppose these kinds of asymmetric relationships.

One indicator of power is resistance exercised by the other partner. At the start of the cooperation there was an exercise of resistance from Lokayan's side. When KEPA introduced its new programme and proposed posting a liaison officer to India, Lokayan resisted the idea and proposed shorter visits of "visiting fellows" and set some standards for the visitors.

Potential applicability of the methodology for other cooperation processes of CSOs

Partnership in CSO-development cooperation

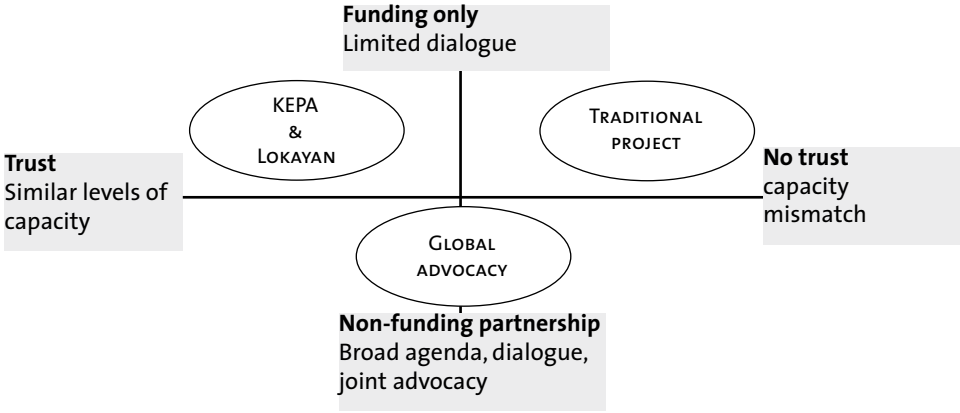
In the following section the applicability and potential of "lessons learned" from the Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA cooperation programme for CSO-development cooperation are discussed. Within the general discussion on CSO development cooperation one of the central themes has been partnership. Partnership – as opposed to the donor-recipient relationship – refers precisely to the change that has occurred in the relationship between Southern and Northern actors towards greater equality where the needs of both parties are satisfied and the aims of which are openly negotiated between the partners. Partnership as an idea was important already in the activities of the solidarity movement in the 1960s and 1970s that stressed, for example, direct contacts between similar groups of people in the North and South. However, during the late 1990s the idea of partnership in the context of development cooperation became once again a central one.

Arguments in favour of partnership usually spring from two different starting points. Firstly, partnership has been conceived as a way towards more effective and sustainable development outcomes and impacts. It has been noticed that a negotiated way of defining relevant development problems and making decisions leads to shared ownership, and thus, sustainable activities and outcomes. Secondly,

the more normative argument for partnership stresses that an equal relationship is a value in itself. Rather than being seen as a means of development, it should be seen as end in itself. The Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA cooperation started merely from the latter point of view, since the reduction of South-North asymmetry was one of its explicit aims. An equal relationship and democratic ways of working were both aimed at in the practical collaboration between the partners, as well as advocated by specific activities – such as arranging dialogues and publishing – in the programme.

Mancuso Brehm (2004) has proposed a spectrum that describes different types of partnerships between Southern and Northern CSOs (see figure next page). The relationship in this typology is discussed in relation to two continuums. The first continuum is between trust and no trust that has to do for example with the wideness of the gap in capacity levels. As research on the emergence of trust in organisational relationships has shown, trust usually requires time to develop and is more likely to occur between quite homogeneous groups in terms of professional background, ethnicity and culture. The second continuum is between the simple funding relationship and non-funding relationship. The funding relationship refers to direct funding from Northern CSOs to Southern CSOs. Direct funding is not tied to particular projects or ear marked activities, but is more of an institutional support enabling Southern CSOs to implement their activities. In such situations, and under conditions of trust, actual dialogue or negotiations between the organisations may be rare and not very continuous. At the other end of the continuum there is cooperation that is typical, for example, of global advocacy networks such as anti-WTO networks. The cooperation may not include any funding at all but is based on flexible and continuous dialogue and exchange of information in order to define common themes.

In this typology many traditional development cooperation projects are situated somewhere in the area between being a funding relationship and no or little trust and a rather substantial capacity mismatch. Of course, also in the project form of cooperation trust will increase with time if there are possibilities to continue the cooperation. However, in the typical project framework of 1-5 years the cooperation is usually terminated at the moment when some mutual trust has been gained. Additionally, development projects typically include a one-way funding relationship and are often implemented in a situation where the capacities, skills, interpretations and knowledge of partners do not easily match.



The dimensions of CSO-relationship. Adopted from Mancuso Brehm 2004, 155.

The Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA cooperation programme is situated between the extremes. The cooperation was a funding relationship in which the funding came from the North to the South. However, the relationship included also the idea of dialogue and joint advocacy. The programme contained a number of dialogues and exchange of views. Additionally, the relationship included a significant amount of mutual trust. Trust can be attributed, for example, to the degree of homogeneity in the ideological commitments of the organisations, as well as the long background of cooperation between the individuals engaged in the cooperation. Trust building did not have to start from scratch when the cooperation programme between the organisations began.

Dilemmas in CSO-development cooperation

Empirical studies on partnership in CSO development cooperation show that currently there seems to be some pertinent dilemmas within the efforts to achieve long-term, mutual and equal partnerships between Northern and Southern actors. The gap between the ideal image of partnership and the practice of cooperation seems to be a large one. In the following I take up some themes identified in the literature that are continuously pinpointed as dilemmatic features in partnership. Further, I will reflect on the Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA cooperation programme's position within these dilemmas.

The first dilemma is between the idea of long-term cooperation processes and short-term project funding. Despite all the debate on direct funding and institutional support the majority of South-North cooperation of CSOs happens within the framework of projects. The project approach poses at least two challenges to long-term institutional partnership. Firstly, the project is supposed to be a defined set of activities that produce certain outcomes. Normally, operation of a CSO or advocacy network is quite difficult to divide into parts or clusters of activities according to a project logic. Secondly, the timeframe of a project is one to five years with an implicit assumption that when the project has ended the Northern CSO should withdraw from the cooperation and the project activities should be "handed over" to the Southern partner. Building trustful relationships might take the whole first five years if the cooperation is started from scratch. This results in a situation in which the cooperation is over when the partnership is about to begin. In the Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA partnership there had been a possibility for long-term cooperation based on individual contacts and joint projects implemented together even before institutionalised cooperation was initiated. However, working under the KEPA programme provided the partners with a horizon for a more long-term and continuous process that would include a number of different activities.

Within the project framework, the second dilemma has been between rigid reporting schedules and systems and the flexibility needed in relationships. Most of the governmental donors that channel funds to CSOs as well as the larger CSOs operating with private funding have quite well defined reporting schedules and systems. For example, the funds allocated for a certain year should be used during that year and reported accordingly. Fund disbursement timetables and reporting procedures give little room for negotiation and flexibility. Additionally, considering the fact that often the disbursement from North to South is delayed, the room for deciding when is the most suitable time to use the funds in the South are narrowed further. The dilemma between the administrative systems and flexibility was apparent also in the Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA cooperation programme. The administrative procedures of KEPA had to be taken into account in terms of such things as using certain planning schemes, budgeting and reporting procedures. However, it seems that the cooperation was also able to deal with issues in quite a flexible way. Plans were changed according to progress identified in diverse areas and plans that did not materialise or were delayed, for example

some of the publications, did not hinder the continuation of the programme. Additionally, both Lokayan/CSDS and KEPA's India-group were able to handle KEPA's reporting systems.

The third dilemma is between maintaining the autonomy of the individual partners and dependence created by the cooperation. During cooperation, especially when it comes to a situation where the Southern CSO is quite dependent on one Northern funder, the agenda and activities may be changed according to the policy principles of the Northern CSOs. In the Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA case Lokayan/CSDS was quite careful about sticking to its own agenda and identity. This was shown in spaces of open resistance to KEPA's ideas.

The findings of previous studies have shown that there is sometimes a discrepancy in perceptions of partnership between Northern and Southern actors. Though the Northern actors perceive their relationships as a partnership, the Southern partners might describe the partnership in more unequal, although friendly terms such as through a father-child metaphor. Based on this material it is quite difficult to assess whether the conceptualisations of partnership differed on the Finnish and Indian side of the cooperation. One of the specific features of this cooperation compared, for example, to cooperation conducted with CSOs in some African countries was the strong tradition of critique towards Northern actors within Indian movements. Such ideological resistance and open denial of foreign funding is rare in other Southern countries.

Additionally, the fourth dilemma identified has been whether contacts should be between individuals or be organisational relationships. Close individual relationships are both a strength and weakness of many cooperation processes. Partnership needs individual and personal relationships, but the lack of organisational relationships can lead to a situation where the content of the cooperation is very dependent on, for example, whoever happens to be the expatriate worker of an organisation. In the case of Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA the planning and administering of the cooperation seemed to be quite individual based on both sides of the cooperation. Those who took part in joint decision-making were few. Further, the main correspondence between the organisations during the cooperation period took place between certain individuals both in Finland and in India.

Lastly, there has been some observation on cases in which there has been a dilemma between aiming at equality, non-hierarchic relationships and democracy

in the external relationships of an organisation (e.g. with the Southern or Northern partner), but simultaneously, a lack of internal democracy within the organisation. This dilemma occurred also in the Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA cooperation programme. At some stage there were debates on the internal democracy of the Finnish part of the programme where criticism was directed at the fact that only two to three persons were making decisions on the cooperation without taking into account additional voices. As one of the activists in KEPA's India group wrote in 2000: "If we are not familiar with the lack of democratic relations in our society and concretely aim to address these by building links to marginalised groups where is our legitimacy to talk of these issues in another society?"

