



Mission Redefined

CASA at 60

Somen Das

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Striving towards Life in Fullness

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CASA 2007

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Dedication

"Dedicated to the Excluded Communities who are subjected to various social, economical and political vulnerability and those who are subjected to various natural, human induced and systemic disasters"

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Foreword

The Church's Auxiliary for Social Action (CASA) had its humble beginning way back in 1947, when it emerged to provide relief and succor to the victims of the Indo-Pak Partition. 60 years down the line, today it has grown into a premier Relief and Development Organization. The journey of 60 years has not been easy and has its share of ups and downs. Today in India, there are very few development organization which has such a long and rich past. What makes CASA unique is that it has always tried to change along with the time so that it remains relevant to the context where it is placed.

As the arm of the 24 Protestant and Orthodox Churches in India, CASA from its inception, has been responding to all the major disasters – both natural and human induced. Over the period of last 6 decades, CASA has developed an expertise in the field of Disaster Management as well as holistic development of the last and the least of our society. CASA is strongly rooted with the communities with whom it works. This is the biggest strength of CASA. Today it is working in more than 3500 villages across 26 states and union territories of India with over 400 partner organizations. CASA has earned the credibility of its stakeholders. Starting from the communities to the resource partners and the government. Every passing day, when it is faced with a bigger challenge, it is also growing from strength to strength. It has gone through a process of metamorphosis and has had its paradigm shifts with the changing times. From a need based to issue based to Rights Based Approach – CASA has travelled a long journey.

Being the chairman of this esteemed organization, I have the opportunity to see the work and function of the organization from close quarters. Therefore, I can vouch for what I am saying about it. The ever-enthusiastic staff of the organization with the able and dynamic leadership of its Director, Dr. Sushant Agrawal, CASA is very much in the safe hands in the future. It is worth mentioning here that CASA is grateful to the remarkable leadership of Major J. K. Michael, who provided the much-needed stability to the organisation since he took over as the Director in 1977 till his superannuation in May 2001.

As CASA is celebrating its 60th year Jubilee, this year, we wanted to mark this mega event by publishing a book on the 60 years journey of CASA with a Theological and Ethical perspective. For the herculean task of capturing the long history of the organization and putting it in perspective, no better person than the Rev. Dr. Somen Das was chosen. Dr. Das has penned down several books on diverse subjects published across the globe. He has been able to do justice to this assignment. We hope that this book will help the Civil Society Organisations, the government, the community, the resource partners and above all help CASA to retrospect into the past and strategically plan for the future course of action towards a Transformational Development.

I, on behalf of the Board of CASA would like to wish all the stakeholders a very Happy Diamond Jubilee and a happy reading.

Tiruvalla
20 October 2007

Most Rev. Dr. Joseph Mar Irenaeus
Chairman, CASA and Metropolitan,
Mar Thoma Syrian Church of Malabar, Kerala

Preface

At the outset, on the occasion of 60 years of CASA, I would like to salute the past leadership and all those who have served this great organisation with commitment, dedication and perseverance. Their collective wisdom and the labours of the people attached and presently serving with CASA, have enabled this organisation to remain dynamic, vibrant and relevant in today's context of the 21st century. Let us rejoice in the Lord always, without whose grace and mercy we are of no significance.

I had always strongly hoped and desired in the past that one day, CASA should share with the world something very substantial and special by affirming its rootedness with the Christian philosophy of Love, Peace and Justice, and yet remaining a secular and professional Civil Society Organisation reaching out to serve the poorest of the poor and the marginalized sections of the Indian society, irrespective of their caste, religious, political and ethnic considerations.

I feel proud that Dr. Somen Das, a noted theologian acknowledged across the globe, has been able to capture the realities and flavour of CASA's existence and work in such a short span of time, and has come out with this book which would continue to challenge CASA in the years to come that this organization is not merely a non-governmental organisation, but a Faith-Based Organisation to serve the creation of the Lord, and hence the title – MISSION REDEFINED.

The title of the book has two relevant aspects – "Life in fullness" and "Mission Redefined". The first aspect talks about our work which is inspired by the Biblical perspective of Love, Peace and Justice. The second aspect explains a very evolutionary 'discovery' of CASA starting from 1947 till the present day, with the intention of leaving behind a chronicle for future generations to read and learn from. However, this book has mostly recounted about CASA from 1997 till 2007, as a continuation to the book which CASA had published on the occasion of its Golden Jubilee in 1997.

I address Dr. Somen Das as "Dada" because of my past relationship with him when I was based in Kolkata and earlier during my SCM association when he was a 'theological Guru' and I was a "growing youth" and "student leader". Thank you, Somen-da, for this great work. You have made my task easier in answering a frequently asked question – "How is CASA, being a faith-based organisation, different from other NGOs in India?" by writing this insightful book.

My thanks and appreciation to everyone who has given time and energy to contribute in the publication of this book.

May the good Lord continue to grant his blessings and mercy on CASA and lead us in the future to remain relevant in the rapidly changing socio-economic and political scenario of this country in order to share the love of God with the people who struggle daily to survive with a life of dignity. We rededicate ourselves to continue the journey to "Strive Towards Life in Fullness".

22 October 2007
New Delhi

Sushant Agrawal
Director, CASA

Acknowledgements

I am immensely grateful to the Director of CASA for encouraging me to write an interpretative history of the Organisation since its inception. I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to all the Officers of CASA for giving me full support for this Diamond Jubilee offering. Mention must be made particularly of Mr. Dinesh Suna - Policy Officer, Mr. Jayant Kumar - Head of Programme, Mr. Alope Michiyari - PRO, Mr. Michael Masih - Head of Finance, Mr. Nirmal Singh - Head of Emergency and Ms. Indrani Michael - Exec. Assistant to Director for giving their precious time each time I have visited Rachna Building. I am thankful for their warm welcome and generous hospitality. Mention must be made of my visits to East and South Zones. Both Ms. Sheila Jones, CZO, South Zone and Mr. Satyajit Das, CZO, East Zone, gave their valuable time and immense information about their work in their respective Zones. I also thank the Directors Secretariat for helping in computerizing my manuscripts.

The initiative and inspiration of the people mentioned above have made it possible to finish this book on time. I must thank my wife for her patience during the writing of the book. It is my joy and privilege to write on a historic occasion of CASA. I sincerely hope and pray that this book stimulates further thinking and greater action. May God be glorified in and through this humble effort.

Serampore
West Bengal

Rev. Dr. Somen Das

I

Introduction

In this chapter I will indicate the WHAT, WHY and HOW of this book. Before I answer the question of WHAT, I would like to answer the WHY question – Why am I writing this book? I would like to formulate the response in two ways – one organizational and the other personal.

CASA is celebrating its Diamond Jubilee – Sixty years of labor of love, work of faith and steadfastness of hope. Jubilee is a time of jubilation and gratitude. We remember with joy and gratitude the pioneering work of the founding mothers and fathers of CASA. This is an occasion to pay our humble homage to their dedicated and sacrificial work. Their commitment and conviction, their experience and expertise, made such an action-oriented Organization possible. Those stalwarts faced enormous difficulties and opposition in the 40s and 50s. Yet they boldly went ahead in the service of the nation. On this occasion, we salute them for their meritorious work among the poor and the marginalized.

Diamond jubilee is a moment of memory and hope – remembering what God has enabled through this ecumenical, pan-Indian Service Agency – moments of triumph and moments of tragedy, moments of ecstasy and moments of despair. It is also an opportunity to look forward with hope as God is the sustaining and strengthening power of this Organization. As we engage in retrospection, we should simultaneously engage in introspection – recalling the past, not for the sake for the past,

but to shape and determine CASA's destiny. We need to examine and evaluate critically and creatively its life and work for last sixty years. CASA is publicly acknowledged as the Official Social Action Arm of the twenty-four (24) Protestant and Orthodox churches. It is working in twenty-four States, covering more than 4000 villages. It is very well known from Kashmir to Kanyakumari, from Kohima to Kutch.

CASA has come of age in terms of Social Action. It has undergone sea changes in last sixty years. Already two books have been published on the life and work of CASA. Bishop Mar Aprem had dealt with the history of CASA from its inception in 1947 till 1979. Mr. Titus George covered fifty years of its work. Both the authors had emphasized on the philosophy of CASA's programme. I have borrowed extensively from their publications. Both those books had indicated the nature and content of changes that have taken place. But the decadal development from 1997 till 2007 has not been documented in a book form.

The Second main reason why I have taken this responsibility is personal. I like to give a touch of autobiography. I have always been interested in social action, both theoretically as well as practically. My B. D. dissertation was on Swami Vivekananda's philosophical basis of Social Action. He called it practical *Vedanta*, which is now considered as Neo-Vedanta. I examined this philosophy of action from a Christian perspective. My M. Th. Thesis at Princeton was a critical appraisal of Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence, which was his fundamental basis to bring about socio-economic-political transformation. My Ph.D. dissertation in Boston was on the concept of *Dharma*, which must be the basis of *Karma* (action). *Dharma* is the principle that holds and upholds, supports and sustains life in its wholeness or fullness. I have been teaching Christian Ethics and Theology for last thirty-nine (39) years. For many years I have been closely associated with the life and work of the Student Christian Movement of India (SCMI); Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) and more recently as the Chairperson of the Raipur Churches Development and Relief Committee (RCDRC). This knowledge and experience have made me realize the dynamic interface of ethics and theology, *karma* and *dharma*, of action and reflection. Therefore, I have undertaken this awesome responsibility of closely looking at the life and work of a well-known Service Agency. This gives me the opportunity to test my knowledge and experience. I must confess that in and through this study, I have had to unlearn a lot of my pre-conceived notions about Service Agencies. I have been fortunate to make some quasi-empirical study of CASA

by visiting villages in the Eastern and Southern Zones. This exposure and experience have been an eye-opener. Personally, I have learnt enormously in last few months.

Now I will proceed to answer specifically the WHAT of this book – what is this book about? Obviously, it is about the life and work of CASA in general. More specifically, I am interested in the paradigm changes that have shaped the evolution of the Organization. I am not sure whether ‘paradigm’ is the best word to describe the nature and content of changes that have taken place. I think ‘paradigm’ presupposes self-contained, self-sufficient mode of discourse. We face the same or similar problem when we use ‘model’ or ‘typology’. Therefore, for our purpose, I have used “defining moment”. I believe moments in history cannot be independent and discrete. They together, cumulatively, move and shape history.

In this book, I have identified four distinct but interrelated moments which become momentous for the Movement. I have dealt with them in four separate chapters for the sake of clarity. But *de facto*, we cannot separate or isolate them, as there is an active interface of the four. I have also identified a fifth moment in CASA’s history, which is in the making. I have tried to articulate the nature and character of “Life-in-its-fullness” as envisaged in the Forward Plan (2003–2013). The important constituent of this life has to be towards justice and liberation. I believe that CASA is in a position to operationalize these norms and principles.

CASA inherently, by its nature, is the Church’s Auxiliary. There is a definitional crisis about this phrase. What does it mean, particularly the word ‘auxiliary’? What is the nature of this relationship? What is the role and responsibility of the Indian Church towards CASA and vice-a-versa? This requires a formulation or a reformulation.

As the Church’s Auxiliary, both the Church and CASA must be clear about their theological-ethical stance. Do the churches subscribe fully to the thought and action of CASA? Do they own it conceptually? In a separate chapter, I will explore this territory. I do not have the exact empirical data for the Indian Church in general and of the twenty-four (24) Protestant and Orthodox churches in particular. But my close association with the several churches over forty (40) years have taught me many lessons.

For developing a theological-ethical perspective, it is necessary to make use of the Bible critically and creatively. It is our primary source but not the only source. In a country like India, we are fortunate to have an easy access to several scriptures of other religions. India is the

birth place of major religions of the world like Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, Jainism and many others. Islam has been in India since the influx of the Moghuls. Pluralism is our gift to the world. But in this book, I cannot do justice to so many religions. Consequently, for our purpose, I will specifically deal with the Biblical understanding of Social Action in general. In its sixty-year history CASA has not examined explicitly its life and work from an ETHICAL-THEOLOGICAL perspective. This is an opportune moment to make this perspective clear.

I am not interested in history in a chronological sense. We do not recapitulate the past for the sake of the past. That would be considered idolatry. Some body has rightly asserted, "Tradition is the living faith of those now dead, while traditionalism is the dead faith of those now living." As this is true about religion, it is true about any organization. We remember the legacy of the past with joy and gratitude. We even learn from that legacy but we think and live with a new vision and new goals. History cannot be repeated. It has to be reinvented, revisioned for the sake of the living. This will be my approach in this book on CASA. This is a kind of historiography – looking at the sixty-year history of CASA in a synoptic way from the perspective of principles, norms and goals which have governed it. It is based on some, selected primary and secondary sources for our purpose. So the purpose of writing this book is not to glorify or romanticize the past and indulge in nostalgia. Reminiscences are helpful to the extent that they enliven those lost moments in history. But more significantly, they illumine the present and activate the future.

The different defining moments in the life and work of CASA were possible because of the policy changes. The POLICY STATEMENTS reflect changing attitudes; express desired principles; states intentions in the form of goals, objectives and aims; show what choices have been made at different moments in history; make commitments; provide a focus; express concerns and give advice; make roles and responsibilities clear. So in this book, I will be referring to some policy statements which have made this Organization dynamic and relevant. Policy changes concomitantly brought about programmatic changes in its functioning. Thus those policies were crucial and critical.

Life is defined by fundamental relationships. In fact, life is relationship. Human being is a relational being. The God whom we affirm in Jesus the Christ is a RELATIONAL REALITY. Human beings are living in a state of alienation – alienated from each other, from within, from God, from the whole of creation. Division and disunity are our existential

hallmarks. Jesus came to restore, re-establish this broken relationship, enabling and empowering human beings to move from alienation to reconciliation.

CASA's social action basically has to do with life – life in its fullness or wholeness. It deals with ALL of life and the WHOLE of life. It perceived life as a network of relationships. Therefore, its purpose and goal is to enhance and extend the World Wide Web (WWW) of relationship, which is not mechanical and only technological but human and organic. It is attempting, through its social action, to promote and strengthen the structures of relationship that will embrace everybody particularly the least, the last and the lost in socio-economic-political terms.

This specifically means that the main focus of CASA are the *dalits*, *adivasis*, women and children, who do not enjoy life – life in its fullness or wholeness. I will be dealing with this theme of life in one of the chapters. In that chapter, I will demonstrate that life in its fullness must mean liberation and justice. The concepts of justice and liberation are not self-evident. They need explication.

The year 2007 happens to be the diamond jubilee of India's Independence. This year also happens to be the one hundred and fiftieth (150) year of the First War of Independence (1857). Such moments are rare in history. More significantly, the conjunction of such historic moments offers us an opportunity to critically reflect and learn the lessons from the legacy of the past. They should inspire and challenge us to move towards authentic freedom. For such a coincidence, it is important and necessary to locate CASA's life and work within the totality of the Indian reality. I will be looking at the present socio-economic-political scenario in India and see whether CASA's action is forging a new India as envisaged in the Indian Constitution, in its Preamble, it had boldly proclaimed,

WE, THE PEOPLE OF INDIA, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a SOVEREIGN SOCIALIST SECULAR DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC and to secure to all its citizens: JUSTICE, social, economic and political; LIBERTY of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship; EQUALITY of status and of opportunity; and to promote among them all, FRATERNITY assuring dignity of the individual and unity and integrity of the nation . . .

The fundamental question that we need to ask is whether CASA is consciously and purposively striving towards those values and goals. Obviously, this is a challenge for CASA and such other organizations who are engaged in activism.

By its very nature, inherently, CASA is openly and publicly a FAITH-BASED community of people working relentlessly towards the kingdom of God. Our theological-ethical perspective is primarily based on the Bible. For this reason, as I have mentioned before, I will be using the Bible profusely to understand and uphold CASA's work. Over the years, I have become acutely aware of the misuse or even abuse of the Bible. It has been used in the past to defend and justify racism, mediaeval feudalism, gender discrimination, anti-nature (environment) and above all anti-poor perspectives. In our country, even till today, it is used randomly to support and sustain casteism, communalism, fundamentalism, gender-divide, and consequent patriarchy. As a result, hierarchy and elitism flourish in the life and work of the Church. Precisely, in such a context of negation and narrow-mindedness, it is urgently necessary to interpret or reinterpret the Bible intelligently and creatively. This will prevent some people and leaders in the church from using the Bible as a weapon to promote death-dealing forces in the world in general and in India in particular. The 'Bible-Belt' in the USA (equivalent to the 'cow-belt' in India) even today justifies crusades and Holy wars of the past and of course the wars of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries on the basis of the Bible.

The Bible is not a self-evident book. It cannot be used as a *mantra* or magic—literally, mechanically and thereby simplistically. It requires careful and critical study as any other Branches of study. Texts of the Bible in particular have to be viewed within the historical context of the time in which they were written. It is only in and through this process, we can discover or rediscover the liberative and holistic thrust of the Biblical corpus as a whole. It is for us to assert and affirm its deeper significance for the world in which we live, move and have our being. It has to be used theologically and ethically and not psychologically. We have to remember and reinterpret the immortal texts of the Bible like, "God so loved the world" (John 3:16); "the Word became flesh" (John 1:14a); "Your kingdom come on earth" (Matthew 6:10); "Humans cannot live by bread alone" (Matthew 4:4). Such texts together and separately proclaim decisively God's interventions in history and the whole creation. The Bible definitively advocates God's dynamic action in and for history and the whole creation. We have a theological-ethical reason to hope for and look forward to the transformation of the whole of creation, including communities and people. We have to nurture the vision of "a new heaven and a new earth" as God is making "all things new" (Revelation 21:1a and 5a). That is basically the Gospel, the good

news. I will dwell on this theme further in the chapter on the Biblical perspective.

In and through this book, I pay my personal homage to those numerous people and leaders who have deliberately shaped and determined the life and work of CASA. I make this offering on the occasion of its diamond jubilee because I believe and support its thinking and action. I should reiterate that this book would not have been possible without active support of its present Director and others, both at the Zonal level and at the Central office in New Delhi. May God be glorified through this work. I conclude this introductory note with the words of the Psalmist, "This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes" (Psalm 118:23).

II

Relief and Rehabilitation: First Defining Moment

CASA was conceived in the womb of nascent India. Independent India had experienced the birth-pangs of a new nation. Womb symbolizes pain and joy, despair and hope. On the one hand there was enormous euphoria for being free. But on the other hand, the painful partition brought its own share of problems. The Christians and churches resolved to respond to the request of the government. They came forward willingly to provide succor and support to the government in its work among the many refugees, both from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) and West Pakistan (now Pakistan). The communal riots resulted in death and destruction. People crossed the borders on both sides of the sub-continent and overnight they became refugees. It was a timely response in a particular context, related to a specific time and place. The churches expressed full solidarity in the situation. They witnessed visibly to the love of God as demonstrated in the life and work of Jesus the Christ.

At this juncture, we must pay our humble homage to the founding mothers and fathers of CASA in the 40s and 50s. We cannot name them all. We remember with joy and gratitude the pioneering efforts of Rallia Ram, Charles Bhatti, J. W. Sadiq, Bishop J. W. Pickett, E. D. Lucas, Donald Rugh and many others. National Christian Council of India (NCCI) responded spontaneously, immediately and directly to the suffering and struggles of the refugees with the help of other

national and international Organizations like Church World Service (CWS), Lutheran World Relief (LWR), Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), Christian Medical Association of India (CMAI), YMCA, YWCA and others.

During this initial period, CASA understood its role and responsibility in terms of providing relief and arranging for rehabilitation. We must remember that CASA evolved from the relief work of the NCCI. Originally, it was a Committee on Relief and Gift Supplies (CORAGS), formed in 1955. Later, at the Triennial Assembly of the NCCI in Shillong in October 1967, CORAGS was reconstituted as the Christian Agency for Relief and Social Action (CARSA), which subsequently was re-christened as the Christian Agency for Social Action Relief and Development (CASARD) in 1970, and finally Church's Auxiliary for Social Action after the re-organisation in 1972.

During CASA's Relief phase, it was actively engaged in providing ration to the refugees, residing in the temporary camps in Delhi, Punjab, West Bengal and other States. Refugees came from China and later Tibet. Such an influx doubled the population of the place. According to the report, Tripura State had a population of 1.2 million people and the refugees outnumbered the local people. The refugee population was more or less equal to the population of Metropolitan Kolkata at that time. This indicates the magnitude of the problem India faced in those early days of independence.

CORAGS' ration included food and milk in the early stage and later with the co-operation of other voluntary agencies, they arranged to sink wells, disinfect existing wells, arrange sanitation facilities and mobile medical teams, who were busy inoculating the refugees at the border camps before they reached the rehabilitation camps. CASA had to arrange for mass immunization programmes at frequent intervals to prevent the outbreak of epidemics. The children, pregnant women, the old and the infirm were adversely affected by this movement from a familiar territory to a completely new place. The vast refugee population was traumatized. They needed psychological support as much as physical support.

In the early days of CASA, PL-480 was helpful as an emergency measure. The Indo-American Agreement of 1951 was necessary at that moment in history. This official arrangement ensured the regular food supply in particular. India also received blankets, used clothes and medical supplies, which helped millions of people who had nothing. PL-480 included a new kind of food called CSM (corn, soya and milk),

which met the nutritional requirements of infants and children. CASA developed an indigenous version of CSM, which was palatable to the people. The programme was suspended in 1974.

CASA began with the refugees and refugee camps in different parts of India. In 1966, famine broke out in Bihar and lasted for about a year. Mr. Jayaprakash Narayan set up the Bihar Relief Committee. NCCI convened a Consultation on the issue and sought the help of Roman Catholic agencies and Oxford Committee on Famine Relief (OXFAM) to ameliorate the situation. Bread for the World, a German voluntary agency, set up their Feed the Children Aid Programme. CORAGS started their Food for Work Programme in Bihar. Mr. Stephen Mathai, Director of CORAGS and Mr. P. C. Joseph, Calcutta Area Representative, planned and executed the relief work with the help of many volunteers, particularly from the Student Christian Movement (SCM). The work among the refugees and the famine-stricken people exposed CASA to the harsh realities at the ground level. By the end of the 60s, CASA was actively involved in digging different kinds of wells in the villages, developing farmlands, assisting in agricultural and community development programmes. Action for Food Production (AFPRO), which was a joint service agency, helped with food production irrigation projects. Bihar experience taught CORAGS to network with other voluntary agencies who were equally concerned about the wide-spread famine situation. It was no more isolated. CORAGS was working at tandem.

India is a land of perpetual disasters, natural or human-engineered. Soon after the refugee and famine relief, cyclone and tidal waves hit the coastal regions of Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. A lot of people were suddenly displaced as they lost their hearth and home. Displacement resulted in dislocation and social disintegration. Millions lost their lives and the living lost their livelihood. They needed urgently food, shelter and medical care. It was a Herculean task and CASA accepted the gauntlet. At this stage, CASA realized that they have to organize the relief programme more carefully. They began to discuss about disaster management and disaster preparedness, which would help them not only with the cyclone crisis at that time but also in the future. They talked about "strategic modification" of the disaster intervention. An Emergency cell was set up to respond to the calamity immediately and effectively. There were two implications of this decision. Firstly, a group within CASA was specifically trained and equipped to deal with the emergency situation. Secondly, the regular, core programme was not affected and the work went on.

By the end of the 70s, the concept of DECENTRALIZATION was made functional. Facilities and resources were to be developed at the local levels particularly for this purpose. Local institutions were used for this purpose with their experience and expertise. Decentralization enabled the swift mobilization of personnel and material resources. During this period, warehouses stocked with food, clothes and blankets, were constructed in disaster-prone areas. Cyclone shelters were built for the people who were affected by the heavy rain and the floods.

The most significant development during this phase of CASA's work was towards rehabilitation and community development. By the 80s CASA was already working in many villages, organizing them, engaging them in economic activities and promoting common village programmes. Village SANGHAMS supported, sustained and strengthened the integrated community development programmes initiated by CASA. In fact, over the years, *sanghams* owned the programmes and made them their own.

Another area of intervention was in the drought situation in the mid-eighties. There was scarcity of water for drinking and for irrigation. The soil lost its moisture and the underground water had evaporated. This was the time when many people migrated to the cities or other States, seeking for employment and food. At this time, CASA introduced the WATER-FOR-TOMORROW programme. CASA arranged for hand pumps and trained the local people to repair and maintain them. The local people were trained to become confident and self-reliant even in the midst of crisis situation. They began to use their own resources, capacities and facilities to mitigate the situation. They developed their own coping mechanism in a disaster context, saving lives, minimize the damage and move towards rapid recovery and reconstruction. This was a great step forward. Consequently, when the cyclone and tidal waves struck the coastal regions of Andhra Pradesh again on 2nd May 1990, the villagers were well-prepared to meet the eventualities. Motivational and attitudinal orientation had improved, thereby reducing their vulnerability in the face of calamity. By the nineties, the traditional vulnerable communities had instituted their own safeguards against disasters with the active help of CASA. Slowly but surely PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION was becoming crucial and critical in such a context. They themselves planned their course of action in the midst of a crisis situation, using their own resources; they sought for external assistance. Training became an important component of social action in the 80s and 90s. Mobilization and organization of the local communities became the priority.

India is situated in and near the seismic zone. This became apparent with the earthquake that occurred in Latur, Maharashtra on 30th September 1993. It measured 6.5 on the Richter scale. Its impact was extensive. The damage was enormous. Sixty-seven villages were affected. The Western Zone of CASA responded to the devastating earthquake immediately and effectively. CASA had to be selective in such a situation. They decided to work in the remote, interior villages, which were very backward in terms of social and economic parameters. They managed to reach thirty-five villages, providing emergency relief. They distributed cooked food, relief materials and arranged for temporary shelters to the homeless.

The earthquake devastated the people not only physically and materially but psychologically. They were shocked and traumatized. CASA was not adequately prepared to provide trauma-counseling at that time. After about forty days of initial relief, CASA initiated the rehabilitation process with the active assistance of the local people. CASA developed an excellent rapport with the people. It came forward to help the government of Maharashtra to build houses in several villages. CASA used the suggestions and services of the local people to engage in this rehabilitation programme after the earthquake. This was an attempt to be sensitive to and identify with the people at the grassroots level. Mahila Mandals and the youth were very helpful.

In November 1996, a series of natural disasters descended on the coastal Andhra Pradesh. High velocity storm and torrential rain swept across the region. It was the worst disaster since 1947. But CASA was well prepared. They had developed a good relationship with the people based on mutual trust. The cyclone shelters which had been built earlier helped the people enormously. Information and communication system developed by CASA limited the adverse impact of the calamity in 1996. The early warning system reduced the loss of lives and property. The people in the region could move out to safer places before the tragedy struck.

CASA did not retreat after the initial relief work among the victims of the cyclone. It helped the people to deal with the critical phases of recovery after the crisis. It was swift and flexible in its response to the post-cyclone context of the people. They were prepared better and knew the local people. The local resources were harnessed for the recovery period. The rehabilitation work helped the people to recover their livelihood. It was an effort to "restore the equilibrium" of life in the villages. This work helped the people to restore the local

infrastructures like healthcare, sanitation, roads, temporary shelters and such others.

A significant partnership was developed by the Director of CASA in 1987. It was called the TRI-AGENCY programme, involving the Christian Commission for Development in Bangladesh (CCDB), the United Mission to Nepal (UMN) and CASA. Through this programme, the three church-related development agencies developed a mutual commitment to pool their resources and skills for their common concerns. This programme particularly was helpful during the disasters in Bangladesh, Nepal and India. All the three countries are vulnerable. Cyclones, floods, famine and earthquakes are common problems. Tri-Agency partnership promoted a mutual sharing of the expertise, experience and information on natural disasters. As mentioned before, disaster management involved PREPAREDNESS, MITIGATION AND RESPONSE. They together studied the impact of a crisis particularly on women, children and the environment. This partnership promoted the training on disaster management and develop skills for the purpose. This ensured the participation of the people in planning and preparation in calamity-prone areas.

The Tri-Agency partnership was very helpful in the areas of trauma-Counselling which I have mentioned before. The victims of disasters do not always know how to deal with their shock, depression and despair. Temporary insanity seizes them. Some become completely silent while some others are mourning and crying continuously. In such a context, post-disaster trauma counselling becomes crucial and critical. This partnership developed a training programme for this purpose. The staff was well-equipped with the psychological issues arising after the disaster. It was an important step in the right direction. CASA was ready by the 90s to face the psycho-social damages of disasters. The work goes on.

After cyclone and super-cyclone, floods and famine, independent India experienced for the first time, a disaster unknown to our people. On Sunday, 26th December 2004, an undersea earthquake measuring 8.9 on the Richter scale, resulted in gigantic tidal waves known in Japanese, as *TSUNAMI*. It brought death and devastation in thirteen countries across South and South-East Asia. The worst affected were Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Thailand and the coastal villages of Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and the Union Territories of Pondicherry and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands in India. In fact, it stretched from Somalia to Sumatra. The havoc it caused is immeasurable – physical

and psycho-social. The loss of people and property was enormous. There were 2,70,000 dead across South-East Asia. The death toll in Indonesia alone was more than 2,20,000 people. According to official statistics, 10,749 people were killed in South India and another 5640 were missing. But according to the local people the figure is higher. Suddenly, within few minutes, numerous children became orphans and many women became widows. Thousands were rendered homeless and became more vulnerable. Fisher folks lost their livelihood and their physical equipments like catamarans, motorboats, fishing nets and such others. The farmers and the landless laborers lost cultivable land as these became salinated. The affected people were traumatized. They experienced shock, bereavement, broken families, disrupted communities, resulting in complete dislocation. They were reduced to being "living corpses".

Tsunami has caused enormous damage to the environment. The breeding of fish in the sea is disrupted because of the disturbance. Sea level has changed in some places, either going up or going down. The temperature of the sea water has also changed. There seems to be a continental shift. The speed of the earth's rotation has been affected by *Tusanami* and consequently, the duration of the day is said to have gone down by 2.68 microseconds. The axis of the earth has tilted, causing changes in the direction of the poles. Scientific research is still going on about the long-term impact of the waves. We never knew that water can be so destructive and disruptive!

CASA was one of the first to come forward and respond to the human calamity. According to the Bishop of Madras Diocese, he received a phone call from the Director of CASA soon after the monster *Tusanami* struck South India. Immediately, from the very first day of disaster, CASA moved into the situation with a great sense of urgency. It rushed relief to the affected families in the form of food, clothing, utensils and provided them with temporary shelters. It plunged into action without wasting time. More than eighty staff of CASA from the four Zonal officers were mobilized for the purpose. The CASA staff from the South Zone were the first to respond. CASA's warehouses were in operation for the relief work from 29th December. 45,000 families were helped during this period. Dry Ration Kits were distributed to 50,200 families at this initial phase. This kit consisted of 15 kg rice, 2kg lentil, 1 litre cooking oil, 1kg salt and 100 gm spices. The same number of families were given non-food relief kits and Tarpaulin sheets for temporary shelters. This kit consisted of one woollen blanket, one

dhoti, one saree, three sleeping mats, three bed sheets, nine pieces of aluminum kitchen utensils, one packet of candle, one packet of match box, one soap and one five litre plastic container for water. This relief operation covered one hundred and eighty-four (184) villages which were affected by the *Tusanami*. CASA took up the construction of six hundred and seventeen (617) independent, temporary shelters. It provided the material and hired carpenters and masons to do the skilled work while the family members in the villages provided the labor for construction.

The next important relief work was related to their main occupation. The huge waves had wrecked their fishing boats and the fish vending articles. They had lost their livelihood. Therefore, CASA came forward to repair forty-four (44) boats, including the motors and provided the fuel necessary for the purpose. The fisher folks in the Cuddalore district were the first group that ventured out into the sea after the devastating *Tusanami*. The local media gave a good coverage of the same. Three hundred and sixty-five vending units were given to the women vendors in Tirunelveli, Nagapattinam and Cuddalore. The kit consisted of one twenty-five (25) litre icebox, fish crate, weighing balance, fish knife and aluminum utensils, annakodai, with lid. In addition, South Zone provided one hundred and thirty-six units of 29 ft. FRP Boats, one hundred and thirty six (136) sets of Nets and one hundred and thirty-six (136) ten h.p. Longtail motors for the fisher folks.

As part of the Rehabilitation of the *Tusanami* victims, CASA had to create employment opportunities in the area. They had been rendered homeless and jobless. CASA did not want them to migrate and aggravate their predicament. Therefore, CASA introduced the Food and Cash Programme for five thousand (5,000) families for sixty (60) days for which 1500 Mt rice was approved. The idea was to give 5 kg of rice and Rs. 20/- per family per day for sixty (60) days. According to the report, Rs. 13,15,680/- had been utilized for the beneficiaries, till May 2005.

Psycho-social intervention in a disaster situation is an imperative. The emotional-psychological problems became obvious. CASA realized the urgent need for comfort and counseling from the beginning. It took the help of Dr. Sujatha Rita, an experienced and qualified Counsellor. CASA was involved in fifty (50) villages for this purpose. It arranged for proper Training programmes for volunteers from those villages. It prepared a Questionnaire and documentaries to respond to the

emotional needs of adults and children. Originally, four documentaries were produced in Tamil and later translated into Telegu and Malayalam. CASA has published a booklet, entitled, PSYCHO-SOCIAL SUPPORT: HANDBOOK FOR FACILITATORS, 2006. The methodological emphasis in this Counselling programme is on the community. The writers are keenly concerned about the rehabilitation and recovery of the community from an emotional-psychological perspective.

CASA came forward to respond to the psychological needs of the children in a physical way. Many of those children had lost their parents, relatives and friends. They had developed a phobia of the sea. Consequently, CASA thought of children's Park to ameliorate their fears and anxieties, their sense of loss which they feel very strongly but cannot articulate. From this perspective, CASA rendered an yeomen service.

Herewith, I give below the conceptual framework and strategy of CASA's Tsunami relief and rehabilitation programme, the geographical detail and a report at a glance:-

PHASE I

Crisis Phase	Focus	Meeting immediate needs of the affected people
Day 1	Time Frame	6 Weeks

PHASE II

Mid-term Rehabilitation Phase	Focus	» Checking Migration » Initiating Community Organization » Involving Community in planning process » Socio-Psycho needs » Negotiation with Govt. for people friendly policy. » Intensifying co-ordination efforts with others at field level	Providing Livelihood
Day 1	Time Frame	9 Months	

PHASE III

Reconstruction & Long-term Rehabilitation phase	Focus	» Housing & other infrastructure » reconstruction » Restoring Livelihood » Community Empowerment » Advocacy / Lobbying » Capacity Building » Socio-Psycho Needs » Intensifying networks & co-ordination
4th Month	Time Frame → 24 Months	

PHASE IV

Disaster pre-preparedness phase	Focus	Institutional Capacity enhancement Community Based Disaster Preparedness Lobbying for National Disaster Policy Sustainability of DMTF at community level.
4th Month	Time Frame → 36 Months	

Villages covered during the Crisis phase and Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Phase:

A. GEOGRAPHICAL DETAILS:				
State	Tamilnadu	Kerala	Pondicherry	Andhra Pradesh
No. of villages covered during Crisis Phase	97	12	27	48
Villages requested from the State Govt. for Rehabilitation & Reconstruction Phase	20	3	6	1

NOTE: Involvement of Community, partner organizations, constituent churches and local Panchayat is imperative for the success of the programme.

B. REPORT AT A GLANCE				
S.No	Component	Planned	Accomplished	Notes if any
1	Feeding Programme	45,000 families	45,000	Programmes was supported through 13 member churches
2	Distribution of Dry Ration Kits	50,000 families	50,200	
3	Distribution on non-food relief kits	50,000 families	50,200	
4	Distribution of Tar-paulin Sheets	50,000 families	50,200	
5	Fish vending units	500	365	
6	Setting up children's parks	35	19	
7	Repair of schools	50	27	
8	Single unit temporary shelter	617	562	
9	Food for Community Dev. (food & cash prog.)	1500 MT Rice, 3,00,000 mandays	900 MT purchased, 88856 mandays	
10	Repair of boats & servicing of motor	250	44	
11	New Boats/nets/engine	400	136 units ordered(boats, nets, longtail engine motors)	
12	Recruitment of staff	60	23 new staff appointed	
13	Construction of permanent houses with disaster resistant features	2900	85 under progress	Work has started in 1 Ward only in Kerala State

CASA does not have a direct presence in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. But those islands, being closest to the epicenter of the under water earthquake, were severely hit. The loss of people and property was incalculable. More than six thousand (6000) people were feared dead or missing. About four thousand (4000) buildings along the Car Nicobar coast were razed to the ground. This included schools, churches, community centres, other concrete structures and a whole lot of valuable coconut trees. CASA was able to extend its active assistance through the Church of North India (CNI) and Hindustani Covenant Church (HCC) by providing Rs. 5 lakhs each in the first week of January 2005. Soon after, the Chairperson and the Director, along with few others made an on-the-spot survey of the situation in February and March 2005. On the basis of their findings, CASA decided to continue its support and solidarity through its constituent churches and partner organizations.

At a Consultation on the *Tusanami*-affected islands, following points were emphasized:-

- 1) Acknowledge local people's skills, experience, knowledge and traditional systems or mechanism.
- 2) CASA's work was to complement and strengthen such skills, systems and practices.
- 3) It must facilitate better community participation, planning and implementation.
- 4) Harnessing the locally available resources and discourage outside investment to the extent possible.
- 5) Protecting the basic rights of the *tribals* and their culture.
- 6) Carefully identify the needs of the people, particularly the poor and the marginalized and provide ownership of assets.

Having looked at the nature and scope of CASA's action in terms of relief and rehabilitation, now we are in a position to do our own SWOT. The purpose of this section is to reflect critically on the strength, weakness, opportunities and threats of this kind of SOCIAL ACTION:-

STRENGTH/MERITS OF DOING RELIEF AND REHABILITATION:

CASA (originally CORAGS-NCCI) as a Social Action Agency began its journey with Relief and Rehabilitation work in the forties and fifties. It was a historical necessity or a compulsion. The churches rightly and spontaneously reacted to the human tragedy. They could

not be indifferent and insensitive to the suffering and pain of the displaced, dislocated people. They needed immediate and direct succor and support. Relief work had to be done, not only because the Indian government requested it, but more important was to witness visibly and concretely to the love of God as demonstrated in the life and work of Jesus the Christ. There was no hesitation or ambiguity about it.

The partition of India and the communal conflicts at the dawn of independence gave the church an opportunity to be in service. From the beginning they engaged in relief and rehabilitation work without consideration of caste, community, race or religion. It showed the equalitarian spirit of the church. There was no discrimination at this level. There was a sense of urgency to help one and all, who were languishing in refugee camps.

Another strength of relief work is that it is clearly visible and tangible – it can be measured and counted in terms of food, drinks, clothing and medical help at the initial stage. Related to this advantage, relief helps the affected people to be relieved of their hunger and thirst, of their desire to survive and exist. From this perspective, we cannot arbitrarily separate being from having. To be a human being we have to have. I shall examine this issue in the theological-ethical chapter. Providing food and water is the minimum that one can do.

Relief inevitably and intrinsically leads to rehabilitation. There is an inextricable relationship between the two. CASA was learning this phenomenon in its sixty years of exposure and experience. It perceived the need, but more important, the affected people themselves ask for it in terms of permanent housing and some kind of employment opportunity. Thus over the years, the very nature and function of relief and rehabilitation have undergone radical transformation. Through a process of permutation and combination, such an action has evolved into a process of development. From this point of view, it is possible to consider relief and rehabilitation as not end in themselves but as a point of departure or a point of entry. Over the years, CASA has substantially expanded the scope and character of relief and rehabilitation. This becomes evident in the disaster interventions in recent times. Initially, it is painful and tragic but later it proves to be a blessing in disguise. Such an action, over the years, has crystallized both the opportunities and dangers. The word 'crisis' comes from the Greek word, krisis, which exactly means this.

WEAKNESS OF SUCH A SOCIAL ACTION

Mere relief or even rehabilitation does not resolve the deeper issues at stake. Relief or rehabilitation cannot forge a new relationship between the haves and the have-nots. This dilemma was being realized by CASA from the second half of the 60s. In 1963 the Triennial Assembly of the National Christian Council of India (NCCI), which met in Chennai (then Madras), considered the nature and scope of the diakonal ministry. Thus CORAGS social action was redefined in terms of SELF-HELP and ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT and HEALTH, and SOCIAL WELFARE, in addition to their regular work of relief and rehabilitation.

In the 40s and 50s, much of the relief work was done with the gift supplies received from abroad. CORAGS had an easy access to the PL 480 received from the USA. Such a situation clearly establishes the weakness of this mode of operation. The gift was foreign in origin, thereby diminishing the role and responsibility of the Indian Church in general and local congregations in particular. Another issue that became apparent at that nascent phase was the misuse of the supplies. Some of them were misappropriated and other gifts were used for commercial gain. Such is the nature of relief particularly in a poor country like India. There was developmental action in the latter part of the 60s but the basic thrust of CORAGS was still on relief and temporary rehabilitation.

The weakness of relief work became more obvious in the Triennial Assembly of the NCCI in Shillong in October 1967. This date could be considered as a significant shift in the thinking of the churches. To project a new image, it was resolved to change the nomenclature – CORAGS to CARSA. The change of name does not indicate change in attitude and of course action. Herein lies the problem. The leadership at the top may realize the urgent need for authentic change but the people in general want to maintain the status quo. As such the word, 'relief' continued both in form and substance – not CASA but CARSA!

At this juncture, I will attempt to understand the nature and function of relief per se. Firstly, it is conceived within a dualistic mould – donor and recipient; the giver and the receiver. It has an absolute character. In such a skewed relationship, the donor (both *deshi* and *videshi*) is in a dominant position. They dictate terms and very often exploit the vulnerable situation to their advantage. The recipient are the objects of pity, of favors showered on them. They are completely domesticated. They are at the mercy of the giver. The giver in turn shows a patronizing or paternalistic attitude. They inculcate in the receiver a mai-baap attitude, which makes them dependent and slavish. Such is the bane of relief per se. They begin to

suffer from an inferiority complex, which robs them of their dignity and a sense of equality. They cannot move towards self-confidence and self-reliance. Such a model is based on a mediaeval mindset.

This dilemma was very well exposed in several disaster interventions of CASA. As recent as in 2005, the Chairperson had to state categorically, "CASA is not a donor agency". For a long time, CASA was thought to be a 'channel' or a 'pipeline', only an "implementing agency". Precisely for this reason, CASA has convened several Seminars and Consultations to clarify the issue of relief and rehabilitation. But there are individuals and institutions that do not take seriously the policy and programmatic changes. During the *Tsunami* relief work, the government of India considered the role of CASA as a contractor!

Relief per se is not a "stepping stone". It can be an impediment to holistic and wholesome development. The rich people, both in India and abroad, are more than willing to help as long as their vested interests are taken care of. De facto helping others becomes a form of ego-trip. Rich countries and rich people are willing to do 'charity' (relief) but justice and liberation of the oppressed are not their priority. I shall examine this in a separate chapter. For CASA, a Christian organization, relief was a stepping stone over the years. Mr. Kofi Annan, the former Secretary-General of the United Nations organization had stated,

More effective prevention strategies would save not only tens of billions of dollars, but save tens of thousands of lives. Funds currently spent on intervention and relief could be devoted to enhancing equitable and sustainable development. . . While the cost of prevention have to be paid in the present, its benefits lie in a distant future. Moreover, the benefits are not tangible; they are the disasters that did not happen.

For this reason, CASA has developed Community Based Disaster Preparedness (CBDP) and the Disaster Mitigation Task Force (DMTF). But in fact, CASA took nearly thirty (30) years to cut the umbilical cord as it was conceived in the womb of Partition and the Refugee problem! PL 480 was very tempting and attractive! For this reason, the paradigm shifts were necessary and urgent for CASA.

OPPORTUNITIES OF DOING RELIF AND REHABILITATION WORK:

In last sixty years, CASA has realized the strength and weakness of relief and rehabilitation work. But it has also realized that such an action gives certain opportunities. In this section, I shall look at some of

them briefly. At the outset, I have mentioned that the churches became involved in this kind of work at the dawn of India's independence. It was an opportunity for the churches to bear a public, united witness to the love of God in action. They plunged themselves in action without thinking too much of the implications and consequences of such an activity. They offered their services to the nation and to the people, who were rendered homeless and jobless.

Secondly, the churches demonstrated their active fellowship with like-minded organizations. It was an occasion of sharing and learning from each other as an organization. It is an opportunity to network and build up solidarity and support for such a venture.

Thirdly, relief and rehabilitation work offer a golden opportunity to be at one with the *hoi polloi*, *dalits*, *adivasis*, serfs. The *aam admi*, the *janata* (people), can definitely help such an organization to learn as well as unlearn. After such an experience and exposure, one cannot continue to live in the rainbow world of imagination. Grassroots, ground level reality facilitates an organization like CASA to move rapidly from the *maya jagat* (world of ethnic) to the *aasli jagat*. Some of us enjoy living in a make-belief world. Some of us want to run away and escape the harsh reality of a refugee camp, cyclone-hit, famine-stricken people. It is an occasion of a close encounter.

Fourthly, as a non-governmental agency, such an action can support and strengthen, build and rebuild the civil society and the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), People's Organizations (POs), Voluntary Organizations (VOs), and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), which I have mentioned. It is important to remember,

Civil society is a public sphere where people's spontaneous actions are determined, and people's collective opinions are formulated and expressed towards realizing the common good in a participatory and democratic manner.

Basically, this means that CASA as an NGO has the opportunity and responsibility to practice as well as promote autonomy in its function and outreach. It cannot be fully achieved as we live in a fallen and finite world, as there are diabolical forces, which are working relentlessly to negate the purpose and goal of a civil society. We must remember,

Civil society is an ethical ideal, dreaming of life-centered values. It can energize utopia, strengthen people's aspirations for manageable societies and elicit imagination and creativity in the search for alternatives.

Fifthly, in and through its involvement for last sixty years, CASA has learnt to re-conceive or reinvent the concept and consequent practice of relief and rehabilitation. It has given them an opportunity to transform the nature and characteristics of relief and rehabilitation. Therefore, at this juncture, I should mention that in the CASA work, relief and rehabilitation of the 40s and 50s are qualitatively different from the 80s. In the following chapters, I will highlight on this issue.

THREATS OF DOING RELIEF AND REHABILITATION WORK:

In last sixty years, CASA has exposed itself. It has faced criticisms and even condemnation. Some of them are positive and helpful but a lot of it is negative and destructive. CASA is living in a world of keen competition, particularly among the NGOs. Competition is helpful to the extent that it is edifying and enlightening. But it can be threatening as it became obvious in the post-*Tusanami* intervention. Too many NGOs wanted to be involved directly instead of cooperating with few of them. As at one time, Christianity actively promoted denominationalism, now there is a process of NGOisation of communities and even of poor countries like Bangladesh. Competition cannot be conducive towards building a healthy and a happy society. It leads to divisiveness and disunity.

Secondly, relief work can bring about corruption in the organization. This became obvious in the days of PL 480 gift supplies. They were misused and misappropriated. Such a situation is usually exaggerated and magnified and thereby undermine the effort of the service agency. Once the image is tarnished, it is difficult to restore its integrity. As mentioned before that the gifts do not reach victims of disasters and others become the beneficiaries. In a poor country like India it is important for such an organization to exercise vigilance and a high degree of transparency and accountability.

Thirdly, there is always the pressures on the CASA by the government and the power brokers. Such people want the organization to toe the line and conform to the status quo. One of the recent examples of such a pressure was with regard to the permanent houses to be built for the Tusanami victims in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. There were long-drawn negotiations between CASA and the government. The government insisted on their own architects and contractors but they wanted CASA's money. The negotiations failed and CASA withdrew from the building project. It is not always possible to resist pressures. The government and the power brokers want to use CASA for their own

vested interests. Similarly, in the early days of India's independence, some foreign powers and missionaries tried to put pressure with regard to their Gift Supplies. In fact, their surplus food or even the discarded food was given as relief.

Fourthly, in this kind of work, any Christian organization is under threat from some obscurantists, fundamentalist forces in the country. This has become explicit in modern India. They accused CASA for its work among the *Tsunami*-hit people particularly among the *dalits* and the fisher-folks. Such forces and people falsely accused CASA of converting such downtrodden people in the name of relief and rehabilitation. It happened in 2005.

Fifthly and finally, very often the threat is from within. As mentioned before that there were people in CASA organization who were undermining the service-orientation by misappropriating and misusing relief materials for their own individual purposes. In addition to that problem, the church authority and hierarchy are at loggerheads with CASA on certain issues. Later, in a chapter on church's relationship with CASA, I will elaborate on this issue.

CONCLUSION:

In this chapter, I have attempted to give an overview of the CASA's relief and rehabilitation work among the marginalized. This is not exhaustive but illustrative of the first defining moment in the life and work of CASA. I have tried to indicate the nature and the actual function of relief and rehabilitation over last sixty years. I have stated that it basically remained a relief organization for twenty years (1947 – 1967). It was only in about 1970 that the umbilical cord was cut. It began to substantively expand the scope and character of relief and rehabilitation in both thought and action. This was the significant moment. Relief and rehabilitation work continued but with a wider vision and longer perspective. It was not myopic in its understanding of relief and rehabilitation. It became a significant entry point to engage in a long-lasting purposes and goals. In the next chapter, I shall examine the nature of change in perspective and priority of the programme.

III

Need-based Social Action: Second Defining Moment

From the 70s, CASA definitively emerged as a Need-based Social Action Group – from CARSA to CASA. In this chapter, I will attempt to delineate the emerging trends in CASA. I will examine and evaluate the thinking and action pertaining to the need-based thrust. I will try to understand the nature and function of such a perspective, its impact and implications for the future. How and how much is it an advance from relief and rehabilitation? Towards the end of the chapter, I will do my own SWOT study, understanding its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats or dangers. For our purpose in this study, I will deal with a twenty-year period for this phase of social action – 1967 till 1987.

NEED-BASED THINKING IN THE 60S AND THE 70S:

Thinking must precede conscious action. Thus there is a significant difference between reflexive action and reflective action. CASA has been engaged in thinking about the nature and content of social action from the beginning. This became more crucial and critical in its formulation of policies and programmes in the 60s and the 70s. Already, in 1963 at the Triennial Assembly of the National Christian Council of India (NCCI) in Madras, this became obvious. They considered the Diakonal ministry of the Church in terms of relief and rehabilitation; self-help and economic development; health and social welfare. Soon after, in the Triennial

Assembly of the NCCI at Shillong in October 1967, they deliberately and consciously expanded the scope of their social service and altered the character of CORAGS' work. They made a significant shift from relief to rehabilitation and development. This was the second defining moment in the evolution of CASA. Consequently, they resolved to continue to do relief work, receive gift supplies, encourage nutrition programmes, assist in agricultural development projects and help church-related Industrial and Vocational Training Institutions.

The need based social action was better articulated at the All India Consultation of CASA in Delhi in September 1973. Bishop Leslie Newbigin, the CSI Bishop of Madras at that time appealed to CASA to facilitate the churches to become "a CARING CHURCH." At that time, it was said that foreign help could be or should be taken but the fundamental aim of CASA should be to lead the churches in India to "a deeper kind of caring." Bishop Newbigin understood caring in terms of the church congregations. They must be actively involved by becoming health visitors, responding to emergency needs and be engaged in fund-raising for such needs. It was categorically stated at the Consultation,

There is much emphasis today on the need to tackle the fundamental causes of human suffering rather than merely providing "ambulance service". It is not enough to deploy Good Samaritans around the place; we must also police the road. . . We must do both; we must care for the victims of disaster or injustice, and we must also undertake those measures of social engineering or revolution which are needed to prevent disaster and injustice from happening.

At this juncture, I should mention that an All-India Christian Consultation was convened earlier in February 1970 by CASA and the Catholic Bishops Conference of India (CBCI) on the issue of Development. It was inaugurated by the then President of India, Mr. V. V. Giri. He had said that development is the "full flowering of the human personality which will enable the human to realize his true potential as a human being." In his keynote address, the well-known Indian economist, had rightly stated,

. . . In a world where millions of men, women and children worry about their next meal, where human life is reduced to less than the level of animal existence for want of the material things of life, we can never underestimate the economic dimension of development. Development is not the new name for peace or justice, but the old name for food.

Thus CASA has to begin with the fundamental need for food, clothing, shelter, water, and health. Therefore, in October 1978 the Director placed before the Executive Committee, a draft policy statement. It clearly defined the Weaker Sections in terms of the landless labourers, the marginalized farmers and those who are disadvantaged. The Policy statement defined basic needs in terms of food, clothing, shelter, water and health. It also added "meaningful employment" and maintaining some "social standing, dignity, and self-worth". Formal or non-formal education was integrated to the understanding of basic need. CASA has been repeatedly summoned to be a catalyst or a conscientiser to the basic needs of the aam admi, the janta (people). Thus "initiation and implementation of projects" became important for meeting the basic need of the poorest of the poor. The Rev. M. A. Z. Rolston, the General Secretary of the NCCI, issued a circular letter upon CASA to be involved in development-oriented programmes and motivate, mobilize, equip and strengthen the Church and the larger community to "respond to socio-economic needs." There was an urgent need to emphasize on educational, political and social concerns. In the 70s it was strongly felt that CASA should not be a 'channel' or a 'pipeline' but actively get involved "with project initiation, preparation, evaluation and implementation." There was a keen desire to redefine CASA's ideology and priorities.

The new CASA, which was born as an autonomous agency on 31st March 1976, had raised critical questions about its social action. It was consciously moving from relief to development, which meant programmes of people's participation and socio-economic changes for the good of the future of the whole community. It took cognizance of the gap between the rich and the poor and expressed its keen desire to liberate the whole human being. Similar ideas were expressed at the National Consultation at Whitefield, Bangalore in 1977 on the theme, Justice, Self-Reliance and Economic Growth. Thus by the end of the 70s the CASA wanted to involve to evolve an egalitarian society. That was their vision and mission. This in brief gives us some idea of the thinking process that brought about a significant shift from relief and rehabilitation to a positively need-based philosophy and practice.

NEED-BASED ACTION FROM THE END OF THE 60s:

In the first chapter, I have already indicated that CASA from its own experience, realized that they have to go beyond mere relief and work actively for the rehabilitation of the refugees and those displaced by floods, cyclone, drought and such others. Thus the two kinds of action went on simultaneously. Relief was an attempt to respond to

the immediate, physical needs of the people, affected adversely by what was considered as natural calamities. So the immediate urgent needs for survival were food, potable water and temporary shelters. Soon after, CASA had to think, plan and operationalize some selected long-term measures for the rehabilitation of the affected people. After looking into the primary needs of the people, they worked for their secondary needs like semi-permanent housing, health and education. This is what they tried to do with those victims of the Koyna earthquake in 1967 and in 1968, they provided relief to the affected people in Assam, West Bengal, Bihar, UP, Delhi, Kerala, Gujarat and Rajasthan. Their relief work was extensive at that time. They mobilized youth volunteers and sought the assistance of the SCMI and the YMCA. They developed nutritional feeding programmes, reclamation, development and cultivation of land, installation of pumpsets, kitchen gardens, irrigation and drinking water wells, *bunds*, roads, irrigation tanks and channels. This means CASA, concurrently, responded to the immediate and longer needs. They engaged in agricultural development projects as well as community development. But obviously, such action was viewed from the perspective of need.

The massive influx of refugees from East Bengal (now Bangladesh) into West Bengal, Assam, Tripura and Meghalaya activated the relief operation of the government, Ramakrishna Mission and CASA and others. PL 480 relief materials continued to come although it was suspended in 1974 and only in 1982 CASA decided to discontinue those supplies. That was quite a break with the past! During this phase of CASA's action, beside the usual relief and rehabilitation work as mentioned above, they also promoted occupational activities like cottage industries. From 1974, CASA wanted to respond to the developmental and reconstructional needs of the poor and the marginalized. Thus slowly but surely, CASA was making a transition from only relief and rehabilitation to developmental needs, mainly economic. From 1975 they focused on socio-economic developments like the Hill People's, Paharia, project in the Santal Parganas in Bihar, bare-foot doctors, percolation tanks, Harijan Resettlement in Cuddaph, Tamil Nadu, Calcutta garbage dump turned into a housing complex for slum-dwellers. Such was the emphasis and the priority of CASA.

At this juncture, it is necessary to remember that the new CASA was born on 31st March 1976 and earlier on 12th February of that year, it was registered as a Society. Demarcation of the four zones were done and the Headquarters and the North Zonal office was

established at the Rachna Building, New Delhi. The most significant event of the time was the appointment of Major J. K. Michael as the Director-Designate with effect from 1st January 1977. This provided an incentive and an impetus for greater involvement and action. CASA continued to respond to existential needs with greater sensitivity and alertness. There was greater thrust towards community organization. Training programmes were initiated, community health and education were encouraged. Again disaster struck India in August 1977 and floods played havoc with the lives of people in Delhi, Haryana, Assam and West Bengal. A lot of energy, time and resources were expended to ameliorate the pain and suffering of the victims of the floods. Beside the regular relief work, CASA responded to the long-term needs of the people by initiating maternal and child health programme, alternate employment opportunities and Weavers' rehabilitation programme in Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.

In the last week of November 1978, about three-fourth of West Bengal went under water and fifteen million destitutes were rendered homeless. CASA rose to the occasion and responded rightly to the dire needs of the displaced. In the fourth decade of CASA, they were seriously considering various long-term options like socio-economic welfare activities, environment-related activities and developing tools and skills for development work.

CASA's need-based perspective on development led it to forge its CORE PROGRAMME from the early eighties. During this decade, the government initiated programmes for rural development, one of which was the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP). They began to identify the rural population that was below the Poverty Line (PL). The four zones of CASA made use of this government programme. They identified the needy people and the areas, organized them which made them aware of their own needs.

By the eighties, CASA not only taught the people to respond to the immediate impact of a disaster but they learnt how to prepare and manage disasters before hand. Thus many of the villages had learnt to cope with floods, cyclones and drought. In a drought situation, CASA initiated the Water for Tomorrow programme. Through training and community organization, the people were becoming self-reliant and confident in such catastrophic situations. This preparedness helped them in 1993 when earthquake struck Latur as mentioned in the previous chapter. By the 90s, CASA had taught the people to disseminate information and be engaged in networking particularly in

such situations. Through this free flow of information, they were able to help each other at the time of need. In this way CASA developed new expertise and adopted new operational strategies to help the people in distress. This was the nature and character of the need-based perspective.

Basically, two types of need have been distinguished but they are intrinsically related – primary needs and the secondary needs. The primary needs have to do with immediate, urgent physical needs. The secondary needs had to do with the local community. Each community has its own unique character and concomitantly, their combined, public need. Thus after the initial intervention in a disaster situation, CASA inaugurated a process of development after the disaster. People in the villages began to express their needs and aspirations, which indicated their desire to rebuild their lives and livelihood. CASA developed an excellent rapport with the local people. CASA came forward to help the government to rebuild houses in several villages. They used the advice and services of the local people to engage in this rehabilitation programme. This was an attempt to be sensitive to and identify with the people at the grassroots level. *Mahila Mandals* and the youth groups became active for bringing about socio-economic reconstruction of the communities.

One of the concerns of the community was the menace of alcoholism, which affected their health and happiness. The women and the youth began to organize themselves to fight the issue. They marched together to the district authorities and demanded that the liquor shops be closed down. Initially, goats were provided by CASA, which became the collective property of the village. It generated some income. Similarly, CASA had introduced the collective savings scheme and the women became responsible for it. *Mahila Mandals* are also interested to encourage and promote *Panchayati Raj* which would enhance the position and power of the villagers.

Such socio-economic-political interventions brought about a high degree of awareness about various dimensions of life. But this consciousness exposed and crystallized the caste and class conflicts in the community itself. In a village, a *Dalit* woman was elected as the President of the *Mahila Mandal*. Immediately, the upper caste women of the village were up in arms. But over a period of time, they were willing to accept the change and social justice was done. At this point, it is important to mention that women were conscientised from this time. Their social awakening made a lot of difference to the community

to which they belonged. They were open and responsive to the various needs of the community. They were enabled and in turn, they became the enablers of the community. We will return to this topic in the next chapter.

Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP), which I have mentioned before, needs further elaboration. Till the eighties, development was conceived in economic terms. Surely, it was important to respond to the economic needs of the people. *Dal-roti* is the basic need of the people for the sake of survival and existence. But from the eighties, there was a realization that development in its essence, has to do with all areas of life and living. Consequently, CASA used the government IRDP to work with the people at the grassroots level and made them aware of their socio-economic needs. All the four zones of CASA introduced the IRDP. They encouraged people's participation and organized them for their economic and social needs. As a result, local people's organizations identified their own socio-economic needs, developed their own strategies and mobilized resources available within the community itself and then responded. This required local planning, allocation and distribution of resources among the needy. Titus George has given the example of the tribal villages in the Lohardagga district of Bihar. Irrigation department of Bihar had already sanctioned two minor irrigation projects for those Oraon tribal villages in the seventies. But the projects were not implemented for several years. The Social Education Programme of CASA enabled the villagers to become organized about this need in the eighties. Finally, they were able to meet the Deputy Commissioner, who sent the Sub-divisional Officer. He was instructed to immediately implement the pending project.

CASA's IRDP helped the tribal villagers in Tamil Nadu. They are situated on the Western ghats, near the boundary of Kerala and Tamil Nadu. The three tribal communities lived in the six villages. Even in the eighties they were illiterate, living without any significant infrastructural facilities like water, roads, electricity, schools or a health clinic. They were living in small huts, making bundles of grass on the hill side. They were utterly neglected and the government had not initiated any programme in those villages for their welfare and uplift. They had no proper clothing and they worked occasionally for the *Zamindars* for low wages. CASA intervened towards the end of the eighties and began to respond to their primary needs – food, clothing and a decent shelter. They built thatched houses, separating the living room from the kitchen. This construction was undertaken through the FOOD FOR

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (FFCD) Programme. CASA helped the villagers to get their Ration Cards and thereby avail of the Public Distribution System (PDS). Similarly, the government had to provide electricity to the villages. CASA organized the villagers and formed Village Development Association, Youth clubs and *Mahila Sangam*. They gave training to the villagers and brought about social awareness of their own needs. Connectivity improved and the people had linkages with the government and Development Agencies like CASA. But in 1992, there was a landslide, sixteen families were washed away and thirty people from those villages died. Immediately, CASA came forward and helped the affected people with food and shelter. In 1996, IRD Programme was merged with People's Action for Transformation (PAT). This social action of CASA was extended to fifty-three villages (53) in that area. This is another example of need-based work undertaken by CASA.

The above narration demonstrates the fact that CASA has engaged in social action in terms of needs, both primary as well as long-term. They focused on the community in its local context. I have cited few examples to illustrate the change from only relief and rehabilitation to a need-based approach. This definitive perspective was pursued consciously and deliberately in the seventies and the eighties. Now it is important for me to examine and evaluate this second defining moment as a principle and a strategy. As mentioned before, I will use the SWOT categories to comprehend its nature and function, its aims and objectives. Is it to be appropriated as a separate, independent typology? Or as an interim, intermediate concept that has no finality or absoluteness? This methodology of social action could be viewed as a "stepping stone".

Before we conclude this section, I should repeat and emphasise that this need-based perspective helped to develop the Integrated Rural Development Programme. Later, in the nineties the same programme evolved into the People's Action for Transformation (PAT). Thus the focus of this approach was on PEOPLE, COMMUNITY and above all INTERGRADED DEVELOPMENT. This means the scope and character was expanded to go beyond the physical-external. The word, 'beyond' is not a negation of the previous position. It includes but moves to the other dimensions which are equally important and necessary. A community is a complex phenomenon, which cannot be measured in terms of economics alone. The word, 'integrated' has an inclusive character. The normative human being or an ideal human being has

to be an integrated being, who thinks, feels and acts. We cannot be oblivious to his/her socio-economic-political ambience. The need-based perspective is an attempt to reckon with this reality.

STRENGTHS/ MERITS OF NEED-BASED SOCIAL ACTION:

Relief to rehabilitation to the need-based position and practice does make a difference in attitude and action. It makes a difference both for the giver and the receiver, for the donor as well as the recipient. It is an improvement on the first defining moment. Need-based help is not temporary, ad-hoc and casual. It is thought-out, systematic and sustained compared to the first. It is essentially responding to and being sensitive about people's needs at the existential, ground-level. Obviously, such a work would require more time and energy, more commitment and dedication.

Secondly, related to the first, is the focus on people in their milieu. This means it is not individualistic. It is an effort to understand people in their collectivity, in their togetherness. Consequently, this action has a greater objectivity and reliability. As mentioned before, CASA understands people in terms of the *dalits*, the *adivasis*, women and children, who are marginalized. Over the years, they have openly worked among the victims of Partition, of floods, cyclones, drought, earthquakes and more recently, *Tusanami*. Their needs are obvious and visible. They have responded immediately and directly for the benefit of such people. It has proved to be an effective witness to their keen desire to show the love of God, particularly for the least, and the lost. CASA, as an organization, has clearly demonstrated their real interest and concern for the people.

Thirdly, related to the people, the target of CASA has been people in their particular community. This communitarian thrust is significant. Each community is unique and special. They have their respective needs which require careful scrutiny and selection. Each community has their own dynamics. This has to be understood. Communities cannot be homogenized and dealt with in the same way. Primary needs are the same for all people and all communities – food, clothing, shelter, education, employment and health. CASA has been meeting those needs to the extent possible. But they have gone beyond those physical-external needs. They have engaged in training, social education and community organization. This has helped the communities with knowledge, skills and opportunities. They have been conscientised to a great extent.

Fourthly, the most important strength of this kind of social action, fostered an ongoing relationship, removes barriers and bridges the gulf between the two. In this context, CASA cannot treat the people as objects of their largesse. The people are treated as living subjects, who can think, feel and act for themselves. This is a great step forward. It is no more a subject-object but a subject-subject relationship, where there is mutual respect and appreciation. It uplifts and edifies both the 'giver' and the 'receiver'.

WEAKNESSES OF NEED-BASED SOCIAL ACTION:

One of the weaknesses of this stance, is that it is not preventive in the long-run. It operates within the realm of the curative. Curative medicine deals with a disease when it has already affected the person. But, on the contrary, the preventive medicine anticipates diseases and deals with them in advance like vaccinations, inoculations and such others.

Secondly, as mentioned before, primary needs can be ascertained quite easily as for example food, clothing and shelter. After these immediate needs, it becomes increasingly difficult to identify authentic and apparent needs -- perceived needs and the genuine needs of a community. One can go wrong in this area of needs. Thirdly, related to the second, it is possible and necessary to distinguish between needs and wants. Blurring of the distinctions can only aggravate the situation in a given community. Needs have to be prioritized on the basis of selected norms and principles. If not, money may be wasted, materials misused and the people misled.

Fourthly, although this defining moment goes beyond an individualistic approach and moves towards the concerns of the community, but it still operates within the micro-reality as the relief and rehabilitation work. It does not take into consideration the wider community and the bigger world. At the end, it proves to be myopic and narrowly-conceived. A community has to be conceived in the midst of other communities. A community cannot be isolated and made discrete. Precisely, for this reason there are conflicts among communities, leading to communalism and parochialism. Over the years, CASA has become acutely aware of this problem in its work among the *dalits*, fisherfolks, women and others. Communalism and Casteism are rampant in our country, leading to violent clashes. Needs, particularly the secondary or long-term needs, are the problematic. The problem becomes more acute when we realize the predicament of the vast majority of the people in India. There is a proliferation of needs -- social, economic and

political. One cannot take hold of them. Financial constraints prevent an organization like CASA from meeting even the basic needs. Expectation of the referral community goes up as the people are hoping for their material – physical salvation. Consequently, need-based thinking and action have their inherent limitations. Rising expectation and rising frustration happen simultaneously.

For the reason stated above, it is vitally important and necessary to stipulate certain clear criteria for ascertaining long-term needs, beyond the obvious ones. This is where one has to exercise a high degree of discretion and judgment. From this perspective, needs cannot be a helpful category to work with. I believe, precisely for this problem, CASA had to consider a change of approach and consequent action. Dealing with needs within the micro-framework emasculates the communities. They are considered as discrete realities. This could result in pitting one community against other. This is more relevant in India, where communities are divided along caste, class and religious lines.

OPPORTUNITIES/ CHALLENGES OF NEED-BASED SOCIAL ACTION:

Weaknesses do not have an absolute character. They can be overcome through concerted action. When we acknowledge our own weaknesses, then we have reasons to deal with positively. As a result, it is possible to turn one's weakness into an opportunity to change and grow. In the seventies and the eighties, CASA began to organize people and gave them social education. That helped them to build their own communities. There were attitudinal and actional changes. They learnt to think together and act together. It gave them an opportunity to work unitedly for their common needs.

Now in 2007, as we reflect on this methodology of the seventies and the eighties, we begin to realize its potentialities and possibilities. The well-known Indian economist, Mr. C. T. Kurien, had formulated his understanding of the Indian economy. He had made a significant distinction between the Need-based and the Want-based economies. According to him, in the pre-British period, the ancient village economy was run on Need-based approach. It was an open system in the sense that its working arrangements were determined exogenously. This was true about the resources to be used to meet the needs of the people and how the products to be distributed among the participants. The local community decided about the use of the resources – what they are to be used for, how they are to be used, and how the produce to

be distributed? In this context, the economic processes of production and distribution are independently organized. Thus there is greater flexibility and freedom in the selection and use of resources and for production and distribution compared to the Want-based economy. The goods are produced to meet their own needs. They are not dominated by the market mechanism. Basically, use of resources is important than the ownership of resources in this economy. The community, as a collectivity, must own the resources and harness them for their common use. Such an economy was independent and even self-contained.

With the coming of the British in general and industrial revolution in particular, such a need-based economy underwent drastic changes. Over the years, the need-based village economy developed into a total need-based activities. Kurien designates it as N-Circuit for short. This was the time when the Want-based economy developed due to the impact of several factors. This system he designates as the W-Circuit. But what is more significant that gradually the N-Circuit got absorbed into the W-Circuit and thereby it lost its independence. The interaction between the two Circuits were helpful temporarily but in the long run, it proved to be detrimental to the village/cottage industries and for the communities. W-Circuit brought about a sea-change in terms of accumulation, profit and competition. The rich were becoming richer and the poor came into existence. Mass or massive poverty was a reality in British India.

Since 1991, the Indian government is openly and deliberately pursuing this Want-based economy, creating a new W-Circuit. The colonial economic system has been reincarnated in neo-colonialism or neo-liberalism. Liberalisation, Privatisation, and Globalisation (LPG) is the new face of capitalism in India.

In this context of exploitation and consequent deprivation, Kurien suggests an Agenda for an Alternative, which is relevant and meaningful even today. We will take a glance at it. According to him, the planning and policies of the nation should be decentralized. This would enable each locality to articulate its own felt needs. Secondly, there must be a realistic assessment of the resources of the locality or the community, primarily in terms of human potential that can be and ought to be animated. The principle of need-based economy should be recognized and the N-Circuit should be operationalised. For this purpose, it is necessary to restrict the operation of the W-Circuit and the C-Circuit (interaction between the Need and the Want

Circuits). The needs and the resources necessary for them should be determined by those who have no stakes in the W-Circuit. For this, the criterion could be those who are just above and below the Poverty Line (BPL). The fundamental operating principle will not be private accumulation. He suggested a cooperative farming or small collective farm units by giving land to a group of landless agricultural labourers, who will own the land in common and cultivate it jointly. Then he suggests the strategy and the organizational structure for promoting the N-Circuit. This is mainly suggested for the poorest of the poor in our countryside. Such an alternative has its inherent problems but it offers a new challenge for CASA. The Need-based approach is an opportunity to think and act along the lines suggested by Kurien.

THREATS/ DANGERS OF NEED-BASED SOCIAL ACTION:

I have already hinted at some of the threats under 'weaknesses' in a different way. The greatest threat of this approach is that it can become another form of relief and rehabilitation. This happens when the emphasis is on primary or basic needs alone. But when we consider the ongoing support and sustenance of a community, there are problems. The related problem is that CASA intervenes only when there is a felt need. But in fact needs of life cannot be expressed also. It should not wait for some needs to arise. It is a kind of a negative approach to people and their total life and livelihood.

Another serious threat is that this methodology does not view the poor as active agents or subjects who must make their own choice to develop and grow. They are seen as victims who need help. They are objects to be manipulated and engineered. The fact is that their needs cannot be addressed authentically without considering their rights, their entitlements. The issue of power and structural injustice become paramount in this context. De-politicalisation of poverty is not possible. There is no neutral ground for doing social action.

The need-based action, as practiced and promoted in the seventies and the eighties, did not address those larger, macro-issues. On the contrary, it was reinforcing the status quo in its own way. It did not challenge the existing oppressive economic system in particular. Precisely, for this reason, CASA saw the urgent need to go beyond this need-based approach. It realized its limitations by the end of eighties. It moved rapidly to a new methodology which I will consider in the next chapter.

CONCLUSION:

In this chapter, I have briefly examined and evaluated the Need-based philosophy and practice from the early seventies. In this study, I have discovered that this is a distinct approach, different from but in continuity with relief and rehabilitation. It was an attempt to focus on specific communities, educating them, organizing them and raising their social consciousness. Such a process of social action helped the people to bring about necessary changes within their own community, responding to specific needs. It is definitively communitarian in character and function. There was no attempt to impose on them any predetermined way of thinking and acting. It was contextual and indigenous to the people.

This particular kind of social action enabled the communities to realize their own underdevelopment and therefore, work for more development. Originally, it was focused on the primary needs as in the situation of drought, floods, earthquake and such others. In this process of community organization, CASA began to nurture and provide logistic support for developing self-help groups (SHGs). This was an attempt to tap their own indigenous resources, both men (women) and materials. Time, talents and energy were harnessed for this development.

This approach of CASA could be considered as a slow but sure transition from doing 'charity' towards justice and liberation. Thus this has close affinity to the work of relief and rehabilitation. There is both a convergence and divergence between the two modes of operation. The latter continued to operate within the framework of giving or doing something for the needy. At this stage, although they were trying to be self-reliant, if not self-sufficient, they had to depend on outside help to meet their urgent needs. They needed money, technical assistance, some machines and technology for their development. CASA was able to provide some of these, as in the case of *Tusanami* victims.

Finally, we could state that the first defining moment of CASA subscribed to the Chinese proverb, "If somebody comes to you for fish give him/ her fish". But the second defining moment subscribes to the second part of the proverb which states, "If you teach them how to fish, they will not come back". They would have developed their tools and skills to respond to the contingency of the situation. It was quite a step forward in those days.

IV

Issue-based Social Action: Third Defining Moment

Issue-based social action of CASA was initiated towards the end of the eighties. By that time, CASA was convinced that the need-based social action, as practiced and promoted in the seventies and the eighties, was inherently flawed. It was wrong and very limited both in terms of its understanding of needs as well as in terms of the solutions that it offered to the people. It operated basically within the micro-framework. There was a gradual realization that the micro issues have to be comprehended within the larger macro-context. In this chapter, I will try to understand and evaluate the real nature and function, the scope and character, the aims and objectives of this kind of social action. It is a definitive departure from the earlier stance. But it needs clarity and understanding. Conceptual clarity leads to proper or appropriate conduct. For our purpose in this study, I will again deal with a period of ten-year for this stage of social action – 1987 till 1997.

ISSUE-BASED THINKING IN THE 80s AND 90s:

Some so-called learned people think that the activists in particular and the Social Service Agencies in general, do not think and reflect. They indulge in thoughtless activism or mindless activism. But in fact, the warning was sounded in the eighteenth century, that theory without practice is empty. But practice without theory is blind. Later this adage came to be modified, "Thought without action is empty. But action

without thought is blind". Such an understanding brought into use the word PRAXIS, which literally means practice. But in fact, it is practice based on theory or thinking. This emphasis on praxis brought into use action-reflection-action. Thus authentic action demands reflection but authentic reflection must inevitably lead to action. There is a dynamic interface between the two.

As mentioned before that CASA is a learning organization, growing from truth to truth. It has always engaged in critical thinking about its action. This has been the character of action from its inception. Therefore, over last sixty years, it has convened Consultations, Seminars and Workshops to constantly and consistently reflect on its total life and work. There was a constant movement and growing in their thinking and learning, in their operation and strategy. This was evident at this juncture in their history.

The National Board of CASA was convened in May 1977, to consider the earlier recommendations about Training, Programmes and Resources. They emphasized that a systematic training should be given to CASA workers on "Christian Witness through Service". They encouraged people's movements and community organizations. CASA's programmes should include agricultural seeds, fertilizers, irrigations and such others. It should emphasize on preventive medicine. With regard to resources, it wanted to develop financial, personnel and food grain resources. But at the same time, it recommended the continuation of the PL 480. They did not see any contradiction among the decisions they had taken at that time. But on the whole, such a thinking paved the way towards issue-based action in the future.

World Council of Churches (WCC) sent a delegation in December 1977, visited the cyclone-affected areas in Andhra Pradesh and the work being done by CASA for the victims. Then they took time to meet the leaders of different churches and the CASA Director. They had discussed about the work of CASA in terms of three phases. The first phase had to do with Relief work like Canals, Field ditches, seeds and fertilizers. The second phase had to do with rehabilitation, which consisted of surveys and interviews of people, affected by natural or human-made disasters. It also had to do with reclamation of land. At that time, they encouraged CASA to enter into PHASE III which had to do with housing, employment and other kinds of development. By March 1978, CASA was keenly interested in the long-term development of the people. By the end of the fourth decade, CASA was exposed to the stark reality of India in general and Andhra Pradesh in particular.

The vast majority of the people affected by disasters are dalits, marginal and landless farmers or laborers. According to Bishop Aprem, their per capita income on an average was about Rs. 5 per day or Rs. 150 per month in 1978. On an average, a family consisted of five persons – husband, wife and three minor children. If the woman of the house managed to get a temporary job, the earning could not be more than Rs. 3 per day or Rs. 90 per month. These earnings adds up to about Rs. 240 per month, depending on their combined income for thirty days. That was the existential reality CASA was confronted with. By that time, they had discovered that the literacy rate was bout 40% among men and only 5% among women. The quality of their lives was appalling, without skills, proper tools, potable water, roads and such others. The CASA survey revealed the reality in a particular State in India – environmental, socio-economic and vocational issues. Such a predicament prompted CASA to move towards greater deeds. The Survey was an eye-opener.

The First Forward Plan was drawn up in the eighties. It became the functional document of CASA. It talked about “social distribution, status, power and resources.” It defined development as an endeavor to establish a society which promoted human welfare and social justice. Towards the end of the eighties and the beginning of the nineties, CASA was talking about “People’s movement” and “the transformation of communities through empowerment.” The emphasis was not on projects but the process of change and transformation, taking up local issues from a macro-perspective. Human resource development and networking became important for this approach. And that became the thrust of the Second Forward Plan of the nineties.

The Second Forward Plan of the 90s emphasized the fact that development cannot be thrust from outside. It must be a process generating from within the community. People can develop and grow by working for themselves. One documentation clearly states,

The Core Programme of CASA (direct intervention) initiated in the 80s initially focused on building and strengthening Community Based Organizations (CBOs) of the marginalized sections. These organizations are the pivots for addressing issues affecting the life of the reference communities through a process-oriented approach and are owned and managed by the community itself. In addition to organizing and mobilizing, the thrust was also on building capacities of the poor in analyzing the causes of their deprivation, issue identification and prioritization and building required skills

in planning, implementation, monitoring review and evaluation of the planned activities amongst others.

ISSUE-BASED ACTION FROM THE END OF THE 80s:

The Southern Zone office of CASA in Chennai received a request from Kanyakumari Diocese of the Church of South India. Many members of the diocese had to pawn their Palm trees due to financial problems. The Palm trees were their sole means of sustenance. The money-lenders of the place would charge an exorbitant amount as interest. CASA was requested to intervene in the situation and save the people and the Palm trees. In the mean time, the Tamil Nadu government had already passed an ordinance, the Debt Relief Act in December 1979, providing relief to the debtors. The Southern Zone of CASA procured a copy of the Act which was in English. They translated it into Tamil and with the help of student volunteers, educated the people about the various provisions of the Act. That is how CASA responded to a critical issue, making people aware of the government Act.

Social Education Programme (SEP) and the Parliament to the People Programme (PPP) enabled the people to know and organize themselves for a particular issue. In the early nineties, Kashipur village in Orissa, was not dependant on agriculture for its survival. Many of the villagers worked in spinning mill nearby. But they did not receive the minimum wage stipulated by the government. They were receiving Rs. 8 instead of Rs. 14 as the government had stipulated. CASA entered the village, educated the people and mobilized them to demand the minimum wage. Strikes and negotiations followed. Ultimately, the mill management and the labourers came to an understanding.

This issue-based methodology included capacity building. This was an attempt to motivate people to use their own critical judgment, initiative and creativity. In this context, Advocacy and Awareness-building became very significant. Information was not enough but a proper interpretation of it brought about transformation. Awareness leads to action. Interpretation of the information involved value-orientation. Values like equality, dignity and justice became important. The next step was to build their competence in terms of tools and skills. This educational process on issues happened through folk songs, street theaters, drawings and paintings. Thus development became a participatory process of communities transforming. This is the crux of the People's Action for Transformation (PAT).

For this purpose, CASA developed Resource Centres in the communities to disseminate information and for mutual sharing of experience. This was a people-centred and people-controlled centre which allowed space for planning, organizing and empowering. Those Resource Centres acquired a lot of information about their community through stories, surveys, photos and others. In the process, the people of the community became the willing participants for social change. In this work, CASA soon realized that its staff has to be trained, develop special skills and mobilize resources. For this purpose, CASA initiated a programme of Organizational Development (OD) and Human Potential Development (HPD) from the beginning of the 90s. The Organizational Development was a systematic analysis and assessment of CASA's strengths and weaknesses in relation to the environment in which it had to function. It was an opportunity to examine and evaluate CASA's structure, perspectives, strategies, objectives, and the occupational relationship in terms of supervisor-subordinate relationship.

Human Potential Development (HPD) was designed to develop the competence and commitment of CASA's own staff. This was an attempt to equip the staff members with new tools and skills necessary to deal with issue-based approach. It was preparing them to play their rightful role in that changing scenario. This work was done in partnership with the Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA), a Delhi-based non-governmental organization. Later, the Jesuit-run Xavier Labor Research Institute (XLRI), Jamshedpur, Indian Institute of Management (IIM), Ahmedabad and the National Institute of Rural Development (NIRD), Hyderabad, helped with this programme. Such specialized Centres enabled CASA to deal with the burning issues of the time.

Human Potential Development (HPD) programmes were organized at three levels – National, Zonal and at the grassroots level. Basically, it had three distinct characteristics. Firstly, it commenced with the Training of Trainers (TOT). This was an effort to enhance the 'facilitating capacity' of the selected staff of CASA. They, in turn, took the responsibility to train others at different levels. Secondly, under the HPD Programme, Training of Trainers (TOT) was introduced. This was to impart to the selected CASA staff, the managerial skills and tools necessary to deal with the management issues pertaining the organization. Thirdly, the Training of Community Workers (TOC) was initiated to inculcate in the community workers the necessary knowledge and strategy to deal with issues at the grassroots, ground level.

Human Potential Development programmes and the Organizational Development programmes, together, cumulatively, were enormously beneficial to the CASA staff and the communities they served. Such programmes deepened and strengthened the total life and work of CASA at that point in history. The work goes on. In and through this action-reflection-action process, CASA was able to identify and deal with wider issues that affected the nation as a whole and the referral communities in particular. Earlier, they were confronted with the issues of Untouchability, illiteracy and superstition in the communities they worked. They viewed them as isolated phenomenon. But with the dawn of issue-based thrust, they began to look at them from a wider horizon of understanding. The people were helped to look at them from a wider perspective and then try to deal with them. They began to realize that such issues can be dealt with in different ways as the above two examples suggested. I can give two more examples from the past which show the value and veracity of issue-based philosophy.

During the nineties, the government initiated a Constitutional approach to the subjugation and subordination of women in India. The 73rd and the 74th Constitutional Amendments were aimed at the decentralization of the decision-making process in the country. They were eager to strengthen and enrich the *Panchayat* system. It was an attempt at the devolution of power to the people. According to those Amendments, one-third of the seats in the *Panchayat* were reserved for women in planning, implementation and administration at the local level. Obviously, those Amendments gave a boost to the morale of the women in India.

CASA took full advantage of those Amendments. Advocacy of women's empowerment became compulsory. They wanted the women of the communities to participate fully in the decision-making process at the local level. For CASA, empowerment of women meant redistribution of power and access to resources. They actively engaged in sensitizing women about their rights and responsibilities at the *Panchayat* level. CASA wanted them to be fully assimilated into the new *Panchayat* culture in the villages.

In addition to the active participation of women in the *Panchayat* system, CASA also promoted the formation of *Mahila Mandals*. In such forums, the women were able to deliberate on issues that affected their lives. Mr. Titus George reports about such *Mandals* in the Mukhed and Billoli taluks of Nanded districts of Maharashtra. Due to heavy rain the standing crops were destroyed in those taluks. The *Mahila*

Mandals got together and formed an Action Committee. They discussed the issue and formulated a plan of action. They sent a petition to the government to purchase the germinated grain at Rs. 0.50 per kilogram and make available edible *jowar* at the same price. They also requested the government to rebuild their houses and provide relief to the people. When the government did not entertain their petition, the women from Mukhed mobilized about four thousand people (4,000) to participate in a peaceful demonstration. The local MLA was involved. As a result, the government sanctioned Rs. 45 lakhs. CASA played an important role in this demonstration, which took place on 15th November 1995, through its Resource Centre. It facilitated the networking and dissemination of information.

The concept of networking was very beneficial particularly when CASA wanted to have an access to remote villages of Southern and Western Rajasthan. This spirit of partnership gave birth to the Rajasthan Development Project in the early nineties. The project is a network of 13 regional non-governmental organizations. This enabled CASA and others to reach about four thousand (4,000) families, spread around 40 villages. The issues of environment and better living conditions were paramount. It is reported that a village, Simili, was one of the early projects of CASA. Simili is about 20 kilometres from Udaipur and two kilometers from the main road. The villagers could not depend entirely on agriculture as only one crop was possible in a year and that also depended on adequate water for irrigation.

The villagers in Simili, therefore, were engaged in brewing and selling country liquor. The police was aware of the situation and the villagers lived in constant fear of police raids. But people were resigned to their lot and thought that nothing could be done to alter the situation. At that juncture, Rajasthan Development Project intervened and began to inculcate in the people mutual trust and thereby established a good rapport with the villagers. They began to discuss together their common issues and problems. Women came out of their closet and began to participate actively, identifying common issues, working out strategies for action. They began to talk about *their* land, availability of water and of course about the brewing and *selling* of liquor. This consciousness-raising process helped the villagers to find their own resources for development. They began to deepen the existing wells, improve their agricultural land and plant trees on the slopes. As a result their living condition improved considerably. They were not dependent on liquor industry. Electricity and roads were provided. They began to

have frequent village meetings at the newly-built Community Centres. Above all, their confidence-level soared. They began to experience a new sense of dignity and hope.

The four examples that I have narrated, explicitly demonstrate the nature and content of the issue-based thinking and action. In Kanyakumari, CASA made good use of the existing ACT about debt cancellation. It also shows the structural nature of poverty in India. CASA was able to educate the people and make them aware of the situation. Similarly, the example of Kashipur in Orissa, indicates a proper use of a government ACT. It highlights two distinct issues. Firstly, it shows that the government may turn a Bill into an Act but it usually fails to convert an Act into an action, which will benefit the needy and the disadvantaged. The significant role and responsibility of a non-governmental organization becomes important particularly, at the level of implementation. Secondly, it is an evidence of the power of the private sector to flout the law of the land. The Minimum Wage Act was not implemented and the villagers had to be satisfied with less than the minimum. Such is the condition of our people, who are at the 'mercy' of the higher-ups!

The third example is very special for various reasons. Firstly, the legislative Amendments of the Constitution enabled the women to exercise public-political power. The law of the land enhanced their position and prestige at the grassroots level. Secondly, the strengthening of the *Panchayat* system makes the India Democracy vibrant and vital. Democracy, in the final analysis, must mean decentralization and devolution. This was a great step forward. The most important lesson of this incident is that the empowered women in Maharashtra, used their power to mobilize and organize a movement against government apathy and insensitivity. It shows what ordinary people could do if they have the will and determination to bring about change in their own community. It was a triumph for the issue-based approach of CASA.

The fourth example of the intervention of Rajasthan Development project, similarly, endorses and strengthens the process of development. According to this example, like others, development is not a project, which is predetermined and out of context. It is a process of involvement and identification. Firstly, if an organization genuinely is interested in a community, it must get involved. It is only through direct, open involvement, they will begin to identify the issues affecting the community. Then only, together with the people, begin to evolve a strategy of action to bring about much-needed change. CASA's

conscientisation process, along with the other NGOs worked. The villagers began to realize for themselves what are the real issues at stake and what they could do to improve the situation. They learnt to listen and learn from each other in the village. They came to an understanding of their common predicament. The problem was not fully solved but it was mitigated to a great extent. Such is the nature of the issue-based methodology. Now, I will evaluate it in terms of its strengths / merits, weaknesses, opportunities and threats / dangers.

STRENGTHS/ MERITS OF ISSUE-BASED SOCIAL ACTION:

Compared to the two previous perspectives of social action, this defining moment could be considered as an advance both in theory and practice. Relief work was done in the context of disasters and catastrophes like during the Partition of India, floods, cyclone, earthquake and such others. Fundamentally, it dealt with the symptoms of an ongoing predicament of the people. Immediate relief in terms of food, clothing and shelter are helpful in a given situation. But it cannot and does not respond to the aftermath of disasters. It was a temporary measure to ameliorate the immediate suffering of the people in terms of hunger and thirst, nakedness and homelessness. Need-based social action was basically confined to primary needs but at the same time, trying to ascertain the secondary needs of a community. It conceived of needs mainly in terms of economic development, which of course is urgent and necessary. But a human being is a conglomerate of body-mind-spirit. They are inseparable and consequently, involved in each other. Both relief and needs are negative in character and composition. Therefore, from the point of view of those two perspectives, issue-based approach is more positive and helpful in attempting to analyze and act in a community. Relief and needs understand the people in terms of problems. But issue is something that we can discuss and then decide a course of action.

Thirdly, related to the first two, issue-based thinking and action do not confine itself within the micro-framework of a society / community. It is an attempt to relate and integrate the micro and the macro. Micro-macro belongs together. This linkage or connectivity is vitally crucial for understanding the total socio-economic-political reality of the world in general and India in particular. Issue of health and education became very important in addition to the other material-physical issues of food, water, clothing and housing. The issue of employment was also raised in different situations. Thus, this model goes much beyond what is known as rehabilitation.

Fourthly, the strength of this methodology is in terms of the significant strategies adopted to fulfill the goal. CASA articulated its CORE programme from this perspective. For this purpose, it began or organize and mobilize Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), which assumed its own responsibility. So it was decisively people-based and people-oriented. It is important to repeat that for CASA 'people' means the *adivasis*, *dalits*, women and children. Those CBOs were established for a purpose – to bring about much-needed change around selected issues. This process of change was called People's Action for Transformation (PAT). Much of CASA's programmes are through PAT.

Fifthly, CASA promoted several instruments to approximate to the issue-based typology. It organized the CBOs on the basis of certain definite aims and objectives. They inculcated in the people the basic culture of thinking through on issue. They developed tools and skills for bringing about changes in the community. Thus Capacity-Building was the aim or the goal of this process. The capacity-building was done through Social Education Programmes (SEP) and the Parliament to the People Programmes (PPP). Those several instruments of issue-based social action were immensely beneficial to the participants and the communities at large. They began to realize the real issues affecting their lives and livelihood. Such educational and pedagogical process awakened the people to the reality in and around them.

Sixthly, this process enabled the people to engage in ADVOCACY of specific key issues which needed resolution. They learnt to listen to each other and thereby learn from each other. Awareness-building was an achievement of CASA at that point in history. VALUE-ORIENTATION or value education was part and parcel of this process. The people began to acknowledge and appreciate the values of equality and justice, freedom and fair-play.

Seventhly, another strength of this mode of discourse and deed, was the RESOURCE CENTRES in their respective communities. They began to value posters and pictures, photos and stories for social education. They began to discover resources within their own community which they had never thought of before. It was an eye-opener. Such basic information helped them to plan, organize and empower the whole community. People at the grassroots, ground level, were truly conscientised.

Eighthly, this slow but sure educational process, gave the people a profound sense of dignity and equality, a sense of confidence and reliance on their own potential and power. It was a moment of enlightenment and engagement. The women in particular, were enormously benefited.

They had been dependent and subservient for centuries. They came forward voluntarily to stand side by side with their men to deal with issues that were common to all. They could not and did not stand apart at that moment of action.