Types of cooperation and lessons learned from Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA cooperation programme

The Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA programme offers some general contributions to any kind of South-North cooperation. Firstly, explicit consideration and analysis of the effects of the global and historical position in which the cooperation is taking place is often lacking in development cooperation. Many cooperation projects seem to consider they enter "virgin" land when starting out. They believe they come to a situation where there is neither history nor structural elements of South-North relations affecting the particular cooperation processes. This often leads to unnecessary disappointments and frustrations on both sides of the cooperation. In the Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA cooperation programme an explicitly critical stance was taken towards the legacy of colonialism and imperialism as well as current processes of economic globalisation and neo-liberal thinking. However, even in cooperation processes that lack this kind of critical position historical and structural contexts and their effects on cooperation are worth reflecting on.

Secondly, in every type of cooperation the nature of the relationship should be considered. The importance of stressing the process instead of or along with the outcome is relevant for any kind of cooperation. These approaches are not exclusive as some studies have shown that cooperation where the partners communicate well with each other and where there is trust and constructive handling of conflicts are also more effective in the terms of development outcomes. A hierarchical system of command and control might be efficient in tem-

porary emergency situations, in which for example humanitarian aid has to be delivered at short notice, but in development and policy oriented processes the negotiation should be open, reciprocal and continuous. Cooperation processes are always a meeting point of different interests, goals and points of views that should be discussed as openly as possible. If there is no open negotiation, or resistance and even struggle the cooperation might turn out to be a process were there is a great difference between explicit and implicit agendas and usually a domination of the agenda by one partner. In this sense the big challenge is for Southern partners to find the courage and self-esteem to resist and negotiate with their Northern counterparts in the way Lokayan sometimes did. Additionally, the very idea of dialogues that were arranged was to bring forth as many points of view as possible. This kind of a starting point would be fruitful in any negotiation situation.

It should however be noted that the programme, including analysis of different phenomena, travelling and spending a lot of time together requires a variety of resources that are not always available to organisations. As shown in the Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA process, deep analysis requires intellectual and educational capacities. The analysis might seem to be too theoretical from the point of view of more practice-oriented persons. At one stage of the Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA programme at least some of the Finnish activists felt excluded from discussions they experienced to be too conceptual. Another point is the amount of funding needed for a programme of this type. Travelling is resource intensive and most of the existing cooperation processes at the moment do not have the luxury of allocating funds for extensive travelling from North to South and from South to North. For a smaller project, for example, even a single trip one way or another forms a large part of the project budget.

For the purpose of discussing the possible "lessons learned" from the Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA cooperation programme I have distinguished six different forms of working typical to Finnish CSOs engaged in South-North issues: 1) working directly with communities, 2) supporting institutions, 3) cooperating with local CSOs, 4) channelling assistance through international CSOs and networks, 5) political work through international networks, and, 6) education and political work in Finland. The cooperation between Finnish CSOs and their Southern partners might include aspects of a number of these forms.

1) Working directly with communities

Many Finnish organisations work directly with local communities in the South. These communities include for example villages, township areas and individual schools and health care centres. This kind of cooperation can be organised so that there is a permanent Finnish expatriate employer or employees to take care of the cooperation and relationships with the community. Working directly with single communities is also typical of small Finnish voluntary organisations. This kind of work is mostly based on personal contacts and on the idea of assisting a particular local community. Conceptualising the cooperation as help is usually done by both cooperation partners. Typically, cooperation processes consist of small-scale projects that receive funding from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and are administered through voluntary efforts. Usually the partners are able to meet face-to face once or twice a year during short visits by Finns.

In direct cooperation between a Finnish CSO and a local community in a Southern country the building of partnership might require much more of an effort than in the Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA cooperation programme. The situation at the beginning of cooperation might be such that neither of the partners is familiar with the environment and problems of the other. The Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA example shows how demanding it is to get to know each other even if one shares a common commitment to certain political goals and a shared language. When time is scarce, especially in projects implemented by small Finnish voluntary CSOs, it is usually used "effectively" in planning and implementing a certain project and there is no time for reflection on how the project positions itself in a wider picture or to learn about societal and local circumstances. The situation easily turns out to be similar to the disappointment experienced by Lokayan at some stages of the cooperation: Northern activists seemed to be too busy with their own themes and did not have time to get involved in Lokayan's every-day activities. Tight timetables, the need to fulfil the Northern agenda and show effectiveness are actually often the main reasons for the need to start solving problems that might not be conceived of as the most relevant ones by the community and, thus, leading to a lack of ownership in the cooperation process. In such a situation there should be enough time allocated for just hanging around (and

seemingly doing nothing) in the community in order to learn about the life situation of persons.

In a situation where a Finnish CSO is working directly for example with a remote village there is quite a substantial capacity and knowledge mismatch compared to that found in the Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA cooperation programme. Representatives of the Finnish CSOs have more knowledge for example in certain theoretical fields, such as health care or forestry, and about the aid system itself, whilst village representatives at community and village level have more knowledge of village level practices. Finnish CSOs usually posses more financial resources, or at least more potential to access development cooperation funds than Southern organisations. Due to the capacity mismatch, very often also a power and influence mismatch occurs – the knowledge posed by the Northern actor, whether it is about education, health or agriculture, is taken as being more valid and valuable by both partners without further reflection. The mismatch in the access to funds is also likely to create a situation where the Northern agenda is implemented. The Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA example shows how the attitude towards building shared knowledge to which both parties can contribute is important. The situation that enabled quite direct negotiations was created partly by taking these asymmetries into open reflection and analysis. Open analysis created a distance between more structural and historical power relations and individual persons taking part in the process: not blaming individuals is a fruitful starting point for any South-North cooperation.

Working with communities usually includes direct face-to-face contacts between different actors. However, the question of reciprocity is often taken for granted. Which needs and interests is the cooperation responding to? Information, especially, is often lacking on the needs, motivations and interest of the Finnish side of the cooperation, as analysed in the Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA cooperation programme. This aspect becomes relevant when working directly with communities, the needs of which are not homogenous. At issue is whose needs the activities are responding to within the community, and, what are the needs of Northern partners that are satisfied in the co-operation. The open analysis and publication of the motivations behind Finnish activism is an excellent example of articulating – to us and our partners – diverse motivations inherent in the activities.

Lessons learned for working with communities
a) Time needed for just hanging around and learning.
b) Explicitly reflecting on the question of power in the relationship
c) On reciprocity – who gets what and what kind of motivations are at stake?

2) Supporting institutions

Typical ways of working are, for example, for large missionary organisations to support local churches and parishes in the South, or for Northern trade unions to extend support to Southern trade unions by providing technical assistance, funding and advice. This kind of cooperation is based on supporting existing and more or less established institutional actors. In this kind of cooperation it is essential to identify the already existing processes in the respective institutions in order to be able to contribute to strengthening them in some aspect. Cooperation of this type might be direct budget funding of the institution in which decision-making on the use of money is left entirely up to the Southern partner. However, most of the time such support includes negotiations on the use of money and the specific activities that would improve the institution.

As in any other cooperation, when it comes to institutional support knowledge of specific problems and the current situation of the institution to be supported is essential. In a situation where support is extended from one church to another or from one trade union to another the shared ideological and practical starting point might be easier to identify than in an organisation-local community situation. However, the assumed similarity might also hinder actual learning about the specific situation of the institution. Institutions work in specific historical and societal contexts that affect their priorities and ways of working. Sharing of experiences becomes crucial also when dealing with institutional support. In the activist exchange Lokayan/CSDS stressed the importance of taking part in day-to-day activities and dialogues arranged by Lokayan instead of concentrating on individual thematic projects. This kind of sharing of the daily duties builds a good basis for institutional cooperation.

Another issue relating to institutional support are the modes of support and especially the manner in which money is allocated. In some instances a taken-for-granted solution for institutional support would be to send an expatriate expert

to work in the institution. This may be a good solution, but the expertise needed might rather be found at closer hand. Making this type of decisions should be an open negotiation process and the Southern partner should be able to say that they do not want the Northern expertise if he/she doesn't posses some specific qualifications. This is analogous to the reaction of Lokayan/CSDS towards sending a liaison officer or younger volunteers. Lokayan explicitly said that sending experienced exchange activists was what they needed. Similar questions usually have to be tackled with development experts – often, experts are quite young and inexperienced and their training and settling into the environment requires much energy by the receiving institution.

The lessons learned from the Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA cooperation programme in terms of decision-making in relation to the use of money and budgeting are twofold. Firstly, the attempt to make all the budgeting decisions together with the Southern and the Northern partners was one of the important features of the cooperation methodology. Open negotiation and information sharing in terms of fund allocation, from both sides, as well as the independent budgeting of the Southern partner as a basis for fund negotiations, are important aspects of the cooperation programme. Secondly, in some instances the flexible decision-making mechanisms in Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA created situations where it was unclear who was making the decisions about allocating funds on a smaller scale. In institutional support these kinds of situations could be avoided by negotiating on the broader lines, but attributing decision-making on the use of funds to the institution supported.

Decision-making on using funds goes hand in hand with decision-making in general. When established institutions are supported the question of existing decision-making structures becomes relevant. Often, in the name of flexibility and effectiveness, institutional decision-making structures may be by-passed. However, this kind of unofficial decision-making does not support the idea of institutional ownership and cooperation might even be considered a threat to the institution. While it is true that at times existing decision-making structures are bureaucratic, inefficient and even corrupted by-passing them might not be a sustainable strategy. Contributing to a change of structures is more demanding and time-consuming but it may have sustainable effects.