WEAKNESS OF ISSUE-BASED SOCIAL ACTION:

As with relief and need-based approach, issue-based theory and practice have their inherent as well as external limitations. It does not go far enough. It includes relief and rehabilitation and need-based perspective but goes beyond in terms of issues, relating self-consciously the micro to the macro world. But that itself poses a problem in terms of analysis and evaluation, in terms of prioritizing and identifying the real issues that need to be tackled. Thus very often, even the fundamental issues are not critically dealt with. People persist in their preoccupation with parochial, communal issues.

Secondly, related to the first, the micro-macro connection are not properly made. This larger horizon of understanding does not substantially impinge on their life and action. Macro-world remains distant, remote and vague. It is good that CASA made use of the several institutions like the Xavier Labor Research Institute, Jamshedpur, Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad and the National Institute of Rural Development. But a particular facilitator in a particular context and time must know how to use that knowledge and experience. He /She must be able to translate those concepts and ideas for the purpose of a given community. This has been one of the weaknesses of the programme. This training programme must be ongoing, with occasional refresher courses that will update the knowledge of the staff concerned. That will make their input relevant and meaningful in a particular community.

Thirdly, the issue-based approach leaves the system as it is. It cannot bring about structural changes necessary for the uplift of the people. Issues are raised and related to the wider issues but the structure of injustice is not confronted. This methodology has yielded some good results in some separate situations as in Kanyakumari, in some villages in Maharashtra, Orissa and Rajasthan. But on the whole the macro-world is not disturbed or destabilized. Precisely for this reason, CASA in its wisdom and experience, saw the need of a paradigm shift. This was a valuable input in the nineties.

One of the serious dilemmas of CASA is to reckon with the changing reality. While felicitating the Prime Minister of Denmark, who was on a visit to India, on 14th September 1995, the Director had emphasized "that the most important element of CASA's commitment to society

was relief intervention during disasters". Earlier, Bishop Aprem, in the last chapter of his book on CASA, had raised the issue of the new directions. He had asked, "Has CASA succeeded in the development thrust?" That question was asked after four decades of its life and work. Now the question needs to be asked again in the context of its diamond jubilee. At this point, the question is whether the issue-based philosophy is conducive towards the liberation of the *adivasis, dalits*, women and children. This kind of thinking and action was still confined to social service rather than social justice. Surely, there was an urgent need for change.

The related question is whether all the staff, particularly the Field-workers of CASA, are totally convinced of the need and nature of the changing paradigms. Some of them are not fully equipped to impart this new teaching on development. The mind-set has not changed for them. They want to hang on to the past. Zonal offices have much work to do on this front. Training of trainers needs to be rejuvenated for some of the new comers in particular. They have to be convinced and committed themselves before they are able to transmit the new way of thinking and doing. They must clearly comprehend the value and validity of such an approach to development. CASA has the resources and the infrastructure to deal with this lacunae. This renewed pedagogical process will strengthen and deepen their understanding and a proper use of this philosophy.

OPPORTUNITIES / CHALLENGES OF ISSUE-BASED SOCIAL ACTION:

As mentioned before, very often weaknesses can be changed into opportunities or challenges. It is a blessing in disguise. This issue-based model is a process and not a project and consequently, it is in motion. It is not 'doing' or being a 'doer' or a giver. It is not even providing or enabling but essentially facilitating a process to identify local issues from a larger, wider world. The idea is to think globally but act locally. It is an attempt to link up, identify and then involve. It is an opportunity to be with people locally, at the grassroots level, to come in touch with the ground reality.

Some of the weaknesses that I have mentioned in the foregoing section, can be overcome with will and determination. Over the years, CASA has built up excellent infrastructures to implement this issue-based social action. Much of the Core programme depended on the functioning of those infrastructures. People's Action for Transformation (PAT) could be effectively promoted through Social Education Programme

(SEP) and the Parliament to People (PPP). Such an action made CASA more an enabler rather than an initiator of projects. By the end of the 90s, Advocacy and lobbying became potent instruments for promoting gender justice and environmental sustainability. Human potentials were discovered through Resource Centres, which helped them to plan and organize. In this process, Capacity building became a real possibility. Thus plethora of programmes offered a golden opportunity both for the workers and the communities to develop their tools and skills, which would help them to engage in vigorous social action. I have mentioned some of the results of such training and experience. Some learnt faster than the others. Some were willing to take full advantage of the opportunities offered by CASA. Consequently, some benefited from this issue-based social action but some others did not. But on the whole, it was a successful venture.

The real breakthrough came through TOT, TOM, TOC. Such rigorous training programmes were a challenge for a lot of people particularly, for those who were not used to this kind of pedagogy. This kind of a training process was both necessary and important for the organization and the community. This exposed them to various possibilities. One significant outcome of this total programme was the reversal of the decision-making process. Previously, decisions were taken at the top and they were supposed to percolate down to the grassroots. But this whole educational process enabled the people to become the active agents of change and not the beneficiaries of change. The subject-object dichotomy disappeared by the time of the issue-based action. This changed the whole attitude and outlook of the people particularly, the *adivasis*, the *dalits*, the women and children. This was both an opportunity and a challenge both for the people and the organization. Some were pleasantly surprised by the overall outcome. CASA was well on its way to decentralization, devolution and democratization of the programme. There was a two-way flow of information. Monitoring cells were set up both at the National and the Zonal levels to ensure this flow of information. This was congenial to the overall health and happiness of the organization and the people with whom they were working. It was a challenge to work together for a common cause. It helped the organization to go ahead with faith and hope.

DANGERS / THREATS OF ISSUE-BASED SOCIAL ACTION:

I have already stated some of the possible dangers in the form of weaknesses. The work of relief is to satisfy the immediate needs of the people, who are mainly affected by some disasters. The need-

based approach is to work with a referral community. The issue-based thinking is to identify local issues in the light of the larger interests and concerns. It is an attempt to look beyond and behind a particular issue affecting that specific community. In the process of deliberation, there is a danger at reification that is making an issue too concrete when it is relative to the community. It cannot have finality or absoluteness from the wider perspective. But on the other hand there is also the danger of turning an issue into an abstraction, when it loses its rootedness and reality. Micro to macro and then back to micro is a difficult process. This circular movement needs to be dealt with carefully. We cannot suddenly jump to conclusions. It can either confuse or dilute the issue at hand. This danger needs to be avoided.

There is also the danger of being satisfied or being complacent about this position. It certainly gives a false sense of satisfaction as a lot of things had been done under this rubric. Usually, quite a number of non-governmental organizations are happy with this model as it responds very well to the situation. A lot of people do not see the need to go beyond this horizon of understanding and doing. The results are quite visible and tangible. It can be measured to a great extent as I have shown. But it cannot have finality or absoluteness. Therefore, CASA is to be congratulated for its willingness to go beyond and seek to do social work on the basis of another paradigm. It is indeed a listening-learning organization and consequently, it continues to be relevant and dynamic after sixty years of active service to the nation. Its contributions cannot be minimized.

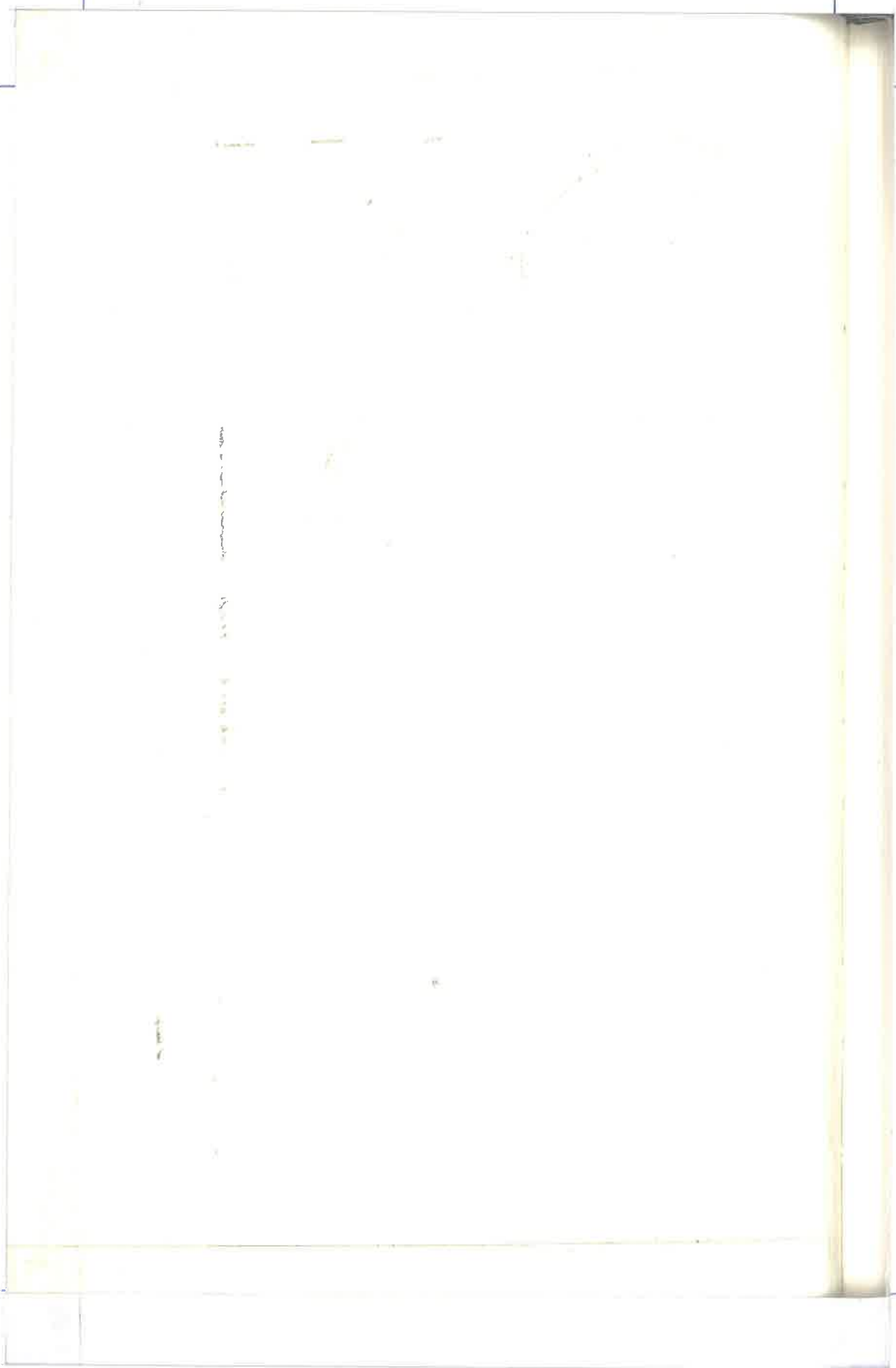
Another danger that faces this organization like others, is that it may begin a programme very well but it cannot sustain the initial impetus and enthusiasm. It may become mechanical and repetitive. This can happen, not only with this particular mode of discourse and deed but certainly with the previous ones. There must be an element of passion involved in this professionalism. The work must be done with the head, the hands as well as the heart. Heartless work is as bad as headless work. Human being is a unity of thinking, feeling and willing. Social action needs all these three in equal measure. After sixty years, inertia or lethargy could set in, robbing the organization of its vigor and vitality. This is a danger for any human organization. There must be an inner mechanism to rejuvenate and reinvent itself all the time. CASA had already done this as it moved subsequently from relief to rehabilitation to need-based to issue-based. This definitive shift is a clear sign of hope. The organization is alive and well.

CONCLUSION:

In this chapter, I have briefly looked at the nature and function of the issue-based social action, as undertaken by CASA from about 1987 till 1997. This decade of active work has demonstrated the value and veracity of this approach. It is an advance from the past action of relief, rehabilitation and the need-based orientation. It helped the organization to expand the scope and character of social action in independent India. This issue-based approach opened up new vista. It introduced new ways of approaching development work. This shift was significant and timely. It opened the minds and hearts of the people concerned.

In concrete terms, the value of this typology, was the development of several instruments that would support, sustain and strengthen the Core Programmes of CASA. For this purpose from the early nineties, they introduced PAT, PPP, SEP, Capacity Building and Resource Centres in the many communities they were working. All the four Zonal offices were keen to develop those infrastructures. In this process, the people and the communities at large were highly conscientised and motivated. In fact, they became the arbiters of their own destiny. They were not dependent, waiting for CASA to give. The movement from project-orientation to a process-orientation has proved a boon to the organization. CASA is not essentially, the 'giver' or the provider or even the initiators but effectively became the enablers or facilitators. The people themselves did the work of planning, organizing and implementing. Surely, that is a great step forward. They were beginning to understand the larger issues that not only affected their communities but other communities also.

This was a step in the right direction particularly, in terms of value-orientation. This is necessary and urgent in the world in which we live. Vision and values, high ideas and ideals shape and determine civilizations and cultures. Civilizations rise and fall depending on their sense of values. What is true about civilizations and cultures is true about the life and work of any organization. How much and to what extent their action is governed by values? CASA has chosen the right path. It has formulated all its programmes on the basis of values. They have taken cognizance of the fundamental values of people, of communities, of community-formation and transformation. Even its TOM-TOT-TOC are value-based. They want to inculcate in the people the value of self-respect, dignity and confidence. This augurs well for the future of CASA.



V

Rights-based Action: Fourth Defining Moment

In last three chapters, I have closely examined and evaluated three distinct policy decisions of CASA's life and work. Those policy decisions were converted into various programmes for the uplift of the people particularly, the *adivasis*, *dalits*, women, children and the other disadvantaged people. Thus the several programmes were operationalized in the many villages of India. By about the middle of the 90s, CASA began to articulate a different kind of policy decision, which was in continuity with but distinct from the three models of the past. This was the Rights-based social action. It was the fourth defining moment of the history of CASA. In this chapter, I hope to look at the concept and the character of this different category of thinking and doing. Towards the end of the chapter, I will attempt to evaluate it, both at the conceptual and practical level.

FORMULATION OF RIGHTS-BASED ORIENTATION:

Major J. K. Michael, the Director of CASA, in the Annual Report for 1995-96, had emphasized that over the years CASA's understanding of development has undergone considerable changes. It is a dynamic organization, always defining and redefining development in the context of the changing societal realities and shifting priorities in the socio-economic sphere of life and living. CASA was beginning to talk about basic rights of the people. The language was changing and the

concomitant conduct. The idea was to sensitize the grassroots on their rights. It was changing its role from being a mere provider to an enabler to a facilitator. This shift brought about drastic changes to the development objectives, priorities, problems and possibilities. By the end of the 90s, CASA was beginning to conceive of development as a process and not a project – a process to be owned by the people themselves. For this reason, advocacy and lobbying were important tools of development. In and through this process of participation of the people, empowerment was becoming a live, possibility. CASA was thinking of people-centred and people-oriented policy and programme. In a booklet issued on the occasion of its Golden Jubilee, it was rightly affirmed,

... it was realized that there needs to be a shift in the strategy, focusing on the process rather than project approach and to identify, create, facilitate and strengthen collective, participatory interventions promoting networks, forums, coalitions and other forms of formal and informal expressions for creating people's movement.

Thus CASA was ready for a leap of faith and action. They began to talk of Rights-based approach and intervention. But the actual formulation of this historic change came only in 2006. It is entitled, RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH IN CASA: UNDERSTANDING & INTEGRATION STRATEGIES. The dawn of the new millennium ushered in this new methodology. It was considered as "the key instrument for addressing poverty, inequality and injustice and the need for its integration in the work of empowering the poor." It was a way to strengthen the strategy for intensive long term micro and macro action in the right mode. This booklet states that the "trickle-down" theory proved to be wrong and consequently, the government and the NGOs shifted, directly targeting poverty and addressing the basic needs of the people like food, water, shelter, education and health, through service delivery. That was the time of participatory decision-making. Local culture, knowledge and traditions came to be respected and valued. The late nineties saw the strengthening of people-centred development, building the "social capital" of the people. The Forward Plan of the 90s emphasised on People's Action for Transformation (PAT). By the end of the 90s, 33 Core Programme areas were created, which facilitated the collective action around prioritized issues. The RBA discourse became an imperative in the context of the alarming rise of both absolute and relative poverty, aggravating the issue of inequality in the country. Related to production, the issue of distribution or redistribution became paramount. At this

critical juncture, it was stated that depoliticization of poverty is not possible or tenable.

This analysis of the economic situation in India made the thinking people realize that one cannot separate basic needs from basic rights. Thus it was stated,

There is no neutral ground, no no-man's land in the process of development. The choice is thus a stark one: either play the role (unwittingly or otherwise) of reinforcing those social relations that reproduce impoverishment, injustice and conflict. Or make the choice to play a positive role in supporting those processes in society that will overturn those social relations.

Then the document goes on to define and describe RIGHTS as well as RIGHTS-BASED approach. According to it, Human Rights are inalienable and inherent in the being of the human. For others, Rights are legitimate claims that give rise to corresponding obligations – Rights and Duties go together. Few scholars define Rights as “justifiable claim, on legal and moral grounds, to have or obtain something or act in a certain way.” Rights are entitlements, which are backed by legal or moral principles. It must be realized that rights are not only based on legal objectives but also on ethical/moral obligations. The write-up acknowledges the origin of Human Rights in several international covenants and treaties. This language has been there for a long time.

After this description of rights, the CASA document goes on to distinguish between individual and social or civil and political rights like freedom of speech, of assembly, of religion. There is an ongoing debate between Civil and Political Rights (CPR) and Economic and Social Rights (ESR). This is a significant distinction, which is meaningful and relevant for an organisation like CASA. It takes note of the fact even in the Indian Constitution, most ESRs are listed in the Directive Principles of State Policy. This clearly means that they are ‘aspirational’ and not legally enforceable. Most of the enforceable rights are the CPRs. This is the crux of the issue. For this reason, many advocates of human rights consider them to be indivisible. This means that there cannot be a disjunction between CPR and ESR.

This indivisibility of rights leads us to the position that we should not only theories about it, reducing it to legal rights and making it static. In fact, it is a matter of struggle, particularly in a situation like India. Therefore, according to the CASA document,

... it is akin to righteousness rather than right. Seen as a means of struggle, right is therefore not a standard granted as charity from above, but a standard-bearer around which people rally for the struggle from below. Role of the right-based approach in promotion of human rights is that of extending solidarity.

This means that rights put values and politics at the very heart of development practice. It brings ethical and moral dimensions to development work. Consequently, this also means that it has to do with power and obligations of those who are involved on both sides. It demands mutual responsibility and accountability. Rights-based methodology calls for participation, advocacy and mobilization of the people particularly the *adivasis*, *dalits*, women and children. Thus the focus shifts from assessing the needs of beneficiaries or the choices of customers or clients to foster citizens who can claim their rights and obligation-holders to honour their responsibilities. Positively, it means that it has the potential to achieve a transformation of power-relations among the various development actors. The document goes on to assert,

The organizational vision for a right-based approach much be interrogated for the extent to which it enables those whose lives are affected the most, to articulate their priorities and claim genuine accountability from development agencies, and also the extent to which the agencies become critically self-aware and address their inherent power inequalities in their interaction with those people.

With this understanding of this particular perspective on development, CASA agreed to provide direct and indirect support to processes that seek to combat or overcome the sources that produce or reproduce inequality and injustice, and which lead to restoration of rights to groups that have been historically and systematically deprived of them. This would require CASA, in active partnership with the referral community, to identify their chronic and systematic denial of rights, their sources and causes, conscientise them about their oppressed condition and then organise and mobilise them to resist, combat and seek to overcome such a situation.

This perspective began to be used to strengthen the existing programmes of CASA. In this process of 'revisiting' the programmes, there was a "reframing of issues" and identification of "additional issues", involving grave and chronic injustice. The document en-numerates

the different stages of thinking in terms of the extent of the denial of rights of the historically disadvantaged, communities of people, making them completely vulnerable, voiceless and powerless. It also took into consideration the support received by such people from other Non-governmental and Civil Society Organisations. At that time, CASA was dealing with the issue of "contiguous area" of operation and the "issue-based up-scaling". Such a radical shift in emphasis required critical mass mobilisation, networking and alliance-building, not only with partners but with other like-minded groups/organisations, capacity-building of the staff and the communities, policy and implementation analysis, and the structural changes within CASA. For those purposes, CASA looked forward to the cooperation of Human Rights Law Network (HRLN), Commonwealth Human Rights Initiatives (CHRI). The document affirmed,

Attaining justice and securing rights of individuals or communities is a continuous struggle in which CASA will play a proactive role. CASA believes in non-violent and peaceful mode of work and in its right-based work, it will try to pursue the same. However, CASA also believes that in this struggle, situations of conflict, violence, intimidation and legal complications are very obvious, which may put the communities or the staff at risk.. it is ready to provide all sorts of legal, moral, medical and other organizational support to its stakeholders...

Such a statement clearly indicates CASA's total commitment to the disadvantaged people and the perspective. With this clear thinking, CASA launched its crusade for the *adivasis*, women, *dalits* and the affected minorities.

They particularly focused on the right to *jal, jungle, jamin* and *janwar*, which have become marketable commodities. This means that CASA was determined to go much beyond food, water, clothing and shelter. It was eager to promote health, education and employment. This work involved the whole socio-economic-political life of the people at the grassroots level, without any bias or prejudice or discrimination. Upto this point, I have defined and described the Rights-based philosophy of action. In the following pages, I will attempt to be more specific in terms of aims and objectives and the operational strategies.

I have already repeated the real story of the Debt Relief programme of CASA as recorded by Titus George. I will repeat another story from his writing. These are worth repeating and remembering. CASA had

already discovered that several laws had been enacted by the government such as Minimum Wages Act, Anti Dowry Act, Land Tenancy Act, and of course the Debt Relief Act. But information about those Acts had not reached the people. Non-accessibility of information had resulted in the ignorance about their entitlements. Parliament to the People Programme (PPP) and the Social Education Programme (SEP) in all the Zones began to disseminate information about those Acts by the 80s. Legislations about the Contract Labour Act and the Fair Rent for Share Croppers Act made the people aware of their rights and privileges. Advocacy and lobbying helped the people to realize that development had to do with human rights, environmental sustainability and gender sensitivity. Such a social action facilitated the process of building pressure on groups in each community by the 90s. I have already mentioned about the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments, which reinforced the *Panchayati* system and the empowerment of women. That was the time when CASA was advocating food security for the people, not only as basic need but fundamentally as a human right issue. Now I will repeat the real story from the 90s.

Sirkali Taluk in Nagapattinam district, which was known as the "rice bowl" of Tamilnadu was experiencing social tension at that time. The agricultural labourers were trying to cope with agriculture farming. Some MNCs had established those farms all along the coastal regions of Tamilnadu with the connivance of the government. It had set up Marine Product Export Development Authority (MPEDA), which identified shrimp farming as a thrust area. Aqua-farming was supported by liberal loans and subsidies from the government and the World Bank. 1,00,000 acres of land were acquired for this purpose. They promised employment to the local people but they were not trained for it. The MNCs/TNCs brought workers from Taiwan and Thailand to do the job. Consequently, the local people were deprived and disillusioned. Moreover, this "rape and run industry" was destroying the eco-system of coastal Tamilnadu. They bulldozed the trees and the greenery and a large quantity of sea water was pumped on to the fields. The salinisation of the fields deprived the people of potable water and it affected the paddy cultivation in that region. Its annual yield was considerably reduced.

The Southern Zone of CASA was already active in Manigram and Perumthottam villages. Initially, they helped the villagers with relief materials and temporary shelters. But soon they realised that such a help cannot bring about a long-term solution. Social Action Committee in that area began to educate the people and provide moral support and expressed solidarity with the victims of aquaculture.

A veteran Gandhian leader, Jagannathan, was active in the area. CASA joined him and the local church leaders to form a coalition. They organized the people and staged protest demonstrations. A case was filed against them. First, it went to the High Court in Chennai and later to the Supreme Court. On 11th December, 1996, the Supreme Court ordered the destruction of all aqua farms in India. This is how CASA, with the help of others, waged a war against Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization (LPG) in a particular context in the 90s.

The Core Programme of CASA is oriented towards the Rights-based approach. It is being implemented in the four Zones of CASA. It is active in 3,545 villages in 1,450 Panchayats of 162 Blocks in 65 districts of thirteen (13) states of India.

THE GENERAL OBJECTIVES OF THE CORE PROGRAMME ARE:-

- » To facilitate a change process in the lives of the poor by creating opportunities to participate, influence and direct their development initiatives;
- » To strengthen community capacities by building confidence, problem solving capacities, resilience and skills among all stakeholders;
- » To increase self-reliance of the poor by strengthening their organisations in order to have access and control over the resources by collective and sustainable actions for its optimum use and management;
- » To strengthen community capacities in mitigation of disasters, building their livelihood support base, and assist them to play an active role in the process of self-government through Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs);
- » To promote gender inclusive initiatives in all the development actions;
- » To advocate for policy changes in favour of the poor and marginalized;
- » To review CASA's organizational strategies on a regular basis for reformulating/accommodating emerging strategic needs during the course of programme implementation.

The Core Programme of the 90s had three components, namely, Planning, Human Potential Development (HRD) and People's Action for Transformation (PAT).

THE OBJECTIVES OF PLANNING WERE:-

- » To enhance the understanding of the societal context of the referral communities through analysis and reflection, prioritization of problem and issues through the process of group discussions;

- » To facilitate the development of action plans of the referral community and their organizations at the village/cluster/PAT/state level on the basis of their articulated strategic needs and issues for collective action;
- » To continuously document and update the baseline data for additional information and conduct feasibility studies for effective programme implementation.

THE OBJECTIVES FOR HUMAN POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT (HRD):-

- » To enhance the capacities of referral groups and individuals in group management and Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (PME);
- » To increase the capacities of staff in facilitating the development process, Participatory Strategic Planning (PSP) and to make planning gender-sensitive;
- » To capacitate the capacities of Church representatives and partner organisations in facilitating people-centred development processes;
- » To develop the capacities of referral groups in addressing identified issues such as self-governance, food security, environmental degradation, human rights, gender justice and resource management at Local/Grassroot Level (GRL)/micro level;
- » To enhance the capacities related to networking, advocacy, PME, of referral groups and other stakeholders at different levels;
- » To build common understanding on development concepts and theory of change among the referral Community, partners (Church) and Voluntary Organisations (CVOs) and Community-based organizations (CBOs).

THE OBJECTIVES OF THE PEOPLE'S ACTION FOR TRANSFORMATION ARE:-

- » To develop and strengthen people's organizations and encourage community action around identified issues at the local level;
- » To organize forums and networks of People's organizations (POs), Non-Governmental organizations (NGOs) and institutions at macro levels to facilitate collective action on prioritized issues for policy changes in favour of the poor and the marginalized;
- » To increase access and control over local resources by the referral communities and promote their sustainable use and management for self-reliance and livelihood support;
- » To facilitate people's participation in strengthening institutions of self-governance;

- » To promote collective action towards gender justice and equity;
- » To promote self-sufficiency of Resource Centres to maintain organizations networks and sustain self-reliant people's movement.

FOLLOWING STRATEGIES WERE FORMULATED:-

1. Community organizations: Forming, strengthening and sustaining the activities of people's organizations and enabling them to form democratic federations to serve as vehicles for carrying forward the development activities;
2. Capacity-Building: Enhancing the capacity (awareness-knowledge-skill) of the leaders of people's organizations, in order to help them to take charge of the development process;
Creating opportunities for the churches to develop understanding of the holistic ministry in the contemporary context and capacitating leaders to play their role in social action;
3. Networking and Linkage: Enabling the people's organizations to analyze the issues deeply and facilitating people's movement around identified issues. Networking between People's organizations, Churches and like-minded agencies and cooperation and understanding among various partners, towards creating a macro base;
4. Capital generation: Promoting income generation activities among the people's organizations, to generate local resources towards sustaining their efforts, advocacy and lobbying.

In the first decade of the third millennium, CASA was convinced of the following features of the rights-based methodology:-

- » Ownership of the development process to the people (change from facilitation to ownership);
- » Value addition to the programme through strategic alliances and integration of relief and development;
- » Involvement of the broader civil society in development issues;
- » Strengthening democratic and just governance;
- » Building future leadership amongst church partners and others;
- » Challenging conventional thinking, i.e., keeping the poor, the sick, the hungry at the foreground;
- » Addressing not just the poor, but also the reasons for their poverty;
- » Amplifying the voice of the voiceless;

- » Focusing on gender mainstreaming and gender justice;
- » Initiate, intervene, inspire, inform, and influence, to be the philosophical base of CASA's intervention.

The same document went on to enumerate the following elements which are to be included under the rights-base thinking and actions:-

EMPOWERMENT: Preference is given to strategies for empowerment over charitable response; the emphasis is on the human person as the centre of the development process through organizations of civil society. The goal is to ensure people's power, capacity, capabilities and access needed to change their lives, control over resources, improve their own communities and influence their own destinies.

PARTICIPATION: The rights-based approach require a high degree of participation from communities, civil societies, minority, indigenous people, women and others.

NON-DISCRIMINATION: Particular attention to vulnerable groups like women, dalits, tribals, and the disadvantaged. Women and girls are among the first victims of discrimination. They are the most vulnerable and least empowered in society. The existing imbalances need to be addressed, e.g. between men and women, land owners and the landless, dalits and the upper castes and others.

ACCOUNTABILITY: The focus is on raising the levels of accountability in the development process by identifying the claim holders, i.e., the poor and the marginalized, and their entitlement and corresponding duty holders, i.e., those obligated to protect, promote and provide; simultaneously work towards bringing about adequate laws/policies/institutions, administrative procedures/protection and mechanisms to redress and respond to denial/violations, access to entitlements and control over natural resources.

LINKAGE TO RIGHTS: Not in agreement with policies/activities that have affected all violating rights; does not allow trade-offs between development and individual rights, e.g., health, education, housing and others.

On the basis of these programmatic policies, CASA decided to act in the following thrust areas:-

1. Sustainable Livelihood and Local Self-Governance (including land, water and environment). CASA holds that right to life is the very basis for all rights. Right to livelihood, right to clean water, right to clean environment are linked up with the right to life. The thrust is on generating deeper understanding on prioritized issues, policy advocacy at various levels, capacity building of POs, strengthening of PRIs.

2. Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation calls for operationalization of the Participatory Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (PPME) system, institutionalization of PPME, impact assessment on process as well as projects on the withdrawal strategy of the programme area, support to POs on PME.
3. Perspective and Capacity Building and Peace Reconciliation initiatives are necessary for building potentials within the community to ensure sustainable livelihood and growth. The focus would be on Institution building, perspective building on focused issues, knowledge, skills, awareness building and facilitation skill development. Peace and reconciliation intervention would be underlying all capacity building initiatives.
4. Advocacy, Networking and Alliance Building calls for building networks / alliances around issues, confederation of networks, networking with like-minded Voluntary Development Organizations (VDOs) and their network and advocacy on issues like gender, food security, globalization and others.
5. Humanitarian Aid and Disaster Management: the basic aim is to develop a holistic perspective on disaster management and humanitarian response, integration, disaster preparedness in development thinking and action.
6. Research, Documentation and Communication and Resource Mobilization: focus would be on maintaining an information system, producing promotional materials, facilitating experiential learning, action and issue-based research, organizing symposium and dialogue and facilitate internal resource mobilization.

The following issues were identified Zone-wise:-

Zone	State	Issues
North	HP, MP, Chhattisgarh & Rajasthan	Drought, environmental degradation, health and hygiene, illiteracy, unemployment, local self-governance, economic insecurity, increasing pressure on agriculture, migration, food security, lack of alternative/additional income, drinking water.
East	Jharkhand, West Bengal & Orissa	Gender equality, environmental degradation, food and income security, illiteracy, Tribal self-governance and local self-governance, Tribal identity crisis

West	Maharashtra & Gujarat	Environmental degradation, decreasing crop yield, drinking water, disaster. Land encroachment by organized groups, health and sanitation, caste certificate, mono cultivation, issues related to forest produce, human rights, gender, local self-governance, migration, bribery, malnutrition, Tribal rights, marketing of agricultural produce and food security.
South	Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Kerala	Human rights, child work force, food security, health, family welfare, gender, pollution and diminishing forest coverage, bonded labour, panchayati raj, pro-rich government policies, illiteracy, drinking water, LPG, geographical domain building by NGOs, shift from food crop to cash crop, land agro economy to industrial economy, conversion of agricultural land to industrial land, unemployment, communalism, Tribal issues, social evils, unorganized labour issues.

I want to end this theoretical section on the RBA with a more specific articulation about its nature or character. The same document went on to assert,

Development is not economic growth but equitable distribution, enhancement of people's capacities and widening of their choices, it gives top priority to the elimination of poverty, integration of women into development process, self-reliance and self-determination of people and government and protection of the rights of disadvantaged communities. This calls for a rights-based approach towards empowerment and sustainability . . . A Rights-Based Approach to development is a conceptual framework for the process of human development that is normatively based on international human rights standards and operationally directed towards promoting and protecting human rights. . . The principles include equality and equity, accountability, empowerment, participation and sustainability.

RIGHTS-BASED SOCIAL ACTION OF CASA:

By 2004, CASA's Core Programme was implemented in 13 states all over India, through 33 PAT units from the four Zones. The programme area covered a population of 3,500,700 in 746,243 families, belonging to 4,671 villages, 2,183 *panchayats* in 290 *Mandals* of 77 districts. By 2007, the South Zone of CASA itself covered 11 PAT units in Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Kerala. They reached 5,47,161 families with a

population of 12,54,533 men and 12,16,290 women. It is interesting to note that they have not only formed People's organizations (POs), which became village *sangham's*, but institutionalized them, forging federations of labour, women and youth at Block / *Mandal* level and State level. Such federations act as "pressure groups" with a political outlook to exert pressure on immediate authorities at the village/panchayat / block/district as well as at the State levels. At present there are 853 village *sanghams* organized in the South Zone.

East Zone, which at present covers North East States of India, Orissa, Jharkhand and West Bengal, is actively engaged in social action from the RB perspective. The National Rural Employment Guarantee ACT (NREGA) was enacted on 2nd February 2006 covering 200 districts. East Zone has conducted various programmes with the active cooperation of partner NGOs. They have conducted seminars, workshops, rallies on this issue, helping the villagers to acquire job cards in places like Jamgoria, Purulia, Bankura, Hasimara and Malda. They did different kinds of work like roads, tanks, ponds, land leveling, check-dams construction, plantation of seedlings, social forestry, drainage, embankment, water harvesting structures and others. Similar kind of work was done under the NREGA scheme in Gumla, Sarnatoli, Taljhari and Dumka in Jharkhand. According to the data received, the following comments were noted:-

The people in the majority of villages were not familiar with *Gram Sansad*;

- » The *Gram Sansad* did not discuss the projects, which was supposed to be undertaken for the village under NREGA;
- » The participation of women in the *Gram Sansad* was low;
- » The cadres of the ruling political party filled up the job applications on behalf of the villagers;
- » WOMEN participation in the NREGA programme is below 33%;
- » Widows and deserted wives were refused separate job cards;
- » Number of days of work and the amount disbursed were wrongly reduced and recorded by the officials;
- » Wages were pending for more than a month after the completion of work;
- » NREGA has not stopped middle men or contractors.

Such a feedback is possible for the PAT forums in general and the manch members in particular who are continuously involved in monitoring of the whole project under the supervision of the governmental officials. One significant step taken in Jharkhand was the formation of the SWASASAN SHASHAKTIKARAN MANCH. This CASA-funded Forum of the like-minded NGOs in Jharkhand, drafted a Tribal Policy, which was taken seriously by the government. In March 2007, Adibasi Chhatra Sangha Akrosh rally was organized against the reduction of seats in the Assembly. A Tribal Policy seminar was convened and as a follow-up, a National Kurukh Sammelan was conducted, with the support of PAT Gumla. They demanded that the Kurukh language be included in the eighth schedule of the Indian Constitution, Part XVII, Chapter II, Article 347 as well as the protection of the Minorities Rights enshrined in the Fundamental Rights.

It is not possible to finish this part of the social action in Jharkhand without referring to and learning from the trials and triumphs of two brave women – Sheela Kujur and Bobby Bhagat of Ghaghra village. They are President and Secretary respectively of the Rural Employment Development Society (REDS). They together mobilized the people to fight for the right of Equal Wage to the workers of the area. They were intimidated and harassed but finally they succeeded in their mission. Such real stories must inspire and challenge those who are eager to bring about substantial change in our society. Obviously, the PAT forums and the several clusters in those villages are awakened to their rights.

North Zone of CASA was interested to strengthen the Local Self Governance in U.P. It was able to do so through its forum, Jan Kendrit Vikas Manch (JKVM), which comprises of 21 partners in U.P. CASA and the JKVM intervened in a big way during the elections in mid-2005. In and through this process, it tried to reinforce the *Gram Sabha*, which is the main body of the *Panchayat* system. There was a Pre-election as well as a Post-election study of the *Gram Sabha*. Following were some of the findings:-

- » The election was not properly concluded. Consequently, the six sub-committees to the *Gram Panchayat* have not been constituted;
- » Decentralization has not happened and the GP does not function properly,
- » The Zilla Yojna Samiti (District Planning Committee) has yet to be formed. The MPs and the MLAs are delaying it as they do not want the transfer of power;

The above situation demonstrates the political unwillingness to en flesh the ACT in letter and spirit. It was decided to launch an Awareness Campaign to strengthen the *Gram Sabha*, covering 30 districts and 300 NGOs in U.P. The objectives of this exercise was to make the people aware of their role and responsibilities, to analyze the functioning of the *Sabhas* and the *Panchayats*, to make the elected representatives aware of the main provisions, the amendments, roles and responsibilities of the Act to enhance the participation of the *dalits*, tribals and women. This was done through workshops, slogan-writings, Nukkad Natak (street plays) by the staff of CASA and others and public meetings. Later signature campaigns, rallies were organized and posters and pamphlets were distributed widely for the purpose. Information came from the village Pradhans and the Ward members. It was found out that the number of Scheduled Tribes informants were low. They remain ignorant, do not contest and have not exercised their franchise. But the beneficiaries were mostly SCs and OBCs. As they belong to the BPL category, they engage in Construction work, Pension, Ration Card, Plantation, Indira Awaas, NREGA, Handpumps, drainage and roads. In fact, such activities benefit the upper and wealthy classes. But JKVM is taking measures to ensure that the real beneficiaries of those schemes are those who need them most. Policy level changes in the distribution of benefits have been promoted.

Training programmes were organized for the elected representatives, which helped the latter to know to which sub-committees they belonged to, Accounts and Book keeping, about cleanliness, irrigation and other development activities mentioned in the Act. There were very few women Panchayat representatives due to several reasons / excuses as mentioned below:-

- » Elected representatives through reservations are not capable;
- » Lack requisite training to discharge their duties;
- » High rate of illiteracy among women is the disabling factor;
- » Male representatives are unable to accept a woman as their Pradhan;
- » Conflict between a male panchayat secretary and a woman Pradhan;
- » Gram Sabhas are biased and do not give the correct picture.

This means that class and caste stratification and consequent domination continue unabated in rural U.P. This also means that much

work has to be done to awaken and conscientise the rural India. A beginning has been made by CASA and its wing, JKVM. They had organized a two-day Consultation on Problems, Probabilities and the Rights of PRI Representatives in March 2005. It was attended by about 5,000 people from PRIs, NGOs, ministers and officials of the government.

By 2006, the Core Programme, based on Rights, was implemented in the four zones of CASA. It is operational in 3,545 villages in 1,450 Panchayats of 162 Blocks in 65 districts of 13 States in India. In 2004-05, in Padhar, Maharashtra, the PAT committee organized a *Social Dandi*, when 220 people marched across 32 villages to highlight the issues of BPL, Land, Ration Cards, and Caste Certificates. These were considered as rights of the marginalized people. In Kullu, Himachal Pradesh, an area survey was conducted to assess the demands and needs of the National Hydro Power Corporation (NHPC) oustees. In November 2004, under the Package Programme or the Collective Forms of Co-operation (CFC), CASA organized a state-level seminar in Raipur, Chhattisgarh, through its Lok Sahbhagi Manch (LSM), for the benefit of the elected women panchayat representatives. 1,600 participants were there from the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), NGOs, government, experts and media personnel from the State. They identified measures necessary to strengthen the participation of women in local self-governance. The LSM acts as a pressure group to address the issues of *jal*, *jungle* and *jameen* for the *dalits* and the *adivasis*.

Mountain Forum Himalayas (MFH) has been formed in Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh after working there for eight years. This Forum of CASA has raised critical issues related to development. On 11th December 2004, (International Mountain Day), civil society organizations, NGOs, government officials, experts and the media were invited to Shimla to share their views on Mountain and Contemporary Development Issues. 2005 happened to be the Centenary year of the earthquake in Kangra. CASA seized the opportunity to educate the people about disaster management and preparedness.

Madhyanchal Forum in Madhya Pradesh is constituted of 17 NGOs and several experts, who are directly involved in the ongoing discussion of the *jal*, *jungle* and *jamin*. The Forum is engaged in the work of conscientising the local people on those issues. In addition, they have made the people aware of gender injustice, livelihood and the local self-governance issues. They had meetings in Bhopal on those issues. Right to Food workshop was organized in Indore in 2004 to work

out the strategies for the purpose. State level seminar of Panchayat representatives was held in Bhopal where 600 women shared their problems with the experts and others. Recommendations were submitted by the PRI representatives to the Chief Minister. At present, Madhyanchal Forum has the founder membership of 18 voluntary organizations in Madhya Pradesh and around 100 like-minded organizations, who are interested in and involved with issues of food and livelihood.

Child Rights Forum has been initiated by CASA in Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. According to the report, there are 44 million children (between 4 and 14), who are part of the Indian labour force. The Indian Constitution, in its articles 24, 39f and 39a, prohibit child labour. In this situation of denial and deprivation, CASA continues its work for the uplift of the children of India. It is called RESTORATION OF LOST CHILDHOOD PROJECT (RLCP). It is in its fifth year of its activity, releasing, rehabilitating, for their growth and development. They are engaged in Pre-school, Non-formal and Supplementary education. There are Parents' Literacy Centres and skill development. This work is going on in 320 villages of 110 *Panchayats* in 5 districts of Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. This covers about 43,855 families, supported by 88 animators. The impact of this work is visible – 4,248 children are no more bonded labourers; 2,358 such children have been put into schools; 597 children are gaining vocational skills and 1,293 children are receiving skill training through external sources.

CASA has initiated the DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME IN NORTH EAST INDIA (DPNEI) in spite of the regional disturbances. The main objective is the capacity building of the Village Development Organizations (VDOs), which will be able to focus on crucial socio-economic issues affecting the region. They have began with Herbal gardening. But the most important programme is on HIV/AIDS. World-wide, AIDS has killed more than 30 million people. There are 40 million people living with HIV/AIDS. The first AIDS case in India was detected in 1986. According to the Indian estimate, there are 5.21 million living with HIV in 2005. According to the UNAIDS/WHO, between 270,000 and 680,000 Indian died of AIDS in 2005. CASA, in partnership with the Norwegian Church Aid, started preventive cum awareness education programme on this issue. The most challenging task in spreading awareness of the deadly disease, and the eradication of stigma attached to it.

One unique intervention of CASA in recent time is the LYMPHATIC FILARIASIS (LF) programme in Orissa. This is a matter of global concern

with more than 120 million people affected by it. In Orissa (spread over 12 districts) alone there are 1.9 million LF patients. A survey was made in 2003 and its assessment was done in 2004. It demonstrated a lot of ignorance among the people about the causes and the consequences of the disease. CASA began its work in 16 villages in Orissa, spreading awareness about its causes, transmission and prevention. The young people in particular were involved in communication through street plays, folk dances and musical performances. More specifically there is a concerted effort to destroy mosquito breeding places and to take care of their feet.

In addition to the above programme, CASA has continued its original emergency interventions in Assam, Orissa, Kashmir and West Bengal. A powerful earthquake, measuring 7.6 on the Richter scale, rocked Pakistan and North India on 8th October 2005, killing nearly 100,000 people in Pakistan and about 1,500 in India. According to UN estimate, 4 million were affected and about 1 million needed immediate help. CASA immediately intervened and helped the local NGOs, churches and volunteers with relief operations. As usual, CASA's intervention was in three phases. In the first phase, they provided relief materials to face the immediate problems of winter. In the second phase, they provided tin sheets, *Bukharis* (indigenous coal-wood-burning heaters) and additional blankets. They reached up to Kupwara and Baramulla districts on time before the area became inaccessible due to heavy snowfall. In the third phase, additional blankets and tents were provided through the partner NGOs. Altogether, they extended help to about 3,000 families.

Similarly, CASA was actively involved in the aftermath of the earthquake that played havoc in Gujarat on 26th January 2001. Many were killed and millions were rendered homeless. During the crisis phase, CASA with the help of the Indian Churches and the International ecumenical partners, reached out to about 35,000 families in 152 devastated villages, providing food, clothing, drinking water and temporary shelters. For the mid-term rehabilitation, CASA was trying to restore their livelihood, water harvesting structure, temporary school buildings, dispensaries, vocational training for women and nutritional and educational support to school-going children. After this period, CASA was engaged in reconstruction work with the help of the local people including the women. They became involved in the planning and the decision-making process. At this stage 19 villages were involved. CASA is now engaged in Community Based Disaster Preparedness (CBDP) in 10 clusters, covering 60 villages in the districts of Kutch

and Jamnagar. The focus of this programme is on capacity building, CBDP, training of Disaster Mitigation Task Force (DMTF), lobbying and advocacy for disaster policies. They are trying to institutionalize the CBDP by making it a part of the *gram panchayat* work and providing rescue and first aid kits to each of the 58 villages. An emergency fund has been created in those villages. The work of rehabilitation and reconstruction is still going on in different villages, establishing *mahila mandals*, *yuvak mandals* and Self-Help Groups (SHGs), giving the people hope and confidence.

Brahmaputra valley of Assam was inundated by the devastating floods in 2004. CASA was able to help 19,000 families in that area. More important, CASA has started CBDP and DMTF in those villages, 6 Multipurpose Disaster Shelters (MDSs) and 5 High-Raised Platforms (HRPs) were constructed. Village Development Committees (VDCs) are trying to take charge of the situation. As a result of those interventions, CASA's suggestions have found a place within the State Disaster Management Authority and the State Disaster Control Room. Similar kind of work is going on in the disaster-prone areas of Orissa and West Bengal.

Tsunami relief and rehabilitation work is still going on in Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Andaman and Nicobar Islands. CASA with the help of churches, institutions and organizations is continuing to develop alternative sources of livelihood for the people affected by the *Tsunami*. They are developing vocational training cum production units for such people. Goats and cows have been given so that they can generate subsidiary income for their livelihood. The affected children are being helped with tuition centres, books, uniforms etc. Permanent Disaster-Resistant houses are being constructed in Cuddalore, Nagapattinam, Tirunelveli, Tuticorin, Kanyakumari, in some places in Kerala and others. They are now busy constructing Primary and Secondary schools, Community Centres, village information centres and conducting training programmes and health camps for men, women and the youth. Increasingly, more and more women are coming forward to take full advantage of such trainings and facilities.