Lessons learned for institutional support

a) Reciprocal trips in order to get to know the institutions

b) Consider the need for sending experts and the nature of the needed expertise

c) Open budgeting and negotiation about the use of money

d) Respecting existing decision-making structures

3) Co-operating with local non-governmental organisations

Many Finnish CSOs are currently working in partnership with diverse kinds of non-governmental organisations and associations in the South. A number of Finnish CSOs have moved from direct support of communities to cooperation with organisations for two main reasons. Firstly, the main funding agency for development cooperation, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, has stressed the importance of organisational partners. Secondly, during the past ten years there has been an increased emergence of such organisational bodies and development CSOs in many Southern countries.

There are at least two types of cooperation carried out with CSOs in the South. Some Northern CSOs are engaged in partnerships with Southern CSOs whose constituencies are people on the village or community level or a specific group within society such as disabled people. These CSOs often have a thematic orientation; there are for example environmental organisations, women's organisations and agricultural organisations. Cooperation with these organisations is realised through certain limited projects, the outcomes of which are aimed at improving the situation of the membership or wider constituency of the local organisation. Simultaneously, cooperation might include the so-called capacity building of the organisation itself.

Another type of cooperation between Finnish and Southern organisations is working with intermediary, umbrella and network organisations in the South. This kind of cooperation most often lacks a project focus and is merely concentrated on supporting organisations through capacity building. As in the case of institutional support, capacity building means of CSOs include technical assistance i.e. staff and equipment, training and, in some cases, direct funding.

The main difference between working with communities and working with organisations is that an organisation is a more structured and homogenous

actor than a "village" or "community" and thus it has more established aims, agendas and an organisational history. Thus, in cooperation with emerging non-governmental organisations the question of organisational identity is crucial. Although the development and CSO-management literature emphasises the importance of clear organisational "missions" and "visions" needed in Southern organisations, often the situation is such that the organisations are ready to modify their agenda on the basis of conditions set by available funding. In such a situation a donor-recipient–relationship easily emerges and the Northern CSO decides the scope of activities and the Southern CSO accepts whatever agenda is given. However, in many cases Southern CSOs also have their own organisational agendas and if there is not enough attention placed on explicating and identifying these agendas it may lead to "hidden agendas" and the appropriation of diverse projects for other purposes. The Lokayan/CSDS example shows how important it is to explicate criticism and ideas that do not match the agenda of the Southern organisation as a basis for negotiating real shared agendas.

In cooperating with an organisational body the management of the cooperation meets the challenge of matching two different organisational systems in terms of leadership, budgeting, reporting and so on. Both sides should be explicit about their systems and quite clear about decision-making procedures, be they formal or informal. This question is related also to that of to what extent the actual cooperation is managed "outside" the organisational framework, for example, through some individuals. The example of KEPA and Lokayan/CSDS shows the difficulties encountered between informal communication and decision-making between some individuals and the more formal procedures of organisations.

In cooperation between the Northern and Southern CSOs it is thus a question of handling multiple management systems: that of the Northern CSO, that of the Southern CSO and that of the cooperation. In a similar vein to the lessons learned for institutional support when it comes to organisational cooperation, the questions of open negotiation on budgeting and dealing with multiple decision-making procedures is relevant. Organisational cooperation requires harmonisation of different management systems and creating new, collaborative ones. For, example, conceptualisation of a collaborative accountability instead of accountability of one organisation to other could open up new possibilities.

As shown through the Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA example the possibilities of travelling and getting to know partners' working environment and practices are crucial in creating an equal relationship. Therefore arranging possibilities for visiting for both sides is an important lesson to be learnt.

Lessons learned for cooperating with local CSOs
a) Maintaining organisational identity is crucial – also conflicts about the contents of cooperation are needed
b) Handling multiple management systems and creating a shared one for the co-operation
c) Importance of getting to know each partners' working environment – provision of equal possibilities for travelling

4) Channelling assistance trough international CSOs and networks

Some larger Finnish non-governmental organisations channel at least some of their development assistance through their international umbrellas or other network organisations. In this kind of cooperation there is no direct contact between Finnish and Southern actors, but the expertise on the Southern aspects lies in the hands of the international organisational body. In such a situation there are not many direct lessons to be learned from a process such as the Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA cooperation. However, the Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA experience can sensitise Finnish organisations to monitor projects and programmes of international networks in terms of how they deal with power relations and negotiations with Southern partners. Additionally, Finnish CSO could advocate the principle of conducting continuous analysis and dissemination of information.

5) Political work through international networks

One form of action for Finnish associations is political work through international networks. These networks can be more established ones, such as international CSOs, or more loose networks organised spontaneously around some specific campaigns, such as anti-WTO campaigns. This kind of cooperation does not include a

bilateral funding relationship, but mostly consists of action on diverse issues on a more or less ad hoc basis and taking part in global processes, such as the World Social Forums. In this work, it is very important to get information about issues, processes and situations all over the world in order to build up global agendas. For this kind of rapid information exchange informal and individual relationships between activists are an efficient way of cooperating.

Global advocacy work requires the capacity for understanding the realities of different societal contexts and their relationship to global processes. Lessons learned from the Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA cooperation programme are at least two fold. Firstly, the emphasis on a reciprocal activist exchange in order to share life and learn from issues stresses the importance of getting personal experiences about the issues one advocates. Reading literature, policies and about others' experience gives a manifold picture of global issues, but their local level manifestations are hard to understand without personal experience. As shown in the Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA programme, mutual exchange breaks up the homogenous picture and stereotypes both of the Northern activists about the South and of Southern activists about the North. The possibilities of the activist exchange provided by KEPA-Lokayan programme offered such avenues for learning.

Secondly, the Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA programme stressed the importance of documentation. In a number of places around the world there are a number of discussions being held, analyses carried out and conclusions made that could contribute to understanding diverse situations on a local and global scale. However, due to the lack of capacities to document and disseminate the results of the analysis there is no emergence of shared knowledge and understanding or cumulative knowledge. The efforts made in analysis, documentation and distribution within the Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA programme displayed the importance of such activity, but also showed how laborious an effort it is.

Lessons learned for working with the international networks

a) Enabling personal experiencing about the phenomena one is advocating for

b) Taking care of documenting and dissemination of knowledge gained through analysis

6) Educational and political work in Finland

Many of the Finnish CSOs involved in South-North cooperation also work extensively in Finland. There are a lot of CSOs whose main activities take place in Finland and South-North cooperation is one small part of their work. Many of these CSOs are concentrating on certain thematic issues, for example disability CSOs are lobbying for the disabled. For these CSOs political work in Finland includes lobbying parliament on issues concerning specific themes. Another field of political work of Finnish CSOs is lobbying the Foreign Ministry on issues related to development cooperation. The third area is the global questions discussed above.

Additionally, many CSOs carry out education programmes in Finland on certain thematic issues or information about Southern countries in general in which the experience gained in the South is used in preparing educational material. For this kind of work networking between Finnish organisations would be crucial. It would benefit all parties to making use of Southern activists and CSO representatives visiting other organisations in the education programmes. The activists in the Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA programme visited many places and gave lectures and talks that were arranged in cooperation with a number of Finnish organisations. The flexible use of visitors would require information sharing between Finnish organisations about forth-coming visitors. In a similar vein, Finnish persons that have had the possibility to take part in an exchange programme in one form or another could be used more often in the educational efforts of organisations.

The Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA activist exchange showed a number of ways in which Southern visitors can be used in education and awareness raising. Visiting "ordinary Finnish people", schools and giving presentations on issues relevant to the visitor as well as publishing articles and interviews in newspapers are all ways that could be replicated in many other contexts of Finnish CSO activity. If there is no visibility in the local or national media there is a danger that the fruits of any kind of visit will stay with very few people. In addition to the fruits, there is also the issue of duties related to hosting visitors. When a number of CSOs together are hosting the visitors, the individual workload would decrease.

Lessons learned for educational work in Finland
a) Using visitors from the South in educational situations by a number of Finnish organisations
b) Sharing the visitors from the South among a number of Finnish CSOs
c) Making visitors from the South visible in mass media

Recommendations

Of course, each cooperation process is unique and has its own objectives as well as restricted resources for conducting cooperation. Therefore it is quite hard to give any specific recommendations that would apply to any particular process. In the following I have listed some recommendations to inspire Finnish actors while working with their cooperation processes. Cooperation is, however, a two-way process in which only one party cannot initiate change. That is why some of the recommendations apply equally to Southern CSOs. Additionally, the Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA cooperation indicated that even if there is an explicit aim of exercising equality in cooperation, it is difficult and, of course, never perfect.

1) Recommendations for the CSOs

Increase awareness of the historical context and global asymmetries

- Consider explicitly how the wider historical context (e.g. experiences of colonialism and previous development cooperation projects) affects your cooperation with a certain partner.
- Be aware that some problems and dilemmas in relationships are due to this historical context, not because of the conduct of individual CSOs or individual persons.
- Consider commitment to change these historical features that create asymmetry and inequality – ask yourself whether you would like to exercise a more explicitly political aim.
- Discuss about the effects of foreign funding on Southern CSOs in general and in regard to your own cooperation in particular.

Pay attention to the cooperation process in addition to outcomes

- Consider whose idea the cooperation was in the first place and was the agenda of the Finnish side or your partner organisation the first starting point of the cooperation.
- Be sensitive to the critique coming from the Southern partner (not always as explicit as in the case of Lokayan) on the cooperation – does it lead to change or it is by-passed as irrelevant?
- Reflect on your motives for engaging in cooperation and be open about them: all motives have their impact on negotiations about joint objectives.
- Remember that cooperation is always a process of negotiation and about finding a common ground – it is never easy, in any circumstances, to create joint objectives between diverse actors.
- Exercise the strategy of finding out as many points of views as possible for the basis of negotiation and do not be afraid of conflicts.
- Arrange dialogical meetings and seminars in order to evaluate the relationship.