As mentioned before, there is a quantitative as well as a qualitative difference between relief operations of the 50s and the 60s and the relief operations in recent times. There is a decisive perspectival change of the operation. Initially, CASA was a giver-provider but today it is a facilitator-enabler, helping the people particularly, the *adivasis*, *dalits*, women and youth to become fully aware of their fundamental human

rights. Today, food is seen not just as a need, an issue but their right. People are entitled to get food. Consequently, food security for the people is the fundamental right. But it is another matter that they are losing their food sovereignty in the present national scenario. Precisely, for this reason, it is necessary to subject this fourth defining moment of CASA to a SWOT study. It may reveal dimensions that are missing in this paradigm. Surely, it has its strengths and weaknesses, created opportunities but also poses some threats for the people in particular.

ANCIENT AND MODERN ROOTS OF HUMAN RIGHTS:

The strength of this particular defining moment of CASA is its long history and heritage. The idea of Human Rights have been with humanity for a long time. It is rooted in and related to several cultures and civilizations. For our purpose, I will recapitulate briefly this long legacy of humanity. Human Rights can be traced back to the Graeco-Roman world. It had some vague notion of this idea, which helped them to develop a legal system. Their Constitutions have been based on this fundamental principle. It can be traced back to Aristotle in particular in his Nicomachean Ethics.

The ancient Jewish people had developed their idea of Human Rights on the basis of their unique understanding of God. Early in their history, they began to believe in moral monotheism – one moral God, who has created the world and more significantly, made humans in His/Her image (Genesis 1:26 – 27). This prompted them to stipulate laws meticulously and extensively on the socio-economic-political life of the people. They were convinced that those human laws reflect the divine imperatives. The righteous God demands righteous life and living. Fundamentally, this righteousness of God must be demonstrated in neighbour-love. This neighbour is not the one who lives next door or down the road but one who is in dire distress and needs immediate help. The fundamental rights of the weak, the foreigner, widow, orphans, the poor and even of the animals must be recognized and acknowledged. They even went on to institutionalize this fundamental right in terms of the SABBATICAL and JUBILEE year. I shall elaborate on this theme in the chapter on the Biblical perspective on social action.

Jesus was a first century Palestinian Jew, who was born and bred, nurtured and nourished in that ancient Jewish tradition. He inherited this great tradition but he did not conform to it uncritically and blindly. On the contrary, he tried to rectify and reform some of those ancient legislations. In this effort, he tried to expand the scope and character

of neighbour-love without discrimination and prejudice. In his own way, for his time, he was an ardent advocate of human rights. We will return to this theme later. But for the present it must be conceded that much of this talk of human rights remained in the book as a good theory, which was not put into practice all the time. Thus there was a wide gap between de jure and de facto.

While this was happening or even earlier, Hinduism began to enunciate its own understanding of human rights in terms of *DHARMA*. *Dharma* at the popular level, is translated 'religion' but its etymological derivation has to do with that power/principle in the universe that holds and upholds, binds and bonds, supports and sustains. It is cosmological and universal in scope and character. Later, it was conceived as righteousness and righteous conduct. Thus *Bhagavad Gita* mentions of *dharma* as righteousness and *adharma* as unrighteousness. Basically, this means that the sense and the longing for the right is embedded in the universe, which they attempted to embody in their several legislations – *VARNASHRAMA DHARMA* as mentioned in the *MANUDHARMASHASTRA*. Precisely in their endeavor to establish human rights for all, they created, over the centuries, a highly stratified, hierarchical society that discriminates and deprives. Consequently, casteism, communalism, sexism and such others are assuming alarming proportions. Human rights are openly, publicly and purposively flouted in modern India. But there is hope both in theoretical and practical terms. The fundamental law of the land upholds equality and dignity for all people irrespective of caste, colour, community and religion. The more substantive basis of this hope is in the philosophical perspective of the nation in terms of *dharma* – ultimately, *dharma* must triumph and truth and justice must prevail – *SATYA EVA JAYATE!*

The practice of human rights is more explicit and evident in liberal democracy rather than in the authoritarian regimes of the right and in the totalitarian regimes of the left. Mr. John Locke (1632-1704) is considered the pioneer of this way of thinking. As a result, liberal rights doctrine came into being. Locke and few others had espoused the cause of the freedom of the individual person. They are defenses of individual liberty. The individuals must have full freedom to act, speak, worship and associate as guaranteed by the state. The restrictions on the individual by the state must be minimal.

This way of thinking and consequent doing became the pillar of the American revolution and the subsequent Constitution. *THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE* of 1776, had categorically stated,

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all Men (women) are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.

It is important to remember that a BILL OF RIGHTS, drawn up by Mr. Thomas Jefferson (1743 – 1826), was incorporated into the Constitution of the United States. Soon after the American revolution, the cry of the French revolution (1789–1799) was LIBERTY, EQUALITY, and FRATERNITY. It is also important to remember that the English Statute of 1689, had anticipated the Declaration of Rights.

The CHARTER OF THE UNITED NATIONS, soon after the Second World War, declared in 1945,

We the people of the United Nations determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind, and to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small . . .

The UNO declaration was not binding on the nations but was to serve as a “standard of achievement” for all. But the two Covenants on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of the UNO have a legal force for those nations that have ratified them. After taking this brief glance at the roots and the recent background of the Rights language, now we are in a position to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats of this particular perspective.

STRENGTHS/ MERITS OF RIGHTS BASED SOCIAL ACTION:

CASA is to be congratulated for this radical shift to a Rights perspective. It is valuable and necessary. It is a positive, forward movement for the organizations. CASA has made serious attempts to define and clarify the Rights languages, which augurs well for the future of the movement. The language of Rights is crisp, blunt and even curt. In a way, it is a language of protest, of claims, of demand. It is the political trump card for the individuals.

Towards the beginning of the twentieth century, Bal Gangadhar Tilak had declared, “Freedom is our birthright.” By that he had primarily meant political freedom. Freedom is fundamental. It is the basic condition for all other freedoms. Human rights become meaningful in

a free country like India. But this freedom cannot be taken for granted. It requires constant vigilance. People have to be nurtured and trained in the understanding and use of this language. Precisely, this is what CASA has been doing for last ten years directly and openly.

CASA's capacity building programmes have enhanced the confidence level of the people. They have learnt to speak for themselves and voice their opinions. They have begun to become aware of their equality, dignity and worth. Their voices are heard and many of their demands are met. This growth of self-awareness is quite visible and audible. The women, *adivasis*, *dalits*, youth and children are no more silent. They know their authentic needs and have developed strategies to deal with them. They are no more dependent and beggarly. They want to stand on their own feet and realize their entitlement. Surely, it is a positive gain both for CASA and the stakeholders. Thus there is mutual caring and sharing, mutual respect and honour.

In last sixty years, CASA has made tremendous improvement in its relationship with people. CASA cannot and must not think of itself as a 'giver' or a 'provider'. It considers itself not even as an enabler, a facilitator but an empowering agency, helping people at the grassroots level, to realize their own potentialities and powers. It is very much a process approach and definitely not project-oriented. It is a way of assisting people to own and shape their future. It is a path to be awakened to their micro situation from macro perspective. As mentioned before, all the Zones of CASA are actively engaged in pursuing their Core programmes from the Rights perspective. Advocacy, Lobbying, Networking and Alliance-building have become integral to CASA's Core programme. It is a decisive step in the right direction. For this the Resource Centres in remote villages in all parts of India have a key role to play.

Another merit of this position is a decisive movement from an isolated micro world to the wider macro world in their knowledge and understanding. This surely has helped them to better comprehend their context and deal with it realistically and with relevance. This is an inevitable movement from an individualistic world to a structural/systemic way of dealing with issue. For example now it is increasingly realized that FOOD or *dal-roti* is not a matter of 'charity', a need or even an isolated issue but essentially a structural/institutional problem. In fact, it cannot be a problem in the modern world of abundance. This means it is artificially turned into a problem, a matter of manipulation and bargaining. Increasingly, the *aam admi*, the *janata*, are just beginning

to apprehend this and consequently, demanding their basic rights. They have been deliberately deprived of their *jal, jangal, jameen, jan* and *janwar*. They are beginning to demand what is rightfully their own.

WEAKNESS OF RIGHTS BASED SOCIAL ACTION:

In the above section, I have mentioned some of the merits of this way of thinking and doing. Now I will deal with few of the weaknesses of this position. The clue has been already given in one of the CASA documents. It talks of the distinction between Civil and Political Rights (CRS) and the Economic and Social Rights (ESRs). The latter rights are 'aspirational' rather than legally enforceable, both at the national and international levels. The United Nations made a general Universal Declaration of Human Rights in the 1940s. The more specific Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural and the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights were separated from the main Declaration. The nations had little problem in endorsing the general statement on human rights. But the debate was between the Covenants particularly, their priorities. Thus quite a number of nations, big and small, did not ratify the Covenants particularly, the one on Economics. This is the moot problem with the Rights-based social action.

At this point, I will not go into a detail critique but just mention some of the weaknesses. The Rights language belongs to another time and context. It is basically, Western in origin. Its requirements and restraints are radically different. The twentieth century Human Rights issue rose in the context of wars of the West. For them, the priority was more political than anything else. More significantly, rights language was conceived in the womb of Capitalist ideology. For them, individual rights are more important than societal (in line with John Locke and others). In that context, individuals have the absolute right to accumulate wealth without restrictions. The immediate implication of this in our present context is that "one person's satisfaction causes another's frustration." It will not be helpful to tell a poor person that although he/she is starving, he/she is free. This also means that such a rights position is compatible with the presence of extreme deprivation in a society even when the resources are available to eliminate such a situation. We are at a point in history when we have to assert the legitimacy of curbing the economic rights of the rich, First World nations, for the sake of the economic development of the most of Asia, Africa and Latin America. We live in a broken, divided, lopsided world.

This brings us to the ideological origin of Human Rights. There is a clear division between what is called 'Liberal' position and the Marxian perspective. So far, we have dealt with the issue of Rights. But the more primordial question is about the Humanum -- who is a human being? According to the Biblical/Marxian position, there are no isolated individuals. That is a sociological-theological absurdity. An individual has to be considered within social solidarity. There is no human being apart from or to the exclusion of a society. Concomitantly, this means genuine human rights must be a social reality. The second related issue is a priority of material needs particularly in a situation of extreme deprivation and consequent marginalization. There cannot be any neutrality about it. CASA documents have taken note of this. Every claim of the rich creates a counterclaim of the poor as is evident in national and international negotiations. In a divided world, in a divided India, there is an inevitable conflict of claims.

Liberalism has given birth to Laissez faire (allow to act) capitalism. It has permitted colonialism in the past and neocolonialism in the present. Neo-liberalism of LPG [Liberalisation-Globalisation-Privatisation] is proving to be debilitating and dehumanizing, particularly for the poor. It seems to be a No-Exit situation. Thus human rights is an ideological issue and it must be reckoned with at that level. Now it is a politically-charged issue. Confrontation and conflict have become inevitable as in the World Trade Organization (WTO) negotiations of our time. Economic Rights have been relegated. The rich and the powerful will continue to dominate and domesticate the poor nations of the world. The language of human rights is proving to be negative and detrimental to the interest of the poor nations. Such nations and people in particular are being co-opted into this capitalist mode of discourse and deed.

Another related weakness of this defining moment of CASA is that this notion of rights remain individualistic and non-relational. It continues to operate within this framework, making it egoistic and self-centred. CASA's idea of human rights as RIGHTEOUSNESS has not percolated to the people. It is still top down. Human Rights remain supernatural and deductive. This is not at all helpful for those who are suffering and dying due to the wrong policies and programmes of the government. Human Rights cannot be used in our country without conditions and strict qualifications.

OPPORTUNITIES OF RIGHTS BASED SOCIAL ACTION:

Some of the external weaknesses can be overcome. But the weakness intrinsic to the concept, cannot be rid off without overhauling the whole discourse. This is an opportune moment to debate and deal with some of the problems I have mentioned. It holds out a great promise and potential benefit for the people. CASA has seized the opportunity to nurture and train the people to claim their rights and responsibility. It is an opportunity to conscientise, mobilize and organize people from this perspective. CASA has done some of this but it has not been successful always.

This is a golden opportunity to raise the critical ideological issues related to human rights. A rapprochement has to be worked out carefully, taking into account the compulsions of our context. We cannot live it in a limbo. We have to establish our priorities and raise fundamental questions about life and livelihood. Liberty has to be restricted for the sake of greater liberty. This means that "free development of each is the condition for the free development of all". This is the ideal -- the goal.

CASA has been able to do extensive and intensive work on the basis of rights. It has helped them to impact on a lot of people, scattered in our villages in the East and West, North and South. On the basis of existing laws of the land, CASA has been able to bring about drastic changes in people's attitudes and actions. Advantages have to be advanced and disadvantages removed through this process of training and education. A lot of people are no more in the grip of fatalism and defeatism. They have become more optimistic and hopeful. They are learning to plan and implement their own strategy of action for their own welfare.

Indian independence has given the people freedom to participate in the benefits of the emerging society and to share in the building our systems of governance. They are the authentic makers and shapers of modern India. The state has given us a formal freedom. Now it is for us to externalize it in socio-economic-political term. It is for the people to insist that the state institutionalize respect for their socio-economic claims! NREGA is only a small sign in this direction. Obviously, the government has to go much beyond this tokenism to guarantee the well being of the women, dalits and adivasis and such others. There is no substitute for that. The government must change its basic policy, becoming deliberately pro-poor or proactive for the poor.

THREATS/ DANGERS OF RIGHTS BASED SOCIAL ACTION:

The section on weaknesses has suggested some of the lurking and obvious dangers of this way of thinking and doing. It is a dangerous doctrine devoid of internal restraints and control. This dilemma has become evident in last sixty years or since the end of the Second World War. The USA, the UK, Germany, France, Italy and Japan were the original G-6 nations of the world, who have consistently and deliberately violated the human rights of the poorer nations. Canada and Russia joined this exclusive club in 1976 and 1998 respectively. Now they are eager to add the five emerging economies namely, Brazil, India, China, South Africa and Mexico. The idea is to co-opt these five countries into their system of global governance through the World Trade Organization (WTO), World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). In such a context, it has become dangerous to talk about human rights, which are absolute and eternal. If we want to do social action on the basis of human rights, we will need to work out critically some criteria that will control and restrain the rich and the powerful both within the nation and outside.

Related to the above, another threat of human rights is the fact that they remain undefined, indefinite and undetermined. We have to specify and thereby concretize. They have to be made moral and mandatory. The rich and the powerful do not perceive of basic needs as rights but as something they will decide to give or not to give. Thus rights are seen more as negatives rather than positive entitlements of the people at large. Rights of the poor people have to be honoured and acknowledged. Accordingly, the policies and programmes have to be oriented from this perspective.

Another danger of this approach is within CASA itself. Some of the staff are not adequately trained and equipped to promote it vigorously. It seems that they are sucked into the system that promotes LPG syndrome. They may not give direct approval but their tacit consent is discernible. CASA's TOT, TOM and TOC programmes have to be reinforced from this perspective. This means that it has the infrastructural facilities to deal with the danger but they have to be implemented in a systematic and sustained ways. It has to also strengthen its OD, PRIA and HPD programmes more vigorously in this direction. Much depends on the conviction and commitment of the CASA community itself. Ideologically, where does it stand? If they are to stand with the poor and express solidarity with them, their critical and creative input is crucial for the success of this methodology. One cannot be half-hearted or double-minded about this.

CONCLUSION:

In this chapter, I have closely and critically examined the fourth defining moment of the sixty-year history of CASA. The period I have briefly covered in this chapter is between 1997-2007. This last decade has been crucial for CASA as it has undergone a lot of changes. In this chapter, I have shown the exhaustive formulation of the concept of Human Right and its operational strategies. It is very helpful and has to be appreciated. Rights, particularly conceived as righteousness, is highly commendable particularly from a theological-ethical point of view. Its helpful distinction between CPR and ESR is relevant in the Indian context. Reframing of issues from this perspective has to be done in detail. Using the existing laws or Acts for bringing about changes in the different communities are to be vigorously extended to all the Zones of CASA. Empowerment, participation, accountability and linkage to rights have been achieved to a great extent in some regions in India. Research, documentation, communication and resource mobilization have multiplied in several villages particularly with regard to disaster management and mitigation. There are signs of hope.

Increasingly, a lot of women in remote areas are the real heroes. They are coming out in large numbers and openly asserting their basic rights. Gender-justice is becoming a reality in rural areas. Their voice is being heard and heeded. They cannot be ignored or bypassed anymore. But their participation in the *Panchayat* system has to be ensured. Their educational level has to be enhanced. They must learn to question and challenge their own cultural customs like caste and dowry. May be time has come for CASA to focus and target more sharply. They cannot be all over the place both in terms of policies and programmes.

Finally, there is a sense of restlessness or uneasiness. CASA wants to move forward with renewed faith and hope. They are already planning for the future, giving it a new meaning and direction. For this, we turn to the next chapter to understand this important process of change.

VI

Third Forward Plan (2003 – 2013): Life In Its Fullness

In the last chapter, I have briefly examined the fourth defining moment of the history of CASA. In this chapter, I want to indicate the future direction. RBA covers more or less the last ten years. But it is interesting to note that after its Golden jubilee celebration in 1997, CASA did not rest on its laurels, being comfortable and complacent about its past success stories. Soon after 1997, it began to realize that it is necessary to dream and plan for the future. Another important compulsion of the moment was the fact that the First Forward Plan was drawn up in the 80s and the Second one was formulated during the 90s. Its tenure was coming to an end in 2003. Therefore, there was a need to look forward to the next ten years of CASA's life and work. Another significant factor was the fact that the new Director of CASA, Dr. Sushant Agrawal (installed in 2001) had a vision for the organization, in which he was already working for 22 years. Those valuable years of experience and expertise facilitated new thinking and action. Thus out of these internal/external factors, a new perspective plan was articulated. I will discuss in detail this new plan, which enunciates its own policies and programmes. Towards the end of the chapter, I will attempt to evaluate it in terms of its strengths and weakness, its opportunities and may be some threats. Although there is an overlapping with the fourth defining moment, it is possible to designate it as the fifth defining moment which extends up to 2013.

**DEVELOPMENT PARADIGM AND PERSPECTIVE PLAN
(2003 – 2013)**

The above is the title of the document issued in March, 2003. It is an attempt to summarize the policy decisions and several programmes of the past and then to project into the future in the light of the former. Thus there is a definitive continuity but as well as definitive discontinuity. Thus it discusses about paradigm shifts and perspective planning. In its recapitulation of the past of CASA's thinking and action, they affirm its dynamic character and conduct. It has made tremendous strides in last fifty-six years. But in the midst of these dynamic changes, CASA continues with its original mandate of relief, rehabilitation and development. Consequently, it has made several interventions during and after the floods, cyclones and earthquake in recent time. Then they summarize the national socio-economic-political scenario in terms of poverty, globalization, conflicts, disasters, governance and civil society, human rights and discrimination, declining space for voluntary action and ends the section with a forthright statement,

Mushroom growth of the NGO sector as an employment and family-oriented enterprise, has cast aspersions on the sector as a whole. The apparent decline in the values in such organizations also affect genuine initiatives. Further, devoid of any ideological basis for voluntary action, many initiatives lack perspective and capacity. Building and sustaining values, upholding the poor and improve organizational effectiveness through perspective and capacity building is important for the sector.

The statement takes note of the urgent need of values and an ideological basis for social action. It was necessary to work out new strategies and new roles from this perspective in the changing context. It is only then that CASA can be relevant and contextual and serve the poor and the marginalized. There was an urgent task to relook at CASA's vision and mission, its role and strategy, its policies and programmes. Position papers were prepared for that purpose. Thus this new perspective plan was participatory in character. Participatory Strategic Planning (PSP) was done in consultation with the church leaders, partner organizations, NGOs, and the Board of CASA, its staff and above all its constituencies, the people. In this process, value clarification was done and the non-negotiable values established. The review of the Core Programme of CASA was to strengthen this deliberate process. I shall look at this separately. This internal analysis and assessment facilitated the identification of specific areas, target groups, issues, partnerships, roles, thrust areas etc. This perspective planning took into account a

National Convention of the Voluntary Organizations, which was held in Delhi on 19th February, 2000. The theme of the Convention was MEETING CHALLENGES THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS. The 150 organizations that attended the Convention, deliberated on issues like challenges for the voluntary sector, role of civil society, human rights, the poor and disaster mitigation through an alternative paradigm. A Church Leaders' Consultation was organized in Delhi on 21st November, 2001. This also provided CASA with a roadmap for the future.

The document identifies some key areas that needed a special attention and a more focused approach. Firstly, it identified the declining livelihood opportunities for the poor and the urgent need for restoring their entitlements and facilitating accessibility and control - - "Right to livelihood is derived from right to life." It is important to strive for their basic needs like water, food, security, employment, sustainable agriculture, access to credit and appropriate technology. Secondly, it focused on the issue of environmental degradation, which has direct bearing on the life and livelihood of the poor. Environmental restoration would require improving the water table, vegetative cover, maintaining bio-diversity, minimizing land, air, and water pollution, advocacy against irrational mining, displacement and thereby restore to the people *jal, jangal, and jameen*.

The third area of concern for CASA was health and education, which have not reached the millions even after 55 years of independence. They are privatized and commercialized and consequently, there is a decisive withdrawal of the idea of welfare state. CASA has to strengthen the people's effort to gain access to health and education, which specifically means influencing such policy decisions. Fourthly, CASA focused on the social stratification of the Indian society, which has aggravated the gap between the haves and the have-nots. Caste-class conundrum continues to deprive the *dalits*, tribals, women and such others of their rights and privileges. Their marginalization has been accelerated by a deliberate process of monoculturalisation. As a result, the cultural identity and plurality of such communities of people are threatened. There is an urgent need to strengthen and promote plurality and diversity based on our fundamental unity. Fifthly, the issue of gender-justice is of paramount importance. Specifically, gender-justice and equity means access and control by women over resources and decision-making, participation in the political process without any discrimination and prevention of atrocities/violence against women. Sixthly, the document wants to take a long-term perspective of the disaster management and

its integration with the planned development. For this, all the people involved directly or indirectly, must be equipped with tools and skills and understanding of the problem. It is eager to integrate relief, rehabilitation as well as development of the most vulnerable sections of the different communities who are effected by it.

Seventhly, CASA takes seriously the democratic governance of the country. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen the *panchayat* institutions and the *nagarpalikas*. For this, the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments are steps in the right direction. This creates a space for the full participation of the SCs, and STs and women. It has a potential for substantive social change. The eighth area of concern is the reducing space and opportunity for voluntary action. It is important to strengthen this sector. For this purpose, it is necessary to inculcate a sense of values in this sector. Globalization is the ninth issue in the document. It takes note of its negative impact on the poor and the marginalized, widening the gap between the rich and the poor. It requires that the interest of the poor are protected through awareness creation, resistance and policy advocacy on issues like trade liberalizations, privatization and globalization. Tenthly and finally, CASA takes note of Caste, religions and conflict. It is concerned about the rise of fundamentalism, communalism and caste/ethnic conflicts. In recent time, politicization of religion and criminalization of politics are assuming an alarming proportion in India. At this critical juncture, it is important for NGOs, civil society groups and like-minded people to come together and combat such narrow-minded agendas. In this context, interfaith dialogues and ecumenical initiatives are significant. They must work towards peace and reconciliation.

The next section of the document on the new perspective, deals with the perspectival changes that have taken place in last 57 years, moving from only relief to need, to issue, and finally the RBA. In this context, it asserts,

CASA in its theory of change, upholds the dignity of the poor and marginalized, and seeks to restore a dignified living with mutual cooperation and sharing among the reference community, based on its cherished values and principles. CASA holds that the present suffering is due to unjust sharing of resources and control and a manipulation by a handful, which was perpetuated by age-long structures and systems of the society.

Precisely, for this reason, it is necessary to change our perspective and consequent practice of development. According to it,

Development is not economic growth but equitable distribution, enhancement of people's capabilities and widening of their choices; it gives top priority to elimination of poverty, integration of women into the development process, self-reliance and self-determination of people and the protection of the right of disadvantaged community.

Thus the new thrust is deliberately and purposively people-centred and process-oriented. Then the document goes on to stipulate the fundamental principles of this perspective in terms of equality and equity, accountability, empowerment and participation. The discussion on human rights has been done in the last chapter. But we need to add the new emphasis on the institutional changes suggested by the document. The most significant recommendation is the creation of a POLICY DESK at the CASA Head quarters in Delhi. The basic purpose of this move is to build up a clear understanding of different issues among the partners, the community and the stakeholders. The analysis and assessment done by the policy Desk are to strengthen or reinforce the ongoing Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (PME) of CASA. It will not be responsible for doing advocacy directly but provide support to this work done in the Headquarters and in the four Zones. This means both the Policy Desk and the Advocacy Desk are crucial for CASA's future thrust. In addition, the document suggests the creation of an AREA Resource Centre (ARC) that will coordinate the work of the several resource centres scattered all over India. It will establish linkages with other development interventions, which are done by other NGOs and groups. Such a process will facilitate integration of strategies, both internal and external, for collective action.

Gender-sensitivity and gender-justice programme must be taken up with renewed vigor. Gender-mainstreaming must be emphasized in the total life and work of CASA. I shall return to this topic later. Then the documents rightly restates the VISION and MISSION OF CASA with minor changes as mentioned after the cover page:-

Then it spells out the ORGANISATIONAL and OPERATIONAL STRATEGIES in detail. Among the OBJECTIVES, NUMBER 12 and 13 needs more focus and attention, namely, to promote INTERFAITH DIALOGUE and "to enhance the participation of Churches, like-minded NGOs and financial institutions in the development endeavor of CASA." The document articulates the KEY elements of the new perspective:-

1. TRANSFER OF POWER: Total handing over of the programme and decision making with resource linkages to people's organizations,

their apex bodies and networks in CASA's Core Programme areas and facilitating institutional strengthening. In the bilateral programmes, transfer of power means that partner forums, networks and different stakeholders build independent identity/ institutions so that they can function on their own. This transfer must take place within 10 years.

2. EMPOWERMENT OF THE POOR AND THE MARGINALISED particularly, the women, tribals, the dalits, OBCs and the minorities. This will be done through the various mechanism already developed by CASA.
3. Within a period of 4-6 years, there will be a hand over of the process in all 33 Core Programmes to the local people's organizations. This process will drastically change the role and relationship of CASA with regards to those organizations. Therefore, CASA will target the youth and inculcate in them values and leadership qualities.

The document enunciates the nature and role of the Area Resource Centres. Basically, it will have a supportive and a promotive role to play as well as provide a common platform for collective action. In the process, it will enhance capacities at an individual and collective levels, bringing about innovation and creativity. It works out in detail the thrust areas mentioned above. Finally, it proposes an INTERNAL RESTRUCTURING, which will help addressing the relevant issues effectively and efficiently.

Related to this document on the Forward Plan, is the document on the RBA, which was drawn up in 2006. The latter document has been dealt with in the last chapter. This 2006 write-up is a clarification on some of the issues emphasized in the 2003 statement. For our purpose, I have discussed them in two separate chapters but in fact they belong together. Now, I shall briefly look at another related document, which illuminates the Forward Plan of 2003.

REALIZING SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION... TOWARDS PARADIGM SHIFT:

This write-up was presented at a CASA Roundtable between 27th February and 1st March 2007. It was considered as key organizational and programmatic strategies, which has been developed in the light of the Core Programme evaluation. This external evaluation was done in September, 2004. It recommended,

- » Greater coherence is required in perspective building around issues such as rural poverty, gender, livelihood and RBA at conceptual, policy and operational level.

- » The issue of organizational learning with regard to RBA requires more systematic and conscious attention. The learning mechanism needs to be integrated into the practices of the organization consciously and continuously.
- » Establishing strong strategic alliance and partnership with like-minded institutions is imperative in RBA to strengthen the struggle of the poor.
- » It is recommended that more well-planned policy level advocacy efforts are required to address the problems at policy level while at the same time strengthening grassrootsness of the issue at micro level.
- » The concept of people's organizations needs to be re-visited within the framework of the new RBA. The issue needs to be dealt with at conceptual level and at the level of strategy.

Accordingly, this was an attempt to clarify and go into detail about the future plan to engage in the task of integration and greater synergy among several units, both internal and external. RBA is used at all levels of CASA's social engagement. The CBOs in particular are being strengthened and deepened. Thus it categorically affirms,

Formation of networks and coalitions with the already existing ones are important strategies for pursuing policy level changes in favor of the poor and marginalized through institutional action, increasing the capacity to negotiate and bargain. Questioning and demanding transparency and accountability from the governance systems is getting strengthened in this process.

Keeping this in mind, several people's organizations and collective platforms have been revisited and reorganized specifically from a strategic perspective. Some of these are Thar Jagruk Manch (Barmer, Rajasthan); Rebari Pragati Manch (Pali, Rajasthan); Garokota Adivasi Mahila Samiti (Jalpaiguri, West Bengal); Adivasi Maga Swargiya Bikas Parishad (Ahmednagar, Maharashtra); Jayakwadi Pani Sangarsh Samiti (Aurangabad, Maharashtra); Farmers' Organization for Agriculture and Rural Development (Khurda, Orissa); Adivasi Swasashan Shaktikaran Manch (Gumla, Jharkhand). These organizations are able to influence legislators and bureaucracy for effective implementation of Constitutional guarantees and rights along with pursuing sustainable livelihood strategies. Micro-level campaigns are done by CASA, partners and like-minded organizations on issues like right to food security, right to drinking water, right to health, gender issues, right to education and employment and right to livelihood. One good example of the real

impact of such a campaign is the lack of access to water from Mahi dam in Banswara, Rajasthan. Saewaangeen Vikas Samiti (PAT unit) has already initiated a fruitful dialogue with the disaster management (preparedness and mitigation) are being addressed as a rights issue.

The emerging key strategies of social action is creating networks and forums (partners). This is helping the communities to gain a new identity and voice. Mountain Forum Himalayas has initiated a discussion with different stakeholders for developing and strengthening a disaster policy for the future. Similarly, Tamil Nadu NGO Alliance is a network of 207 NGOs of the state with the purpose of creating a state-wide awareness among the voters about the significance of the *Panchayat* governance and consequently, the need to select and finally elect the right people for the job- Andhra Pradesh Forum For Empowerment of Local *Panchayati* system. In North East India, 21 partners of package programme are functioning in the 5 states of the region. They have forged a common, collective forum called the Regional Cooperation for People's Empowerment (RECOPE). They together deal with issues like HIV, human rights violation and gender.

The second strategic action is to create a SYNERGY in the planning of bilateral, core and package programmes of CASA. As a result, the issues are not programme-centric only but region specific and state specific. There is cross learning and comprehending the multidimensional nature of issues. Inter-state synergy is also taking place as between the Rajmeru Forum of Rajasthan Package Partners and Madhyanchal Forum of Madhya Pradesh Package. In this context, the issue of BELOW POVERTY LINE (BPL) and its selection criteria have become crucial. The third strategic forward action is building Alliances. The document states,

Linking and developing a cohesive relationship with various stakeholders is a prerequisite for any long term strategic partnership. CASA, in order to become more inclusive in its relationship, has started with stakeholders of varied interest and needs, which includes government, institutions, and related authorities. . . CASA has shown its commitments by building partnerships with relevant institutions and organizations which support RBA at the block/ district/ state/ National level. This area will be strengthened.

The Commonwealth Human Rights Initiatives (CHRI) and CASA have entered into a strategic alliance based on mutual cooperation and assistance. They have taken up the issue of RIGHT TO INFORMATION (RTI). Similarly, the Human Rights Law Network (HRLN) and CASA are focusing on violation of human rights, right to land, right to food,

social security schemes and their implementation. The partnership will work on judicial issues at different levels particularly, sensitizing the judiciary about the legal dimensions of various issues affecting the lives of the poor and marginalized.

The third strategic thrust is to launch campaigns at various levels. Through these CASA hopes to enhance awareness among the people about various socio-economic-political issues like land, tribal rights, PDS, unequal wages, check globalization, domestic violence. People's Election Manifesto has been submitted to the political parties in the South through such campaigns. Such a step has created a positive impact. Maharashtra Social Forum (MSF) and North East India Social Forum (NEISF), initiated by CASA, is the logical outcome of the World Social Forum (WSF). This has provided a common platform to thousands of *dalits*, tribals, women groups, activists, NGO representatives and experts to share, understand and work jointly on identified issues. The MSF has generated hope, strength and encouragement to such downtrodden people. *Dalit* Land Rights Movement, initiated by CASA in Tamil Nadu has directly and openly addressed the issue of unequal power relationship, leading to oppression and injustice. CASA has been promoting federations of unorganized laborers and women in 20 districts of Tamil Nadu. Similarly, Right to Food campaign has raised questions about the PDS – non-utilization of funds and food grains, irregularities in implementation, inadequate supervision, administrative delays and inadequate allocation. This particular campaign is successful in Chhattisgarh and Tamil Nadu.

CASA is strictly monitoring the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) through *gram sabhas*, social audit and participatory planning. It is now perceived not just as a scheme but as a right in 14 states, 113 Districts, 255 blocks, 762 Panchayats, 1728 villages in collaboration with 700 NGOs, NGO networks and collectives of People's Organisations through state officers and partners. Right to Information Act is also used fruitfully in CASA's various interventions. Another strategic step has been to create Platforms at State and National levels, facilitating discussion, sharing and solidarity on issues of self-reliance and sustainability. It is strengthening capacity building, advocacy and lobbying on relevant issues. Rajasthan *Vikas Manch* is an example of this State level campaign. Upscaling of issues helps the process of connecting micro to macro level, taking it to a higher level.

Another significant step envisaged for the future is Local Resource Mobilization, using the funds of CASA and other sources. In addition,

CASA is hoping to strengthen ACTION BASED RESEARCH, LEARNING AND INSTITUTIONALIZATION through the campaigns on issues such as PDS, Livelihood, RTI, BPL. CASA is hoping to use the SOCIAL AUDIT PROCESSES to expose irregularities in implementation of the above ACTS and thereby make them accountable and transparent. Gender mainstreaming will be taken up in the next section. But a significant move was made by CASA in its Forward Plan was to mainstream LOCAL CAPACITIES FOR PEACE (LCP) in South Asia region. It is an attempt to avoid conflict situations and establish an alternative system for dealing with problems that have caused such a situation.

The final section of the booklet deals with existential challenges in the present and makes suggestions for the future. The following challenges have been identified:-

1. Lack of political will towards social, economic and political reforms at various levels, is one of the obstacles for CASA to carry forward its struggle with the people.
2. Presence of powerful lobbies and forces like WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION (WTO), STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT PROGRAMME (SAP), and big MNCs to influence government decisions in their favour, is another obstacle which further dilutes the ongoing struggle of the *adivasis*, *dalits*, women and others. Such an oppressive situation would aggravate poverty and inequality in the country.
3. Assessment of the existing legislations, laws and policy framework is the capacity CASA needs to develop. If that is possible, it will be able to influence policy level decisions and provide direction to the struggle of the people.
4. Monitoring and keeping a watch on the implementation of the policies and making the government thereby realize its responsibility and accountability towards the people.

CASA concludes the write-up with the following focus for the future:-

1. Institutionalization of the CBOs, POs, networks, forums, and federations will give an organized power base to the struggle of the people, particularly the poor and the marginalized.
2. Perspective and Capacity Building of all stakeholders, including CASA staff, will be taken up in such a manner that a learning mechanism will be built in and a process of sharing and information dissemination will become an integral part of the organizational system and culture.

3. Strategic alliances at various levels, will be established, interlinked and further strengthened, which will give value to the ongoing work of CASA in various regions on issues like right to water, land security, right to work, *dalit* rights etc.
4. Research, policy analysis and documentations of issues like water, drought, RTI, Right to livelihood will help to influence and implement policies efficiently and effectively.
5. Gender mainstreaming and integration into all the programmes, system and the culture of CASA will ensure equality in the wider context.
6. Convergence and consolidation of issues at meso and macro level through the above-mentioned processes will upscale the issue and influence policy making in favor of the oppressed and the marginalized.

GENDER POLICY OF CASA FORMULATED IN NOVEMBER 2006:

In 2006, CASA issued an explicit statement on its gender policy. Such a policy was long overdue. The document was discussed at the roundtable of the Core group. I will summarize the basic thrust of the booklet. In the Introduction, it states,

CASA committed to take side with the poor and marginalized, considers woman today, the most disadvantaged. CASA strives to secure her a rightful place, that they are economically independent and socially dignified. This would bring about a balance between the two faces of God's creation of humanity as man-woman.

It states its own understanding of gender and gender relations,

Gender relations are the roles, traditions and social relationship of societies and cultures, which together determine what is feminine and masculine and how power is allocated and used differently between women and men. Gender refers to social construction of femininity and masculinity, which varies over time and place and is enacted through acquired, rather than innate, behaviors . . . gender inequality is caused by structural and institutional discrimination.

So the document takes note of the serious asymmetrical power relations within households/ society/ organizations. The position of women remains inferior to and dominated by the patriarchal society. Thus for a long time even in development work, the concern for women

remained peripheral. For this reason, it is vitally necessary to address the issue of women directly and honestly. We cannot assume anymore. Empirical evidence has shown that benefits accrued to women do not necessarily contribute towards their empowerment.

According to the document, gender equality is a principle of human rights. It must ensure equality of women and men in terms of perceptions, interests, needs and priorities. It must highlight the equality of results. It calls for fairness and justice in the distribution of benefits and responsibilities between the sexes. It requires a rebalancing of the power between the two in terms of economic resources, legal rights, political participation and personal relations. It rightly asserts,

Sustainable human development is development that not only generates economic growth but also distributes its benefits equitably; that generates the environment rather than destroying it; that empowers people rather than marginalizing them. It gives priority to the poor, enlarging their choices and opportunities and providing for their participation in decisions affecting them. It is development that is pro-poor, pro-nature, pro-jobs and pro-women.

Both women and men are our sources and resources of development but not to be used only as a means of production and material prosperity. They are living persons of incalculable value and worth. The on-going violation of women's human rights are not accidents, *ad-hoc* side effects, acts of God or the natural order of things but the result of the systematic framework of society that places the interests of capital forces before those of people, that makes the creation of wealth an end in itself. Such a structural framework deprives and dispossesses the livelihood resources of women in particular. They are denied of health and education. Thus gender justice requires that equality and equity principles become fundamental for policy formulation and social action.

CASA has been concerned about women from its inception. It has served their immediate needs through its programmes such as Food For Work (FFW). In the 80s, *Mahila Mandals* were organized and their capacity building was done. But their position remained unchanged – discrimination against women, gender violence, lack of ownership and control over resources and decision-making.

During the 90s, intra and inter-village linkages of *Mahila Mandals* were established, which constituted the cluster level women's forums. Later such clusters led to federations at the regional and State level. They established their Self Help Groups (SHGs). By April 2003, there

were 2,340 MMs, 102 Cluster level women federations, besides two state level forums. The SHGs tries to make the women self-reliant. In addition, they took up issue-based reflection and action at the micro-level such as aqua-culture, alcoholism, environmental pollution. People-centred advocacy and lobbying helped the women to become aware of issues that affect their lives. Strategic alliances with like-minded agencies and networks were demonstrated through processions, *dharnas*, campaigns, public meetings and rallies. Now the women have begun to think and act from the Rights Based perspective.

CASA has taken note of the general condition of women in India. From time immemorial, women have been worshipped as Mother Goddess. India was one of the first countries to give women the right to vote and the Indian Constitution guarantees equal rights for women and men. But de-facto, the Indian woman today is "an embodiment of pain and agony, sorrow and suppression and above all a living dead". Following is the state of women in India:-

- » The sex ratio of the country is 927 women to 1000 men. These 'missing' women were either aborted before they were born or died before reaching adulthood. The majority of these deaths occurred from easily preventable diseases.
- » The majority of women go through life in a state of nutritional stress – they are anaemic and malnourished. Girls and women face nutritional discrimination within the family, and often get less food than they need.
- » The average Indian woman bears her first child before she is 22 years old, and has little control over her own fertility and reproductive health.
- » Only 37.7% are literate as compared to 65.5% men and far fewer girls than boys go to school. Even when girls go to schools, fewer girls than boys manage to stay in school for a full ten-year period. Most of the girls who drop out of school are working at homes and fields of either their parental or marital families.
- » Women's work is undervalued and unrecognized. Women work longer hours than men and carry the major share of the household and community work, which is unpaid and invisible.
- » There are fewer women in the paid workforce than there are men. There are more unemployed women than unemployed men.
- » Women generally earn a far lower wage than men, doing the same work. It has been estimated that women's wage rates are on average

only 75% of men's wage rates and constitute only one-fourth of the family income. In no state, do women and men earn equal wages in agriculture.

- » Women generally work in the informal sector where wages are lower and they are not covered by the labor laws. Within organizations, women generally hold lower-paid jobs. Women workers are also engaged in piecework and subcontracting at exploitative rates.
- » Women are under-represented in governance and decision-making positions. At present, less than 8% of Parliamentary seats, less than 6% of Cabinet positions, less than 4% of seats in High Courts and Supreme Court are occupied by women. Less than 3% of administrators and managers are women.
- » In spite of Constitutional guarantees, women are legally discriminated against in land and property rights. Most women do not own any property in their names and do not get a share of parental property.
- » Women face violence inside and outside the family throughout their lives. Police officials confirm that the vast majority of crimes against women do not get recorded. Data compiled by women's groups show that a woman is molested in the country every 26 minutes; rape occurs every 34 minutes; every 42 minutes an incident of sexual harassment takes place; every 43 minutes a woman is kidnapped; every 93 minutes a woman is killed. In the majority of these cases the criminal is a man belonging to the woman's family or well known to her.

Obviously, such shocking statistics compel CASA to be committed to an explicit, definitive gender policy and programmes. With this in view, CASA clearly conceptualized this burning issue and recommended strategies that will go a long way to the amelioration of the malaise.

Gender violence, both domestic and societal is a fact of our time. Therefore, it suggests that women are empowered to expose and encounter such deliberate atrocities. Sexual assault and rape are the concrete expressions of such violence. Very often, the victim is accused and the real offender goes 'scot' free. This means our patriarchal society persists in its inertia and apathy, in its hostility and prejudices against women. Consequently, the following strategies have been recommended to combat gender violence:-

- » Sensitize the enforcement machineries – police, doctors, lawyers and judges about gender justice.
- » Promote collective action to take steps regarding violence against women.

- » Empower women to stand up against gender violence in their personal and social life.

Disasters bring untold suffering to women. They are the worst victims. In a post-disaster situation, they have to engage in a lot of unpaid and unrecognized jobs. They are deserted or made widows overnight. Following recommendations are made:-

- » Community-based disaster preparedness and plan must reckon with women's physical, psychological, social and economic vulnerabilities.
- » Dialogue with women and women's groups at every stage of relief and rehabilitation is an imperative

After surveying the national scenario about gender injustice, CASA's document looks at the international conventions, and commitments to deal with the issue. Such a global outcry will strengthen and reinforce the struggles and sacrifices of women today. Like the Social Summit, Development Summit and Earth Summit, the UNO has been holding Women's Summit regularly since 1976. CASA can also use the NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR WOMEN, STATE COMMISSION FOR WOMEN and the various legislations and Acts against sexual discrimination.

In the light of the above, CASA's Gender Policy was adopted, as shown at the beginning of the book. The booklet went on to suggest the following strategies towards fulfilling the aims and objectives of the Policy:-

- » The Policy must be owned, starting with the Governing Board and move to all levels of operation, without compromise.
- » A proper analysis and assessment of the needs of women, taking into account their experiences and capacities.
- » CASA will work both with women and men, together and separately for gender justice.
- » Partnerships and Alliances of CASA will have to be evaluated from this perspective.
- » CASA would seek to ensure the full participation and empowerment of women in all areas of its work.
- » CASA's campaigns, advocacy, and media messages must emphasize on gender equality, taking into account their poverty and suffering.
- » CASA must arrange for adequate, competent staff and resources for this purpose and thereby demonstrate its wholehearted commitment to the cause.

The main thrust of CASA is to empower women in the fullest sense of the word. For this, their mainstreaming becomes vitally crucial and critical. Empowerment is a process in which women are enabled to become autonomous agents of their own development, gaining greater control of their total life. For this, it is necessary to foster an enabling environment through organization-building, advocacy, mobilization in public spaces and access to decision-making. There has to be a systematic and sustained training in this direction, creating space and opportunity for women's voices to be heard in all organizational matter. All people, men and women need to realize,

Gender is not biological – girls and boys are not born knowing how they should look, dress, speak, behave, think, and act or react. Their 'gendered' masculine and feminine identities are constructed through the process of socialization, which prepares them for the social roles they are expected to play . . . Patriarchy makes women powerless in many ways – by convincing them of their own inferiority to men . . . by denying them control over their own bodies, lives and labor; by limiting their access to resources and by restricting their opportunities to participate in decisions, which affect their own lives.

Thus gender equity and equality will come to fruition only through the transformation of structures and systems, which dehumanize and marginalize women. Specifically, it means building a critical consciousness, enhancing the self-esteem and confidence of women; gaining knowledge, information and skills to understand and intervene in the socio-economic-political process; moving into new roles and spaces, which were hitherto seen as the exclusive domain of the male. So the process of gender-justice can be substantively advanced, not by 'allowing' them to be good mothers and housewives, as an economic agents or even "letting them to participate" in projects, not through women-only projects but "reshaping these processes to create the space for women's involvement, not only implementing the development agenda, but also in agenda-setting". This would urgently require redefining and reconstructing the legislations, policies and programmes in all areas and at all levels. Commitment, competence and compliance are the conditions required to achieve the goal of gender mainstreaming. The leadership and senior management should provide direction and support for such a cause. A gender-equality policy must be comprehended and owned. Building strategic partnerships with civil society, including women's organizations and other stakeholders, will visibly demonstrate

the commitment. Competence must be inculcated through capacity building for all staff at every level, which will provide them with tools and skills for gender analysis. GENDER TASK FORCE will be necessary for planning, monitoring, thereby increasing the effectiveness of the organization. This should be reflected in the organizations work plans and budgets. In this context, building inter and extra-organization partnerships will lead to identification and sharing of the best practices related to the issue. In terms of compliance, there is a constant need of refining tools and indicators to assess the results, monitoring and reporting to the management and a proper accountability mechanism to ensure the effective implementation of the gender-equality policies. CASA has already acted in this direction by providing for MATERNITY AND PATERNITY LEAVE. This means that childcare and nurture is the responsibility of the mother and the father.

Steps have been suggested for CASA's office and administration, upholding the dignity and respect of the female employees. For this 'inclusive' language should be used in all official documents and correspondence. Adequate resources, both human and materials, be developed for this purpose. Gender impact assessment must be made mandatory for all the programmes. Following strategies have been suggested for this:-

1. Ensuring gender balance in staffing;
2. Rationalizing procedures and systems and making them more gender-sensitive;
3. Building systems for collective functioning;
4. Ensuring accountability
5. Creating a more open environment.

The document takes note of sexual harassment in work place and therefore, the need for vigilance. In conclusion, it affirms,

Gender-equality and equity" are central to CASA's existence and action. The empowerment of women and girls is recognized as a fundamental to our mission . . The concepts of gender-justice, gender-equality and equity are well-embedded within the programme framework of CASA at all levels. . Let us initiate action in a concerted way of institutionalizing the process and based on the feedback, modifications/ amendment can be done to make it more relevant to the vicissitudes.

RBA WORK GOING ON IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM:

So far in this chapter, I have examined briefly, three basic documents, which articulate the concept and characteristics, policies and programmes for a ten-year period, beginning from 2003. From this we should not get the impression that everything is left for the future. In fact, the Forward Plan of CASA, has already been initiated. Thus it will be worthwhile to examine the practical work, which is going on all over India, from this new perspective or paradigm. The concepts are being concretized or actualized in different context. I have already written about the work undertaken in the four Zones of CASA, in the last chapter. So the following is the continuation of the last chapter.

In the previous chapter, I have mentioned that the Rights-based approach to action began about 1997. But with greater clarity and understanding, it was pursued more self-consciously by the organization in the new millennium. As they were elaborating the meaning and the modus operandi of the RBA, CASA's work was becoming more explicit and unequivocal. This became evident in the REGIONAL INTER AGENCY PARTNERSHIP (RIAP), previously, TRI AGENCY PARTNERSHIP of India, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka. In a mid-term review meeting on 19th and 20th September 2005, at Colombo, Sri Lanka, CASA's Director had suggested that they must deal with disasters with development principles. This should focus on full life, peace, justice and dignity of the target population. It should empower the civil society in totality for its transformation. RIAP should address new and emerging issues such as the impact of globalization, *Tsunami* and other unforeseen catastrophes. The Director had appealed "to involve at least 40% women in RIAP activities". In its various interventions, RIAP is attempting to improve the quality of life of the poor and the marginalized in disasters, promote peace and reconciliation, governance and food security.

REGIONAL RESOURCE CENTRE (RRC) is a step forward in CASA's long history of disaster interventions. CASA has trained about 1,500 volunteers as Disaster Mitigation Task Force (DMTF) in last five years (2002-2006). It covers the States of Orissa, West Bengal, Jharkhand, Bihar and Chhattisgarh. Community-Based Disaster Preparedness (CBDP) programme of RRC included awareness-building, baseline survey, hazard risk mapping, community contingency plan, role profiling, livestock caring, First-Aid, primary health, village mapping, resource mapping and such others. This means that such vulnerable people and communities are well equipped to encounter the eventualities. They

are well-trained for its mitigation, preparedness and response, which includes an adequate rehabilitation.

Melghat area of Amravati district, Maharashtra faces severe malnutrition and resultant deaths every year. From 2003 CASA has regularly responded to the dire situation through its Food For Community Development Programme (FFCD) in 20 villages where Korku tribal communities reside. CASA provided employment through distribution of wheat. These programmes have created community assets such as water harvesting structures, village approach roads, land improvement. In addition, CASA has initiated Food Security and Nutrition Improvement Programme (FSNIP) covering a population of 18,733 in the 20 villages. 95% of the population is small and marginal landholders and the rest are landless laborers. The strategy followed were:-

- » Implementation of the programme through local NGO partners;
- » Livelihood enhancement;
- » Capacity building interventions;
- » Health and nutrition awareness and support;
- » Education development;
- » Advocacy and Networking.

Some of the specific objectives of the programme are to improve the nutritional status of women and children in those 20 villages; to increase yield of cereal and pulses by small and marginal farmers; to ensure the availability of green vegetables through Bio-intensive Garden (BIG); to inculcate in the people a sense of cleanliness and personal hygiene; to make them aware of the government provisions like Public Distribution System (PDS) and the Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRI); and to develop indigenous knowledge. CASA's programmes have made significant changes in the communities in terms of their level of confidence and ability to cope with the situation.

CASA's collaborative work with several NGOs is bearing fruits in Western Orissa, particularly among women, *dalits* and the tribal communities. In this Package Programme, they are emphasizing on capacity building; sustainable livelihood; gender mainstreaming and local self-governance. By 2005, several Community Based Organizations (CBOs) have been formed to do the work of training and bring about mass awareness – Fifty Self-Help Groups (SHGs) with the active participation of 700 women. Twenty Grain Banks have been developed for the people

to store their food grains in the villages. The work is going on with eighteen selected NGOs in the nine districts of Western Orissa.

In the Eastern Zone, CASA is actively involved in empowering seventeen NGOs in the districts of Jalpaiguri, South Dinajpur, Malda, Nadia, South 24 Parganas, West Medinipur, Bankura and Purulia in West Bengal. The aim is to create a common platform and build up a network of People's Organizations (POs). CASA is busy training them on RBA and Disaster Preparedness, mitigation and management. They are focusing on Food Security, Gender Equity, Human Rights and Social Justice and Health and Nutrition. They are also giving training on LCP (Local Capacities for Peace). This partnership has yielded fruitful results in terms of empowerment of women, Self-Help Groups generating supplementary income for the family; becoming aware of the value of bio-fertilizers; some of them joining Gram Unnayan Samity of their respective Gram Sansad; training as mid-wives; controlling pests and diseases of their crops and such others.

RBA directly or indirectly is posing a real problem for some people, who have dared to expose and encounter or confront. There are several examples from Assam—Krishak Mukti Sangram Samity (KMSS) in Golaghat district of Assam. Its Secretary is Akhil Gogoi. He filed a number of Right To Information (RTI) applications on 2nd March 2006 seeking information on the implementation of some schemes such as Indira Awas Yojna (IAY), Individual Beneficiary Scheme (IBS) and Sampoorna Gramin Rozgar Yojna (SGRY) from the concerned Departments in the district. He and his organization was threatened, declared illegal. But the KMSS workers took out a cycle rally, protesting against the corruption of the local authorities. Some were arrested and kept in police custody for about three months. Only after they approached the State's Chief Information Commissioner in November 2006, they received some information from the district authorities. In the meantime, KMSS had conducted their own survey of the area, finding out about the implementation of the schemes by the *panchayats*. They discovered several irregularities, including forged names listed as beneficiaries, some half-completed houses, some commodities were not supplied to the beneficiaries, and road repair, digging of ponds and construction of houses had been done only on paper. There were malpractices to the tune of Rs. 35 lakhs. The local media gave a wide coverage of this corruption. In May, this year the concerned official was dismissed and local governance began to implement the schemes. The Cheque Release Registrar (CRR) for Sampoorna Gramin Rozgar Yojna revealed a Rs.

25 Lakh scam. North East Network (NEN), a women's organization discovered a lot of malpractices and misappropriation with regard to government schemes. This was possible through the RTI Act in 2004. As a result, Namita Subedi of Teliagaon *Mahila Samiti* of the Sonitpur district of Assam, Sanjit Tanti of the Sodou Assam Adivashi Chatra Sanstha of Udalguri district and such others have been threatened and attacked for exposing the wrong doings of the local officials. Such people of truth and integrity are openly intimidated and harassed but they cannot be silent. They will continue to speak out and express full solidarity with the *adivasis*, *dalits* and other poor people.

CASA's East Zone has a Package Programme called "Accompanying Partners in Development – North East India". There are twenty-one Project Implementing Organizations (PIOs) in the five States of Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Manipur and Nagaland. These PIOs have identified the following core issues for their consideration and action – nine PIOs on Food Insecurity; eight on Livelihood issue; one dealing with opium addiction; another dealing with alcoholism; one dealing with poverty and the other dealing with the degradation of the environment. They are making good use of the RTI Act, NREGA and others. The main issue that the Confederation of Nagaland Development Agency (CONDA) is looking into is the faulty Public Distribution System (PDS) in the STATE. Two noteworthy events of the region are strengthening the North East India Social Forum (NEISF). Number of them joined the Indian Social Forum meeting at Delhi in November 2006 and one member of the Planning Monitoring and Coordination Team participated in the World Social Forum meeting in Nairobi in January 2007. The follow up meetings were held at the regional, State and district level in March of this year. Socio-economic-political issues were discussed at the common forum. Similarly, a Consultation on Water was convened at Guwahati on 11th March 2007. As a result, the *Jal Biradri* Water Fellowship – NEL, Tarun Bharat Sangh, Rajasthan and One World South Asia came together to form a common platform for the purpose. I should also mention that CASA is at the forefront for Conflict Resolution in NEL. It is a member of the Joint Peace Mission Team, which included the Catholic and the Protestant churches in the region. They are promoting LCP in the area.

In the South Zone, CASA continues to express solidarity with the exploited, discriminated and excluded communities. They continue to work for land, water, agriculture, employment, health and education of such people. They have formed 853 village *sanghams* for the purpose.

The substantial gains have been to identify 1,313 acres of land for the landless; 678 families received house pattas; 842 families received ration cards; 281 laborers got identity cards; 6,895 received farmer's cards and PDS provisions were made available for 1,172 families. Women have established micro-credit and collective enterprise schemes. 191 SHGs raised a revolving fund of Rs. 17,87,000/- and another 20 SHGs mobilized Rs. 1,00,000/- as matching grant and much more gains are visible in the area. It is worth mentioning here that over a period of last ten years (1997-2007), CASA has mobilised Rs. 76,10,10,538/- (Rupees Seventy Six Crores, ten lacs, ten thousand, five hundred thirty eight only) from various governmental agencies, banks, and individuals, locally. A detailed zone wise Local Resource Mobilisation has been given in the table below:

Table: Details of Resource Mobilisation by CASA During the last 10 years (1997 to 2007) From Governments, Banks, Individuals and partners.

Particulars	North	East	West	South	Total
(1) 2006 – 2007					
Government	7,217,500	22,085,800	5,448,846	18,294,872	53,047,018
Banks	200,000	2,154,705	2,894,235	17,579,000	22,827,940
Individuals	8,000	97,000	290,030	2,839,050	3,234,080
Total	7,425,500	24,337,505	8,633,111	38,712,922	79,109,038
(2) 2005 – 2006					
Government	17,819,000	1,312,705	18,544,547	13,837,825	51,514,077
Banks	-	322,000	6,484,342	7,391,500	14,197,842
Individuals	62,000	97,000	1,725,490	3,583,500	5,467,990
Total	17,881,000	1,731,705	26,754,379	24,812,825	71,179,909
(3) 2004 – 2005					
Government	28,950,675	1,303,500	18,455,474	11,383,000	60,092,649
Banks	1,990,400	250,000	7,142,578	7,119,500	16,502,478
Individuals	983,876	100,150	2,025,940	32,38,305	6,348,271
Total	31,924,951	1,653,650	27,623,992	21,740,805	82,943,398
(4) 2003 – 2004					
Government	10,520,000	1,453,500	13,598,200	2,325,500	27,897,200
Banks	1,415,000	4,891,060	2,352,064	7,084,500	15,742,624
Individuals	673,698	110,150	907,900	2,648,155	4,399,903
Total	12,608,698	6,454,710	16,858,164	12,058,155	48,039,727
(5) 2002 – 2003					
Government					29,684,754
Banks					25,517,063
Individuals					3,999,129
Total					59,200,946
(6) 2001 – 2002					
Government					647,863
Banks					23,360,260
Individuals					73,78,501
Total					31,386,625

(7) 2000 – 2001					
Government	3,321,680	17,096,398	15,883,915	18,665,175	54,967,168
Banks	389,500	4,891,060	4,642,366	5,912,500	158,335,426
Individuals	602,117	3,872,063	273,200	2,838,088	7,585,468
Total	4,313,297	25,859,521	20,799,481	27,415,763	220,888,062
(8) 1999 – 2000					
Government	3,456,800	12,311,576	441,150	16,122,280	32,331,806
Banks	380,500	2,117,135	271,700	796,493	13,593,443
Individuals	102,160	796,493	94,100	28,50,800	3,843,553
Other Insts	-	202,000	-	-	202,000
Total	39,39,460	15,427,204	806,950	29,797,188	49,970,802
(9) 1998 – 1999					
Government					38,103,433
Banks					16,503,124
Individuals					7,662,271
Total					62,268,828
(10) 1997 – 1998					
Government	20,082,400	35,000	4,839,360	5,210,278	30,167,038
Banks	3,628,800	-	2,173,000	12,663,674	18,465,474
Individuals	6,507,500	92,036	576,000	215,155	7,390,691
Total	30,218,700	127,036	7,588,360	18,089,107	56,023,203
Grand Total					Rs.761,010,538/

Campaigns on RTI, PRI, Special Economic Zones (SEZs), Save Water Resources, Save Rice and political participation made the women confident and courageous. South Zone is particularly concerned about banning Genetically Modified (GM) Food. They are concerned about banning the hazards of poisonous pesticides like Endosulphan. Consequently, some MLAs have come together to form Green Legislators' Forum to focus on a clean environment and good food for the people. Similarly, Save Rice campaigns are waging a struggle against GMO seeds and GE technology. They organized a People's CARAVAN, which traveled a distance of 3,000 kms in 20 districts covering 2,000 villages in the State. South Zone's work among the *Tsunami* victims and villages continues to this day, using the RBA.

This section has given us some idea of the kind of work going on till today. Now I will return to some more involvements, which attempt to project a new future of CASA.

CASA'S WORLD WIDE WEB OF RELATIONSHIPS:

CASA's involvements and engagements go far and wide. It wants others to know and understand its sustained and systematic social work among the poorest of the poor, *antodaya*. Consequently, it has made its unique contribution at the global forums and international meetings. The Director of CASA attended the 8th Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) at Harare (Zimbabwe) from 3-14 December 1998 as an Observer. The Finance Officer was given the

"Accredited Visitor" status. Four other officers formed the team that organized and ran the CASA stall at the PADARE exhibition during the Assembly. CASA's stall had been very well appreciated, and over 7,500 brochures about CASA's work were distributed. CASA Participated very effectively by producing a video film and information material and was able to exhibit the same. Two workshops were also organized and facilitated by CASA staff. The Visitors Book was full of good comments from delegates who came from almost all the countries of the world and different walks of life. The WCC held its 9th Assembly at Porto Alegre, Brazil between 14th and 23rd February 2006. There were four thousand participants including 348 Mutirao participants. Mutirao is a Brazilian / Portuguese word meaning "a meeting place" or "an opportunity to work together for a common cause". Exhibitions were set up at the venue by over one hundred organizations from all over the world. CASA displayed its various activities in its exhibition stall. More important, CASA sent six delegates to the Assembly under the leadership of its Director, Dr. Sushant Agrawal. It organized two Workshops. The first one was on THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS (MDGs) FOR THE UPLIFTMENT OF THE SOCIALLY MARGINALIZED. The presentations and the lively interaction were appreciated by all. The WCC media summed it up by stating, "Officers from CASA sought a people-centred critique of the goals, questioning who set up agendas and whether or not the people involved could oversee its implementation." The second workshop was on HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE AID IN POST-TSUNAMI CRISIS. The final outcome of the workshop was the emphasis on increased coordination among NGOs of church-related organizations engaged in *Tsunami* response programme to take up a more proactive and a leading role. Through the Workshops and the vivid Exhibition, CASA made an enormous impact on the delegates. It was a unique opportunity for the international ecumenical leaders and lay people to learn about the total life and work of CASA. The WCC Assembly theme was, GOD IN YOUR GRACE, TRANSFORM THE WORLD. The main Message of the Assembly concluded by affirming,

Transform us in the offering of ourselves so that we may be your partners in transforming, to strive for the full, visible unity of one Church of Jesus Christ, to become neighbors to all, as we await with eager longing the full revelation of your rule in the coming of a new heaven and a new earth.

CASA has been equally and enthusiastically involved in the deliberations of the WORLD SOCIAL FORUM, which has been gathering every year since 2001. For wide experiential learning, CASA mobilized more than one thousand participants from its constituencies, comprising of grassroots people, churches, bilateral partners and fifty youths from all over India, for the meeting in Mumbai in 2004. Due to *Tsunami* involvement, CASA was able to send only three of its staff members to participate in the fifth meeting of the Forum held in January 2005 at Porto Alegre, Brazil. Its basic theme is ANOTHER WORLD IS POSSIBLE. It was a golden opportunity for CASA to connect with other global networks on issues like Food Security, working out common strategies and oppose neo-liberalism; to build alliances with NGOs on issues like livelihood and disaster management and to facilitate people's movement on issues affecting their lives through mass campaigns and expressing solidarity with other civil society organizations. CASA was able to organize two workshops at the WSF-V. One was on RIGHTS WITH DIGNITY FOR A JUST AND EGALITARIAN WORLD. The other was WHOSE FOOD SOVEREIGNTY – CAN POOR HAVE ENOUGH TO EAT? Both were well received by the participants. The following suggestions emerged as a result of this involvement:-

- » CASA will have to enhance its knowledge on related concepts, strategies and practices of other agencies in addressing issues from a rights-based perspective.
- » CASA will have to develop new relationships with networks at international level, addressing similar issues and thereby reformulating its strategies to counter the adverse impact of globalization.
- » CASA will have to play an important role in motivating and developing programmes for further enhancement of partnership for advocacy at RIAP level.
- » CASA has to share the aspirations, concerns and solidarity expressed by grassroots organizations participating in the WSF – V, 2005 with the CBOs, Networks and other stakeholders.

After surveying the recent scene of social action of CASA and its futuristic perspective, we are in a position to do a brief SWOT study. As we have arrived at the end of a sixty-year period, we are also in a position to survey the total scene in a holistic manner.

STRENGTHS/ MERITS OF THE FORWARD PLAN:

There are several merits of the Forward Plan, which need to be highlighted and emphasized. It is a definitive step forward compared to

the foregoing defining moments. It faces head-on the structural/ systemic nature of poverty. Poverty is built into the system of governance, both national and international. Such a perspective helps CASA to reiterate its Vision and Mission with some modifications. In this context, internal restructuring is essential and CASA established its Policy Desk, Advocacy Desk, and Area Resource Centre to propagate this perspective and promote the concomitant practice. Realizing the structural/ systemic nature of poverty and consequent development, CASA now vigorously advocates Transfer of power, empowerment of the utterly neglected and ultimately handing over the process to the people. It is a great step forward. At the ground level, this kind of work is going on in all the four Zones, Synergy has made the process more region-specific or State-specific. Wide web of relationship or partnership has been developed to facilitate greater awareness and capacity building.

Another area of strength or merit of this Forward Plan is a decisive Gender policy. It has been formulated very well, taking into account the national-international scenario. It is bold in its assertion and fully committed to its action plan. Its understanding of gender-relationship is objective. Consequently, there is an urgent need to make a radical shift from gender-injustice to gender-justice based on equality, freedom and mainstreaming. According to this Forward Plan, Gender Policy must be owned from top to bottom. It must become the policy of the people, both the so-called powerful and the so-called weak people, of men and women together. For this, a Gender Task Force has been set up to plan, monitor and evaluate the whole process. It is a necessary step in the right direction.

Another area of strength is the definitive emphasis on transparency and accountability at all levels of operation. No one is immune from honesty and probity in public life. No one is above the law. The law must apply equally to all, high or low. This is a much-needed emphasis, particularly in a country like India which is high on the corruption calculation. According to Transparency International's Corruption Perception ranking, India is placed as no. 88 from the bottom. Our only consolation is that we are not last in the list! Corruption is a way of life in India. Therefore, there has to be greater vigilance and monitoring as CASA has suggested.

The fourth merit of his plan is the open recognition of ideological and valuational changes necessary to bring about justice and liberation. It makes a sound critique of the LPG policy of the government. Liberalization has not and cannot engender liberation and justice for the

vast majority of our millions. In a recent book entitled, Globalization, Democracy and Terrorism, Eric Hobsbawm has maintained that globalization has drastically increased economic and social inequalities within and among nations. According to him, this disparity lies at the root of all major social and political tensions and conflicts. Globalization has failed to dislodge the political and military might of the powerful. Joseph Stiglitz had been with globalization for a long time. But later, he expressed its discontent in 2002 and more recently in 2006, he realized that making globalization work is a complex process, which required equity and justice. India is aiming for a near double digit growth. She is now a trillion dollar economy. In the first flush of Reform, India's poverty ratio surely dropped from 36% in 1993-94 to 26% in 1999-2000. But by 2004-05, it climbed to 28%. Therefore the champions of neo-liberal policy began to talk about Reform with a human face. The question is what is the other face? More recently, some of those champions are talking about "Inclusive Growth". In the meantime, starvation deaths are regularly taking place in West Bengal, Orissa and some other States. There is an increasing number of suicides among farmers in India and nearly half (49%) of India's farmers are in debt trap. Such is the story of globalized India today!

If this is the state of affairs, there is an urgent need of an ideological shift. Obviously, LPG is based on a pure idea of the MARKET. It must govern our thinking and doing. As a result there is a real confusion of categories or an ideological confusion, which has been engineered. Now we have PEOPLE-FRIENDLY CAPITALISM and of course MARKET-FRIENDLY SOCIALISM. In such a situation, there is the basic need of ideological clarification and commitment. This cannot be diluted or compromised, particularly for the sake of the *dalits*, *adivasis*, women and children. CASA is on the right track.

Fifth merit of this plan of action is making good use of the existing laws of the land like the Right to Information and the National Rural Economic Guarantee Scheme. The workers at the grassroots level have demonstrated courage and conviction to pursue relentlessly a particular issue and have exposed inefficiency and corruption at high levels of governance. Sixthly, CASA's networking and connectivity is inclusive and ecumenical in the broadest sense of the word. They are practicing inter-religious dialogues and thereby encouraging pluralism and vehemently opposing religious and national fundamentalism. As it opposes fundamentalism, it equally promotes fundamental values of life and liberty, of equality and equity, of freedom and justice. That augurs well for the future of CASA in India.

WEAKNESSES/ LIMITATIONS OF THE FORWARD PLAN:

The very strengths of the plan proves to be its weakness. It is infused or suffused with high ideas and idealism, with vision and values, with mission and ministry. Precisely, at the point, much is expected from CASA in general and its staff in particular. This means rising expectations give birth to rising frustrations. Such a Plan is theoretically idealistic but practically quite difficult. It will require a lot of homework or preparation. The nurturing and the training process has to be systematic, sustained and rigorous. Are the people in this work mentally-psychologically prepared for such a disciplined orientation and experience? It will require time, energy and commitment.

At the empirical, existential level, such a Plan requires people with competence and full commitment. It will require a high degree of courage to face the consequences of Rights-based action. One must be ready to face insults and intimidations, threats and assaults. It is very good to know that few of the workers faced such a problem in Jharkhand and Assam. They were not deterred.

Conceptually, the Gender Policy of CASA is very well articulated but practically whether all the people involved and the referral communities are convinced of this position? Are they willing to be liberated themselves from innate prejudices and presuppositions about femininity and masculinity? Is theology stronger than sociology at this point? Externalization of certain ideas about women has resulted in the objectivisation of the reality of sexual disparity. This has been internalized by the people over generations, resulting in discrimination and patriarchal domination. The people concerned have to be trained and equipped to think and act differently. Surely, the Gender Task Force has an enormous role and responsibility to inculcate such gender-equality and equity. It is a prolong process of moving from darkness to light, from falsehood to truth about human relationship. Another related weakness of this policy is that it indulges in vague generalizations and abstract universalism. It has to be more India-specific like dowry, child-marriage, condition of girl-child, widow remarriage, divorce, abortion and such others. We have to confront on these issues affecting and afflicting our society.

It is good that the LPG policy of the government has been critically evaluated but here is a need for a deeper analysis and assessment. LPG is decisively based on an ideology that is pro-rich and anti-poor, based on the affirmation of the human rights of the rich to amass wealth without any restraint, even at the expense of the poor. This has to be exposed

thoroughly, without mincing words or flinching from our responsibility for the last, least and the lost in our society. Rights of the poor are not directly advocated or vindicated in the context of such a policy.

Another area of weakness in this Plan is a lack of clarification of the idea of LIFE-IN-ITS-FULLNESS. It is not a self-evident phrase that can be easily comprehended without interpretation and elaboration. This phrase has been popularized and turned into a slogan. It can be misunderstood and misinterpreted for one's own vested interests.

OPPORTUNITIES INDICATED IN THE FORWARD PLAN:

Some of the weaknesses mentioned above can be overcome if there is will and determination to do so. Those are not insuperable. They can be clarified and amended at the ground level of exposure and experience. As it is a projection into the future (up to 2013), there is still time to think through the implications and the consequences of following such a perspective. It offers a challenge. It is a promissory note waiting to be realized or fulfilled. This is the opportune moment to make the necessary transition from RBA to a Life-in-its-fullness, based on justice and liberation. As mentioned before, life is multi-dimensional. It has physical-mental-spiritual aspects. It is religio-cultural but more important socio-economic-political. At one time, growth was conceived only in terms of GNP or GDP, per capita income, and daily calorie intake in rural/ urban areas. These are important economic indicators but not sufficient. Amartya Sen and other economists began to emphasize on non-economic factors impinging on economic development. He has demonstrated the intrinsic relationship among economics, education and health. Our development process had emphasized on instrumentalities or mechanics of growth and not on people. People must become aware of their entitlements. So Sen understood development as freedom. Primary health and basic education have become necessary for people's development. Gender-parity has been added to the calculation of growth.

This is an opportunity to make a new study of the economist, Samuel Parmar of the Allahabad University, who later shaped the thinking of the World Council of Churches on development. In the 70s, he had categorically stated that the question of poverty is not simply a question of resources but of relationships. For this, it was necessary to mobilize the spirit of the people. In this context, mechanical transfer of capital and technology will not achieve the goal of growth. Therefore, for him social justice and self-reliance should be preconditions of growth

rather than its consequence. At this juncture, it is good to remember that Mahatma Gandhi had advocated *swadeshi* (self-reliance), *swaraj* (self-rule) and *sarvodaya* (uplift of all) are the constitutive elements of economic development. Both for Gandhi and Parmar, self-reliance did not mean depending on primitive, archaic and obsolete tools and skills. Gandhi had written in Young India, 17th June 1926,

The broad definition of swadeshi is the use of all homemade things to the exclusion of foreign things, in so far as such use is necessary for the protection of home industry, more specifically those industries without which India will become pauperized.

A WCC economist, Richard Dickenson had clarified on this issue when he wrote that self-reliance,

Is to opt for those forms of production, which permit local grassroots initiative and innovation, yielding results compatible with local tastes, conditions and cultures.

In the context of LPG, MNCs or the TNCs and the Corporate business houses capturing and dominating the domestic market, such world of wisdom become highly relevant and meaningful.

Another related issue that needs to be critically examined, evaluated and opposed is the new-found faith in the SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONES (SEZs). I am glad that the various Zones of CASA are engaged in this study. This is an opportune moment to examine it deeply for the benefit of the people at large. It should not remain an elitist exercise. What is the fundamental nature and characteristics of SEZs? What is the fundamental ideology behind them? Who will really benefit from them? Some people think that they are Special Exploitation Zones! What are the social, economic and ecological costs of such Zones? We must remember that the basic issues at stake are (1) Land Acquisition; (2) Compensation for the owners; (3) Rehabilitation of the Internally Displaced People (IDP); (4) Using local labor force instead of using labor-displacing technology. Fundamentally, what does it mean for a farmer to lose his ancestral land? These questions and issues need to be raised afresh, particularly in the context of the ground reality of India. It is time to probe deeply into the authentic causes, including its supporting churches about these vital economic issues. People, all across the board, can be easily co-opted into the status quo.

THREATS OF THE FORWARD PLAN:

I have already indicated the possible or perceived threats of the Plan. It promises much but there could be a big gap between promise and fulfilment, between rhetoric and reality. Much work has to be done in the area of nurturing this way of thinking and doing. CASA has to develop a culture that is conducive towards life-in-fullness. It cannot be assumed or taken for granted. As mentioned before, human rights could be misunderstood or even misused for promoting individual interests or of the group. There could be conflicts in claims. CASA has to anticipate the pitfalls and work accordingly. Some of the threats can be overcome. But the basic threat posed by the rich and the powerful cannot easily be transcended. They will continue to be reactionary and repressive, refusing to see the existential reality as it prevails in India as a whole. This is a matter of life and death for the *adivasis*, *dalits*, women and children. The present Prime Minister of India, Dr. Manmohan Singh, has strongly advised against huge Corporate salaries. He had categorically stated that profit maximization should be within the bounds of decency and greed. He had appealed for Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), a kind of a code of conduct or business ethics. But the fact of the matter is that their social contribution is minimal. They were requested to give back to the community but very often their 'altruism' is for the purpose of getting tax exemptions and sanctify and sanction their Black Money. In the meantime, Indian Corporate giants are coming up with projects such as a mansion is coming up in Mumbai, which will cost Rs. 100 crores. It will have 27 floors, complete with a helipad at the roof top! Another Indian, who is doing extensive business in India, flaunts his wealth by buying a luxury yacht for Rs. 1,300 crores!

CASA has to take a stand as it has by expressing solidarity with the destitute and the impoverished. Obviously, this is posing a threat for the organization and the people involved in this labour of love and the work of faith. It must be willing to be a part of the creative minority in India, standing for justice and liberation, moving towards life-in-fullness for such people. It is not a slogan for CASA but part and parcel of the Forward Plan. CASA is doing social action in a divided, broken world. Contradictions are real. CASA has to face this stark reality. There are death-dealing forces active in the world. They are bent on negating life in fullness for all people. CASA has to contend against "principalities and powers", which are working against the vision and mission of CASA. The Forward Plan is a challenge and not a threat for the people who support and sustain such dreams

and hopes. This is the moment to convert threat into a challenge, fear into hope, dream into reality. I am sure CASA can do it after having traversed so many years and so many milestones. The purpose and the direction of CASA is explicit and unequivocal.

As I have mentioned before, I like to repeat that the threat is also from within, both at the administration level and at the operational level. As it happens with most of the organisations, so in CASA there could be some people both at the administrative level as well as in the operational level, who are not fully convinced and committed to this approach, which is radical and even revolutionary. This internal threat could delay and dilute the targeted aim of CASA as envisaged in the Forward Plan. They are the ones who are prone to go along with the establishment for whom the market has become the *mantra*. In the context of this real threat, it is imperative for CASA to make sure that a thorough and in-depth orientation process is initiated and implemented specially for this group of people – people who genuinely or for some ulterior motive is in doubt or in a dilemma. Unless this group is well equipped, they are not in a position to convince others and convey the essential message, clearly mentioned in the recent Perspective Plan and publications of CASA. They have to be critically and carefully read, comprehended and assimilated into the whole system of operation. It cannot be done half-heartedly. It will defeat the vision and the mission for which CASA has spent a lot of time, energy and money.

At the operational level, it is equally important to train and equip the Field-workers, who are in constant contact with the communities. Transmission at this level is crucial. They are the ones to concretize or actualize the dreams and hopes enshrined in the Forward Plan. It is true that CASA has been engaged in TOT, TOM and TOC for a long time but it is necessary to revitalize and reinforce this pedagogical process from time to time. It needs upgrading and to make it up to date. That will ensure efficacy and effectiveness of the programme and thereby remove to a great extent the looming threat.

CONCLUSION:

In this chapter, I have tried to examine and evaluate some of the significant publications of the new century. The Forward Plan in particular projects till 2013. But the work has started in right earnest, which I have indicated in the next section. I could designate this mode of thinking and action as future perfect. This means that the future

conceived in the documents has already impinged in the present. Thus this futuristic planning and programming become a motivation, inspiration and challenge in the present. This clearly means that although the present CASA is the logical development or the product of its past but it has broken the causal nexus and is determined to be guided by the future. This future is not vague, abstract or remote. It is a future, which is already anticipated in the present. Thus today, CASA is guided not by the inevitability of history but by the possibility hidden in the bosom of the future. It is essentially a dream and a hope of the adivasis, dalits, women, children and other disadvantaged communities. So CASA has a good reason to celebrate its diamond jubilee. In the final analysis, it is fundamentally guided and governed by HOPE and not fate or fatalism.

VII

CASA As The Auxiliary Of The Church

CASA is the Church's auxiliary. This is its unique character and characteristic. Surely, this makes it very special. In this chapter, I will explore the meaning of this fundamental self-acknowledgement. What does it mean by the use of the term 'auxiliary'? I do not think that this is self-evident or self-explanatory. It is important and necessary to examine and evaluate the nature of the changing relationship between the Indian churches and the organisation. What is the way forward?

A BRIEF BACKGROUND:

I like to recapitulate briefly the history of the relationship between CASA and the churches. I depend on the documentation of Bishop Mar Aprem in his book on CASA. In the beginning, CASA's social service was done through the National Christian Council of India (NCCI), which is a conglomerate of several churches in India. At the dawn of India's independence, Mr. B. L. Rallia Ram was the President and Dr. E. Charles Bhatta and the Rev. J. W. Sadq, were the Secretaries of the NCCI. Initially, the Government of India invited the NCCI to work among the pouring refugees from East and West Pakistan. The NCCI Relief Committee was set up for the purpose with people like Dr. Bhatta, Bishop J. W. Pickett and E. D. Lucas. In a recent book on those days of India's Partition, the author has paid a particular tribute to the meritorious service rendered by Bishop Pickett and his wife, Ruth. They were right in the midst of

the communal carnage in Delhi. There was enormous tension among the Hindus, Sikhs and the Muslims. He took charge of the dangerous situation with the active help of the government and the volunteers from several churches and organizations like the YMCA and YWCA. One Methodist missionary who was involved in the relief work was Dr. Clyde Stuntz. Pickett personally saved quite a number of Muslims, starting with one of them. The book states, "He was the first of many orphans of the storm rescued by the Bishop" (page 319). According to the record, Bishop Pickett was shot at twice as he was busy rescuing and sheltering Muslims. Someone also fired a bullet at his residence as more than 200 refugees were sleeping on the verandah, the floors, the beds and even under the beds. But God saved him. The Bishop commended the courage and restraint of the Christian community in Delhi. In a letter to the Methodist mission Board, Pickett stated,

Our people have behaved wonderfully. The courage and spirit of service of many of them has been very encouraging. The case for the Gospel could not be better demonstrated...

They are the unnamed, unknown heroes of social action in the midst of massacre. The Bishop and his wife together organised the Christians in Delhi for providing the provisions necessary for survival. The Bishop appealed to the fledgling Church World Service (CWS) in New York for help. They responded whole heartedly. He along with the volunteers from several churches and organisations, were directly involved in helping the refugees, first at the Purana Quila camp and then at Humayun's Tomb camp. They not only met their primary needs but got involved in educational work, occupational therapy and even recreational activities to ease the tension of the people concerned. In the month of November, 1947, Bishop Pickett received letters of gratitude from the Town Hall Emergency Committee of Delhi and from the government for the help rendered by him, Ruth and the NCCI. Pickett, Bhatti, Lucas and others were instrumental in those days of creating CASA. The Indian churches and their numerous volunteers made a real impact through their relief work.

Another significant development in those early days was the gift supplies received from the USA. It came to be known as Public Law 480. The Indo-American Agreement of 1951 made available a large quantity of food and hospital supplies. The churches through the NCCI handled those gift supplies in collaboration with the Church World Service and Lutheran World Relief, USA. There were several church agencies

like Department of Churches, Geneva, the Council for Organisation of Relief Services Overseas (CORSO) of New Zealand, Bread for the World, West Germany and Christian Aid, UK, were actively involved in relief work in India.

Right Reverend Pius Kerketta, Archbishop of Ranchi, had stated, "We feel goaded on by the charity of Christ to increase our efforts to serve the needy. " The Right Reverend S.A.B.D. Hans, Bishop of the Church of India, Burma, and Ceylon (Anglican) was active in the Bihar Regional Christian Council of the Committee of Relief and Gift Supplies (CORAGS) of the NCCI. At this juncture, it is necessary to mention that the Triennial Assemblies of the NCCI took critical decisions about the Relief work done by them. Those occasions were utilised by the church leaders to discuss and deliberate on issues particularly related to social service. I have already mentioned about the contributions of Bishop Leslie Newbigin. Now I will mention about the great contribution of Metropolitan of the Syrian Orthodox Church, Poulouse Mar Gregorius. CASA held a National Consultation in Bangalore in February, 1977. He had boldly declared at the Consultation,

The Church's Auxiliary for Social Action cannot ignore the disturbing fact. So far CASA has had a chequered history and a doubtful image. Seldom has it been regarded either by the government or by the public, as an expression of the Indian Churches. Basically, it has had the image of a foreign-financed and foreign-controlled enterprise in India. . .

He had therefore, suggested the following course of action:-

- a) Progressive emancipation from dependence on funds from abroad, by cultivating the Christian constituency in India. . . CASA cannot do this without building an elaborate network, using the parishes as a major element in that network. This means full cooperation and backing of the official leadership of the churches. Unless CASA gets the Bishops and the pastor on its side, it cannot effectively enlist the support of the ordinary church members in its work.
- b) . . . Organisations of the poor and of the so-called powerless, as soon as they begin to have some power and effectiveness, are bound to be resisted by those who control power now. And usually, the Bishop and other church leaders are identified with those who control power and not with the powerless. And so, a CASA that is controlled entirely by Bishops and church leaders, is itself bound to become reactionary in the long run.

. After stating this obvious contradiction or a dilemma, the Metropolitan suggested two-fold direction of CASA to pursue the Churches' creative involvement in social action:-

- a) Building up of a huge network of trained young people who can be catalysts in their own societies, for mobilizing and organizing the common people for a socially creative work.
- b) The development of a decision-making network, which includes both the church leaders and young people involved in people's organizations..

Different Workshops were set up to consider the proposals. In 1977, it was suggested that a semi-autonomous department be set up to deal with the operationalization of the proposals. It was specifically recommended that the said department should:-

- a) Help churches to understand what is happening in India today;
- b) Help churches to reflect on the national and international problems and the exploitative nature of the world economy;
- c) Help churches to be in contact with groups/ organisations with similar interests and thrusts.

With regard to the financial sources and resources of CASA, it was recommended:-

- a) The National Board of CASA should initiate steps to achieve "a central shift" from foreign resources to Indian resources;
- b) The Board must move with equal vigour to begin to mobilize systematically, Indian contributions, small and large;
- c) CASA must establish a regular means of communication with local churches through the machinery of the 18 churches, which are members of CASA Society to do promotional work;
- d) Technical personnel be used for research and training from the churches, governmental and secular experts.

This chunk of history is worth repeating in 2007 as it remains relevant and meaningful even after 30 years.

I have already mentioned about the mission sent by the World Council of Churches (WCC) in December, 1977. After surveying CASA's social work, they had stated,

The CASA staff members, their 300 volunteers and the church leaders, were operating cheerfully and efficiently in very difficult circumstances. If the planned Phase III reconstruction is carried out with the same degree of competence, this will indeed be a programme to remember.

This means that the local churches were very active in those days in the midst of floods and cyclones. Church people and many others readily responded with relief and rehabilitation of those affected by calamities of such a proportion. I like to conclude this brief recapitulation with the words of Bishop Mar Aprem in 1979:-

When Christian Agency for Social Action, Relief and Development was changed into Church's Auxiliary for Social Action, it was hoped that CASA would really become the auxiliary of the churches in India. It is true that by registering it as a separate entity from the National Christian Council of India in March, 1976, it is legally the Church's Auxiliary in India. But do the non-Catholic Christians in India own the CASA?

This is a question worth pondering. I have raised this issue in the Introduction of this book. The OWNERSHIP of the churches in India has to be envisaged both from a practical as well as from a perspectival point of view. Finance is important for CASA but more important is the ownership in terms of its philosophy, policies and programmes. Fundamentally, does the churches in India support CASA theologically-ethically? Do the Church leadership and her lay constituency appreciate and fully appropriate the Rights-based approach, which logically must lead to justice, freedom and liberation of the people in its fullest sense? Is this the Agenda of the Church. I like to expand on this issue in this the Agenda of the Church? I like to expand this issue in this chapter and the following two chapters.

CASA'S CONSULTATION ON TSUNAMI FOR CHURCH LEADERS:

As the churches' auxiliary, CASA convened a Consultation for the church leaders on 12th and 13th July 2005, at Mutukadu near Chennai. It was attended by about 40 delegates from the Church of North India (CNI), Church of South India (CSI), Mar Thoma Syrian Church of Malabar, Lutheran churches, Baptist churches, Hindustan Covenant Church, Mennonite Central Committee, Christian Aid, Lutheran World Relief (LWR), Dan Church Aid, and YWCA. The report of

the Consultation is contained in a book entitled, Rebuilding lives: CASA'S RESPONSE TO TSUNAMI - RECASTING FOR MISSION: A RENEWED DIRECTION. The Most Rt. Revd. Dr. Joseph Mar Iraeneus, the Chairperson of CASA, in the Preface, has expressed profound gratitude to the church leaders for their direct support and solidarity for the post-Tsunami interventions, which has immensely helped to rebuild the lives of those poor, *dalits*, the marginalized, the voiceless and the excluded or those battered sections of our society. Dr. Sushant Agrawal, the Director, in the Foreword resolved on behalf of CASA, "We are going to be there with the victims until we facilitate rebuilding their lives with fullness of life, as promised by our Lord (John 10:10)." He went on to affirm or reaffirm "the symbiotic relationship between the endeavors of CASA and the Churches." He was quite convinced that the churches have reaffirmed the fact that "CASA is truly the official arm of the Protestant and Orthodox churches in India for engaging in social action." The Consultation critically reflected on the theme, CHALLENGES AHEAD IN TSUNAMI REHABILITATION- IN SEARCH OF EFFECTIVE STEPS TOWARDS LIFE IN ABUNDANCE. It affirmed,

The spectacle of the churches and CASA working together in a genuine spirit of partnership was a firm affirmation and clear manifestation of the fact that CASA is the specialized and most effective instrument of the churches in India with a mandate from them to pursue and fulfill the ongoing mission of Jesus Christ in bringing life in abundance to all. . .

The message emphasized the fact that *Tsunami* is a blessing in disguise. It crystallizes the underlying reality of India - "injustice, inequities and other exploitative forces which are at the root of the widespread abject mass poverty, hunger, malnutrition, unemployment, illiteracy, ignorance, ill-health and other vulnerabilities." The message concludes with an appeal to the churches to use the services of CASA to promote life in abundance, which becomes accessible and affordable to the *janata*. I have already mentioned about the valuable suggestions made at the Consultation in chapter two. They were keen on providing short-term as well as long-term relief and rehabilitation. They were of the opinion that CASA's development work is not known to the various sectors of the society. Therefore, it should have an effective network particularly in the media, to interpret and spread its philosophy and work.

Prof. Dr. M. Abel, a well-known church leader, in his keynote address, emphasized that the churches and CASA should give highest priority to providing alternative means of livelihood through an alternative system of education focused in building capacities of individuals and communities. People should be made aware of their fundamental right to life in all its fullness. For this, they must claim from the government food security, job security, health security, knowledge security and other values. Some of the church leaders narrated their experience of working among the affected people. Some of them were happy with the fact that the churches responded openly, without any consideration of caste, creed and denomination. While others expressed their anguish at the fact that some of the churches responded along denominational line and against the *dalits*, who were equally affected. Some questioned the housing policy of the government. Fisherfolks were allotted houses 500 meters away from the coast. Such a move affected adversely the professional activities of the group. Some of the Northern partners present at the Consultation, expressed their expectations and concerns. One of them raised the issue of gender equation in terms of CASA's staffing and involvement. Dr. Gnana Robinson of Kanyakumari Peace Trust, urged that victims should be taken as partners in decision-making regarding the types of houses to be built and their location. He suggested that humanitarian aids should have no strings attached to them. In his concluding response, Dr. Agrawal, again appealed to the churches, "should own and trust CASA and work together." The Consultation wholeheartedly endorsed the ideological commitment of CASA to work with the poor and the oppressed, particularly the fisherfolks, *dalits*, women, children, tribals, the landless daily wage earners, bonded labourers and other marginalized groups. In the context of *Tsunami*, quite a number of people became atheists, affirming that there is no God and others became fatalistic, losing their faith in the fullness of life, promised in Jesus Christ. In this context, both the churches and CASA had to respond to such a challenge and proclaim, "God never fails" for those who believe. People must be helped to cope with their trauma and see and feel the liberating and humanizing presence of Jesus Christ.

CHURCH LEADERS' CONSULTATION ON MDGs, 2006:

CASA organized a Church Leaders' Consultation in Kolkata in December 2006. The main purpose was to reflect and evaluate on the Millennium Development Goals of the United Nations Organisation (UNO).

Participants came from Delhi, Tamilnadu, Kerala, Mumbai, Kolkata and other places. It was a fruitful exercise for the participants. There were lay leaders, Pastors and Bishops from several denominations. They deliberated for three days on the following MDGs of the UNO:-

- Goal 1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger;
- Goal 2. Achieve universal primary education;
- Goal 3. Promote Gender equality and empower women;
- Goal 4. Reduce child mortality;
- Goal 5. Improve maternal health;
- Goal 6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases;
- Goal 7. Ensure environmental sustainability;
- Goal 8. Develop a global partnership for Development.

The UNO hopes that these goals will be achieved within fifteen (15) years – from 2000 to 2015. The one hundred and ninety one (191) Nation World Body, appealed to the member nations to help each other to achieve the goals. The 'developed' nations have the moral and ethical responsibility to help the developing nations with financial and human resources.

Those eight general goals have been articulated in term of specific targets. These are:-

	Goal	Targets
1	Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger	Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than \$1 a day. Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger.
2	Achieve universal primary education	Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling.
3	Promote gender equality and empower women	Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education; preferably by 2005, and at all levels of education no later than 2015.
4	Reduce child mortality	Reduce by two-thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under-five mortality rate.
5	Improve maternal health	Reduce by three-quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio.

6	Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases	Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS. Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases.
7	Ensure environmental sustainability	Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources. Halve by 2015 the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water. By 2020 to have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers.
8	Develop a global partnership for development	Address the special needs of landlocked countries and small island developing states (through the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and the outcome of the 22nd special session of the General Assembly) Deal Address the special needs of landlocked countries and small island developing states (through the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and the outcome of the 22nd special session of the General Assembly) Deal comprehensively with the debt problems of developing countries through national and international measures in order to make debt sustainable in the long term In cooperation with developing countries, develop and implement strategies for decent and productive work for youth In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries In cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications.