Pay attention to creating a shared management system

- Exercise shared budgeting from the beginning: do not separate Finnish and Southern costs and negotiate only about the latter.
- Consider project funding as a funding for a shared project, not funding for the Finnish organisation to be further allocated to the Southern partner .
- Inform your partner immediately about the possible funding received from the ministry and adjust together the budget according to the received amount of money: each decision about cutting off or increasing the budget should be negotiated jointly.
- Be explicit about the decision-making system of a project: should there always be representatives from both organisations when decisions are made on the project (if not in person, then by fax, letter or email to take a stand on the things to be decided)?
- If there is a possibility for continuous use of email, create an email-list in which all the parties are involved in order to discuss the issues regarding the project (not e.g. Finnish partners discussing among themselves and then informing the partner only about the outcomes of the discussion).

- Use English or any other language that all the partners can understand to a certain extent in all the documents on the project, especially the plans, budgets and reports.
- Make and disseminate written documentation about the discussions and decisions made.

Remember that learning takes time

- Remember that the more diverse the backgrounds of the partners, the more time the building of initial understanding and trust will take.
- Stress the importance of spending time in your partner organisation (both South and North), being together and listening in addition to the time used in effective accomplishment of certain tasks.
- Consider visits both ways, even if resource consuming they are crucial for creating a shared understanding in cooperation.

2) Recommendations for the funding agencies

The Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA cooperation programme was a kind of an experiment of more policy-based cooperation between Finnish and Southern CSOs. The work both in India and in Finland included policy-oriented work on both local and more shared global themes. The activist exchange supported learning from experience of this political work and transferring the experiences from South to North and vice versa: recent Finnish development policy stresses the importance of finding what "added value" can be found in Finnish development cooperation. The experiences of the Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA activist exchange show that Finnish voluntary work, activism and the function of voluntary associations could be one of "value added" – not as ready-made models to be imported, but as examples of inspiration and joint discussion for Finnish and Southern actors. Breaking up stereotypes and getting knowledge of the lives of ordinary activists provides platforms for struggle for more equal relationships. Therefore, supporting exchanges and visits from South to North could potentially share both the goal of building equal partnerships and strengthening Southern civil societies.

As the experience of the Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA partnership shows, for South-North cooperation to function well it is important to get to know each other and gain trust to avoid side-tracking and the hiding of real agendas on both

sides of the cooperation. Partnership, or any good and functioning relationship, does not emerge out of nothing. Therefore, in funding decisions the more flexible idea of partnership building should be supported. If the first contact between collaborating Northern and Southern CSOs includes a lot of pressure to produce an effective project plan in one to two weeks, the plan is not likely to be based on mutual understanding and reciprocity, but on an agenda of one of the actors into which the other is forced in one way or another.

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APPENDIX: A dialogic self-appraisal of the cooperation between Lokayan/CSDS and KEPA 2001

Introduction

This appendix is an edited and shortened version of a self-appraisal report that was produced by Lokayan, CSDS and KEPA. The self-appraisal process was carried out collectively by the key actors of the cooperation in both India and Finland for seven months, from April to November 2001. Originally the report covered the cooperation of these partners from October 1998 to November 2001, which were the first three years of their cooperation programme. In this edited version some up dated information has been added, especially in relation to more recent outcomes in documentation. The text is mainly as it was in the original version; only some minor editing and changes in the structure were made. The excluded parts covered mainly detailed information on activities, administration issues and notions on internal coordination in KEPA. The complete version of original self-appraisal report is available in KEPA. The "we" of the text refers mainly to those who were active in this cooperation programme from Lokayan, CSDS and KEPA. However, sometimes it refers only to Indian partners but this is easily recognised by the context. The self-appraisal was carried out through a dialogic method, which reflects the centrality of democratic ideals in the Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA association.

The atmosphere was very enthusiastic in the CSDS meeting room in Delhi, 5 April 2001, when bout 20 representatives of the partner organisations (four of them from Finland), decided to present to KEPA the proposal that the planned evaluation of the Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA cooperation programme should be carried out as a dialogic self-appraisal. They were eager to take the task seriously and held a first proper self-appraisal meeting already the next day. The five-hour meeting was a success. It formed a solid base for the self-appraisal. Another self-appraisal meeting was organised in Helsinki in June 2001. Besides these two

main meetings there were many other discussions in India and Finland. Also, interviews were carried out with both KEPA board members and staff and with Indian and Finnish activists who had participated in the activist exchange. Some sent their comments by e-mail, as did also some of KEPA's India group members and those who were on the Finnish e-mail list of the cooperation. Agreements, letters, minutes of the KEPA's India group, informal texts, reports on dialogues and lists of organised/attended seminars were used in this collective effort.

The partners saw this dialogic self-appraisal effort as an opportunity to test this type of an evaluation method, in the development cooperation context, which is carried out collectively by the Southern and Northern partners, and which is based on transparency and mutual sharing of experiences. Various versions of this report were discussed properly and agreed upon in the partner organisations, partly also with their constituencies. The partners experienced this collective estimation effort as a very positive and constructive process. It deepened their own understanding of the cooperation and on the communication and cooperation between the South and the North.

The self-appraisal process was an important learning process for those who participated in it. As the introduction to the report pointed out: "It is difficult to say how different the results would were if a consultant had carried out this effort, but most probably the collective learning process would were weaker". It was also noted that the political nature of the Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA association makes it difficult and challenging to evaluate its outcomes. The results will largely be seen only during the years to come but the aim of the report was to analyse the outcomes of the Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA cooperation programme as transparently, exactly, deeply and widely as possible." The report also noted that: "We are satisfied both with this dialogic self-appraisal method, and with this report. We think it describes and analyses properly and openly the history and activities of this programme, and also brings up relevant notions for future cooperation. We hope that also others in the KEPA and CSDS/Lokayan constituencies would find this report a useful, coherent and reliable one."

In this appendix the results and observations of the self-appraisal report are organised so that first the main results and notions on main dilemmas and experiences of the programme will be presented in relation to the four main activities of the cooperation: activist exchange, seminars and dialogues, documenta-

tion and networking. Of these, the activist exchange part is the longest as many notions of the exchange activists themselves are included to give the reader a comprehensive picture of the dilemmas and experiences of the exchange programme. After the activity-wise presentation there are ideas on the communication and decision-making between the partners and some assessments of whether the original objectives of the cooperation were achieved.

Activist exchange

Main results

The overall results of the activist exchange were positive and encouraging, besides its various problems and shortcomings. In the end, all activists were satisfied that they participated in the programme and that they were given a fruitful opportunity to deepen their political understanding as activists, through a close cooperation with activists in a Southern/Northern society. The political influence of the exchange has also been significant. An important result of this component is the success in creating physical parity between Southern and Northern activists. All the exchange activists continue their social/political activism, although only a few of them are actively involved in the KEPA-CSDS/Lokayan programme. However, the aim has not been to integrate all of them into this specific activity, but to support their personal growth as activists.

Many different kinds of learning were documented by the activists. For example, the discussions of one of the Indian visitors has significantly influenced understanding in Finland on child labour and some of the Finnish exchange activists were creating important initiatives based directly or indirectly on their experiences in India, especially concerning climate change, other environmental issues, and the democratisation of the South-North relations. The exchange programme has given Indians, who usually do not have the possibility, an opportunity to travel to Europe. Their visits were deeply important for themselves and their political movements, but also for the Finns who were in touch with them. The most positive comments from the Finnish side were related particularly to these exchange activists from India. It has been positive to realise how the

traditional KEPA kind of approach, the academic institutions and the Indian low cast movements were able to come together to pursue a common goal: the visit of one of the activists to Jyväskylä has ended up giving birth to the environmental community programme of Jyväskylä University students in a township of Delhi. Contacts with Indian activists have significantly influenced both the anti-privatisation and WTO campaign, and also vision-formation on (at least) WTO related issues in KEPA. One of the Indian exchange activists came up with the idea that a specialist from the Indian Ministry for Renewable Energy, responsible for the development of cooking stoves, should meet Finnish specialist Pauli Rantanen to see which of his models could be further developed for Indian conditions. The cooking stove issue is an extremely crucial health dilemma, as between 900 000 and 3,6 million persons, especially women, die in India annually because of the smoke caused by inappropriate cooking stoves. A Finnish CSO Technology for Life (Tekniikka elämään palvelemaan) has created long-term contacts with some Indian exchange activists.

An important outcome is also the experiences of all those who were interacting with the exchange activists in India and Finland. For example, in the Finnish context, the Indian activists' comments and queries about Finnish society taught the Finns a lot about their society. It has made the invisible visible to them and has forced them to search for information on a wide range of issues and seek contacts with a diverse group of people. It showed them that sometimes outsiders are needed to make social marginalisation visible to them living in a welfare state.

Although the results of the exchange programme will be mainly seen during the years to come, there have already been positive political impacts both in India and Finland. In India, a better understanding and a building of a common platform has been strengthened as a result of the time spent in Finland and due to contacts with the Finnish activist community. At numerous dialogues, organised by various platforms, most of the activists have related to their Northern experiences primarily because of the participation in the exchange programme. Lokayan's legitimacy has increased in activist circles because people from all ideological streams were involved in the cooperation and exchange process. This has benefited Lokayan with a larger network than ever. The process has, thus, been very effective in conveying the policy of positive affirmation. The experiences,

comments and concrete contributions of both Finnish and Indian exchange activists have had a significant importance for will-formation and campaigning in KEPA and among other Finnish civil society groups and organisations, concerning especially the privatisation of public companies and WTO/trade policies related issues.