The former Secretary-General of the UNO, Kofi Annan, said in September, 2005, that the MDGs are people-centred, time-bound and measurable. Secondly, they are based on a global partnership, stressing the responsibility of developing countries supporting those efforts. Thirdly, the MDGs have unprecedented political support, embraced at the highest levels by developing and developed countries, civil society and major development institutions alike. Fourthly, they are achievable. Although these goals were officially put together at the dawn of the third millennium, the work had already started in 1990. Thus according to the UNO, following is the Progress Card between 1990 and 2005:-

GOAL 1: ERADICATE EXTREME POVERTY AND HUNGER

Global poverty rates are falling, led by Asia. But millions more people have sunk deep into poverty in sub-Saharan Africa, where the poor are getting poorer. Half the children under the age of five are malnourished in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.

GOAL 2: ACHIEVE UNIVERSAL PRIMARY EDUCATION

Five developing regions are approaching universal enrolment. But in sub-Saharan Africa fewer than two-thirds of children are enrolled in primary school. Even if children are going to school in South Asia, Oceania and sub-Sahara, they are not receiving high-quality education.

GOAL 3: PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWER WOMEN

The Gender Gap is closing slowly in developing countries. But women continue to get smaller share of wage than men and are often relegated to insecure and poorly paid jobs. They lack equal representation at the highest levels of governance, holding only 16% of parliamentary seats worldwide.

GOAL 4: REDUCE CHILD MORTALITY

Death rates among children under the age of 5 are dropping but not fast enough. Eleven million children a year, i.e., 30,000 a day die from preventable or treatable diseases. The respective governments must discover simple, low-cost solutions.

GOAL 5: IMPROVE MATERNAL HEALTH

More than half a million women die each year during pregnancy or at childbirth. Twenty times that number suffer serious injury or disability. This is the situation even in 2005.

GOAL 6: COMBAT HIV / AIDS, MALARIA AND OTHER DISEASES

AIDS has become the leading cause of premature death in sub-Saharan Africa and the fourth largest killer worldwide. In the European countries of the commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and parts of Asia, HIV is spreading at an alarming rate. Efforts must be intensified, using the new medical treatments to prevent premature deaths. Malaria and Tuberculosis together kill nearly as many as AIDS each year and represent a severe drain on the national economies. Ninety percent of malaria deaths occur in sub-Africa, where efforts are now being made. Tuberculosis is on the rise as a result of HIV / AIDS, though a new international protocol to detect and treat the disease, is showing promise.

GOAL 7: ENSURE ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Sufficient progress has not been made particularly in the context of the plight of the poor, whose day today subsistence is often directly linked to the natural resources around them. It is urgent to prevent the further deterioration of the ozone layer. Access to safe drinking water has increased but half the developing world still lacks toilets or other forms of basic sanitation. Nearly one billion people live in urban slums because the growth of the urban population is outpacing improvements in housing and the availability of productive jobs.

GOAL 8: DEVELOP A GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR DEVELOPMENT

The 'developed' world will have to do more in terms of aid, debt relief, opening of trade, transfer of technology and improved employment opportunities for the growing ranks of young people in the development world.

* The Consultation made the participants aware of the Goals, the specific Targets and the progress made till 2005 about the MDGs. Then the facilitators presented India's current position vis-à-vis the MDGs as follows:-

The **Tenth five Year Plan** of India (2002-2007) has set some key target on the basis of MDGs targets.

The following table shows important MDG targets and where we are today:-

MDG Targets	Tenth Plan Target	Where we are Today
Extreme poverty to be halved between 1990 and 2015: Poverty rate in India to be brought down in 2015 to 16% according to international definitions	Incidence of poverty to be brought down to 10% by 2012	The incidence of poverty is around 26% according to Government of India definitions and around 35% according to international definitions
All children to be in primary school by 2015	All children to be in primary school by 2003	92.14% of children (82.85% for girls) in primary school
Eliminate the difference between male and female literacy by 2007	Halve the difference between male and female literacy by 2007	The literacy rate for men is 74% and for women it is 52% -- a difference of 22%
Reduce 1990 mortality rates for infants and children under the age of 5 by two-thirds by 2015 (2015 target for infant deaths: 40 per 1000)	Reduce infant deaths to 45 per 1000 births by 2007	Infant deaths: 68 per 1000 Under-five mortality: 93 per 1000 births
Reduce deaths due to childbearing (maternal mortality) by three-fourths of 1990 figures by 2015	Reduce deaths due to childbearing to 1 per 1000 by 2012	Deaths due to childbearing range between 4 to 5.5 per 1000 births
Halve the proportion of people without safe drinking water (Target: 85% of people get safe drinking water)	All villages to have sustained access to safe drinking water by 2007	84% of rural families and 95% of urban families have access to safe drinking water but not all source are sustainable

In the light of the above information and interpretation, the participants were convinced that the Indian government alone cannot fulfill the goals and the particular targets. A greater role needs to be played by the NGOs, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and the Church, both national and international, to question, challenge and raise their united voice against the systemic failure and corruption.

They can put pressure on their respective governments and conscientise their respective constituencies about poverty, hunger, illiteracy, lack of education and health. The Church as a People's Movement, must play its prophetic role in this context.

The Bible Studies, Keynote Address, creative worship, sub-theme presentations and the group discussion, facilitated the process of understanding and awareness of the development issues at stake. The church leaders and the lay people, both women and men, young and old, resolved to be more concerned about and be involved in development education and action. The participants of the Consultation were reminded of the memorable words of Kofi Annan at the UNO in 2005,

Let us be clear about the cost of missing this opportunity; millions of lives that could have been saved will be lost; many freedoms that could have been secured will be denied; and we shall inhabit a more dangerous and unstable world.

YOUTH INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME, 2008:

In the early days of CASA, it made use of youth volunteers from churches, YMCA and YWCA for relief and rehabilitation work. But over the years due to changing context and compulsions, voluntary help declined and professionalism entered social service. Inertia set in and the youth in general have become disenchanted with social service and political action. There is a tendency to run away from reality and live in a 'virtual' world through the internet. The churches are not attracting the youth of the country for various reasons. Similarly, the youth are not attracted to the church in general. There is an all round apathy and disillusionment. In this present context, CASA has come forward with a viable programme based on socio-ethical values necessary in the modern world.

CASA introduces the programme with the affirmation, TODAY'S YOUTH ARE TODAY'S LEADERS. With this hope and expectation, CASA gives the youth an opportunity to learn, equip themselves with knowledge, tools and skills to transform the society in which they are living. The purpose of this programme is to liberate the youth from their apathy and complacency; to groom them in such a way that they begin to see the fundamental issues and problems facing their society, to inculcate in them a desire to work for the weak and the marginalized; to empower them to become socially sensitive.

CASA will facilitate their exposure and experience of the grassroots reality through classroom lessons and field work.

The Internship programme is of one year duration. It will be conducted for five years initially with the hope that CASA could select ten youths every year – five girls and five boys. So at the end of five years, there will be fifty (50) socially responsible citizens who will contribute creatively to the transformation of the church and society. The recruitment will be done in two phases. In the first phase, information will be given to the respective churches, applications will be received and then the short-listing of the deserving candidates for the programme will be announced. In the second phase, the selected candidates will have to undergo another round of group discussions and interviews by CASA personnel for final induction into the programme.

The year-long programme will have several stages of orientation and learning. The first week of the programme will be an orientation period, consisting of an introduction, structure and activities of the total internship. After this initial week, four months are allotted for classroom training, which will equip them with some theoretical-theological understanding of the socio-economic-political dynamics of the Indian reality. This pedagogical process will take place through indigenous-creative worship experiences, theological-Biblical reflections, lectures, group discussion, simulations, case studies, transactional analysis and audio-visual presentations. For about eight months, they will be exposed to the ground reality, which will give them practical knowledge and understanding. The Zonal activities of CASA will provide them with this valuable practical experience.

It is hoped and desired that CASA and the churches will be mutually responsible and accountable for this significant programme. The churches should take the initiative and encourage the youth to come forward and avail the programme. They should be willing to sponsor and support wholeheartedly such a programme that will benefit them in the long run. It is also expected that the youth exercise self-discipline and enjoy their live-in and plunge-in experience in the programme. CASA will provide a congenial environment through their staff involvements and arrange for Resource persons and for field work. Finally, it is hoped that such a programme will support and strengthen the solidarity between the churches and CASA.

CAPACITY BUILDING INITIATIVES OF CASA FOR THE CHURCHES:

It would be wrong to think that only the CASA Head quarters is engaged in building bridges with the churches. The four Zones of CASA are actively engaged in reinforcing their respective relationships with the churches. In the Eastern Zone, I have already mentioned about the work which is going on in North-Eastern India particularly the hill states. In Nagaland, Mizoram, Meghalaya, and Assam in particular, CASA is working in close collaboration with the churches. The churches are taking full advantage of CASA's expertise and experience of the socio-economic-political reality of India. Similarly, in Jharkhand, some of the churches are regularly relating to CASA's initiative and thrust. Gossener Evangelical Lutheran Church (GELC), in Diankel, held a dialogue with 87 local leaders about their role in efficient implementation of government policies for the development of *adivasi* villages. The Self Help Group of the same villages are also members of the GELC. They were able to check the sale of alcohol. The local leaders participated in *Gram Sabha* activities for promoting self-governance. Similar activities took place in Kuchinda village in Jharkhand. In addition, they have built grain storage facilities benefiting 50 farmers and a campaign against trafficking of girls, has rescued six girls in that village. The Diocese of Chotanagpur has benefitted from the Food for Community Development (FFCD) programme of CASA.

In the South Zone of CASA, several churches readily responded to its appeal for relief and rehabilitation in the post-*Tsunami* disaster from December, 2004. Several Bishops, Pastors and lay people are actively involved in this herculean task. The work is still going on. For a long time, the South Zone has been engaged in capacity building of the church leaders and laity. Trainings, seminars and meetings have been organized on issue like Right to Information Act, 2005, Rights-based approach to development, gender justice, child rights, social analysis and alternatives, Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Social transformation, human right and such others. Several dioceses, and organizations have immensely benefitted from these interactive sessions. Tamilnad Christian Council, Andhra Pradesh Council of Churches, Karnataka Christian Council, Kerala Council of Churches, Andhra Christian Theological College, Hyderabad, several Lutheran and Baptist churches, Methodist Church in India, Mennonite Brethren Church of India, Malankara Church and few others have been oriented to social issues affecting the Indian society. In 2006, CASA has constructed

a school building at TELC Plutschau Primary School in Tranquebar. CASA was able to organize an exhibition at the Ziegenbalg Tercentenary function. The Self Help Group from Pushpavanam, Perumalpettai and Koolaiyar were able to sell their Dry fish.

At this juncture, it must be mentioned that CASA as the Church's Auxiliary, has several church leaders and laity in its decision-making Bodies at all levels. At the Zonal level, there are ten members from the churches and six members from the Regional or state Councils of churches and four members are co-opted. The CASA society and its Governing Board consist of church leaders and laity. The Director, Dr. Sushant Agrawal in his Preface to the Annual Report of 2004-05, had stated,

Very substantially, our source of strength comes from our 24 member Protestant and Orthodox churches, who have always supported us and consolidated our determination to take up further challenges in very unfavourable situations. We are proud to be an auxiliary of the NCCI.

At this point, it would be helpful to draw our attention to the Director's Report, which he presented to the CASA Society on 9th January, 2007. He had categorically stated,

CASA, being the auxiliary of the Indian Protestant and Orthodox Churches, need to contribute in changing the image from that of a charitable institution to a prophetic church. However, this would also require CASA to challenge the member churches to be open for accountability and transparency.

He had reiterated this position towards the end of the Report,

... Churches need to move away from the conventional characteristic of being 'charitable', and get involved proactively towards a prophetic mission in challenging the socio-economic and political structures which perpetuate poverty of all kinds ... The Church's strength is that it is community-based and people-based ... The time has come when the Churches need to play a larger role in the Civil Society.

This vital emphasis is my point of departure to the next section dealing with the essential nature and function of the Church.

THE NATURE AND FUNCTION OF A PROPHETIC CHURCH:

We recall with joy and gratitude the immense contribution that the universal church has made for the development of people and societies. She has been in the forefront of resistance and reformation. The church stalwart like Martin Luther not only opposed the Pope of the time but he was equally and vehemently against the existing church and society that encouraged certain corrupt practices, superstitions, and ritualism. For a long time, she has stood for the promotion of education and health. Therefore, through the centuries, she has established schools and colleges, hospitals and clinics, which had served the poor and the needy. The church has opposed openly the system of slavery and racism. There have been prophetic voices within the church, resisting forcefully and unequivocally the forces of darkness and death, prevailing in the society of the time. The church had taken the initiative to oppose fascism, communalism and militarism. We cannot forget the names of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Karl Barth and few others. She has acted as a 'gadfly' or a catalyst to bring about social changes, arousing the conscience of people at large. The names of William Wilberforce, William Carey, John Wesley, Alexander Duff and later of Ida Scudder and more recently Mother Teresa of Kolkata have been recorded in the pages of human history for their selfless service for the vulnerable, ignorant, unhealthy segment of society. Much earlier, Thomas Muntzer, John Calvin, George Fox, John Hus and the resistance of the Anabaptists, Diggers Levellers, Quakers who had initiated the process of social change.

It is equally true that the church in the contemporary world has become reactionary and status-quo oriented. It is characterized by hierarchy, episcopacy and patriarchy. For this reason, she is more interested in the role as a 'pujari' and not a prophet, more interested in maintenance rather than building a movement for change and transformation in all areas of life and living. As a result, the church has 'managed' to make her members static, stoical and desensitized. There is a general apathy and callousness about the world in general and one's own society in particular. She seduces and reduces - - seduce the members to believe something's which are false and artificial and reduce the complexity and diversity of the reality around us. Consequently, there is more hypocrisy and dishonesty in the life and work of the church. Such a state of affairs can at best be described as despiritualised. The church in general has become Rightist and Fundamentalist. She is preoccupied with the petty and the parochial, ignoring the macro-issues affecting our modern society. The organized, institutionalized church is

obsessed with bureaucracy and administration, resulting in red tapism, and corruption. The administration of the church is busy with money, property and power-struggles. Concomitantly, the congregations are sucked into this system, robbing her prophetic character and function. It is in such an existential context, we have to understand the nature and function of a prophetic church.

We must remember that the word 'Church' in the English language comes from the Greek word, *ek-kalao*, which literally means, being called out or called into being. Originally, the concept evolved from the civil assemblies or gatherings of people in the ancient city-states of Greece. In some of the Indian languages, *ekklesia*, derived from the same Greek root, *ek-kalao*, is directly used without translation. The English word derived from it is, *ecclesiastical*, which has to do with the structure and administration of the church. But the theology and ethics of the church belong more properly to the realm of *ecclesiology*. It is important and necessary to comprehend this vital distinction and difference, although they are closely related. In this chapter, I am concentrating on 'ecclesiology' rather than 'ecclesiastical'.

We must also remember that the English word, 'church' does not resemble *ekklesia*. It is closer to the German word, *kirche*, which is derived from the Greek word, *Kyriakon*, which specifically means, "belonging to the Lord." Ecclesiology takes into account both these significant meanings - - being called out as well as belonging to the Lord. That gives its distinctiveness and differentia. It is not a private club, only meant for its '*bona fide*' members. Fundamentally, it exists for the sake of the 'outsiders'. That is the mission and ministry of the Church. Therefore, by its very nature, it should be God-centred but people-oriented - - all people, so-called insiders as well as for the so-called outsiders. It is the Body of Christ but simultaneously, it is a body of people, gathered sometime but more frequently scattered.

In the light of the above discussion, what does it mean to be a prophetic Church or a prophetic community? Specifically, it means that the Church has to be the extension or even the incarnation of Jesus' prophetic mission and ministry as demonstrated in the testimony of the early Church. In the chapter on the Bible, I will explicate on Jesus' life and work. But at this point, it is necessary to be clear about the nature and function of the Church. The Church in general and the Indian Church in particular has to carry on and even go beyond Jesus' prophetic work.

The Church of God is constituted by the people, majority of whom are considered as the 'left overs', the scum of the society. The Church is made up of the *dalits*, *adivasis*, women, children and the other poor and the oppressed. They are part and parcel of the grassroots, ground reality of India. Consequently, at the empirical-existential level, the very being of the Church is the becoming of the people - - people becoming more human in terms of equality and dignity, becoming more free and liberated from socio-economic-political shackles that bind them. Surely, the Church of God cannot escape this challenge. It acquires its historical identity in and through the people. Without the people, we cannot conceive of the Church here-and-now. As it is composed of people, it is made up of the world, of the earth. In this sense, it is very much earthy, worldly, with its concomitant needs and aspirations. From this perspective, the Church of God is "a treasure in an earthen vessels" (II Corinthians 4:7) or in clay jars or "a broken reed" (Isaiah 36:6). This implies also that the historical Church cannot be perfect, complete and immune from trials and temptations. It is a physical-spiritual, human-divine community of people under God in Jesus the Christ.

As a historical community, the Church must share and participate in the natural-normal life and work of the people from a prophetic perspective. This has a two-fold function. Firstly, it must be characterized by their spoken and unspoken languages and their interpretations; their painful-joyful memory and understanding; their belief and action; their dharma and karma. Their physical-mental-spiritual nurture and nourishment has to be the agenda of the Church if it is to engage in a prophetic ministry. People have to be awakened and conscientised about their social status, economic well being and political power. It has to ensure and strengthen their critical understanding and consequent action in their respective societies, with their particularities and concreteness. Secondly, it is equally important for the Church to question and challenge and thereby amend their perceptions of power and possibilities, their role and function. They must not compromise or conform to the ways of the world, when it is deliberately deceptive and dishonest. At this juncture, the Biblical injunctions of the early Church is significant,

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - - his good, pleasing and perfect will (Romans 12:2).

There are several versions of the New Testament. At this juncture, I like to present the variations of the same verse in different versions, which will illuminate and crystallize the thinking of the first century Christians. King James Versions (KJV) states, "And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed."; Revised Standard Version (RSV) says, "Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed."; Living Bible states, "Don't copy the behaviour and customs of this world, but be a new and different person with a fresh newness in all you do and think"; Philips Modern English talks about, "Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its mould, but let God re-make you so that your whole attitude of mind is changed."; Today's English Version (TEV) states, "Do not conform outwardly to the standards of this world, but let God transform you inwardly by a complete change of your mind."; New International Version (NIV) has been quoted above; Jerusalem Bible says, "Do not model yourselves on the behaviour of the world around you, but let your behaviour change, modeled by your new mind."; New English Bible (NEB) puts it differently, "Adapt yourselves no longer to the pattern of this present world, but let your minds be remade and your whole nature thus transformed. . . ". Several versions have been cited to clarify certain points. Firstly, it is important to remember that this verse does not address isolated individuals or discrete individuals. Basically, it is addressed to the Church in Rome in that ancient world. Secondly, its understanding of the world is in terms of the age or the time and situation in which the early Christians lived. Thirdly, and most important, it is emphasizing the prophetic ministry of the Church in terms of TRANSFORMATION (in the Greek language metanoia). Thus prophetic ministry is to bring about a radical metanoia of the members, a kind of metamorphosis. So the Church has to become a CHANGE-AGENT or an agency and this change is not definitively cosmetic or superficial. It is a deep-seated change of attitude and action that will "move mountains" (Mark 11:23) or "turn the world upside down" (Acts 17:6). Jesus summoned the pioneer Peter, Paul, John and others, "to be in the world but not of it" (John 17:15). This means that the people are called, not to conform to the standards and strategies of the world, which negate the purpose and direction of God. This means that the Church must know when to say YES and when to say NO to the world. It must inculcate in the people a high degree of discernment and discretion. The Church has to be a NON-CONFORMIST and DISSENTING, when the world marginalizes the people in multifarious ways, when people are taken for granted or "taken for a ride". A prophetic Church is demanding, challenging and of course risky.

At this point, it is necessary to mention that the early Church was not only brave with words but weak in action. They strongly believed in the enfleshment of their own words as "the Word became flesh" (John 1:14) in Jesus the Christ. The first century Palestinian Christians lived in a war-torn, violent world. They lived in a colonial context. The Roman imperial power imposed on the people different kinds of brutalities like heavy taxation, being conscripted into the army and above all Emperor worship. The early Church dissented, refused to bow down to the emperor and refused to join the army. Obviously, they suffered for their non-conformist position. Roman persecutions became popular and the people at large 'enjoyed' the spectacle! There were theological-sociological reasons, both for the action of the ancient Church and the Roman rulers. Whatever the reasons, we have to learn from the vision and values, ideals and ideas of the early Church. Surely, as a church, they were struggling to stand for freedom and justice in that hostile world. If the modern Church want to be prophetic, they have to train and educate all the people, from top to bottom, its leaders and the laity in this direction. This means that the Church has to be busy from Sunday to Saturday, full seven days of the week. The Church buildings have to become multi-purpose, organizing diverse programmes for the uplift of the people, both 'inside' and 'outside'.

A prophetic Church must focus on the people. The people are the pillars of the Church. They will support, sustain and strengthen the life and work of the Church. They are its sources and resources. Their theoretical-practical tools and skills, their innate and acquired qualities of head and heart must be harnessed creatively and critically. Their natural endowments and God-given potentials should be properly utilised to make the Church dynamic and relevant. For this purpose, they need guidance and help. It is necessary to inculcate in them certain fundamental, abiding values like justice and joy, freedom and fair-play, love and liberation. On the one hand, we appreciate and encourage their sincerity and spontaneity, their openness and 'innocence' but on the other, people are prone to be gullible, gregarious, and garrulous. For this reason, it is vitally important that they are equipped and empowered in the right way. They can be and have been misled by the Church herself. Very often, the leadership of the Church has taken full advantage of the people and have 'brainwashed' or 'indoctrinated' them by making them believe a wrong theology and ethics, which reflect and sanctify a false ideology, developing in them a false consciousness. As a result, the very people who should be motivated and animated to

become agents of socio-economic-political transformation, have become individualistic, other-worldly, asocial and apolitical. There is withdrawal and disengagement from the real world. The Church helps them to escape to a make-belief world, a figment of imagination. Encounter with the real world is considered irreligious and unspiritual.

At this juncture, it will be helpful to reflect on the role and function of the Pastor. The word, Pastor, has been used from the inception of the Church in the first century. Originally, the word, 'Pastor', was coined in a rural-agricultural context. It was oriented towards the countryside. The pastor was a herdsman (never a herdsman in the past), who took care of the animals under his custody. He was a shepherd, who looked after the sheep. Such stories are mentioned in the Old Testament. The shepherd was a person with a crook or a long staff in his hand, 'handling' or controlling the flock. He was raising the livestock in a peaceful and serene setting. There was an intimate, personal relationship between the shepherd and the sheep.

In the Old and New Testaments, the word, 'shepherd', is used literally and metaphorically, for God and human beings. As such, God in general and Jesus in particular, were portrayed as the shepherd and the people as the sheep (Psalm 23:1; 28:9; 49:14; 78:52; John 10:11). More significantly, the Bible witnesses to the authentic and the deceptive nature and function of the sheep and the shepherd (Psalm 23:1-4; 28:9; 79:13; 95:7; John 10:11; and 14-15; Ezekiel 34:2-3, 5 and 6b; read the whole chapter). The Bible exposes the misuse of power invested on the shepherds of Israel. Pastoral ministry has to be prophetic in terms of love and involvement, sacrifice and suffering for the people. The same Bible notes that the shepherd of Israel have been feeding themselves and clothing themselves and not feeding and clothing the sheep. Consequently, the sheep becomes more vulnerable, victims of wild animals. God takes charge of the sheep because of the failure of the pastor. He/she searches and seeks the sheep, healing their wounds and strengthening the weak. Finally, God says, "I will feed them with justice". Other Old Testament prophets like Jeremiah, Isaiah and Zechariah use this language of sheep and shepherd (Jeremiah 10:21; 12:10; 23:1; 49:20; Isaiah 56:16; Zechariah 10:2b; 11:9, and 15-17).

In the modern Church, we persist with the Pastor, sheep and shepherd mechanically. We have to reinterpret the metaphors in the modern context. People should not be treated as a flock of sheep, expecting them to behave in 'sheepish' ways and thereby inculcating in them passive-submissive qualities like blind obedience and uncritical

attitudes and action. This is positively detrimental to the development of a prophetic Church.

A prophetic Church must acknowledge with love and humility that God is at work because of as well as in spite of the Church. God is not dependent on or exclusively determined by the life and work of the Church. Jesus came primarily to proclaim the coming of the kingdom of God. Priority and perspective of the kingdom is paramount. The kingdom in the understanding of Jesus is not a territorial notion. It cannot be identified with the Christendom of the past. It is a quality of life and living, characterized by love and justice, peace and well-being. The Church is related to but cannot be identified with the reign of God. At best, the former is a sign, a sacrament, and a manifestation of the latter. The Church must not indulge in self-gratification, absolutising her powers and possibilities. Therefore, one scholar asserted

The Church want to control and domesticate God - - confine God to a definite place. They put God in a cage, as it were, with inspiring ceremonies and praises. Special 'sacred persons' are assigned to retail and distribute the tamed grace of God to the people. Attachment to a "sacred temple" can produce an extraordinary lie! Jeremiah saw this (7:4) and so also Jesus (Mark 13:2).

God is at work through the Holy Spirit in the world of reality. The spirit of God cannot be confined to or limited by the action or the inaction of the Church. Another scholar has said,

It is not the Church that has a mission of salvation to fulfill in the world; it is the mission of the Son and the Spirit through the Father that includes the Church. . . it then has no need to look sideways in suspicion or jealousy at the saving efficacies of the Spirit outside the Church; instead it can recognise them thankfully as signs that the Spirit is greater than the Church and that God's purpose of salvation reaches beyond the Church.

This is the prophetic realization that the parishioners must imbibe for themselves and convey to the world at large.

Finally, the prophetic Church must recover her essential mission and ministry. In its prophetic zeal, it must be liberating and not domesticating the people and even God. It has the awesome responsibility of empowering the people and not enslaving them in the name of fidelity and obedience. It must always strive to unify the people and not dividing them and thereby causing a rift. Divide and dominate has been the policy of the colonial masters of the past and the masters of post-independent India. But the leadership of the

Church must inculcate this basic sense of unity, which is based on love and forgiveness. Prophetic Church must promote and practice such fundamental values as God in Jesus the Christ is liberating, empowering and unifying. The modern Church must actively advance the cause of koinonia (inclusive fellowship), diakonia (social service) and dikaiosisune (righteousness and justice).

SYNERGY BETWEEN THE CHURCHES AND CASA:

This has been a matter of an ongoing debate and discussion since the 60s and the 70s. I have already referred to this issue. Now it is a matter of urgency. We cannot postpone this any longer. When *Tsunami* happens and a calamity strikes, the Churches come forward willingly and actively help CASA in its work of relief and rehabilitation. But the issue is much deeper and fundamental. In this section, I hope to explore this territory.

Firstly, I like to discuss about the word, SYNERGY, which CASA uses in its several documents. Its usage is mainly in terms of other similar organizations outside of CASA or among the several components of CASA. Seldom it is used with reference to the member churches. Precisely, for this reason, I would like to emphasis on this aspect. Like any other English word, 'synergy' has a long history. It is used in several situations and in different disciplines. It has both a secular and a theological connotations. As CASA is familiar with this word, I like to highlight its several meanings, which I believe will have implications for the future of CASA.

The first obvious meaning of synergy is working together and being cooperative, which surely is happening between the Churches and CASA. It is a physical-external arrangement which is working very well from the beginning. The second meaning of synergy is providing power and energy for social action. In fact it is energizing each other through this cooperative ventures. Is this happening? How far this is true both for the churches and CASA? We need to ponder over this. This has to do with the inner strength and spirit - - uplifting, edifying each other.

The third meaning of synergy comes from the theological-ethical disciplines, used by ancient theologians. For them, synergy was a doctrine of the Holy Spirit. It helps in the work of regeneration and the human will cooperated with it. It is for the modern churches to make sense of this doctrine and use it in their relationship with CASA. It must have a vital contribution to make to this ongoing relationship. Then synergy will become more meaningful and effective.

The fourth meaning of the word has to do with the joint action of agents, which enhances each others effectiveness. This means the churches will have to learn from CASA and use that knowledge and understanding for their own life and work. Similarly, CASA will have to learn from the churches, which will deepen and strengthen its social action. This means theology and ethics have to change and grow in the light of CASA's work and in turn the latter's action will be undergirded by sound theological-ethical values and principles.

The fifth meaning of synergy reinforces the above meanings. CASA and the churches together must be enthusiastic and zealous about social action in the society. The churches can and must provide the necessary anchorage for social action. And CASA's collaborative effort must radicalize church's theology and ethics. This combined action brings about mutual conversion.

The sixth meaning of the word is to provide stimulation and inspiration. I think this is helpful for both of them. The churches need to be stimulated and inspired by the work which is being done by CASA all over India. Its work and function, its character and composition is pan-Indian and truly ecumenical. It does not believe in boundaries. It could help churches to transcend their parochial and petty particularities. It could extend and expand the frontiers of their thinking and action. Have the churches perceived of their relationship with CASA in those terms? Lastly, it is interesting to note that the word, synergy, has the connotation of some limitation as the ascent trajectory of an escape rocket and the effects of gravitation and atmosphere. For our purpose, this means that the integrity and independence of the member churches and CASA will be maintained in this active partnership. Partnership is not for the purpose of usurping the power and position of the other. It is a healthy, sound partnership based on equality and dignity.

If there is a synergy of the two, according to the above, then the word, AUXILIARY, will have new meaning and understanding. In the conventional usage, auxiliary meant subsidiary, additional, supplementary, used as a reserve, a kind of the 12th man or woman in the game of cricket. As I understand, it is used by CASA and the churches, as the 'arm' or 'instrument'. This means CASA is "the official arm of 24 Protestant and Orthodox churches in this country." It is considered as "a specialized humanitarian aid and development agency of the Protestant and Orthodox churches." Such a language or formulation could be construed to mean that it is dependent on and determined by the churches. It does not have a life and vitality of its own. On

the contrary, CASA could inject new life and energy to the churches by the kind of thinking and doings. It can, in fact enliven the passive churches. Therefore, 'auxiliary' could be used in the sense that CASA giving support and being helpful, both conceptually and practically. As a result of close connectivity, there is a "fusion of horizon" -- horizon of the churches and the horizon of CASA. This leads to a rapprochement. Both experience new life and energy. The theology and ethics of the churches are revised and reinvented in the light of this fusion. The churches in India must be the source and the resources for renewing and re-visioning the life and work of CASA.

CASA has been exposed to and have the experience of the ecumenical Church world-wide. Its support comes from the ACTION BY CHURCHES TOGETHER (ACT). The present Director of CASA, Dr. Sushant Agrawal, has been elected as its Moderator recently. This means the world Church recognizes CASA's immense contribution. Now it is high time that the Indian Church in general and the member churches in particular, OWN CASA conceptually and practically. The churches must help CASA to develop a theological-ethical perspective that will strengthen and deepen its functional qualities as a service agency. Practically, it must provide financial and infrastructural support for its extensive work all over India. At present, the monetary help from the Indian churches is minimal. The Director has initiated the process. But it is yet to take off the ground. It requires will and determination of the member churches to extend their financial and moral support. Then the Indian Church can be truly proud. Surely, this can be done and must be done.

CONCLUSION:

In this chapter, I have analyzed and assessed the nature and scope of the relationship between the member churches and CASA. CASA began its arduous journey from the womb of the NCCI. The churches in India has given its moral support to CASA, particularly during the time of sudden catastrophes in terms of relief and rehabilitation. But the question remains whether those churches have fully endorsed and encouraged the several defining moments in the life and work of CASA. Do they wholeheartedly own CASA theologically and ethically? Does it make sense? Are the churches in India ready to support even a small portion of the budget of CASA?

I gave the examples of *Tsunami* seminar and the Consultation on the MDGs of the UNO as illustrative of the relationship between the

two. More recently, CASA has initiated a Youth Internship Programme, hoping that the member churches will explicitly demonstrate their interest and involvement in the work of CASA. Then I have shown the relationship between CASA and the churches at the Zonal levels, which is very significant. This work has to go on and strengthened. Then I have attempted to indicate briefly that the agenda of the churches and of CASA must converge. There has to be a common ground, both theoretical-theological and practical-pedagogical, where the two can actively collaborate. Such collaborative ventures and even adventures of the two will produce an ideal synergy, which will be a model for the rest of India. This interface has to be a model for the rest of India. This interface has to be activated and operationalized. In this sense, CASA will be the authentic auxiliary of the churches.

As we end this chapter, it is worthwhile to remember the words of two well-known authors, one a theologian and the other a secular writer. Richard Niebuhr wrote in 1929,

The Church as an organization, interested in self-preservation and in the gain of power, has sometimes found the council of the Cross quite as inexpedient as have national and economic groups. In adapting itself to the conditions of civilization, it found that it was easier to give to Caesar the things belonging to Caesar, if the examination of what belonged to God were not too closely pressed. It represents the accommodation of Christianity to the caste-system of human society.

Os Guinness, well-known British author wrote in the 80s,

Christianity contributed to the rise of the modern world. The modern world in turn, undermined Christianity. The philosophical strength of Christianity lies in its claim to truth, whereas the social strength of Christianity, on the other hand, lies in its challenge to tension. Most Christians have no trouble in seeing themselves as 'believers'. They may be vague about what they believe. Few have looked into the deeper dimensions of the nature of believing. Without a feel for the social-dimension of believing, the Church is like a person paralyzed from the neck down.

It is not simply a matter about the "feel for the social" but a fundamental theological-ethical orientation and transformation of the Church, both national and global. They are not willing or not able to comprehend the vision and mission of the Church as liberating, empowering and unifying all people, particularly the *aam admi*, who are suffering and in pain. Thus the same author goes on to affirm,

Individuals (in the Church) are free to build a world of their own to their hearts content so long as they rock none of the boats of the real world. It (Christianity) is privately engaging but socially irrelevant. There is a taming of religion in the modern world, amounting to a private preference, a spare time hobby, a leisure pursuit -- domesticating the untamable world of the spirit. "Jesus is Lord", they may declare but what do they demonstrate? Little better than spare-time faith and pocket discipleship.

As faith-based and faith-driven communities both the Church and CASA must enter into a deeper fellowship that can promote unitedly freedom, justice, and liberation for all everywhere.

VIII

A Biblical Perspective On CASA's Work

In the previous chapters, I have attempted to trace chronologically the defining moments in the sixty-year life and work of CASA. In the previous chapter, I tried to show the relationship between CASA and the Indian churches. In this endeavour, I showed the existential and the normative relationship - - what is and what ought to be? It is obvious that CASA is the churches' auxiliary in India. It originated from Christian conviction and commitment. It is definitively a Faith-based organisation. Its primary source and inspiration is the Bible. Therefore, in this chapter, I will examine CASA's defining moments in the light of the Bible, asking the question whether it is Biblically-based organisation. In this attempt, I will try to establish a Biblical perspective which is congenial for its growth and authentic development.

A BRIEF BACKGROUND OF THE BIBLE:

The Bible did not fall from heaven about two thousand years ago. It is not a sudden event but has undergone an evolutionary process. It was in formation from the first century of the Christian Era. Ultimately, it was canonized and made authoritative from the third or the fourth century. The word, 'Bible' comes from the Greek word, BIBLION, which means book.

Following are the bare physical-external characteristics of the Bible as we know it:-

1. The Bible is not one, coherent book. It is a compilation of sixty-six books - - 39 in the Old Testament and 27 in the New Testament.
2. These 66 books of the Bible were not written at one time, in one place by a single author. They were composed over a long period of time, by several writers in different historical context. Even in the twenty-first century, the Biblical scholars are not sure about the authorship of the some of the books, e.g. the Book of Hebrews.
3. The Bible does not contain one kind of literature. There are different kinds of writings - Historical, Mythological, Poetry, Prophecy, Wisdom, Apocryphal-Apocalyptic, and Letters. They are full of imageries, illustrations, parables, metaphors and stories.
4. The Bible began as several, scattered manuscripts in the form of SCROLLS. The writers were dependent on the earlier oral tradition. This was the PAPYRUS period (rolled manuscripts); then came the UNCIAL period, written in large capital letters in Greek language. Then these were put in the form of CODEX. Then arrived the period of the MINUSCULE manuscripts, written from the ninth century. The printed Bible came into existence only from the sixteenth century, when printing began in Europe. Then came the several English versions, which I have mentioned in the previous chapter. The translations into the Indian languages began with the coming of the missionaries in the seventeenth-eighteenth century, e.g. the first Bengalee Bible was made possible because of the labour of William Carey in the nineteenth century.
5. Archaeological excavations near the Dead Sea in Palestine-Israel, discovered ancient manuscripts which add to our knowledge of the Bible. It was done in the early part of the twentieth century and the work is still going on. This means that the Bible is still being discovered, expanding and extending our knowledge and understanding of the Biblical times.
6. This cursory glance at the formation of the Bible in general and the New Testament in particular, is to demonstrate that it was not written by Jesus himself. Therefore, it is not an autobiography or even a biography but a faith-witness of the early Church. The word, TESTAMENT, refers to the COVENANT which God made with humanity. So the Old Testament and New Testament, cumulatively, is a testimony of the apostolic Church to the dynamic action of God in the whole of creation.

For the facts stated above, it is explicitly clear that the Bible is complex and vast in scope and character. It cannot be used like a mantra or magic. It requires careful and critical study and interpretation. The word of God is not self-evident. It is not inherent. We have to discover it in the midst of plethora of words - what is of human origin and what is truly divinely-inspired? We have to 'discern' (Prov. 16:21; Is. 44:18).

USE AND MISUSE OF THE BIBLE IN HISTORY:

The Bible is known and used all over the world. It is used by the Christians, both the laity and the ordained, by people of other faiths and of no faiths, by humanists, atheists, and agnostics, and the secularists. The children studying in the English medium schools, supported by the Roman Catholic and Protestant churches, are exposed to some of the verses of the Bible. It is read even in the Post-graduate courses in some of the Universities in South and North India.

Historically, the Bible came into the Indian consciousness with the coming of the colonial masters and the foreign missionaries. It had its positive, as well as negative impacts. Raja Ram Mohan Roy, the pioneer of the Indian renaissance and religious and social reform, wrote one of the early transcription on the Bible entitled, Precepts of Jesus: A Guide to Peace and Happiness. He focused on the values of Jesus, quoting profusely from the Sermon of the Mount. This process began in the early part of the nineteenth century. Later, the well-known Tagore family, Kesab Chunder Sen, Swami Vivekananda (Narendranath Dutta), Mahatma Gandhi, S. Radhakrishnan and other Indian stalwarts used the Bible frequently to explicate on religion and society. We rejoice that the Bible is so popular. But we need to raise question about its usage - used to defend what or whom?

At this juncture, I will briefly mention about some of the following misuse or even abuse of the Bible:-

1. For a long time, the Bible was used by well-known theologians and scholars to defend the patriarchal way of thinking and doing. Obviously, it resulted in gender-discrimination, negating the fundamental equality and dignity of women. So it is possible to assert that such a usage was pro-male and concomitantly anti-female.
2. The Bible has been used to defend the Establishment or the system, however unjust it may be, e.g., the feudal system of the mediaeval age and more recently, the apartheid system in South Africa. This has resulted in the assertion of racial superiority. Slavery was sanctified. Such a reading of the Bible engendered a pro-rich/wealthy stance or even anti-poor discourse and deed. Today, we are reaping the consequences of such a prejudiced perspective of the past.

3. The Bible has been interpreted to promote and practice an anthropocentric discourse and deed. "Man-against Nature" or "Nature red in tooth and claw." Such scholars strengthened the idea or perception that Nature is the enemy of man (woman). Thus pollution, deforestation, melting of the polar ice, global warming can be directly traced back to such a mode of thinking, based on the Bible.
4. For a long time and even today, the Bible is interpreted to uphold and reinforce exclusive, individualistic, inward-looking and other-worldly spirituality. Consequently, injustice and inequality continue unabated, without let or hindrance. For such people, religion is for the purpose of promoting private piety. The Public, political world of reality operates within a sociological framework, bereft of values and principles.

Precisely because of the above distortions and trivialization of the Bible, there is a decisive advent of a new mode of thinking and doing. From about last fifty or sixty years, there is a rise of new theologies, which are definitively based on and guided by the Biblical witness. Liberation theology, Feminist theology, Eco-theology, Dalit theology, Minjung (People's) theology and such others have entered into our consciousness and action. This means that it is possible to read or re-read the Bible, both positively and negatively, from the point of view of the rich or the poor. We are all suffering from a sociological-ideological captivity. We must examine our own prejudices and presuppositions prior to reading the Bible. Therefore, one writer has stated,

The meaning of a text do not lie within it (the Bible) like wisdom teeth within a gum, waiting patiently to be extracted . . . like a flower waiting to be plucked from its stem.

This means literal, proof-text method of reading and interpreting the Bible will not yield its authentic meaning. We must remember that a text has to be conceived within its own historical-sociological context. Text and the context belong together. Their socio-economic-political climate was very different from our time. Their sociology or biology should not become our theology. The ancient Jewish people began as twelve tribes of Israel. Their dietary restrictions, cultic practices, the social system of slavery, their understanding of war, judgement and punishment cannot be considered as divine imperatives. They considered God as a moral monster, cruel despot, exterminating women, men and children, taking delight in violence and war (I Samuel 15:3; Joshua 11:20; Deuteronomy 28:63; Numbers 15: 32-36). In one book it

is stated, "turn your spears into pruning hooks" (Isaiah 2:4), while in another book, it is stated, "Turn your pruning hooks into spears" (Joel 3:10). Capital Punishment and Holy wars were openly advocated (Exodus 21: 22-24; Deuteronomy 22: 23-25). Women were considered as ritually unclean because of menstrual period and child-birth. We have come a long way from those dark and cruel days. No text is composed in a limbo. It has its original habitat. If we understand this, then we will know how to re-read, re-interpret and re-invent the text for our purpose today. Otherwise, it is irrelevant and obsolete.

This misuse or abuse of the text does not diminish its importance and indispensability. Precisely, now as we recognise its power of legitimisation in history, our urgent responsibility is to rehabilitate it by de-legitimation. The same Bible has the potency to transcend and transform. The support for such a venture comes from an unlikely source -- Mahatma Gandhi. He discerned the problem in the early part of the twentieth century. He had realized that the ancient scriptures are historically-conditioned and culturally-determined. Thus he had asserted in 1927,

And I, therefore, admit, in all humility, that even the *Vedas*, the *Koran* and the *Bible* are imperfect word of God and, imperfect beings that we are, swayed to and from by a multitude of passions, it is impossible for us even to understand this word of God in its fullness.

Again in 1936, in his paper, **Harijan**, he had reiterated this position more directly and unequivocally,

I exercise my judgement about every scripture including the *Gita*. I cannot let a scriptural text supersede my reason. Whilst I believe that the principal books are inspired, they suffer from a process of double distillation. Firstly, they come through a human prophet, and then through the commentaries or interpreters. Nothing in them comes from God directly.

For this serious dilemma, Gandhiji had pleaded for "some authoritative body that would revise all that passes under the name of scriptures, expurgate all the texts that have no moral value." This scriptural scrutiny was expressed particularly about what was written about women in *Manusmriti*. He had said, "It is irreligion, not religion, to give religious sanction to brutal custom (child marriage). The *smritis* bristles with contradictions." In 1925, he was categorical, "Sanskrit texts

of doubtful authority cannot be invoked to sanctify a practice which is in itself immoral". Subsequently, he went on to clarify his position in 1936,

... all that is printed in the name of scriptures need not be taken as the word of God or the inspired word. But everyone cannot decide what is good and authentic and what is bad and interpolated.

In this way, Gandhiji was demanding certain clear interpretative principles or norms, which will help us to read and make meaning of the scriptural text. Obviously, he was against blind and uncritical conformity to texts that in fact is derogatory and abusive of women in particular. This reference to Gandhiji helps us to comprehend the predicament of perspectives developed from the past precepts and principles.

I want to end this section with the warnings, contained in the Bible itself. They demonstrate the nature of the misuse/use of the Bible. I want to stipulate those caution separately:-

1. Primarily, the Bible is not for business, for profit, for peddling, hawking as a cheap merchandise (II Corinthians 2:17). It is not a commodity to be used cheaply.
2. It cannot be chained, shut up, bound, fettered (II Timothy 2:9). This means it cannot be domesticated, monopolized by any particular people, belonging to a country, caste, colour, denomination or even a religion. It has an intrinsic freedom of its own. It must grip us or get hold of us from inside.
3. It cannot be falsified, distorted, tampered with, used deceitfully for one's own selfish interests (II Corinthians 4:2).
4. Re-reading of the Bible can ignite a fire that can destroy all that is false and unjust or can act as a hammer that will smash the arrogance of the rich and the powerful (Jeremiah 23:29). Then it will be living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from the spirit, joints from marrow, it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart (Hebrews 4:12). That is the potency of the liberative word of God.
5. It can be put into action as it is written in Isaiah 55:10-11:-

For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven,
and do not return there until they have watered the earth,
making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower
and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out

from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

6. Authentic word (logos in Greek and dabar in Hebrew languages) is liberative, creative and fruitful. For this reason, Jesus himself distinguished among four kinds of reception of the word. He compared it to the seeds which the sower throws to the ground. Some seeds fall on the pathway and does not find the soil. Birds come and eat them up. Secondly, some seeds fall on the rocky ground, where there is not much soil. They germinate quickly, the sun comes up but as there is no depth, they are scorched and wither away. Thirdly, some seeds fall among thorns and so when they sprout up, they are choked. Fourthly, some fall on a fertile soil, bringing forth fruits (Mark 4:3-12; repeated in Mathew 13:1-17; Luke 8:4-15). This is a serious warning. We cannot be naïve or simplistic about the word of God. Much depends on training, nurture, and nourishment. Receptively in terms of proper interpretation and re-interpretation of the scriptural text will bring about transformation.

Now we are in a frame of mind that is conducive towards delving deep into the scriptural text that will provide a perspective for CASA's work in the world. I will do this in terms of the defining moments in the life and work of CASA.