Notions on dilemmas and experiences of the activist exchange

The activist exchange was the most difficult component of the Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA cooperation programme. It was the main channel for making the partners' constituencies work closely together on an everyday basis. The three-year experience taught us how demanding it is to create a proper programme for a foreign partner visiting your country for several weeks or months. The exchange has demanded us to be earnestly involved in this cooperation process and obviously this mutual earnestness has also extended to other components of the cooperation programme. However, besides the wide diversity of mainly practical problems, the exchange programme mainly had promising outcomes.

The selection process and criteria of activists caused much discussion in KEPA's India group. The Indian partners made it very clear from the very beginning that they wish that activists going from Finland to India/South Asia should be seniors in their fields. However, some younger and less experienced persons were selected. This was for two reasons. First, there were not many senior activists among the applicants. Second, the exchange programme was also seen, from the Finnish side, as a good learning opportunity for younger activists. The selection process was realised together with the Indian partners. It was decided to use an open application procedure in Finland to maintain the principle of democracy, to open up the process beyond the core of KEPA's India group and to gauge the interest available in the exchange.

There were a total of 10 applicants of whom five were selected. The applicants all had a background in international or development issues and almost all of them were active in at least one Finnish citizen organisation such as the Nature League, International Work Camps, the Swallows or Tinku. They ranged in age from 20-46, six of them were women and four men. Finally, three of these

five participated as two of them cancelled their participation due to other commitments. The selection process has been criticised by some Finnish activists who felt that it lacked openness, i.e. that it was not advertised widely enough as the announcements were published only in KEPA's magazine and newsletters and that the selection should were based on matching up candidates with specific tasks. The three other activists were selected on an invitation basis (one of them was Anastasia Laitila whose text on her experiences and personal learning is published in this report).

In the Indian context it was not reasonable to organise an open call for activists. Firstly, it would most probably result in an unlimited number of applications, complicating the task of processing. Secondly, in the Lokayan/CSDS networks there are plenty of activists to nominate for the activist exchange. Thus, in India the activists were invited to participate in the exchange. The selection process was carried out collectively among organisations linked to the Indian partner through informal group consultation, mutual trust and a certain degree of autonomy. Complex criteria are used in selecting the Indian activists, consisting of positive discrimination for activists of an economically modest background, gender bias, smaller country bias (Nepal) and caste consideration. The names of people directly associated with Lokayan were not proposed, nor was precedence given to those in leading positions.

There was a long discussion in KEPA's India group on the compensation policy of the Finnish exchange activists. Opinions on the appropriate salary level varied from Finnish to Indian standards. An Indian standard salary would mean complete parity in the cooperation process between Southern and Northern partners. The arguments for a higher remuneration were mainly based on two aspects. Firstly the Finnish activists have regular expenses to cover in Finland while they are in India (study loans, rents etc.). Secondly, they do not have social networks helping them in India in their everyday life routines and in sharing the costs. The compromise reached was that KEPA would offer Finnish activists a monthly salary of 6,000 FIM which is clearly more than the Indian standard, but still significantly less than the Finnish average (for activists with children separate additional allowances would be negotiated). The salary included social costs, i.e. pension fees that the employer has to pay. Besides, the activists had free housing, and travelling costs, including daily allowances for travelling days.

For the Indian activists in Finland a daily allowance, free housing, reimbursement for local travel both within Helsinki and in Finland, and the use of cell phones for local calls were provided during the exchange period. Due to taxation regulations, it is complicated and expensive for the employer in Finland to pay salaries to non-nationals. Therefore, the KEPA's India group decided that the most cost-efficient way to pay remuneration to Indian activists in Finland was to pay the maximum daily allowance that can be paid locally which does not require the employer to pay taxes. This sum was 157 FIM. KEPA also wants to stick to the principle of paying all its foreign visitors the same amount when they are in Finland.

All the Finnish activists felt that the remuneration provided was sufficient especially since the exchange periods were short and did not affect long-term financial commitments in Finland. Two of the activists felt the salary was too high. One of them found it embarrassing to explain to Indians what the salary was and why it was so high. This activist felt that the issue of remuneration should be set according to the individual needs of each person attending the exchange programme. Another Finnish activist felt that daily allowance provided for travel in India for Finnish activists was unnecessary because the remuneration was more than sufficient to cover costs incurred during travel. An activist who felt that the remuneration was sufficient said this was related to staying as a paying guest with the local exchange programme coordinator: "..the disparity between the remuneration level versus price levels for Indian activists in Finland is not the same as for Finnish activists in India. It is also a matter of spending culture. In Finland more of social life is spent outside the home with visits to bars and restaurants compared to India where Finnish activists are often invited to share meals with Indian families."

Even if some training was arranged for both Finnish and Indian activists some of them felt it was not enough. They thought there should were proper training before the activist leaves from home, because that helps a lot in the work abroad. Information, listening to others' experiences and clear plans make things much easier in a foreign country. The Indian activists would have wanted a clearer idea of what types of individuals and organisations they could meet in Finland to plan their programme in greater detail before departure. An Indian activist made the following comments on the exchange period: "When I finally arrived

at the airport, I realised there was a lot of practical advice that I had not received that could have helped me cope with meeting a different culture and society. In the beginning I did feel awkward, but this unease did not last long."

The dilemma of a specific working theme has been a complicated question. Should a specific theme be defined for the exchange activists or should they just go with an open mind to observe and participate in the activities of the partner organisations and their constituencies?

For two reasons it was decided in Finland that it would be reasonable to list some tentative themes to be presented in the announcement about the exchange programme. Firstly, to be able to take into account the specific substantial needs and hopes of the Indian partners in selecting the activists. Secondly, to avoid making the new programme seem too vague among the possible candidates interested in applying for an "exchange post". Four themes were formulated in dialogue with the Indian partners, (i) the dialogue method and the opening of markets, (ii) the dialogue method and the urban poor, (iii) public health issues in South Asia, and (iv) the impact of foreign funding in South Asia.

Many applicants asked about the status of the topics and were willing to redefine them or to work on another one. However, it was obvious that the interested activists found it more convenient to have a collectively accepted theme to work on before departure rather than just to go and "hang around" in India. Additionally, there is also the issue of the shifting nature of what you actually do during the exchange period. You may set out with initial plans, but these may change according to the needs and the opportunities that arise.

The Indian partners suggested that it would be good for the Finnish activists just to come there and go into Indian activist life without having any predetermined specific tasks to be fulfilled, in order to be as sensitive as possible in experiencing the nature of the society that the Indian partners are acting in and how they construct their methods to act. The Indian partners felt that Finnish activists may find it uncomfortable being involved in unstructured talking followed by writing and sharing. They feel it has been difficult to communicate this cultural code to Finnish friends.

One of the Finnish activists attending the exchange said: "It would were helpful if I had prepared a work plan draft already in Finland together with someone from KEPA and got the opinions on that from Lokayan in advance. I could

have collected information, formulated the questions and topics I want to look at and prepare a preliminary timetable. When I arrived in Delhi I started from zero. It took a lot of time for me to know what to do in the Lokayan office... I was frustrated because I did not really know how and where to start my work... in a way it (the activist period) was a perfect experience for me because of these troubles. I understood many things about myself, about India, about work, about activism, etc."

The undefined schedule of work is a weakness, because the activists feel they want a vision of what they will be doing before they arrive, but also a strength because of the flexibility it offers. The experiences and opinions on the issue are multiple. Therefore, the dilemma of themes has not been universally resolved during the first three years of Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA cooperation. However, maybe it is not even feasible to resolve it! The best solution could be that the decision will be taken separately according to the specific background and aims of each exchange activist.

The expectations tied to this component of the cooperation programme are still a problematic issue and needs to be discussed properly. Do we want to concentrate on collecting and processing material on certain political themes? Or do we want to focus on deepening activists' general understanding of a society other than their own, on the methods used and activities carried out by the civil society actors in that society? During the first three years of the exchange, the working methods chosen by the activists in realising the goals set out for their exchange period have shown that there are diverse ways of working. Because the activists cooperated with different individuals, depending on what they were interested in learning about, they were exposed to a variety of ideas and working methods.

The capacity to receive activists as part of the exchange programme has not always been sufficient in either of the partner countries. There has not been enough preparatory planning for their programme and for taking care of their basic needs. A few of the Indian and Finnish activists also expressed a need for interim evaluations during the exchange period to give them an opportunity to get feedback from the Finnish/Indian partners, to clarify unresolved issues and if necessary to restructure their programme. Getting a sense of whether they were 'going in the right direction' seemed an important reason for wanting an informal

but structured interim evaluation. An Indian activist explained in the Delhi meeting of 6 April, 2000: "There was no formal, structured briefing when we arrived in Finland. The tour around Finland was only a learning experience, but on return to Helsinki there was no possibility to reflect on our experiences with Finnish activists, which would also have made it possible for us to reflect on Indian society. This should be included in the structure of the exchanges."

However, the activists mainly felt they had received help and support from both KEPA's India group members and the responsible officers in KEPA and Lokayan/CSDS, that they had been well cared for, and that a friendly and caring atmosphere characterised the first meeting with Indians and Finns respectively, but the need was expressed for a more structured form of reception with representatives of the partners' organisation. Former exchange activists, both in India and Finland, gave their support and provided local guidance, and organised specific programmes for the activists. Having a 'cultural translator' and 'guide' present was seen as an important factor by all the exchange activists.