THE BIBLE AND THE DEFINING MOMENTS OF CASA:

The Old and New Testaments together testify to the work of relief and rehabilitation. There are several examples but for our purpose, I will be selective. Essentially, the Bible witnesses to a God who is the provider and giver of life in terms of food, water, shelter and work. He/she provides relief and rehabilitation. But human beings are created in the "image of God" (Genesis 1:26-27), giving the m freedom with responsibility. He/she provided the initial ingredients or the raw materials like "the heavens and the earth"; light and darkness; water and dry lands; birds and animals; plants and trees." Soon after this creation, God hands over the responsibility to the humans and then only he/she said, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it. . (Gen. 1:26 and 28). After doing this, God felt satisfied and "indeed, it was very good" (Gen. 1:31). He/she provides a partner, a companion for fellowship and to be fruitful. But humans misconstrues God's purpose, misuse the God-given freedom and are in great predicament. This mythological origin of creation is to emphasize on the divine direction for humanity. We need to keep this in mind as we begin our study of the Bible.

The story of the great deluge is introduced as a punishment for human wickedness in terms of murder (Genesis 4:8) and wide-spread corruption and violence. But the great floods do not destroy humanity completely as God helps Noah to survive and later flourish. According to the Biblical narrative, Abraham is chosen as the patriarch of the nation. God provides for him, in his old age in particular. Later, this same Abraham pleads and bargains with God for the survival of Sodom and Gomorrah (18:22-33). But not even ten people could be found to spare the twin city. The human tragedy persists in terms of intrigues, high treason, lies and deceit. But in the midst of it, God continues to provide relief and rehabilitation to those ancient tribes of Israel. Such is the nature of God's passion and compassion for the people. God does not give up.

The Book of Genesis, the first book of the Bible, ends with the Story of Joseph (chapters 37-50). In and through this ancient episode we learn about God's relief and rehabilitation of Joseph. His brothers wanted to destroy him out of jealousy. Later they decided to sell him. He was sold and taken to Egypt. God in his infinite grace rehabilitated him and became a power to reckon with. Later, during the time of famine, he is the one to rescue his brothers and provide them provisions to survive hunger and want. Such is the turn of events. God's relief is provided and rehabilitation is made in the midst of the slavery of the ancient Jewish people in Egypt and subsequently, the work of rehabilitation begins with their exodus from their land of slavery. God has his/her own way.

God in Jesus Christ comes into the world to provide relief and rehabilitation to the suffering humanity. He has indicated the way. In his three year ministry, he was constantly busy, providing food to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, sight to the blind and life to the dead and the dying (Matthew 8:1-4, 5-13, 14-15; 9:27). Thus when the disciples of John the Baptist came, enquiring about Jesus' bona fide as the Messiah, he responded clearly,

Go back and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind can see, the lame can walk, those who suffer from dreaded skin-diseases are made clean, the deaf can hear the dead are raised to life, and the Good News is preached to the poor (Luke 7:22, repeated in Matthew 11:4-5)

Jesus was not a sadhu, cut off from the world, living in solitary splendour. He was not just a preacher but a regular practitioner. But

it is necessary to look at his words. According to him, the Final or the Last judgement will be in terms of action in the world,

The righteous will then answer him (God), "When, Lord, did we ever see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we ever see you a stranger and welcome you in our homes, or naked and clothe you? When did we ever see you sick or in prison and visit you?" The King will reply, "I tell you, whenever you did this for one of the least important of these, you did it to me" (Matthew 25: 37-40).

Thus according to this context, providing relief and rehabilitation to the antodaya, is a form of worship to God.

The Bible as a whole, therefore, endorses, the second defining moment in the history of CASA - - Need-based social action. As mentioned before, this is different from but continuous with the first defining moment in the history of CASA. As an ancient book, it mentions of God's sensitivity to and identification with the needs of the downtrodden. The garden of Eden (Genesis 2:8) is the symbol of God's providing character. He/She provides for the various needs of humanity. In spite of human greed and selfishness, God gives an assurance and makes a promise,

When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue is parched with thirst, I the Lord will answer them. . I will open rivers on the bare heights, and fountains in the midst of the valleys; I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. I will put in the wilderness the cedar, the acacia, the myrtle, and the olive; I will set in the desert the cypress, the plane and the pine together, so that all may see and know. . (Isaiah 41: 17-20a).

When the ancient Jews were liberated from the Egyptian slavery and God was guiding them to the land of Canaan, they had forty years of wilderness experience. This is documented very well in the Old Testament. It was a revelational experience. On the one hand, it reveals the human condition very clearly but on the other, it reveals the nature and function of God. It was an experience of barrenness, without food and water - - of uprooted-ness and consequently, directionless. But God was with them,

And you shall remember all the way which the Lord your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness. . Your clothing did not wear out upon you, and your foot did not swell, these

forty years. . . For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land, a land with flowing streams, with springs and underground waters welling up in valleys and hills, a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey, a land where you may eat bread without scarcity, where you will lack nothing, . . . You shall eat your fill. . . (Deuteronomy 8:2,4 and 8-10).

There are other references to the wilderness experience (Deuteronomy 29:5; Numbers 32:13; Joshua 9:12; Amos 2:10; 5:25. They bear testimony to God's caring (Nehemiah 9) and sustaining them (Neh. 9:21), spreading table or giving them food in the wilderness (Psalm 78:19). So specific needs were met. Similarly, the ancient prophets were people who helped during the time of famine and even when they were dead or dying (2 King 4:40; Ezekiel 37:1-10).

Jesus was responsive to the needs of the people in their particularity. There was no attempt on his part to indulge in vague generalizations and false universalism. He was busy feeding five thousand people, healing different diseases. So the early followers of Jesus continued the mission and ministry of Jesus faithfully. Simon Peter had entered the temple to pray with John. A lame man was begging and asked Peter and John for financial help. But Peter said to him,

"I have no silver and gold, but what I have I give you; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk." And he took him by the right hand and raised him up; and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. . . "Why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we had made him walk? . . . and the faith that is through Jesus has given him this perfect health in the presence of all of you" (Acts of the Apostles 3:1-16 is the whole story).

Pioneers like Peter, Paul, Barnabas and few others were engaged in social action from the outset. Obviously, it was a faith-based and faith-oriented social action that is documented in this Book and the epistles in the New Testament. One whole book, immediately after the gospels, is designated as ACTS of the Apostles. That is significant. They looked after the needs of the congregations scattered in Rome, Corinth, Galatia, Philippi and such others in that ancient world. They worked 'encouraging', 'edifying' one another (I Thessalonians 5:11 and 14; I Corinthians 14:26; Romans 15:2; Ephesians 4:29) so that they "do not lose heart" (Ephesians 3:13; II Corinthians 4:16). This kind of

a moral-spiritual ambience helped them "not to grow weary in well-doing" (Galatians 6:7-9; see also Romans 2:7; II Thessalonians 3:13). This kind of an attitude and action was in partial fulfillment of Jesus' immortal words,

You are the salt of the earth, but if salt had lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? . . . You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. . . In the same way, let your light so shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven (Matthew 5:13a, 14 and 16).

It would be wrong to think that the Bible is limited to the micro-world, dealing only with individuals, local needs and issues. There is a slow but a sure disclosure of the bigger, wider world. We must remember that the Bible recapitulates a hoary past, filled with interesting myths and frightening ghosts. But in the midst of this situation was the fundamental affirmation of a creator-God - - creator of heaven and the earth. The Bible traces the ancient history from the days of polytheism (belief in many gods), to henotheism (there are many gods but one's tribal deity is the greatest) to moral-righteous monotheism (belief in one God). This long-drawn process facilitated the evolution of a mind that began to comprehend reality from a cosmic dimension. They began to view people and events from this macro-perspective.

Chronologically, the Bible begins with two stories of a God who is global in character and action. Such stories symbolized God's global concerns and care, purpose and direction, rhythm and harmony, unity and universality. God's creation is not only affirmed but is affirmative - - "And God saw that it (creation) was good" (Genesis 1:4, 10b, 12b and 15b) and after the creation of the human, it is stated, "God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good" (1:31). God cannot be selfish and exclusive. He/she imparts this global-cosmic character and function to the humans by implanting his/her image (1:26-27).

This creator-God is also the supreme sustainer. His/her sustaining power and possibilities are made available to the humans through his involvements and engagements. Thus the creator-sustainer God, in his/her nature, cannot be non-involved and disengaged. So the Bible is the unveiling of unlimited divine-human rendezvous. We will return to this topic in the next chapter. At this point, it is necessary to note that in the second Book of the Bible, God is keenly interested in and identified with the ancient Jewish slaves in Egypt and in partnership

with them, works out the roadmaps for their escape and liberation. Certain individuals are used as instruments to operationalise his/her plan. His/her aim and objective of this liberative action is not immediate and temporary. He does arrange for their relief and rehabilitation, meeting their immediate needs of food, water and shelter. But God goes beyond those temporary physical needs. He/she nurtures and nourishes them to live in communion and community. They began to realize that "human beings cannot live by bread ALONE" (Deuteronomy 8:3; Matthew 4:4; Luke 4:4). This means human beings must reckon with the larger issues of human rights, dignity and authentic equality. Concomitantly, this implies human freedom and justice.

Thus those larger issues began to impinge on their understanding of the humanum. From this perspective, the Bible is a critical attempt to enable and empower humanity on those lines. But it is not easy. They love quick-fix solution to their problems. They want 'cosmetic', artificial-superficial changes and not radical metamorphosis. Both the Old and the New Testaments testify to human foibles and failures. They uphold the cardinal principle of freedom, both in terms of institutions and individuals. They strongly believed in *azadi* from the perspective of *Yahweh* (Jehovah). For them, freedom has socio-economic-political dimension. But more important, it has to be mental-moral-spiritual. This is demonstrated in the behaviour of the erstwhile slave in the wilderness. Slavery in Egypt had come to an end but their slavish mentality was so engrained or entrenched that the latter had become their mental makeup. They were liberated from Pharaoh's Egypt but they continued to complain, indulging in groaning and mourning and murmurings.

The whole congregation of the Israelites complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. The Israelites said to them, "If only we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots and ate our fill of bread; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger (Exodus 16 2-3).

Then the Lord provided them with 'quails' and Moses had reassured them,

When the Lord gives you meat to eat in the evening and your fill of bread in the morning, because the Lord has heard the complaining that you utter against him - - what are we? Your complaining is not against us but against the Lord (Exodus 16:8).

The people demanded water from Moses as they and their animals were very thirsty in the wilderness. They were ready to stone Moses to death for not meeting their basic needs. The Lord responded to the petition of Moses and provided for water (Read Exodus 17: 1-7; see also Numbers 14:2, 27 and 29). Thus the people had to learn the hard way to depend on God and have faith. It was an attitudinal problem and God had to teach them a lesson through Moses and Aaron. Freedom of the mind is essential. Rights and responsibility are intrinsically related. The fundamental, human rights are recognized and acknowledged in the Bible. But humans must exercise their freedom with responsibility.

Finally, the Bible stands for justice and liberation. They are mentioned and repeated in the Pentateuchal (first five books of the Old Testament); Historical like the I and II Kings and I and II Chronicles; Poetical, like the Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Song of Songs, and Lamentations; and the Prophetic literature. According to those writers, justice and liberation are constitutive of the character of God. The total thrust and thinking of the Bible is crystallized in and through such action. From the beginning, the Bible talks about slaves, widows, orphans and foreigners. This means the thinking about the Bible is not vague and abstract. It is concrete, physical-external. The ancient writers believed that God is engaged in a *mukti* mission, based on *insaf*. LET MY PEOPLE GO was the divine demand (Exodus 5:1; 6:11, 26-27; 7:2,4 and 16; 8:1, 20-21 and 32; 9:1 and 13; 10:3-4). The people must be given freedom, which will engender liberation and justice. This freedom obviously did not mean freedom to starve and die. It has a double dimension, negative and positive - - freedom from slavery and freedom for a fullness or wholeness of life. In the Old Testament it was couched in a colourful language. I repeat,

And I have come down to deliver them (the people) from the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey. . a land with flowing stream, with springs and underground waters welling up in valleys and hills, a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey, a land where you will eat bread without scarcity, where you will lack nothing. . (Exodus 3:8 and Deuteronomy 8:8-9; see also Ex. 13:5; 16:31; 33:3; Deut. 6:3; 11:9; 26:9; Joshua 5:6).

This liberational and justice thrust of the Old Testament is carried over into the New Testament. Jesus and his first disciples were concerned about and fully identified with this macro-issues of justice

and liberation. Jesus words and deeds converged at this crucial point. He boldly proclaimed,

The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, and to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour (Luke 4:18-19; taken from Isaiah 61:1-2a).

His proclamation was operationalised in his social practices among the people, particularly among the sick, the poor and the widows. He told his disciples, "Let your righteousness (and justice) exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees" (Matthew 5:20). Later, in this chapter, I have mentioned about Jesus' understanding of justice in terms of changing or reforming structures, systems or institutions, even if they are sacred or sanctified by a long legacy. Pharisees and others questioned and challenged him about his piety and practice. Jesus, in turn, posed counter-questions and counter-challenges in his three-year ministry. He knew his priorities and consequently, he had responded to the Pharisees, who wanted to 'trap' him, "Give to Caesar what is due to Caesar but give to God what belongs to God" (Mark 12:17). Indirectly, he was asserting the precedence and priority of God even over Caesar, who considered himself as god on earth. Jesus openly referred to King Herod as 'fox' (Luke 13:32). We must realize that the people, who did not like him and opposed him, were not socially 'bad' people. On the contrary, they were socially held in high esteem for their 'religiosity' or 'piety'. But for Jesus such a show of righteousness was not enough or even wrong. Precisely, because such self-righteousness did not seriously reckon with the issues of justice and injustice, of bondage and freedom. Mary, the mother of Jesus, had anticipated very well the nature and function of Jesus righteousness and religion,

God has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. . (Luke 1:51-53; read the whole section, 46-55).

This is the immortal Song of Mary or the Magnificat, which is used on a regular basis in several churches. It is also important to mention that this Song is anticipated in the Song of another well-known woman in the Old Testament, Hannah, the mother of Samuel. In it, she also proclaims,

Talk no more so very proudly, let not arrogance come from your mouth; . . The bows of the mighty are broken, but the feeble gird on strength. Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread, but those who were hungry are fat with spoil. . God raises up the poor from the dust; he lifts the needy from the ash heap. . for not by might does one prevail (1 Samuel 2:3a, 4-5a, 8a and 9b).

Jesus summarized his fundamental mission and ministry in terms of the KINGDOM OF GOD. He expressed and explained this basic concept through many parables and vivid illustrations. This pictorial presentation proved to be powerful for the people. They comprehended the concept very well. He advocated a kingdom or a quality of life, characterized by love and liberation, joy and justice, freedom and fair-play.

It is important to remember that Jesus was not an exclusive, isolated preacher, living in his ivory tower of seclusion. He began his work by calling few people to share and participate in his vision and mission. He imparted his knowledge and understanding to his disciples from the outset. As a result, Jesus' justice and liberation lingered on among his disciples, subsequently, becoming a powerful movement in history. Thus Jesus' justice-oriented action was an ongoing movement even after his death.

Peter, Paul and few others perpetuated the profession and practice of Jesus. Paul in particular, was an ardent advocate of Jesus' life and work. His code and conduct grew out of this influence and impact. His concept of liberation and freedom was developed in the context of Jewish preoccupation with law. He realized quite early that law cannot save and liberate. It can control, and guide people in their life and living. Love must be the basic principle of life and living. This enabled him and others to oppose tooth and nail, forced circumcision for the 'gentiles' becoming Christians in those days. He had a vision of cosmic liberation,

. . that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves. . groan inwardly. . for in hope we were saved. . we wait for it with patience (Romans 8:21-23a, 24a and 25b).

According to Paul, justice and freedom has a wider dimension. It is not anthropo-centric but cosmo-centric. It is in this macro-context, he advocated freedom,

For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. . For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters, only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence (Galatians 5:1 and 13). . Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. . You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of human masters. . All things are lawful for me, but not all things are beneficial. . Do not seek your own advantage, but that of the other (II Corinthians 3:17; I Corinthians 7:23; 6:12a; 10:24).

The above quotations from the Letters in the Bible, give us some idea of the Pauline perception of freedom and liberation. He views it both positively and negatively. In his keen longing for liberation, he is not oblivious to its dangers particularly at the level of daily behaviour with regard to food and following age-old customs. Such injunctions about freedom can be traced back to Jesus' statement, "You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). Peter warned the early church about the function of freedom, "They (some people) promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption; for people are slave to whatever masters them," (II Peter 2:19).

In this section, I have looked at the different defining moments of CASA from a Biblical perspective. We have discovered that the ancient Bible, which is about two thousand years old, deals with the whole range of social action -- Relief, Rehabilitation, Needs and Issues, Human Rights and liberation and Justice. But we must remember that the underlying motif and motivation of the Bible is Forward-Looking. It has its own Forward Plan, not just for a ten-year period, but for the future of humanity as whole. It is also noticeable, this Future thrust in terms of freedom, justice and liberation, already has been activated in the present profession and practice. For this reason, it is possible for the present to move towards this targeted future, in spite of, or may be because of the present predicament. Such problem does disrupt life but they become a challenge and an opportunity for justice-oriented movement of history. There is the Promise of God for a better life in the Bible, which is embodied in his/her several covenants. They arouse hope and ambition for a fresh future. The Bible shows vividly the human dilemma in terms of injustice and bondage but it also indicates a new future, arising out of the old.

BIBLICAL THRUST OF SOCIAL ACTION LEADING TO JUSTICE:

I began the chapter by stating that we should not depend on isolated, discrete texts of the Bible to determine its understanding about social action. I have made use of scattered verses to establish the different kinds of social action done by CASA in last sixty years. It is helpful to some extent. But methodologically, what does the Bible stand for as a whole? For this, it is necessary to comprehend its thrust and direction. Consequently, in this section, I will specify its main thrust.

RELIGION AS RIGHTEOUS-NESS AND JUSTICE AND NOT RITUALISM:

Christianity has been shaped and determined by Hebrew-Jewish thinking for a long time. Judaism is an ancient religion. It has evolved for several centuries. It gave birth to Christianity and later Islam. But obviously, both Christianity and Islam have developed their own perceptions and conceptions and thereby have become independent religions. Ancient Judaism has evolved through different distinct periods in their arduous history like monarchy, priestly and the prophesy. Therefore, we cannot reduce that long history into few propositions. But it is possible to come to some convergence and continuity in the midst of their discontinuities. The ancient Jewish people suffered immensely through the vicissitudes of their history. They perceived of their suffering some time negatively and some other time positively and creatively. Some times such socio-economic-political sufferings made them other-worldly and non-relational to this world. This gave birth to apocryphal-apocalyptic thinking and action. Some of the ancient Jewish priests had emphasized on rituals to the exclusion of righteousness and justice.

Prophet Amos of the eighth century B.C. was quite forthright and categorical about this. He had said,

I hate, I despise your festivals, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them; and the offerings of well-being of your fatted animals, I will not look upon. Take away from me the noise of your songs; I will not listen to the melody of your harps. But let JUSTICE roll down like waters, and righteous-ness like an ever-flowing stream (Amos5:21-24).

Similar stern reprimand we hear from prophet Isaiah,

What is to me is the multitude of your sacrifices? says the Lord; I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts, I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs or of goats. . . incense is an abomination to me. New moon and sabbath and calling of convocation - - I cannot endure solemn assemblies with iniquity. Your new moons and your appointed festivals my soul hates; they have become a burden to me . . . even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood. . . seek JUSTICE, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow (Isaiah 1:11-17).

Again, we read in Prophet Micah of the seventh century B.CE.,

With what shall I come before the Lord, . . . Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do JUSTICE, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God (Micah 6:6-8).

It would be wrong to think only the ancient Jewish prophets were against rituals. It is also mentioned in the other genre of literature in the Old Testament, as for example, in the Book of Samuel, the Priest reprimands king Saul and says,

Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obedience to the voice of the Lord? Surely, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams. For rebellion is no less sin than divination, and stubbornness is like iniquity and idolatry (I Samuel 15: 22-23).

In the Book of Psalm, this idea is mentioned several times,

Sacrifice and offering you do not desire, but you have given me an open ear. Burnt offering and sin offering you have not required (Ps. 40:6). . For you have no delight in sacrifice; if I were to give a burnt offering, you would not be pleased. The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise (Ps. 51: 16-17).

Why such strong indictment against rituals? In those ancient days, both the leaders or the rulers and the people had to observe elaborate rituals, stated in the law. Over a period of time, they began to indulge in ritualism, being oblivious to the main purpose and goal of religion. Sacerdotal supremacy prevailed and rituals became ends in themselves. They forgot the fundamental tenet of religion - - leading to righteousness and justice.

At this juncture, it is good to remember that the ancient Jewish prophets, *nabii* were not only foretellers but forth-tellers or telling the truth related to ground reality. Their beatific vision of God was well planted on earth. Thus they not only proclaimed and preached monotheism but moral monotheism, strongly believing in a moral-righteous God. And so they were indignant at the people's immoral religion and religious immorality. For them, morality and religiosity embraced whole of reality, particularly socio-economic-political reality. This idea was based on corporate personality and social solidarity. They viewed human beings as a unity of mind-body-spirit - - a psychosomatic-being. They could not conceive of humans as isolated atoms but as social beings. That explains their emphasis on public morality, which is intrinsically related to and rooted in faith in God.

In line with the ancient Jewish tradition, Jesus preached and practiced religion in terms of righteousness and justice in the first century Palestine. He is considered as a prophet, who perpetuated in particular the strong prophetic tradition of the Old Testament. For this reason, Jesus made a clear distinction between the religion and the concomitant practice of the Pharisees and the scribes and his own religious stance. The religion of the former is characterized by ritualism, externalism and legalism. It was more hypocritical and dishonest. Thus Jesus had put it bluntly,

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint, dill, and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: JUSTICE, and mercy and faith. It is these you ought to have practiced without neglecting the others! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel. . For you clean the outside of the cup and of the plate, but inside they are full of greed and indulgence. . So you also on the outside look righteous to others, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness (Matthew 23:23, 25 and 28; read the whole chapter to know Jesus' mind).

Therefore, it is not surprising that Jesus endorsed fully the ancient Jewish affirmation, "I desire mercy and not sacrifice", (Matthew 12:7).

This was mentioned in the context of his disciples plucking heads of corn and eating on the Sabbath as they were hungry. Similarly, with regard, to religious fasting, Jesus was not legalistic. Rituals have a relative worth. They cannot be absolutised. They are for the sake of God, who is absolute and for building relationships with others.

The early church had learnt the lessons of Jesus very well. They understood religion essentially in terms of righteousness and not rituals. They affirmed God's righteousness and not self-righteousness. Initially, the early church was full of Jewish Christians and when the non-Jews became Christians, the question of the ritual of CIRCUMCISION was raised by the Pharisees, who were in the church. Pioneer Peter, Paul, Barnabas and other apostles had an open debate and dialogue on the issue in a Council in Jerusalem in about 50 C.E. At the end of the Council, they passed a unanimous resolution, supporting the dissenters of circumcision, although the majority of them were Jews (Acts 15:6-29). James, a disciple of Jesus, declared,

Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world (James 1:27).

Dharma must inevitably lead to *karma*, which is justice.

RICH AND THE POOR IN THE BIBLE:

The ancient Bible takes an unconditional stand in support of the *dalit*, *adivasis*, women and children. There is no ambiguity. God does not compromise on this issue. He/she is not a neutral God. When he/she expresses solidarity with the ancient Jewish slaves in Egypt, he/she is unequivocally against the powerful Pharaoh. When the affluent Pharaoh dilly-dallies, God persists and finally makes sure that the slaves are liberated. Similarly, about five hundred years prior to the coming of Jesus, the Jews are taken as exiles in Babylon. Again God is openly, publicly on the side of the exiled people, helping them to return to their own land. God further helped them to rebuild their sacred temple. This is how the people perceived of God's interventions.

God's support and solidarity with the poor is not casual, ad-hoc and sporadic. After his/her rescue operations, he/she does not leave the poor, powerless slaves and the remnant in the lurch. God helps and guides them in a sustained, systematic basis. After their deliverance from Egypt, the ancient Jewish people were guided through "the forty years in the wilderness" (Deuteronomy 29:5).

At this point, it is necessary to mention that the Bible does not romanticize or idolize the poor. God's concern and compassion for the poor and the oppressed does not overlook or ignore the follies and foibles. Like all beings, they suffer from selfishness and greed. God designates them as "stiff-necked people", meaning stubborn and rebellious. God becomes angry at their groaning and mourning (Ex. 32:9; 33:3 and 5; 34:9; 2 Chronicles 30:8; Acts 7:51; Exodus 16:2-3). They had come out of Egypt but Egypt continued to haunt and hurt them. They were saved from external slavery but in the process they had imbibed a slavish mentality. They wanted to go back. Such is the human condition! But this human predicament, does not annul God's primacy of the poor.

In several places, the writers of the Old Testament focuses sharply on the poor and the needy. In the Book of Psalms it is written,

May the king judge your people with righteousness and you poor with justice. . May he defend the cause of the poor of the people, give deliverance to the needy, and crush the oppressor. . For God delivers the needy when they call, the poor and those who have no helper. . (Ps. 72:2,4 and 12; see also 14:4; 44:12; 53:4).

The ancient prophetic literature of the Old Testament is loud and clear about the poor. It is written,

. . rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow.
. They do not defend the orphan, and the widow's cause does not come before them. . . The Lord enters into judgement with the elders and princes of his people; it is you who have devoured the vineyard; the spoil of the poor is in your houses. What do you mean by crushing my people, by grinding the face of the poor? says the Lord God of hosts Ah, you who make iniquitous decrees, who write oppressive statutes, to turn aside he needy from justice and to rob the poor of my people of their right, that the widows may be your spoil, and that you make the orphans your prey! . . The villainies of villains are evil; they devise wicked devices to ruin the poor with lying words, even when the plea of the needy is right. . Is not this the fast that I choose; to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free. . Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house. . (Isaiah 1:17b, 23b; 3:14-15; 10:1-2; 32:7; 58:6-7).

We cannot end this section without mentioning the writing of another Prophet, who lived about eighth century B.C.E.,

. . they sell the righteous for a silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals - - they who trample the head of the poor into the dust of the earth and push the afflicted out of the way. . Therefore because you trample on the poor and take from them levies of grain. . you who afflict the righteous, who take a bribe, and push aside the needy in the gate. . Hate evil and love good, and establish justice in the gate (Amos 2:6b-7a; 5:11a, 12b, and 15a)

I have deliberately quoted extensively from the ancient prophetic tradition, to show explicitly the Biblical stand for the poor and the oppressed.

Jesus openly and publicly expressed his solidarity with the poor and condemned the rich for exploiting the former. There are several references to this issue. For our purpose, I will mention few of them. He had asserted, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:23; repeated in Matthew 19:24; Luke 18:25). Jesus makes a deliberate contrast between the rich and the poor when he affirms,

Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.
Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled. . But
woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation.
Woe to you who are full now, for you will be hungry (Luke 6:20b-21a; 24-25a).

According to the Biblical testimony, Jesus was not born in a palace or in a well-to-do home. He was born in a stable, his body was wrapped in a cloth and laid in a manger. He was the son of an ordinary artisan. Such was the humble origin of the man from Nazareth. This context made him sensitive or responsive to the poor and the oppressed of his time. His keen observation eulogised the gift of a widow in the temple,

Many rich people put in large sums (of money). A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which are worth a penny. . . (Jesus said), "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. For all of them have contributed out their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on" (Mark 12:41b-44; repeated in Luke 21:1-4).

Among his numerous parables, Jesus narrated the story of a Rich person and one Lazarus (Luke 16:19-25). The rich man was very busy with his own comfort, overlooking the basic needs of the poverty-stricken Lazarus. The stray dogs came and licked his sores, which were all over his body. He managed to survive on crumbs, which were thrown into the rubbish heap. Jesus gave a name for the poor man but the rich man remains unnamed. Usually, it is the opposite. Thus Jesus continues,

The poor man dies and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. In Hades, where he was being tormented, he looked up and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side. He called out, "Father Abraham, have mercy on me" (Luke 16:22-24a).

Jesus says in the parable, that even Abraham is not able to help the rich man as there is a big divide, created by his deliberate neglect of Lazarus. Jesus was not advocating the law of retribution and subscribing to a "pie-in-the sky" theology. We have to read this parable in the context of his total mission and ministry. In the same chapter, Jesus said, "You cannot serve God and money" (Luke 16:13). Therefore, Jesus was establishing his priority of the poor in the light of his understanding of God. This concept is very well endorsed in his challenge to a Rich Young Ruler (Mark 10:17-25; Matthew 19:16-24; Luke 18: 18-25). The brief encounter between Jesus and the young person terminated abruptly, when the former asked the latter to sell his possessions and give to the poor, "But when he heard this, he became sad, for he was very rich" (verse 23).

Among the ancient apostles, James, who could have been the brother of Jesus, was direct and unequivocal about the issue,

For if a person with gold rings and in fine clothes comes into your assembly, and if a poor person in dirty clothes also comes in, and if you take notice of the one wearing the fine clothe and say, "Have a seat here, please," while to the one who is poor, you say, "Stand there," or, "Sit at my feet," have you not made distinctions? . . . Has not God chosen the poor in the world to be rich in faith and to be heirs of the kingdom? . . . But you have dishonoured the poor. Is it not the rich who oppress you? (James 2:2-6a).

After making these affirmations, James goes on to indict the rich for exploiting the poor,

You rich people, weep and wail for the miseries that are coming to you. Your riches have rotted, and your clothes are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver has rusted, and their rust will be evidence against you and it will eat your flesh like fire. . Listen! The wages of the labourers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord. . You have lived on the earth in luxury and in pleasure; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. You have condemned and murdered the righteous one, who does not resist you (5:1-6).

Those ancient words have a contemporary ring. Obviously, the issues of wealth and poverty is not only a socio-economic matter but profoundly and definitively a theological-ethical matter.

I would like to conclude this section of the chapter with the words of Jesus, which sound puzzling, FOR YOU ALWAYS HAVE THE POOR WITH YOU (Mark 14:7a; Matthew 26:11a; John 12: 6a). Obviously, this text poses a serious doubt about Jesus' mission and ministry. This text can be comprehended within the original context. The story is narrated in detail in all the four gospels, particularly in Luke 7:37-50. A Pharisee named Simon had invited Jesus to a dinner party and the latter obliged. But the host was taken aback by the intrusion of a woman, who according to the text was living an immoral life (7:37). She must have been a sex-worker in that small town and consequently, a number of people knew about her profession, including the Pharisees. At the outset, there was a lot of confusion and consternation among the guests about her presence and finally, an open confrontation with Jesus. According to the two of the gospel-writers, the oil was worth, "three hundred denarii", which is equivalent to nearly a whole year's wages for a worker. His own disciples were indignant, "snarled at her", and uttered, "why this waste? It could have been sold for a large sum and the money given to the poor" (Matthew 26:8-9). The host was not interested in the price of the oil or the poor. His anger was against that woman in particular. The Pharisees were judgemental and self-righteous.

The question remains, why does Jesus justify the action of that woman? Jesus' affirmation about the poor in this context is not to be universalized and absolutised. He was to discern the real intentions and motivations of the disciples, the host and the guests. Very often, the poor becomes the object of charity done by the rich. They become means to gain God's grace and favour. Jesus knew that the amount

of money spent on anointing him, could not bring about justice and liberation of such people. Beyond that, Jesus was able to apprehend the motivation of the 'fallen' woman. The oil was her sweat, tears and blood. It symbolised her agony, longing for compassion and forgiveness. It was her way of demonstrating her transformation. Jesus responded positively and against the wishes of the disciples, the host and the guest, "Your sins are forgiven. Your faith has saved you; go in peace" (Luke 7:48 and 50). Jesus is redefining poverty and development within the larger theological-ethical framework. I shall examine this in the text chapter.

This broader horizon of poverty was well grasped by the ancient apostles. This emerges very well through the Pauline paradox in his letters to the congregations in different places,

Already you have become rich! Quite apart from us, you have become kings (I Corinthians 4:8a). . We are treated as imposters, and yet are true. . as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything (II Corinthians 6:8b and 10). . For you know the generous action of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich (II Corinthians 8:9). . But those who want to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many senseless and harmful desire that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and in their eagerness to be rich, some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains (I Timothy 6:9-10).

Those words from the legacy of Christianity remain relevant and meaningful.

BIBLICAL THRUST IN TERMS OF STRUCTURAL TRANSFORMATION:

Over the centuries, Christianity has been understood in an individualistic and other-worldly ways. The Bible has been privatized. If we examine the Bible as a whole and attempt to articulate its core message, we realize that it stands for structural/systemic changes. The story of the Hebrew people begins as several tribes of Israel. They lived as scattered, nomadic people. According to the Bible, it is God, YAHWEH, who mobilized them as a people and galvanized them into action in that ancient world. Thus it is written, "You shall be my people and I will be your God" (Jeremiah 7:23; 11:4b; 24:7; 30:22; Ezekiel 14:11; 36:28b;

37:27). It becomes the refrain of the ancient people. This was a personal, intimate relationship forged on the anvil of pain and suffering. This is not an ordinary relationship, a contract or a temporary arrangement. It was called a COVENANT, established by God with several Jewish Stalwarts. A covenant is a long-lasting, loving relationship, initiated and inspired by God. God had made these covenants with the people as a whole as well as with few individuals, who were to be his/her instruments of liberation and justice. This covenant was the fundamental structure of relationship.

This covenantal relationship became concrete and real when God intervened on behalf of the enslaved people in Egypt under the ancient Pharaohs. They used slave-labour for their great building structures. God not only called a people and formed them into a cohesive community but was busy to deliver them from real bondage. This is the saga of the EXODUS - making an exit with the help of God. Similarly, God helped them in their Babylonian exile. Their captivity was a matter of divine concern. These dynamic action are decisively communitarian. Transformation therefore, had to do with the liberation and freedom of a whole community of people and not individuals.

The SABBATICAL and JUBILEE laws were instituted for the sake of the poor and the oppressed in the land. Those were structural arrangements, which were objective in scope and character. They were to become the codified scheme of conduct for the people. It is explicitly written,

And you shall hallow the fiftieth year and you shall proclaim liberty throughout the land and to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you; you shall return, every one of you, to your property and every one of you to your family. . You shall not cheat one another, but you shall fear your God. . (Leviticus 25:10 and 17; read also verse 28-33 and 40-54; 27:17-24).

Detail stipulations are mentioned about property, debt, the slaves (bonded labourers) and for the resident aliens in the jubilee year. Similarly, ancient laws were enacted for the sabbatical year. It is written,

Observe the Sabbath day and keep it holy, as the Lord your God commanded you. Six days you shall labour and do all your work. But the seventh day is a Sabbath. . you shall not do any work. . so that your male and female slave may rest as well as you (Deuteronomy 12-14) . . You shall not strip your vineyard bare, or

gather the fallen grapes; you shall leave them for the poor and the alien: I am the Lord your God (Leviticus 19:10).

These social structures were established to give complete rest to the people and the land. Rest helped them to remember, repent and restore their moral-spiritual-physical energy. It was a moment of liberation and justice, particularly for the slaves, aliens, widows and the poor. De jure these structures were operative if not de facto, as it happens with any piece of legislation. But structures of freedom and justice were introduced.

Jesus and justice are integrally related. Consequently, his approach and perspective was not individualistic. He worked relentlessly for socio-economic-political transformation as well as moral-spiritual changes. He viewed them in unity. Ancient Hebrew thinking and practice cannot be compartmentalized. A human being was considered a psycho-somatic unity and so transformation had to be holistic and wholesome. Firstly, Jesus was concerned about the practice of the Sabbath laws in his days. Invariably, many of his healing work were done on the Sabbath day, as recorded in the gospels. The purpose of this violation was to restore its original dignity and objective. He boldly asserted, "Sabbath is made for human beings and human beings are not made for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27). Secondly, Jesus' attitude towards the PHARISEES. He was not angry with any individual Pharisee but against that community that claimed to be religious because of their strict adherence to the laws of the land. He wanted the people to be liberated from legalism, externalism and false piety. Thirdly, Jesus' dealings with the women were radically different from the Pharisees and the others in his society. He worked for gender-justice in his own way. He was liberated from inhibitions within and prohibitions from outside. He mixed with them easily and openly, without being hypocritical. His associations with Martha and Mary (Luke 10: 38-42); Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna (Luke 8: 2-3); woman of Samaria (John 4); woman taken in adultery (John 8:1-11). I have already mentioned about the widow's mite and the woman who anointed him with precious oil. He openly challenged the social stratification that dehumanized women. In this context, he questioned the ancient Jewish legal system, which dehumanizes and destroys relationships. According to the law of the land, a woman taken in adultery, must be stoned to death. Jesus considered such a law inhuman and discriminatory. He openly opposed it in his own way (read John 8: 1-11). So fourthly, the legal system needed radical changes. Fifthly, the temple system in Jerusalem was detrimental to

the development of a just, equitable society. The poor people had to purchase their sacrifices in the precincts of the temple, which were expensive. There were moneychangers sitting in the temple for this purpose. Such a situation made Jesus indignant. He was provoked to a drastic action, according to the gospel writers. He used a whip, attempting to clean up the place. In his anger, he said,

"Take these things (cattle, sheep, doves and money changers) out of here! Stop making my Father's house as marketplace (Matthew 21:12-13; repeated in Mark 11: 15-17', Luke 19:45-46; John 2:13-17).

Another area of concern for Jesus was the prevalent understanding and practice of POWER. He had taken cognizance of the power of Pharaohs, Caesar, kings and monarchs and other non-religious and religious leaders, his own closest disciples like James and John. They disclosed their hidden agenda - - to sit at the right and left of Jesus' throne in his glorious kingdom. Then Jesus responded by challenging them,

Are you able to drink the cup (of sorrow) that I drink, or be baptized with the baptism (of the cross) with which I am baptized with? . . . You know that among the gentiles those whom they recognise as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many (Mark 10: 35-45: see also Matthew 20: 20-28).

Jesus is openly and publicly questioning the fundamental nature and function of power. He was opposed to reckless, ruthless display of power. Power is for the purpose of EMPOWERING the marginalized and not to render them powerless. This means, Jesus not only questioned power *per se* but the idea of 'empowering'. Empowering on the basis of the traditional, historical model of power, will only repeat the mistakes and failures of the past. Jesus was establishing a new model of power - - the POWER OF THE CROSS. We will turn to this topic in the next chapter. At this juncture, we need to note that Jesus was indicating and symbolizing a new structure of power, which is not disabling the people but essentially enabling them- - AN ENABLING POWER.

JESUS' SPIRITUALITY:

From the above discussion, some may conclude that Jesus was a social reformer or a social activist, establishing a kind of a NGO! That would be a distortion of his primary mission and ministry. There, in this section, I will attempt to clarify Jesus' understanding and practice of spirituality. He did not conceive of it as something esoteric and elitist, meant for an exclusive group of people. He could not conceive of spirituality apart from the totality of reality, divine and human. For this reason, he touched upon several areas of life and living and criticized some of them openly and stringently, without mincing his words or flinching from his God-given responsibility.

Our idea of 'spirit' or 'spiritual' is abstract, vague and unreal. For Jesus, the spiritual is intrinsically related to the social/physical. There was no dichotomy or dualism in his thinking and action. On the contrary, he integrated them very well and viewed them as a whole, as a totality. In this context, spirituality becomes the depth dimension of our daily reality. Thus he had told, "Take up your cross (of life) and come and follow me" (Luke 14: 27; repeated in Matthew 10:38). Jesus was crucified with the crucified people of the world - - crucified by oppression and injustice, by deliberate neglect and marginalization.

Once Jesus took three of his closest disciples to a mountain-top (see Mark 9:2-8; repeated in Matthew 17: 1-8; Luke 9: 28-36). The basic purpose of this mountain-top experience was to clarify the direction of His mission. He does not go alone but with Peter, James and John. It is a corporate experience. Jesus himself had a corporate experience. The great Jewish law-giver, Moses and the great prophet, Elijah appear together in his vision. This was a symbolic action to suggest the unification of the law and the prophet in Jesus. There is another side to this scriptural narrative. Simon Peter was very excited with the mountain-top experience and so wanted to stay there for a longer time. But Jesus had to remind them indirectly about their work in the world. Moses and Elijah appears for a short time and soon disappears, leaving Jesus alone with the disciples. This means, past cannot linger on unnecessarily in the present. This also means that the four of them were not to linger on nostalgically on the mount. They must come down and continue to fulfill God's will in the world. This corpus is designated in the Bible as the Mount of Transfiguration. Jesus was not transfigured into a being that is unearthly and thereby other-worldly. It was a temporary experience to help them to understand their objective. They were to come down from the Mount of Transfiguration and get

involved in the valley of disfiguration - - disfigured by disease, injustice and death. Jesus brings them down and immediately become busy with social action. This is mentioned in the following chapter and verses. Essentially, spirituality is not cut off from grassroots, ground reality. Jesus was to respond to basic human needs in the name of God. It was a humanitarian work from a divine perspective. It is faith-based and faith-directed and motivated - - faith in a God, who is active in the world.

Jesus did not come to take people to heaven or escape the earthly reality. He asked his followers to be like 'salt', 'leaven' and light (Matthew 5:13, and 15:13:33; I Corinthians 5:6-8). The purpose of salt is not to remain separate but disintegrate, dissolve and identify with the whole and thereby change its quality and character. Similarly, leaven has a function to perform and the light is given to enlighten and illuminate reality. These are definitively relational metaphors. This is the kind of spirituality Jesus advocated and put into practice in his life and work. It is a spirituality of engagement and identification and not a spirituality of disengagement and disinterestedness. This is what we learn from the Bible.

CONCLUSION:

In this chapter, I have examined several texts from the Old and New Testaments to demonstrate the nature and function of God in general and of Jesus Christ in particular. I have tried to establish the fact that the Bible witnesses to a dynamic God, who is interested in and identified with the world of reality. But this identification is with discernment and discretion. Social action is at the root of such engagements and involvements. The Bible testifies to God's action in history for the sake of transformation. So it begins with creation, salvation-liberation and finally looks forward to a new creation or re-creation. Both the Testaments testify to this forward thrust. It talks about "new heaven and new earth" (Isaiah 65:17-18; Revelation 21:1 and 5), "new Jerusalem" (Revelation 3:1) and "new creation" (II Corinthians 5:17). This means that there is sufficient grounding in the Bible for doing social action for the sake of transformation and new life. We have to believe in this promise, which in turn, becomes the basis of our hope and determination to bring about a new order of life and living. God can motivate and guide us in this venture and adventure.

IX

An Ethical-theological Perspective On CASA's Work

CASA discovers its identity and direction by being the Church's Auxiliary. The Bible is the product of and shaped by the apostolic community designated as the Church. Over the millennium it has actively engaged in social action for the uplift of humanity, irrespective of caste, colour, creed and community. Christian theology was conceived in the womb of the ancient church, going back to the first century of the Christian Era. It has undergone drastic changes over the centuries. Our primary purpose in this chapter is to develop an ethical-theological perspective, which will provide a basis for CASA's social action.

A BRIEF UNDERSTANDING OF CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY:

CASA is a faith-based and faith-directed institution. This faith is not blind, irrational and superstitious. For this reason, it seeks understanding and consequent action. Christian theology is not a God-talk in isolation. Intrinsically, it is the dynamic interface of God, human and the whole of creation. It is a human attempt to discover the inherent, reciprocal relationship among the three. At the outset, it should be made clear that this is not a selfish, exclusive exercise to dominate and domesticate people who have different affiliations. On the contrary, it is an enterprise, which is characterized by inclusiveness and openness. Fundamentally, freedom is its essential nature. Jesus was a free person, uncluttered, not suffering from inhibitions within and prohibitions without. As soon as

I mention the name of Jesus, theology seems to become exclusive and particularistic. I will return to this topic later. At this juncture, we have to remain faithful to the Lowest Common Denominators (LCD), namely, GOD, HUMAN and CREATION. These are not exclusive categories. Most of the religions of the world subscribe to these categories. This is the point of convergence. But there is a need for clarification.

In the previous chapter, I have given indications of the Biblical understanding of the nature and function of God. God is not an exclusive being, living in solitary splendour. Essentially, he/she is a RELATIONAL BEING -- relating purposively with the humans and creation. This relationship is not mechanical and impersonal. It is a direct, personal relationship with people at the grassroots level. This relationship is with the purpose of bringing about profound transformation for the well-being of all. I have already demonstrated from the Bible that God is the living embodiment of LOVE, FREEDOM AND JUSTICE. God is not a dictator, who wants to dominate and domesticate people and turn them into puppets or automations. God has deliberately created free human beings, giving them responsibility to build a new society. This relational God is active and dynamic. He/she is known and acknowledged in his/her action in the whole of creation. He/she is the CREATOR-LIBERATOR-RECREATOR. God's creation is not an once-and-for-all event but an ongoing creative process. God's liberation (salvation) has to do with the whole of life and all of life. This means that no areas of life is outside the purview of God's action. Consequently, sin and salvation cannot be individualized or privatized. For a long time and even today, the church of God in Jesus, the Christ does not recognise socio-economic-political sin perpetrated and perpetuated by the powerful in particular. The implication of this is that one can claim oneself "to be saved" or "a born-again Christian" and yet go on practicing and directly or indirectly, promoting pernicious social systems which dehumanize and deprive millions. Therefore, it is urgent to emphasize the structural-systemic sins without making them vague and abstract.

Christian theology affirms the fundamental promise and hope of a new future. This promise and hope originates in and initiated by God, knowing in advance the wretched condition of creation in the present. This advance knowledge is not based on the idea of Destiny, futurology in terms of Palmistry, astrology, Feng shui, reading of Tar-rot cards and such others. This is based on the knowledge of the human, who has the potential or inclination both for the good and the bad. That is the burden of God-given freedom. According to the Bible, this new future

is not individualistic, other-worldly and spiritual in a vague sense. It is described in concrete-physical terms -- "new heaven and new earth"; "new Jerusalem"; "new creation"; "Behold, I (God) make all things new." Then the question is -- what is the role and responsibility of the humans for this new future??

At this juncture, it is important to understand the nature and function of the humans in relation to the whole of creation. The creation, the cosmos is the context of human thinking and action. He/she is located in this bigger, wider world. We cannot parochialise or communalise action. Human greed and selfishness, materialism and consumerism, have distorted or even perverted the purpose and direction of the divine. It also means that the humans by themselves do not have the capacity, will and the will-power to bring about radical changes. For this reason, we have to depend on and be guided by God. God has entrusted us with this beautiful creation, full of variety and richness. We were meant to be its faithful stewards or trustees. God is even willing to consider us as his/her deputies or partners or co-creators. But obviously, humans, have failed miserably, creating a world of want in the midst of plenty. This is the supreme contradiction. We are not only alienated from God and our neighbours, human and non-human, but from our own selves. We do not know our *swadharma* and concomitantly, *swaraj* and *swadeshi*, has become meaningless. As a result, we cannot move meaningfully to the ideal of SARVODAYA. This is the tragedy of the commons.