Various shortcomings were noticed by the partner organisations and many improvements realised. In India, the support and input of Rita Nahata, who acted as the paid coordinator of the exchange programme in India, was seen as a crucial actor. Without her thorough knowledge, of both the practical and ideological issues of Indian society, Finnish activists would have had a much less enriching and less smooth time during their exchange period. Also, local activists were hired to help the Finnish activists during their trips outside of Delhi and sometimes also in Delhi. In Finland, KEPA's India group members divided the responsibilities more exactly among themselves and to plan the programmes for the activists more properly. It would be costly to hire people to help the activists in Finland and the generous voluntary effort by members of KEPA's staff and by some of KEPA's India group members were been sufficient to keep the programme running.

In both Finland and India the exchange activists were involved in various types of meetings and encounters with local people. What is notable is the wide range of these activities and how the flexibility of the programme has allowed for innovative and unusual contacts to be tied through a network of contacts and interests of both the activists and their local hosts. These activities also entailed travelling within India and Finland and also to neighbouring countries (Nepal,

Bangladesh, Holland, Germany, Russia, Sweden), both as part of the official programme and as private trips financed by the activists themselves.

Indian activists were interested in visiting both institutions, organisations, associations, festivals, seminars, meetings and cultural programmes. Representatives of commercial companies, trade unions and political parties were also encountered and communicated with. Among these there were visits to a cleaners' trade union, a cleaning company, a fair trade shop, a street party, a secondary school, a home for the aged, the women's network of the Finnish parliament, a summer cottage, traffic planning engineers in various cities, and the association of the homeless people. Additionally, one activist arranged a photography exhibition.

Finnish activists were involved in similar types of activities. The perhaps most significant difference is a greater focus on contacts with various organisations, rather than institutions. The majority of the activists also spent time on being in Lokayan and attending programmes and meetings arranged by Lokayan and its constituencies. These included meetings, seminars and dialogues on globalisation, ecology, people's technology (also in Nepal) and meetings with various activists and organisations working with environmental, fair trade, sustainable production and traffic policy issues. Besides the official programme, Finnish activists enjoyed visiting cultural events and celebrations in private homes such as weddings and religious holiday celebrations.

All the activists were required to write a report in English at the end of their exchange period or soon after it. The Finnish activists were also required to write an open letter every fortnight to be circulated among the Indian partners, KEPA's India group e-mail list and on KEPA's web pages. Using newsletters as a means of reporting was seen by the Finnish activists as an efficient and simple method of reporting because it helped in sorting out and clarifying issues and experiences. It was also seen as a good way of documenting the learning process, planning your activities and informing people in Finland about important issues.

A Finnish activist had the following comments on reporting during the activist period: "It would be useful to add to the newsletter system a brief monthly summary of the main events that have taken place in the Indian society that are of particular importance for the cooperation process... The amount of information

that was given to me all hours of the day was quite overwhelming, but when it then came to summarising it or selecting what to write in the newsletter it was difficult partially because of a lack of some basic facts or information on the background of a certain situation and because there was so much information. You fear that you report incorrectly on something because you come up against complicated issues that have a long history... A very positive aspect of the newsletter is the fact that most exchange activists have included personal experiences and incidents from everyday life. This is what gives the whole communication process a special touch and indication of the value that is placed on inter subjective experiences."

Problems were encountered in reporting because not all activists are used to writing, and less so in English. Therefore, discussion has been held on what would be the most appropriate way to collect information on the experiences of the activists in the exchange programme. In the Delhi evaluation meetings in April 2000 stress was placed on realising that there can and should be different ways available for activists to report their experiences, such as discussions with coordinators or some visual methods. One possible method of recording experiences of activists would be to interview them at the end of their activist period and also to have interim discussions during the exchange period to evaluate how the exchange is progressing, what additional support, contacts or information the exchange activist would need. One Indian activist specifically mentioned that the post visit follow-up work should be improved.

In fact, various modes of reporting were used. Usha Tiwari from Nepal reported on her experiences by arranging a photography exhibition in Nepal, and Marko Ulvila interviewed Amar Singh before he left Finland. Susanne Ådahl also used a different reporting format as she was working on the life and rights of rickshaw pullers in the Indian society. She prepared an exhibition of photos, texts and rickshaw art that was presented in KEPA's World Village festival in Helsinki and also in many other events in different parts of Finland.

One Indian activist described his feelings on reporting in the Delhi meeting of 6th April 2001 as follows: "It is difficult to write a formal report on the exchange period. In four months it is impossible to get an understanding that is coherent enough to write it down. There is a fear of misinterpreting and writing

down the wrong information. I was reflecting on sensitive issues like Indonesia, East Timor and timber exploitation in Indonesia. "

All of the activists, both from India and Finland have mentioned that the exchange period opened up windows to cultural encounters and exchange of ideas about society, politics and global values of justice and solidarity. It also opened up new perspectives on working methods and the nature of discussions in another society. Experiencing a different culture also makes you more attuned to what is going on in your own society. However, one Finnish activist also underlined that it is difficult to analyse which parts of one's own inner learning process result from this exchange period. He also underlined that living abroad for an extended period of time can be a learning process in itself and it can show a person that he is capable of doing things/work independently.

The exchange activists also mentioned that they gained a deeper understanding on a wide variety of issues on:

- The roots, motivation and activities of solidarity in both the Southern and the Northern context,
- The life of activists,
- The successes and weaknesses of the welfare state. The Indian activists' concern was expressed about issues such as loneliness and the social marginalisation caused by it, as well as the disintegration of the Finnish family,
- The stereotypical ideas in India about solidarity between the North and the South, i.e. an extreme sense of inferiority and dependence or an extreme sense of arrogance, indifference and an attitude of rejection of any gesture of solidarity from the North,
- The complexity of Indian society, its history, culture and social system.
- The role money plays in relations between the South and the North, and especially in the context of development work in the South. It takes a concrete dimension when experienced personally by interacting with activists working in organisations that do not have large budgets and fancy offices, but rather are individuals who are ideologically motivated on a deep level,
- The fact that how much easier it is to do ideologically motivated work in the North because of a social security system which supports the citizens. Besides, the northerners do not have to bear responsibility to financially support family members such as siblings and parents, and
- The working methods of citizens' organisations in a different kind of society.

An Indian activist in the final report mentions that: "Once again, what struck one was the frankness in the discussions and an ability to take seriously opposing viewpoints. It is my opinion that such exchanges are not only extremely useful, but also necessary to further dialogue between the North and the South. Moreover, what is notable about these exchanges is that it helps foster the dialogue within India as well."

A Finnish activist included the following comment in the final report: "Seeing cultural differences at work has sensitised me to different aspects of my own culture and to understanding certain difficulties a person has to face when coming into contact with a new culture. Most importantly I feel I now have a better and deeper understanding of Southern perspectives on the important political and social issues I were working and continue working on."

People who attended from India mainly had no sense of the Nordic context, so for most who went it was a discovery in its own right. Most have come back highly enriched. Living in a Northern society has served to dispel stereotypical ideas Indians had about Europeans and about wealth and wellbeing in a Northern country. Indian activists were interested in seeing how central features of injustice and societal structure are visible in Finnish society, but noticed that poverty and the working classes are not visible in the Finnish society. It has been a particular challenge for the Finnish partners to make visible these aspects of the Finnish society to the Indian activists. Seeing what equality is like in practice was an important experience for many of the Indian activists. An Indian activist belonging to a low cast, which is discriminated against in India, says: "It was very helpful to know the similarities and struggles of the Finnish society and mine so that we can fight together. All in all, the visit was very educational and really gave me a taste of equality which will give me energy to fight for it in India."

Communicating these experiences to friends and colleagues at home was seen as an important part of the learning process. An Indian exchange activist had this to say about preconceived notions about Finland and how the stay in Finland brought about a revision of these notions: "The level of understanding and commitment to the cause was also much more than I had expected. This situation was so different from our country where we do not have this proportion of activists... It is very important to tell my Indian comrades at this stage that every single person we met was not rich, and these are the opinions of Finnish poor or

Finnish not so rich people. Their existence is hand to mouth and very little is left after paying for rent and food and transportation."

However, one needs to be aware here of the two categories of activists found in India. One category consists of individuals with English as their first language who are motivated and genuine. They function as translators of the needs of grass roots people. They can write on diverse issues such as ecology and human rights. This is a new phenomenon in the activist world in India. The second category consists of grass roots activists who have English as their 2nd or 3rd language. They are highly committed people who resist foreign funding seeing it as a restraint in having truly equal relations with the grass roots. The activist exchange component aimed to mainly give activists from the second category exposure to a different reality. These activists have seemed to have a greater sense of adaptability than activists belonging to the 1st category. In this sense the exchange component is unique.

Also another Indian activist attending the 6 April evaluation meeting in Delhi expressed how the exchange period has influenced his perspective on the issues worked on in India: "When I left I had no idea of what whites were like. I received a completely new view of them and had to realise that not all whites are the same. I also learned about the discipline and working methods used in Finland. This has influenced my work and will continue to do so for a long time. I thought that (the issues I work on) are local problems, but now realise we need to work locally, but have a global agenda."

Seminars or dialogues

The partner organisations have organised a significant amount of seminars/dialogues both in India and Finland. The response from the partner organisations' constituencies has been positive and supporting, as also from other participants. Through these seminars it has been possible to strengthen the dialogue and mutual understanding of different civil society groups and organisations concerning certain common concerns.

In a series of seminars, or dialogues as they are often referred to, issues of common interest of the partners or specific issues in their societies were discussed and analysed. An important aspect of the seminars has been the present of Finnish

activists from the KEPA constituency in the South Asian seminars and of South Asian activists in the Finnish seminars. The Indian partners were more active in organizing seminars than the Finnish ones, as there were all together around 35 seminars organised by them, mainly in India but also in Nepal and Bangladesh. Some of them were supported by other than Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA sources.

The Indian partners have organised large seminars in India, Nepal and Bangladesh on the voluntarism of social action groups, to share and discuss experiences and reflections of the local activists. Another large scale dialogue the South-North Dialogue: Consolidation of grass root democracy was organised in Delhi in 2001 funded directly by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Minister Satu Hassi participated in the seminar for a full day. Another important dialogue was organised in Delhi on Globalisation and Democracy. Minister Erkki Tuomioja was supposed to participate in it but for the current critical international situation he had to cancel his participation. (However, in 2002 another similar kind of dialogue was organised and in which Foreign Minister Tuomioja was present. His dialogue on economic democracy on the international level with South Asian activists and researchers is documented in English and Finnish).

The Indian partners also organised dialogues on the following topics: consolidating democracy in societies, WTO/International trade, (globalisation of) culture/cultural activists, ecological democracy, corruption, empowerment of women, peace and nuclear disarmament, democracy and public health, challenges for resource mobilization in social action, survey of rickshaw pullers, human rights, privatisation/market globalisation, consumerism and liberalisation, Delhi's master plan, poverty, laws and liberty, democracy in the state of Uttarakhand, Nepal-India-forum and Finnish-India forum.

The main seminars in Finland were the four that were documented in the book Dreams of Solidarity. Finnish experiences and reflections (Unelmia maailmasta. Suomalaisen kehitysmaliikkeen juurilla). The topics of the seminars were personal motivations for solidarity, development cooperation as a means of solidarity, other means of carrying out/realising solidarity and solidarity in one's personal everyday life. An important event was also Making Sense of Development CSOs held in Tampere in August 2000 and organised with the University of Tampere. Besides those mentioned above, smaller seminars and discussions were held: the discussion on Dalit Theology (organised together with the Institute

of Development Studies, University of Helsinki), the discussion on Jainism and women, a discussion on ecotourism and indigenous people, cultural and ecological democracy (in cooperation with the Green Cultural Association).

Besides, the Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA programme also had a role in the making of the NIGD (Network Institute for Global Democratization) seminar South-North Dialogue on Democracy and Globalisation, held in Helsinki in June 2001. Vijay Pratap was one of the main speakers in this seminar. His speech is documented in a publication of the seminar published by the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

A fair amount of seminars and discussions were organised and participated in by the partner organisations and their constituencies during these first three years of the Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA cooperation programme. The seminars and generally the dialogue method have received very positive feedback or response in the constituencies of the partner organisations. For example, those KEPA board members and staff professionals who were consulted with for the purposes of this self-appraisal find the seminars/dialogues to be among the most positive outcomes of the programme.

Documentation and analyses

The activist exchange programme and seminars and dialogues organised by the Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA cooperation programme from 1998 to 2001 have generated a great number of documents. They are of broadly four types: reports and proceedings of the seminars/dialogues (transcriptions); articles (contributed/commissioned); interviews/interfaces; and notes/experience/reflections of activists. These documents reflect a multifaceted interaction among people / activists / academics / institutions holding diverse views on a particular theme. The intensive and dedicated effort in transcribing, translating, editing etc. has generated huge and valuable textual material. These documents are of immense significance, not only from the activist point of view, but also from an academic perspective as they contribute to the meaning of the ideological processes and put the effort of such dialogues in perspective.

However, they need to be systematically transformed into publications in order for the material to be accessible and useful for people at large in the form

of suitable products. There are four types of publications produced by the Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA cooperation programme: printed books, photocopy book (thematically arranged articles, translated/edited and properly laid-out/designed), printed booklets and spiral bound collection of articles.

The partner organisations were able to publish various publications by themselves or in cooperation with other organisations but there is still a lot more material to be published. The sheer amount of information worth publishing is daunting. A clear focus or theme outlined for the publication work would provide boundaries and selection criteria for what can and cannot be published under the auspices of the Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA cooperation programme. This is needed for the sake of clarity and would bring greater coherence between the different components of the cooperation, i.e. the seminars, publications and the exchange. Here again, it is important to stress that there must be flexibility also. Finding a balance between having space for ad hoc initiatives and having a set framework within which the publication work is to be carried out needs to be further developed.

There were problems in documenting the seminars. Many of them were taped and transcribed, but final reports or books are still waiting to be edited or published. However, the processes themselves have a specific value. Therefore, it needs to be recognised that very diverse people have come together in these dialogues and significant achievements were reached, although it is difficult to measure all the impacts of the dialogues. However, it was also underlined in the Delhi evaluation meetings that if we are too process oriented we tend to forget the product, i.e. there is a need to find a constructive balance between the dialogues (seminars and discussions) and the documenting (books, articles in newspapers, magazine etc.).

In 2006 the situation is still largely the same, i.e. that a lot of interesting and relevant material is still waiting for processing and publishing, and some manuscripts are waiting for final editing. However, a number of the planned publications were published as books and reports or as spiral bound versions. Below are listed the publications finalised until the August 2006.

Books published in Finland

Unelmia Maailmasta. Suomalaisen kehitysmaaliikkeen juurilla is a collection of articles based on the four dialogues organised in Finland n 1999. A total of 40 people variously involved in the Finnish solidarity movement since the 1950s have a voice in this book, which is a first attempt in Finland to systematically figure out the history of solidarity in Finland, and mainly through personal stories of those who themselves have made that history. The book is edited by Outi Hakkarainen, Miia Toikka and Thomas Wallgren and it was published in 2000 together with Like publications and Suomen rauhanpuolustajat (Finnish Peace Committee). In 2003 the book was published in English under the name *Dreams of Solidarity. Finnish experiences and reflections from 60 years*.

Micro-finance Against Poverty: Challenges and opportunities is a book on micro finance. The articles look at the issue from different perspectives and from experiences in different regions/societies in the South. The articles are mainly based on the presentations of the Micro-finance workshop in the "Making Sense of Development CSOs"conference, Tampere, August 2000. The book was edited by Farhad Hossain and Zahidur Rahman and was published as a reduced academic print in Finland in 2001.

Talous ja demokratia. Ratkaisuja Suomesta ja muualta maailmasta is a book on economic democracy. The articles focus mainly on Finland and India but partly also on other countries. There are seven sections in the book: international economy, local economies, food, welfare state, income distribution, fare trade and social movements. The book documents different ideas and concrete experiences on how economy could be transformed to be more democratic, human and ecologically sustainable. The book is ideologically based on the last person's (Daridranarayan) perspective. It was the first book in a series on the different dimensions of democracy listed by the V.K. network. The book is edited by Outi Hakkarainen, Jaana Airaksinen and Tove Selin and was published in 2005 by Like publications and the Finnish Peace Committee It was a collective effort of the Forum for Democracy Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, Coalition for Environment and

Development (CED) and CRASH-Coalition for Research and Action for Social Justice and Human Dignity.

Democratising South-North relations. Experiences from cooperation between Finnish and Indian activists and organisations 1998-2004 is a report on the Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA cooperation programme. It includes the original version of the dialogic self-appraisal reports by Indian and Nepali activists in Finland and letters by Finnish activists in India. It has been printed as a spiral bound version and is available only in KEPA.

Books published in India / South Asia:

Learning NGOs and the Dynamics of Development Partnership is a collection of articles both on general aspects of the CSOs in development and on the specific cases from the South Asia, mainly Bangladesh. The book was edited by Farhad Hossain, Marko Ulvila and Ware Newaz, and it was published in 2000 by Dhaka Ahsania Mission, in cooperation with the University of Tampere.

Development NGOs Facing the 21st Century: Perspectives from South Asia is a book which is largely based on the dialogic seminar organised by the KEPA-CSDS/Lokayan cooperation programme in Kathmandu in 1999. There are both general and case study articles in the book. It was edited by Juha Vartola, Marko Ulvila, Farhad Hossain and Tek Nath Dhakal, and was published in 2000 by Kathmandu: Institute for Human Development, in cooperation with the University of Tampere.

Book of Trees is a comprehensive monograph covering various aspects of trees, its propagation, utility and varieties. With ecological imperatives firmly in focus, this monograph succinctly argues a case for a greener world to avert an impending ecological catastrophe. Describing the day to day utility of trees in organic societies, it illustrates the issue with a historical and scientific perspective and interesting anecdotes from ancient scriptures by way of situating the importance of fruits and trees in ancient societies. The book is written by Maneka Gandhi and Risto Isomäki and published in India in 2004 by the Other India Press.

Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam: An Alliance for Comprehensive Democracy by Vijay Pratap, Ritu Priya and Thomas Wallgren presents the main ideas of the Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam approach from Indian and European perspectives. In their article, Vijay Pratap and Ritu Priya present the original concept of comprehensive democracy and ideas how to build an enduring alliances around it. Thomas Wallgren discusses how the VK ideas can be integrated in political work in the North

Politics, Morality, Identity: an intimate quest by Vijay Pratap (one volume in English and one in Hindi). A collection of essays and articles written by Vijay Pratap over the years.

The activist exchange and the dialogue programme also sparked a good number of newspaper articles in national and regional newspapers in Finland, and in India there was some press coverage. For example, some of the papers presented in the first Delhi seminar in 1998 were widely publicized in several leading journals of Gandhian and democratic socialist organisations apart from CSO journals like Samayaik Varta Gandhi Marg and Himalya Raibar each and also papers released by a Gandhian news and feature service which caters to small news and regional news papers like the Sarvodya Press Service.

Networking

A lot of networking has taken place, especially in India/South Asia, but also in Finland/Northern Europe. The Indian partners have already been able to create initial seeds for more structured South Asian networking, based on the five dimensions of democracy of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (VK). The VK process is active also in Finland but is still less structured. However, the KEPA-CSDS/Lokayan cooperation has opened up the basis for a new kind of political dialoguing and networking in Finland. One concrete result of a new kind of networking was the agreement between Finland and India concerning research on renewable energy, after Finnish Minister Satu Hassi had met three ministers from the Indian federal government (those responsible for renewable energy, environment and power) during her visit to India.

From the very beginning the idea of networking with other civil society actors in India, Finland and elsewhere has been an integral part of the Lokayan/

CSDS–KEPA cooperation, in order to create creative civic links within the framework of democratising South-North relations. Civic actors were invited to seminars and connections were created during the activist exchange visits and also through personal activities of other actors of this cooperation.

In South Asia formal networks were created with Pakistanis, Sri Lankans and Bangladeshis. In Nepal the progress is at a more advanced level. The aim of the Nepal-India dialogues is to create open debates on society and people-to-people politics. The Indians would like Finnish activists to use South Asia as a strategic example in furthering the notion of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, the Earth is a Family. There is a need to set up an institute for South Asian democracy successfully involving top level intellectuals who are not affiliated with political parties.

A number of Working Groups were envisaged in Lokayan on specific themes aimed at expanding the network and inviting greater voluntary inputs for Lokayan's work while working towards a shared holistic pro-poor perspective on the themes in the prevailing context of globalisation and privatisation. The experience of the last three years has shown that there is immense potential in each of the Working Groups, but there needs to be a senior person working full time for each. While that person would have to be given monetary subsistence, he/she would act as fulcrum to sustain voluntary inputs of a large and diverse network. Since Lokayan had no corpus fund it was decided that each collective, besides the Jan Parivahan Panchayat led by Rajendra Ravi, would be responsible for its own fund mobilisation. It was envisaged that these autonomous collectives could, at some later stage, also become independent entities as part of a larger fraternity.

Various Finnish and Indian partners participated in the civic gatherings in June 2001 in Gothenburg. The main event attended was the Sustainability and Solidarity conference organised by Friends of the Earth International. The focus of the conference was on EU environmental policies and the Kyoto agreement. In a gathering consisting mostly of European participants and European speakers it was important to get the voice of the South onto the agenda. Attendance at the gatherings served a twofold purpose: to present a Southern perspective on climate issues and the EU's role in environmental policy making globally, and, to present the experiences of the KEPA-Lokayan/CSDS cooperation as well as the VK concept to a European audience. It also provided the Indian activists with an

opportunity to concretely experience mass gatherings and public demonstrations in a Nordic context.

Networking has also taken place with politicians and researchers. An important process has been the dialogue with the Finnish ministers Satu Hassi and Erkki Tuomioja on ecological and economic democracy respectively.

In strengthening the base for collective activism we have not reached the desired level of activity. This, also, by extension, has resulted in a failure to expand this process into European networks. One reason for this has been the difficulty in deciding what type of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam we want in Finland and the North, and what would be the role of the current Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA cooperation in this wider context. Therefore, it is urgent to figure out the wider plans, and then have a proper discussion on what could be the role of Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA cooperation, as well as the independent role of each these partners.

Communication and decision-making

In the Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA cooperation programme there are three main spheres of decision-making, i.e. (i) KEPA and its constituency, (ii) Lokayan/CSDS and their constituencies, and (iii) between KEPA and Lokayan/CSDS (and their constituencies). Experiences of communication and decision-making in these three spheres will be presented here separately. However, first there will be some notions on the language issue.

One of the main problems of the Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA programme has been clear from the start of this report: how can we develop a culturally sophisticated and politically serious form of cooperation if we have to communicate in English? And if we use our first languages - Finnish, Hindi, Nepali, Swedish, how can we reach the partners of the exchange.

In situations of informal oral communication interpretation can often be arranged for free, or people can use their version of the English language. In more formal oral encounters – the seminars and administrative meetings are the most important cases – we have mostly been able to get along without paid professional help. But in written communication things are much more difficult. One difficulty is administration. This dialogic self-appraisal report should be available in Finnish. Otherwise, many in the KEPA constituency will find it difficult to go it through. But in order to process this self-appraisal together with the Indian

partners it is imperative to have the report in English. Ideally it should also be available in Hindi. The programme budget, however, has no budget for translation of administrative texts.

Difficulties mount up in the work on documentation and publication. At least some key publications should be made accessible in Finnish, Hindi and English. So far, however, resources were allocated for doing only some of the publications at least partly in two languages.

As has been explained in the section on the parameters of the cooperation there are various spaces and persons in the KEPA constituency somehow involved in the Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA cooperation.

The central point or crossroads of communication among all these actors is KEPA's officer in-charge for this cooperation. She worked or kept contact with all, while many of the others may not even know each other. Besides, they have also kept permanent contact with the Indian partners, and hosts, together with the KEPA's India group members, the Indian exchange activists and other visitors in Finland.

Although reciprocity is sought at all levels of the cooperation, the funding comes entirely from KEPA. Formally KEPA therefore has full control of the programme. At the same time, the ideas and vision that are embodied in the particular concrete modes of the programme and carry it forward reside to a large extent in individuals who have little or no involvement in KEPA's decision-making. Thanks to KEPA's flexible attitude, and the general notion in KEPA that this programme is interesting and important, this situation was workable.

However, there were also moments of tension. There were disagreements about having a senior activist from outside the Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA constituency attend dialogues on economic democracy in India through the activist exchange, but the issue was resolved by financing his attendance through KEPA's general budget. Another example of disagreement was on the funding of a new office for the Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA cooperation programme, where the sum requested was seen to be too high. This was settled by revising the plan and reducing the sum allocated for this purpose. Indian partners criticised a report on a visit in India by KEPA staff members that they found unjust and limited, and similarly some Finnish people were disappointed about not receiving reports from the Indian partners on certain visits.

Original objectives in focus

The objectives for the Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA cooperation programme have significantly been fulfilled.

The first two objectives of the CSDS/Lokayan-KEPA programme, i.e. (1) to support the activists' personal political development, and (2) to deepen activists' and other people's (trade unionists, politicians, civil servants, students, workers, teachers, etc.) understanding of their position in their own society and in the present global situation, and also enhance these through an understanding of the reality of a country in the South (India) and in the North (Finland), have obviously been fulfilled in the activist exchange programme. Also those who implemented the programme had significant experiences in relation to these aims. They have to some extent been fulfilled also through other activities of the programme – seminars/dialogues, publications and networking – although this is more difficult to measure. Moreover, the results will be seen in the future, concerning how the personal learning of the activists is evident in the political movements they participate in.

The next two objectives are more general: (3) to strengthen the base of international solidarity movement and to broaden its understanding of South-North relations, and (4) to increase democratic communication between the Southern and Northern civil societies. Therefore, they are also more difficult to estimate. However, we can be certain that at least some steps have been taken in relation to these objectives. It is difficult to point out some especially successful activities in relation to the two aims, as all the activities of the Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA programme have certainly somehow contributed to the fulfilling of these objectives. However, perhaps the most important results were the active dialoguing and networking in India and South Asia among representatives from various sectors of society. There were in these events also many Finnish participants. Another important result has been a more face-to-face level of dialoguing the Indian and Finnish exchange activists have had during their visits in a Southern/Northern society.

The last two objectives are more related to the programme itself: (5) to create and respect democratic practices in carrying out cooperation, and (6) to develop a method of cooperation to be useful also in other cooperation agreements

between Northern and Southern partners. This cooperation programme has been carried out quite democratically, although there have also been some shortcomings. This programme has been a challenging cooperation process for both partners. It has perhaps been a bigger challenge for KEPA than was envisaged at the beginning of the process. We have experienced our share of complexities and misunderstandings that grow out of working in different contexts. Lokayan and CSDS work according to a decentralised decision-making structure, where individual groups have a fair amount of autonomy in the use of funds and in formulating how they want to work. The decision-making structure is quite different in a quite big organisation as KEPA. There were instances where communication between KEPA staff and Lokayan/CSDS did not function the way it should have and important matters were not attended to. It is difficult to communicate the context of work in India to staff members in Finland who have no experience of it. It is only when decision-making processes become clear to us on the ground and when we understand the effort and discussion that has gone into reaching a decision that we can understand the need for response on proposals and suggestions from the Southern partners. It becomes an issue of commitment and solidarity.

Has the Lokayan/CSDS–KEPA cooperation programme been fruitful for meeting its objective of developing new methods, or new tools, for solidarity? It seems fair to say that the concrete experiences described above have some exemplary value. Especially the activist exchange and the dialogues have already received lot of positive attention in India and Finland, but also elsewhere. For example, a KEPA officer has experienced that when speaking about KEPA's activities in different international CSO meetings the activist exchange programme has been found very interesting and attractive. On the other hand, there is a strong sentiment that the methodological ambitions and experiments have not been concluded and that more effort and time is required before this aspect of the programme can be properly assessed. Whether this inconclusive and uncertain remark means that the programme has in fact failed with regard to working out new tools for democratising South-North relations is a matter of judgement. This judgement should be exercised by the partner organisations when they use this report and other material in approaching future activities.

Writers

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Democratising South-North Relations

Comprehensive democratisation of South-North relations is crucial to long-term success in the struggle for a more just and livable world.

The overriding ambition of the enduring association between the Indian network organisation Lokayan, the Indian research institution CSDS, and KEPA (Service Centre for Development Cooperation) has been to contribute to the democratisation of South-North relations on all levels of society and to develop new methodologies for more democratic interaction between the South and the North. A significant component of this process is the dialogic method used between the partners.

The report provides insight into experiences gathered among both the institutions and individuals involved in this partnership and the activities carried out since 1989. It also includes an analysis of how these new methodologies can be applied to the work of other CSO's.

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