What do we do in this human-made critical condition. God is inviting us to join him/her in a new venture and adventure - - ANOTHER WORLD IS POSSIBLE. This is not only a human aspiration but a divine demand. It is for the human to expect or anticipate in action God's agenda for the future. In this context, social action is not a human achievement but a divine gift. But a gift becomes a gift only if the humans respond to it with loving and justice-oriented action. Thus human beings become beings in the authentic sense, if and when they are willing to accept actively God's Forward Plan for humanity. As God's being is known through his/her becoming in creation, so also human beings can be by their becoming active in God's world. Humans have been created from within to be involved without. He/she is endowed with the fundamental capacity to think (head), to feel (heart) and to act (hands). So headless action is as bad as heartless action, which makes the latter lopsided and unequal. It is equally true that thinking which does not lead to relevant action is meaningless and abstract. Intrinsically, humans are constituted with this three-fold

capacity. This is constitutive of the spirit of the humans. There is no dualism or dichotomy among the body, mind and soul (spirit). They cannot be considered as discrete realities. Simultaneously, this means we cannot view spirituality apart from or to the exclusion of the social-physical. They belong together inherently.

Christian theology affirms the incarnation of God in Jesus the Christ but not in an exclusive, absolute sense. Incarnation, literally, means in-flesh. Thus God in Jesus Christ is the enfleshment or embodiment of God in the world. God is not a disembodied spirit. He/she is a dynamic, relational reality. According to the Biblical faith, Jesus was from and for the people. He was not a timeless religious leader and a teacher, philosophizing on the verities of life. He was well-embedded in his time and place, responding critically and participating actively in the reality around him. There was a unique harmony in his words and deeds. He was a prophet-activist, involving in the life of the society with discernment and discrimination. He knew how far to go and where to draw the line because his priority and perspective was perspicuously clear. He did not point to himself but essentially to the coming future of God. This is our faith and hope.

There are several defining moments in the life and work of the Jesus of Nazareth. The two final moments are crucial and critical for our faith and action - - CRUCIFIXION and RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST, reported by the writers of the New Testament. The Cross of Christ was the culmination of his confrontation and conflicts with the contenders and captains of the society - - Roman rulers and the Jewish religious leaders. They together, in coalition with each other, conspired and plotted to kill this man on the Cross of Calvary. He had to die an ignoble death in full view of his friends and enemies. One Asian writer has rightly stated,

We can shave Jesus. We can put a neck-tie on Jesus. We can put a pair of glasses over his eyes and a Sony transistor radio (cell phone) in his hands. We can even place a colourful Diner's card in his hands. But if you put a handle on his cross so that he can carry it as a business person carries a brief case, then the Christian faith has lost its ground. He achieves victory through accepting defeat, for the word of the cross is a folly.

The cross is the fundamental symbol of Christianity, which unites its several denominations. The Red Cross has been functioning among the sick, the injured and the dying. What do we learn from the Cross

of Christ? Firstly, it symbolizes vividly God's full involvement in and identification with the suffering humanity. Jesus was crucified with the crucified people of the world, particularly the *dalits*, *adivasis*, the women and children. The implication of this affirmation is that God is not above and beyond pain and suffering. His/her nature and essence is to be sensitive to misery and marginalization. God cannot be insensitive and apathetic. He/she is a 'pathetic' (full of pathos) God. This is the meaning of divine love (in Hebrew language, *hesed*, and in Greek, *agape*). It is long-suffering or enduring or steadfast love. It is not based on temporary, ephemeral sentiments or emotions. It has to do with sustenance and sustainability, stability and determination. Thus cross is not a historical accident or an incident, an outcome of the exigencies of a particular situation in the first century. Fundamentally, it is the visible manifestation of the very nature and character of God.

Secondly, related to the first it is a 'mute' protest against human injustice and despoliation. Jesus was not simply suffering and dying. That would be sadistic or even narcissistic. Christians believe that cross is suffering as well as overcoming suffering. For this reason, we cannot perceive the cross in isolation. Such a purposive death inevitable leads to the second powerful symbol of Christianity. The Cross is purposive in the sense that it is representative, vicarious. Therefore, the cross of Christ has significance in the light of the resurrection. One cannot experience the resurrection without the cross. They belong together. There is no short-cut or bypass when one is engaged in the life and death of humanity. At one point in his life, Jesus did not want that horrible death. He prayed to God to be excused. Suffering and death are needed to overcome them. So Jesus Christ is considered as "a strangely, suffering saviour" or liberator. One twentieth century martyr-theologian, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, has asserted,

If our Christianity has ceased to be serious about discipleship, if we have watered down the gospel into emotional uplift which makes no costly demands and which fails to distinguish between natural and Christian existence, then we cannot help regarding the cross as an ordinary every day calamity, as one of the trials and tribulations of life. We have then forgotten that the cross means rejection and shame as well as suffering.

This means transformation, micro or macro, cannot be brought about without sacrifice, suffering and some times even death. It is not a 20-20 game or a limited overs cricket match. It is a patient, long-dream

process. Very often, it entails a lot of sacrifice, shame, suffering and rejection by the Establishment. The Cross of Calvary symbolizes this fundamental truth.

Thirdly, the Cross of Christ is the affirmation of a different kind of POWER and POLITICS. As mentioned before, Jesus, directly or indirectly, dealt with the structural issues of his society. One paramount area of concern was the understanding and use of power, which engenders a particular kind of politics. In this context, we cannot or should not unduly spiritualize his cross. It has an enormous impact on the socio-economic-political life of the people. As Jesus approaches the impending cross, he stands defiantly silent before Herod (Luke 23:9) and sternly admonished Pilate that his authority and power comes from God (John 18:33-38). The Roman rulers like Herod and Pilate, did not comprehend this. Millions of Christians themselves do not understand the basic difference between the power and politics of Jesus and that of the Roman rulers of the time. Thus, the Cross of Christ has a fundamental paradoxical character -- simultaneously foolish and wise; weakness and strength; powerlessness and powerfulness. He is not a conquering hero, coming on a horse (elephant in India!) but riding on a donkey. What a pathetic spectacle! Therefore, the Cross symbolizes a radical reversal and a complete displacement of the existing use of power.

The *aam janata* are considered powerless. But we know the power of the people when they are conscientised and awakened from their stupor. They become conscious of their own inherent potential and strength. Women are considered "the weaker sex" but the women of Manipur recently displayed their power to change. Recently, the power and politics of the people in Nepal (dismantling the monarchy) and in Myanmar (the Buddhist monks challenging the military power) have demonstrated the profound value and veracity of the cross of Christ. The cross symbolizes the power and politics of the people. It points to the power of so-called weakness and the weakness of the so-called powerful.

God in Jesus Christ, was not advocating and actualizing a religion of illusion and deception. It was a serious endeavour to unveil the depth dimension of reality, both human and divine. He sincerely wanted this earth to become like heaven. Consequently, we need to despiritualised Jesus and not present an anaemic, dehydrated Christ. So the pioneer Paul put it sharply, "For the kingdom of God does not depend on talk but on power" (I Corinthians 4:20) -- power to empower and facilitate

the process of justice and liberation. With this theological background, we are now in a position to assert the priority and perspective of the people.

CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY AND SOCIAL ACTION:

There has been a misplaced debate between FAITH and ACTION. There are quite a number of scholars and writers who persist in pitting one against the other. Faith alone, Grace alone and the Bible alone, have been the dictum of this group of people. Therefore, it is not surprising that the first century Church, in its wisdom, incorporated the Book of James as a canonical text of the Bible. I have already quoted from this Book in the last chapter to show the integral relationship between faith and action.

Such a sterile debate has shaped and governed Christian theology for a long time. For quite some time, theology was conceived in a spirit of disinterestedness or even aloofness. This attitude was supposed to make the scholars detached, objective and rational. The pejorative expression of this state of mind could be termed as an Olympian or a Himalayan theologian, dwelling in the rarified atmosphere of the mountains. In such a context, social action was not even relevant, leave alone it being related. A relationship was relegated if not eliminated in such a theological posture. So theology was formulated for a long time to the exclusion of reality in all its aspects. Few individuals who dared to differ were considered eccentric and irrelevant.

By about the middle of the nineteenth century, there was a serious attempt to related theology to social action. There was the birth of Christian Socialism and more important Social Gospel Movement. Such movements were soon discredited and considered as liberalism. Thus even by about the middle of the twentieth century, social action remained basically as peripheral to the fundamental theologizing process. For such theologians social action was important and interesting but not integral to theology. Such theologies were considered to be systematic and scientific. In that situation, the methodology was to theologize in isolation, as an abstraction. Social action in this methodology was considered as an application or implication, a kind of an afterthought. This means that essentially, social action remained external to or outside the scope of the fundamental theological discourse.

In last sixty years, the intrinsic relationship between Social action and theology has been raised sharply and directly. During this period, Christian theologians and ethicists began to realize that theology and

ethics have to be related to and rooted to the praxis. They were becoming sensitive to and having an analytical understanding of the historic and human context. They took cognizance of the dictum, "Theory without praxis is empty, while praxis without theory is blind." Such a discovery helped to articulate Liberation, Black, Third-World, Feminist, Eco theologies and others. Thus action-reflection-action became the fundamental methodology. So today, we talk about doing theology and consequently, theology is praxiology. The burden of theology-ethics is the dialectic between involvement and reflection. Orthopraxis has become more important than orthodoxy.

Today, theological-ethical reflection cannot be done apart from or to the exclusion of socio-economic-political involvement and engagement. This means that social action is not subsequent to but simultaneous with doing theology and ethics. The former has to be at the core of our theological-ethics thinking. Theology is not an esoteric, elitist enterprise by the few and for the few. On the contrary, authentic theology has to be by, of and for the people, whom God has created. Therefore, the thinking processes in theology is not in contradiction to but in intimate conjunction with the feeling and the willing dimensions of the human.

From This perspective, theology and ethics do not pretend to be neutral or immune from socio-economic-political reality and the ideological presuppositions. Such a theology is possible and necessary because of our profound faith in God, who is with and for the people, particularly the *dalits*, *adivasis*, women and children. One Chinese theologian has stated,

This God is not an abstraction of theological thinking but a living reality in the midst of the people. God is not a theological proposition but the moving force of history. God is not to be located in the Holy of Holies, but in the company of men, women, and children toiling and struggling for the right to live as human beings -- God of the people, God in the people, and God with the people.

This means social action cannot be the peripheral/marginal concern of the theology of the Church. On the contrary, it should be central and crucial to the theological enterprise. People are the movers and shakers of history. They cannot be abandoned.

What I have stated in the last chapter and in this chapter, should clarify the nature and function of social action. Theology of the Church should not be satisfied with doing 'charity' or showing favours to the

poor. They are not to be treated as objects of pity. CASA has rightly shifted from only relief to only rehabilitation to only need-based or even issue-based social action to rights-based paradigm, leading ultimately to liberation and justice. That must be the faith-based and faith-directed action of the Church and CASA. The Bible and the concomitant theology and ethics unequivocally, stand for this perspective. But I have also mentioned that there is a need to go beyond the RBA. This is indicated in the Forward Plan of CASA, launched in 2003. This fifth position can be designated as TOWARDS LIFE IN FULNESS. This requires clarification from a theological-ethical perspective.

ETHICAL-THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE OF LIFE IN FULNESS.

Life is a complex category. It is vast in scope and character. Life-in-fullness is not a self-evident term. It requires explanation. In this section, I will attempt to clarify on this issue from an ethical-theological perspective. The Bible as a whole recognizes the multi-dimensionality and depth of the concept of life. There are different layers or levels of life, which can be correlated with the levels of consciousness. Life of the human environment, with its mountains and trees, ice and water, birds and animals, cumulatively, are constitutive of life. This is the natural and necessary ambience of the humans. We ourselves are constituted by and with this Mother Earth. She is in and around us. We cannot negate this primordial form of life.

Human being is a multi-dimensational being. Consequently, his/her life has several, inter-connected aspects of life, which cumulatively, can be designated as life-in-fullness. We cannot conceive of the humans apart from or to the exclusion of the religion-cultural background and the socio-economic-political reality. In more simple terms, they must have physical, mental-psychological, spiritual-moral life. They cannot be envisaged separately. Even when we talk about their physical life, we need to distinguish among mere survival, existence and life in the fuller sense. A matured, responsible organisation like CASA has begun to comprehend those differences. I can highlight this phenomenon, by briefly looking at our reality around us.

Life and death is a polarity and not a contradiction. There is death or dying in life and there is life after or beyond death. Philosophers and theologians have reflected on the latter phenomenon since the dawn of human culture and civilization. For our purpose, I shall elaborate on the former phenomenon. There is a sizeable group of people in India,

who claims that the national life is 'shining' and concomitant "feel good factor" even now. She is one of the fastest growing economies in the world, approaching a double digit growth. She has already achieved a trillion dollar economy. Her Service and industrial sectors have grown enormously. There is a growing number of individual Indian billionaires, record profits made by the MNCs in India, and the success of the IT, pharmaceutical and telecom industries. There are rich Indians (NRI included) like Kushal Pal Singh, Lakshmi Mittal, Ambani brothers and Vijay Mallya, who are living in RICHISTAN! Their worth ranges from \$21 billion to \$1.5 billion. Such wealth has resulted in an open optimism about life in India. There is a talk about INCREDIBLE INDIA @ 60, emerging as an economic superpower. This situation has prompted the Global Youth Survey 2007, conducted by Sweden's Kairos Future. According to this study, 83% of the youth surveyed expressed satisfaction with life as a whole. This has been the concern of the psychologists for a long time. But now even economists like the Nobel Laureate, Amartya Sen, are thinking of adding HAPPINESS to the Human Development Index (HDI), which in the modern time consists of Gender, Health and Education.

At the other end of the spectrum, there is a public recognition of the ground reality of India -- "300 million people who live on less than a dollar a day, we have more poor than all the LDC countries put together." National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) has found out that the villagers at the bottom, spent Rs.9/- a day on consumption need in 2004-05. On an average, a villager spent Rs.559/- in a month compared to the urban consumption of Rs.1,052/-. This is the meaning of 'survival' today. Absolute poverty still persists in the first decade of the new millennium. Our Public Distribution System (PDS) has become dysfunctional. As a result, we receive regular reports of "Rice Riots" or "Ration Rage" Starvation deaths are occurring in different parts of India. In the mean time, farmer suicides are increasing. According to one NGO, 661 farmers have committed suicide since January of this year in the cotton-growing area of Maharashtra. Suddenly, some state governments have discovered the virtue of industrialization in the third millennium. For this purpose, there is an extensive land acquisition drive in the villages of West Bengal, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh and other states. This is resulting in wide spread opposition among villagers in general and farmers in particular. We must remind ourselves that Bengal continues to be largely farm-dependent economy with 63% land available for agriculture. Its domestic product is higher than industry.

In the mean time, the existing industries like jute and tea are suffering. Between January 1, 2006 and March 31, 2007, there have been 571 deaths in the tea gardens due to malnutrition and extreme poverty and 17,000 jobless labourers of the tea gardens. There are 2,250 labourers in the tea gardens, who have not been paid for over a year. Added to these, the old problems like child-marriages, child-trafficking, gender-injustice, dowry-deaths, floods displacing millions, ecological disasters continue unabated. In the midst of this stark reality, the government is encouraging the MNCs like Nike, McDonald's, Domino, Wal-Mart and such others to do business in India. In June of this year, India became the biggest buyer of lethal toys worth \$10b (Rs.42,000 crores)! Such is the national scenario in 2007.

Some may be puzzled by the above paragraph. What have the above statistics to do with life-in-fullness? Should a theology of life reckon with this reality? Obviously, I am looking at our national life and there is much unnecessary death and dying in the midst of life - - dead or dying due to socio-economic-political and psycho-mental and spiritual-moral reasons. This means we should not indulge in reductionism and simplification about life and living. It is extensive as well as intensive. Its depth and dimensions are very often beyond human comprehension. Therefore, it is necessary to approximate to a fuller understanding of life and life-in-fullness. Ethics and theology are helpful for this purpose. Social sciences have been immensely helpful to understand life. But ethics and theology go beyond those descriptions.

In chapter six, I have examined CASA's understanding and action about life-in-fullness. In chapter seven and eight, I have attempted to look at the Church and the Bible from this perspective. Normatively, life has to be shaped by love and liberation; justice and joy; freedom and fairness. These fundamental values, enshrined in the Bible and other scriptures, are conducive towards envisioning life-in-fullness. Jesus' fundamental mission and ministry was to impart to humanity this life-in-fullness. Therefore, he said, "I have come that they may have life, and have it abundantly" (in fullness or wholeness). Those immortal words have to be read within the immediate and the larger context of Christ's life and work. The immediate context was his understanding of the ideal sheep and shepherd. The first part of the verse says, "The thief comes only to steal, and kill and destroy. . . " (John 10:10a). This means that Jesus was acutely aware of the disabling and destabilizing forces, negating life and living. The wider context of Jesus' affirmation is his total ministry of life-giving. On the one hand, he states categorically,

Humans cannot live by bread alone, but on the other hand, he taught his followers to pray daily, Give us this day our daily bread. These words are not contradictory but complementary. 'Bread' is basic to life and bread alone cannot give us life-in-fullness. This is not an attempt on the part of Jesus to divert or dilute the dal-roti issues of life and living. This is an attempt to remind us of our constitutive character -- BODY, MIND AND SPIRIT. At this point, it is necessary to mention that John 10:10 uses the Greek word, zoe, for life, meaning eternal life. It does not mean continuation or prolongation of life but its quality and character. The Bible also talks about biological-[physical life (from the Greek word, bios) and mental-psychological life (from psuche). Thus theologically, we have to recognise life in its variety and richness, in its contradiction and paradox.

This contradiction and paradox of life and death is very well portrayed in the prophetic literature of the Old Testament. I like to focus on three stories very briefly. In the first story, we manage to catch up with the busy, itinerant prophet Elisha in a women's home. The women happened to a Shunnamite and more important that her child was dead. She was wealthy and was childless for a long time. At the intervention of the prophet, a child was born to her. It may have been in response to her warm welcome and generous hospitality. She had even built a small room for the prophet to rest after his hectic schedule. She was thrilled initially to have a son but her happiness was short-lived. She was bitter and cried out in agony, "Did I ask my Lord for a son? Did I not say, do not deceive me?" (2 Kings 4:28). The prophet had made an effort to revive the child through an emissary. So she accused the prophet of lies and deception. But the prophet does not give in or give up. He came to her home and made a direct, personal intervention. According to the story,

Then the prophet went up and lay upon the child, putting his mouth upon his mouth, his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands; and as he stretched himself upon him, the flesh of the child became warm (2 Kings 4:34).

The mouth-to-mouth resuscitation was repeated twice and the son received a new lease of life. It is incredible for the women! She had given up. This prophetic action of identification brings a new life and vitality in the midst of seeming death.

According to the narrative, prophet Elisha comes to another village, where there is famine. In the midst of this scarcity, the prophet arranges

for a meal for the people. But as soon as they drink the soup, they cry out in unison, "O man of God, there is death in the pot" (2 Kings 4:40). This is a peculiar but a significant expression. They did not talk of poison but 'death'. It may be that they were referring to their bitter experience of seven years famine, mentioned in 2 Kings 4:38. So 'death' in this context does not refer to an accident or an isolated incident but a condition of life and reality. The prophet rectified the situation immediately and the people were able to drink their fill.

The third story is about a valley of dry bones (Ezekiel 37:1-10). No flesh and blood and consequently, no recognition, no identity. But the prophet Ezekiel does not give up because God promises new life. He prophesizes and the bones begin to have life in terms of body and spirit (breath or wind in the Hebrew language). The first two stories referred to individuals but this story refers to a community, a group, indeed a nation. These three stories anticipate the story of the resurrection of Jesus. Life and death are represented in the New Testament by the Resurrection and the Cross of Christ. Death was hovering over Jesus from the womb of his tomb. While Mary was pregnant, she and Joseph escaped to Egypt. King Herod was eager to kill Jesus at his birth as the former thought that the latter came to usurp his power and position. Thus the Christmas story is not all about singing angels, a bright star and the three wise persons from the East and the glorifying shepherds. It is also or significantly about death and death-dealing forces (Matthew 3:16) in the midst of life. Jesus' life was jeopardized by his unequivocal stand for the poor and the powerless and against the rich and the powerful. The Roman rulers and the Jewish leaders of the time were plotting to kill Jesus for his opposition to the Pharisaic spirituality, the Sabbath, temple, the legal systems and their attitude and action against women and their perception of power. The Jewish High Priest had inadvertently blurted out the truth of the Cross, "You know nothing at all; you do not understand that it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation should not perish (John 11:49-50). Jesus himself had stated, "unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit." (John 12:24). He had given a new definition to the concept of glorification. He used phrases like "being glorified" and "being lifted" (to the cross) in conjunction with each other. According to him, glorification comes through humiliation. Jesus could have escaped the ignominy of suffering and dying publicly. But he did not yield to that temptation prior to his ministry (Matthew 4:1-11); at the

Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:50-54) prior to his demise; and supremely on the Cross of Calvary (Matthew 27:39-40). So Jesus' death on the Cross was not just an event or an accident in history. Rather, it is the manifestation of the eternal cross in the bosom of God. Such a deliberate death inevitably leads to his resurrection. This is not a call to die carelessly or recklessly. This is not a death-wish or suffering from a martyr-complex. The Cross of Christ becomes a challenge for an organisation like CASA, which has openly expressed its full solidarity with the *aam aadmi*. When such a stand is taken, one should not be apprehensive of suffering and death.

The ancient apostles viewed the cross in the light of the resurrection of Jesus. From that perspective, they were able to proclaim, "Death, where is your victory? Death, where is your sting?" (I Corinthians 15:55). Such a stance takes away the fear of death. Jesus himself, symbolised his impending death during his last supper with his disciples. He had lifted up a piece of bread and a cup of wine and said,

This is my body, broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me.
This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as
you drink it, in remembrance of me (Mark 14:22-25); I Corinthians
11:24).

In this way, Jesus affirmed life-in-fullness. His broken body represents the broken, divided and lopsided world in general and India in particular. This has become the regular practice of the Church on Sundays and other days all over the world. It is to symbolize and emphasize the Cross and the Resurrection of Jesus the Christ. This becomes the source of inspiration and hope. In the light of the resurrection, the Cross becomes the symbol of hope in the midst of despair; symbol of new life in the midst of death and death-dealing forces, widely prevalent in the world of reality. Resurrection is the anticipation and assurance of the life-in-fullness. We cannot and ought not to give up and indulge in fatalism and defeatism. We see the light "at the end of the tunnel." The gospel is the good news about change and transformation at the social-structural level, interpersonal and personal levels. In the light of the Resurrection and the Cross, we can and must categorically affirm,

Justice is possible.

Justice is necessary.

God has endowed us with hope and courage to work for Justice.

Such a posture and perspective makes life-in-fullness – SHALOM. Literally, it means peace. But this 'peace' is not the absence of war and violence but a positive presence of the fullness of life. We have to strive towards this goal with the blessing of God.

THEOLOGY OF POVERTY AND OVERCOMING POVERTY

The Bible in general and the New Testament in particular does not indulge in abstract universalism and vague generalizations. It does not indulge in timeless verities of life. It conceives of life-in-fullness in terms of freedom and food, clothing and shelter, proper education and gainful employment. Christian theology affirms life here-and-now as well as life hereafter. Eternal life must start from the earthly life. There is no dichotomy or dualism. In its objective of having a glimpse of the life-in-fullness, it engages in particularities. According to this way of thinking, authentic globalization must proceed through a process of proper localization. The universal, global God intervenes in human affairs through a particular nation, people and community. This means Israel is only an instrument, a means of divine involvement and engagement. Israel is called to be a servant of God for the sake of all nations and communities. Fundamentally, this call is not a favour or a privilege but a divine responsibility.

From the outset, God identifies with a group of people, who are slaves and therefore powerless. This direct, personal contact with the poor, in a particular context, is the prologue to the story of life and liberation, freedom and food, justice and jubilation. Thus God's involvement with the poor is primary. Theology and ethics must begin here. It is said,

One can affirm God with all the right words, have an impeccable theology, and put money in the collection plate - - and yet if one is not "doing justice", the words are hollow, the faith is spurious, the gestures are meaningless, and the religious stance being displayed is really atheism. "To know God is to do justice" (read Jeremiah 22: 13-17). No separation of the two is possible.

Christian theology, therefore, affirms a God of love and justice. There is an organic relationship between the two. One writer has put it clearly,

1. LOVE is the fulfillment of JUSTICE, never a substitute for justice.
2. JUSTICE is a necessary instrument of LOVE.
3. LOVE is for Jesus, the ultimate norm of JUSTICE.

God's love and justice always strive for *mukti* and *insaf*. Obviously, its implications are many. God does not compromise but confrontation

becomes inevitable when one is working for and with the poor and the powerless. Thus it is important to remember,

Confrontation without understanding will cause unnecessary, hostile, conflict. Compassion without confrontation will result in ineffective transformation. Confrontation with the heart of compassion for the oppressors will genuinely change their hearts through creative tension.

God address the poor in their particularity. There is a definitive "preferential option for the poor" in this divine action. Surely, God is for and with every body but he/ she has an innate predilection for the poor. God approaches humanity from below, from the underside of history, those who are marginalized and usually left out. They become the locus of God's grace and salvation (liberation).

God in general and Jesus in particular were and are concerned about and identified with the physically, externally poor and the poverty-stricken. But they expand the scope and character of poverty of the mind and poverty of the spirit. They are intrinsically related. From this perspective,

Poverty is tyranny, It tyrannizes one's spirit and body. It tyrannizes over one's entire family. And the most fearful thing is that it can destroy love . . the very basis of humanity, that very heart of human relationship, that very core of the family bond.

There is a fundamental alienation in poverty as well as in affluence. It is necessary for us to see the consequences of "Bread Alone" growth. It is inequitable and jobless growth. It is leading to individualism that is dangerous for the well-being of all. Life is becoming more fragmented, impersonal and even dehumanizing. There is a widespread commodification and marketisation of all and the whole of life. People are determined by their utilitarian value, ignoring their intrinsic worth. Marriage, family and communities of living people are being sacrificed in the name of progress and development. Materialism and consequent consumerism are increasing at a geometrical progression. Acquisitive instinct of the humans is being pampered in the present scenario. As a result, the middle class in particular, has grown callous, cold and even cruel. Therefore, Jesus had to issue a warning, You cannot serve God and mammon or wealth (Luke 16:13b). What did he mean? To absolutise wealth is to indulge in idolatry. This means that idolatry is not what others do. Wealth or accumulation of wealth takes the place of god. So in the modern world, mammon has become a corporate reality.

It is governing human society at large. Consequently, it is turning the world into an order of anxiety, of struggle for survival. As destitution and poverty cannot be tolerated, so also extreme wealth at the same time and place, cannot be tolerated. There is a mass or massive poverty and simultaneously, an emerging group of wealthy individuals, which is considered obscene or vulgar. This yearning GAP between the poor and the rich, is provoking tension and conflicts. Theology and ethics have to taken an uncompromising position on this. One writer has rightly affirmed,

Material poverty is a scandalous condition. Spiritual poverty is an attitude of openness to God and spiritual childhood. . Material poverty is something to be rejected. . Spiritual poverty is something more complete and profound. It is above all, total availability to the Lord. . Christian poverty has meaning only as a commitment of solidarity with the poor and is a protest against poverty. . It is a poverty lived not for its own sake, but rather as an authentic imitation of Christ, it is a poverty which means taking on the sinful condition to liberate humankind from sin and all its consequence.

The above quotation clarifies to some extent Jesus' dictum For you always have the poor with you (Mark 14:7). I repeat, Jesus was uncompromising about his priority of the poor and concomitantly, against perpetuity of pauperism. The above Biblical text comes from Deuteronomy 15:11. I have already mentioned about the introduction of the Sabbatical system to overcome the impact of landlordism, money lending and slavery in ancient Judaism. Jesus had realized that 'charity' or relief work will not solve the problem of the poor in the long run. There was an urgent need of a radical restructuring of economic resources and relationships. So the saying cited above, must have been uttered sarcastically. He was reminding his hosts and his disciples the need for a revolutionary metamorphosis or conversion. Repentances is not remorse but a radical turn-around of relationship. That is the message Jesus conveys through that text. The poor must not become poorer by our politics, policies and programme. Theology of poverty does not patronize poverty but it shows the way to overcome poverty and establish a just and a free society. That is what God stands for and advocates.

CONCLUSION:

In this chapter, I have attempted to develop an ethical-theological perspective for the life and work of CASA. I have maintained that the active interface of God, human and the whole of creation is towards

building a just and free society. In this endeavour, I have emphasized on an understanding of God as creator, liberator, and re-creator. In this process, there is the movement from alienation to reconciliation, from estrangement to a renewed relationship. Such a radical shift requires the experience of crucifixion and resurrection as demonstrated in the life and work of Jesus the Christ. Chronologically, crucifixion is prior to the resurrection. But we must reconceive the crucifixion in the light of the resurrection. This means the power and potential of the resurrection helps us to sacrifice, suffer and if necessary die for the larger cause of justice and liberation. Thus we have to be grasped by the theological-ethical circuit with hope, courage and purpose to fight on behalf of the *dalits*, *adivasis*, women and children.

In this chapter, I have also made use of some fundamental values necessary to develop an ethical-theological perspective. I have understood God in general and Jesus in particular in terms of love, freedom and justice, leading to liberation and life-in-fullness. This is not an arbitrary choice but embedded in the ancient story of Israel. I have basically derived these norms and criteria from the Biblical witness. These are the recurring Biblical themes.

I have indicated in this chapter about the misplaced debate between faith and action. Theology is essentially faith seeking understanding through word and action. The Bible itself espouses FAITH ACTIVE IN LOVE (Galatians 5:6b). The various versions of the New Testament put it slightly differently:-

For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love (KJV); . . . for all we need is faith working through love (Living Bible); . . . it is a matter of faith, faith which expresses is faith, that works through love (Today's Eng. Version); . . . The only thing that counts is faith expression itself in love (New International Version); . . . what matters is faith that makes its power felt through love (Jerusalem Bible); . . . the only thing that counts is faith active . . . the only thing that counts is faith made effective through love (NEW RSV).

This means that any faith-based community must translate their faith into loving action. Faith must be enlivened. The only addition or qualification of the above text is that this loving action should not be mere relief and rehabilitation; mere need-based or issue-based action. It has also to go beyond Rights-based approach. It must aim for life-in-fullness, based on justice and authentic freedom of the *aam aadmi*.

X

Conclusion

In this chapter, I will summarise the main findings about the life and work of CASA in last sixty years. After this, I will try to express CASA's defining moments in the form of a chart. I will bring out the strengths and possible weaknesses of an agency like CASA. In the process, I will locate its social action in the present national scenario. Finally, I will look forward to its future as an effective and experienced institution in the service of the nation.

MAIN FINDINGS ABOUT CASA:

Social action is the raison de-e'tre of this ecumenical and pan-Indian organisation. It exists by action as fire exists by burning. But CASA's action is based on critical reflection and careful planning and programming. This has enabled it to listen, learn and grow into a living organism. In last sixty years, it has slowly but surely evolved into one of the largest NGOs in India. It has developed from a Body of one hundred workers in the 60s to about 600 workers at present. It is operating in 26 states in India, in more than 3,500 villages with 1,450 *panchayats*. Primarily, it operates through 33 units of Core programme. It has developed its own logistics and logic of operation. In this process, connectivity with the people is of paramount importance. People of the villages particularly, the women, the youth and others become involved and are aware of their respective bends and the national-international

issues, affecting their lives and livelihood. Slowly, they begin to own the programme of action and thereby become arbiters of their own destiny. They no longer function as objects of charity, of the *largesse* showered on them. On the contrary, they become the living subjects, initiating and implementing the course of action to bring about transformation in their respective context.

The people at the grassroots level particularly, the *dalits*, *adivasis*, women and children, form themselves into several clusters to facilitate social action. Few clusters together in close vicinity form themselves into a *PAT*. Several *PATs* together constitute the Sectoral level of action. Few Sectors together forms the Regional level. This process from below and not top down, is facilitated and monitored by the Zonal office with the Chief Zonal Officers (CZO) as its heads. CASA has established three Zones, comprising of East, West and South. Each Zone covers a huge geographical area. Ultimately, each Zone is accountable to the Central Office, with the Director as its head. The headquarter also facilitate and monitors programmes in the Northern India. The Director is assisted in this work through the National Board and the Executive Committee. As a Registered Body, it is recognised by the government as a Society. This is the total administrative structure of CASA. Obviously, as an acknowledged institution, it has to operate at a formal, legal level, fulfilling the Law of the land. But at a functional level, its efficacy and effectiveness is demonstrated at the ground level. Essentially, CASA is definitively a people-based and people-focused organisation. Or to put it in another way, CASA is a people's movement, striving towards life-in-fullness, inspired by the Spirit of God.

As a people's organisation, CASA has been sensitive to and identified with the needs and aspirations of the subaltern. It has responded in five distinct ways, which I have designated as the "Defining Moments." At the initial stage, at the dawn of India's independence, it responded readily to the urgent needs of the numerous refugees from across the borders on both sides. Immediately, CASA arranged for food, clothing, temporary shelters for the displaced people with the help of the Indo-American Agreement called PL-480 and other national and international agencies. In the second chapter of the book, I have examined and evaluated this first phase of CASA's social action. I have covered the first two decades for this stage, from 1947 till about 1967. Such a social action has its own implications and consequences, which I have mentioned briefly in that chapter.

By the end of the 60s, CASA was getting ready to respond to the people in a different way, going beyond relief and rehabilitation. It began to ascertain the needs of particular communities. It began to think and act on economic growth and development. It is significant that during this phase, CASA first suspended PL-480 in 1974 and by 1982, it deliberately decided to discontinue such free supplies from abroad. They did not want to be a 'channel' or a 'pipeline'. This was the time when independent CASA was born and registered as a Society in 1976. Core programme, Water-for-tomorrow, Food-For-Community-Development (FFCD) were operationalised with the help of government programme like IRDP. This was the time when the *Mahila Mandals/Sangams* and Youth clubs in different villages were activated. The *panchayat* system of the government was effectively utilised to promote the welfare of the villagers. This particular phase of work lasted for about two decades, from 1967 till about 1987. The four Zonal offices came into being, initiating, preparing, implementing and evaluating various programmes for their respective areas.

The third distinct defining moment of CASA was when they began to emphasise on wider issues rather than seeing the problem as needs. This phase of the work could be traced back to about 1987. By that time, CASA was addressing the wider issues, which are socio-economic-political in nature. Such a perspective, radically altered the scope and character of CASA's conduct. It began to make a significant shift from the micro, individualistic world to the macro, communitarian concerns. The duration of this stage of work is the decade between 1987 till about 1997. This was the period SEP, PPP, Capacity and Awareness-building resulted in the PAT. The Resource Centres among the local communities began to forge OD and HPD. The latter programme developed a viable and vital training programme at three levels - - TOC, TOT and TOM. These programmes in particular fostered a new attitude and thrust. This resulted in a wide web of networking. Such a stance facilitated the movement from issue-based to Rights-based thinking and action.

The fourth defining moment of CASA brought about enormous transformation in code and conduct of CASA. By about the end of the second millennium and in the first decade of the third, there was an increasing realization that the organisation should not focus on projects but on a process of people's direct interventions, which will bring about authentic changes. Thus the approach was participatory and collective. The problem was the negation of the fundamental human rights of the people to jal, jangal, jamin and jan. So the basic

issue was the entitlements of the people. This was the times, CASA began to accentuate on poverty as a structural issue and concomitantly, development as a systemic matter. Thus the language of CASA began to change from being the 'giver' or a 'provider' to one of being an enabler, facilitator and most important of being an empowering agency. In and through this process, the people at the grassroots began to own the programme of action. At this critical juncture, CASA began to refine the concept of rights as righteousness. In this way, they began to impart a value-orientation to their scheme of action. They began to talk of dignity and equality and incorporated them in their understanding of development. They began to make use of the government legislations to bring about change. Advocacy, Lobbying and synergy became essential in this context of rights. Extensive clarifications were made about the several programmatic components of CASA. This means, there was no ambiguity and misunderstanding of CASA's Vision and Mission. Empowerment, participation, non-discrimination, accountability and linkage to rights were clearly included during this phase. Various local initiatives were encouraged, supported and sponsored. This was the time when Development Programme in North East India (DPNEI) was supported and strengthened. The most tragic, traumatic disaster occurred in India and other countries. *Tsunami* left a trail of extensive death, destruction and dislocation. CASA was one of the first organisation that intervened immediately. It worked out different phases of interventions for relief and rehabilitation. This work in the first decade of the third millennium shows clearly the huge difference between relief and rehabilitation in the 40s and 50s and in the present. It approached the disaster from a Rights Based perspective.

The sixth chapter deals with the Third Forward Plan of CASA, which covers the period, 2003 till 2013. This forward thrust could be designated as "life-in-Fullness". Dr. Sushant Agrawal, the Director, has used the phrase in his Preface to CASA's Annual Report of 2004-05. Again, in his Report to the CASA on 9th January of this year, he concluded his second paragraph with this phrase. He concludes the same Report with the following words,

The Lord calls us and always asks us, "Mortal, woman and man, can these bones come back to life?" (Ezek. 37:3). We must seek answer from the Lord by saying, "Lord, only you can answer that" (37:3b). . We must be proud and honoured that the Lord has chosen us to put breath and life, which creates hope and peace in the lives of millions of poor and vulnerable people.

Therefore, this is the current language of CASA. It has been very creative and innovative since 2003 when the Forward Plan was launched. An explicit formulation has been done on the Plan in terms of Development Paradigm and Perspective Plan in 2003, Realizing Social Transformation . . . Towards Paradigm Shift, in March of this year, and above all its GENDER POLICY in 2006. These valuable documents articulate the forward thrust very well. It is hoped that such a vision and mission will become a reality to a great extent through CASA's systematic and sustained involvements and interventions.

The process of empowering and ownership is going on through various programmes particularly, by holding Seminars on contemporary concerns like the RTI and MDGs. Regional Inter-Agency Partnership (previously, Tri-Agency Partnership) has been an education and enlightening experience for Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka and of course India. It is necessary to repeat that CASA is not isolated but deliberately developing a meaningful synergy, making other Bodies their working partners. This collaborative process augurs well for the future of CASA. It is working in partnership with the WCC and an active member of ACT (Action-By-Churches-Together) International. CASA's Director has been appointed as the Moderator of this international-ecumenical Organisation. Obviously, this has strengthened the world wide web of relationships with Churches and international agencies. Since 2000 CASA has been involved in the World Social Forum (WSF), which openly opposes neo-economic Order.

Only after analyzing and assessing the different defining moments of CASA, from chapter seven, I begin to reflect on its life and work from an ecclesial-Biblical and theological perspective. As a Churches' Auxiliary, it is necessary to develop such a perspective. It is faith-based but ecumenical in its etymological sense. The word, ECUMENICAL, has been misunderstood by many. Literally, it has nothing to do with the Church, although historically she has used it for her own purpose. The word is derived from the Greek language, OIKOUMENE, which means, "the whole inhabited earth." It is an idea that expands and extends the scope and character of human life and livelihood. From this ecumenical perspective, to be faith-based does not mean fundamentalism and fanaticism. It is a faith that is rooted in and related to hope and love, justice and liberation, freedom and fair-play. This is what I have articulated in chapters eight and nine. Thus Biblical faith does not lead to fatalism but to action, culminating in justice and liberation. 24 Protestant churches including the Orthodox, actively support and

strengthen CASA's vision and mission. Finally, CASA's Executive Committee has resolved to approve its Youth Internship Programme (mentioned in chapter VII) as a Diamond Jubilee thrust.

Now I will attempt to summarize the main thrust of CASA in a Chart (*see next page*).

Both the above write up and the chart should highlight the similarities and differences among the defining moments delineated from chapter two to chapter VI.

SUMMARY FO THE DEFINING MOMENT OF CASA

Both the detail study and the chart on CASA's defining moment indicate that it is always willing to experiment with new ideas about social action and thereby keeping abreast of the changing national and international scenario. It is adaptable, flexible and accountable to its basic constituency, the *aam janata*. It has not betrayed its primary vision and mission. It realizes with the former President of South Africa, Nelson Mandela,

Throughout history, it has been the inaction of those who could have acted, the indifference of those who should have known better, the silence of the voice of justice when it mattered most, that has made it possible for evil to triumph.

Therefore, CASA is on the right track after sixty years of its existence. It has come a long way from the days of only relief and rehabilitation. Its forthright stand against the policy and programme of LPG is highly praiseworthy. It has taken cognizance of the pernicious impact of globalization. Untrammelled private sector is a menace in this country. It does not take into serious consideration the basic needs and aspirations of the *dalits and adivasis*. Efficiency and growth must include the vast majority who are marginalized. One economist has rightly written, "Survival of the fittest is the *mantra*. That means that the vulnerable sections have no right of survival. It is the survival of the 'freest'!" Super-specialized hospitals are doing good business in India but our existing national health care system, public educational institutions, transportation system are in shambles. In this context, CASA has an enormous responsibility. In the light of the above analysis and assessment, following suggestions are made for its future:-

1. CASA is a registered society and therefore, it must abide by the rules and regulations, stipulated by the government. It must remain transparent and accountable at all levels of administration and operation.

Defining Moments	I. Relief & Rehabilitation (1947-67)	II. Need-Based ((1967-87)	III. Issue-Based (1987-97)	IV. RBA (1997-07)	V. Life in Fullness (2003-13)
Problem	Refugees, Floods Earth- quakes etc.	Lack of food, water, cloth- ing & shelter	Backward; under develop- ment; poverty...	Exploitation, Gap between Rich & Poor	Alienation between Poor and the Rich
CASA's Response	PL-480 supplies Emer- gency Aid Disaster Management	Being a caring org.; work for Dev.; initiating projects; PL480 continue still 1982; CORE prog.; dev. IRDP helped CASA	Moving from micro, individualistic concerns to macro, community issues; focusing on <i>dalits, adivasis</i> , women. Process & not projects.	Pov. as a systemic issues; SEP, PPP, PAT, HPD, TOC, TOT, & TOM, Conscientis- ing the people	Dealing with Rela- tional issues Poor/ rich, women/men; Ecology/human
Biblical References	Genesis 41:46ff Exodus 16:8 Good Samaritan Mat- thew 25:37 ff	Isaiah 41:17f; Exodus 16:2-3; 1 Samuel 15:22f; Luke 6:20ff; 21:1-4; James 5:1-6;	Deuteronomy 8:8ff; Exodus 13:5; 16:32; Matthew 23:23; James 1:27; 2:14ff; Luke 4:18;	Exodus 3:7-8a; Leviticus 25: 10; Amos 5:24; Micah 6:6-8; Luke 1:51-53;	Deut. 26:5f; Ex. 5:1; 6:11; Psalm 8 & 104; Is. 32:15ff; John 10:10;
Theol. Affirmation	Witnessing to God's Love & Compassion	Witnessing to God's con- cern for the marginalized - Slaves, orphans, aliens;	Witnessing to God's identi- fication with the suffering humanity	Witnessing to God's free- dom, justice & liberation, giving dignity	Reconciliation through resurrec- tion & Cross-political Dimension
Church's Response	Doing charity; showering favours; being patron- izing & paternalistic	Being a Giver; a provider; disasters provoke sympa- thy and not empathy	With few exceptions, she continues to be individual- istic, other-worldly or not relating meaningfully with the have-nots	Not bale to see the politi- cal-ideological dimension of pov. & dev.	Afraid to talk about justice, freedom & liberation
Consequences	Dependency-Mai-Baap attitude; waiting for external aid; donor-re- cipient relationship	Basic dependency; remain- ing powerless, poor & impooverished; people learning to be sensitive about their needs; contin- ues to be curative	Towards self-reliance; forming SHGs; towards awakening & enlighten- ment; moving towards preventive approach; not just economic needs	Standing up for one's rights & entitlements; demanding decision mak- ing power & autonomy; structural changes	Towards life in full- ness Socio-economic- political justice & freedom

2. It is considered as a NGO like other NGOs. But I believe as a Church's Auxiliary, it has a distinctive character and quality. It must maintain and promote this character.
3. After sixty years, an institution or an organisation is prone to bureaucracy and red tapism. Professionalism should not negate voluntarism and personalism. It must continue to be aware of and sensitive to the rights, needs, and aspirations of the people at the bottom of our society.
4. It must directly deal with the problems related to hierarchy, patriarchy and elitism. It should not be top-heavy. It must try to develop a different kind of managerial tools and governing skills, trying to decentralize and democratize.
5. It must educate the churches about social action leading to justice and liberation. CASA is not working on behalf of but along with the churches as a specialized agency. It must help the churches to come out of their "comfort zone" and plunge themselves in the rough and tumble, the heat and dust of reality at the ground level. It must motivate the churches to own CASA and support its work financially and morally.

CONCLUSION:

At last, this is the conclusion of the conclusion of the book! It has been an exciting but an exacting journey through sixty years. CASA has reached a significant threshold in its pilgrimage. As I began this chapter, I like to end it and the book by repeating that SOCIAL ACTION is the sine quanon of this movement. Action to it is what water is to the ocean; what stone is to the mountain; what blood is to human beings. Without action it cannot live, move and have its being. But this action is faith-based and people-directed. Its action must lead to freedom, justice and liberation. It must strive towards fullness of life. CASA must remember with the great poet,

Where is the life we have lost in live? Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge? Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?

Surely, CASA can lead us to a new frontier of understanding and action as it celebrates its diamond jubilee.

Appendices



Appendix A

MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF CASA IN LAST TEN YEARS (1997 – 2007)

- » Recognition of CASA as Key Stakeholders in Humanitarian Aid Response
- » Integration of RBA (Rights Based Approach) in the development programme as well as Disaster Response Programme
- » Developing a Gender Policy of CASA and institutionalising Gender Mainstreaming
- » Developing Performance Management Appraisal System in the organisation.
- » Recognition of CASA as Key Stakeholders in the PRI system
- » Strengthening of Voluntary Movement with large number of Civil Society Organisations – We have a network of over 350 NGOs
- » Mobilising and strengthening grassroots level people's organisations and forums of Dalits and Adivasis
- » Developing the Perspective & Capacity Building of the Stakeholders of CASA
- » Formation, promotion and strengthening of various people's and partners Forums at the districts, regional as well as National Level to bring change in the life of the people with dignity.
- » Formation of RIAP (Regional Inter-Agency Partnership) involving 4 South Asian countries i.e. India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh & Nepal
- » Emerging as a Key player in participating and organising World Social Forum and India Social Forum processes.

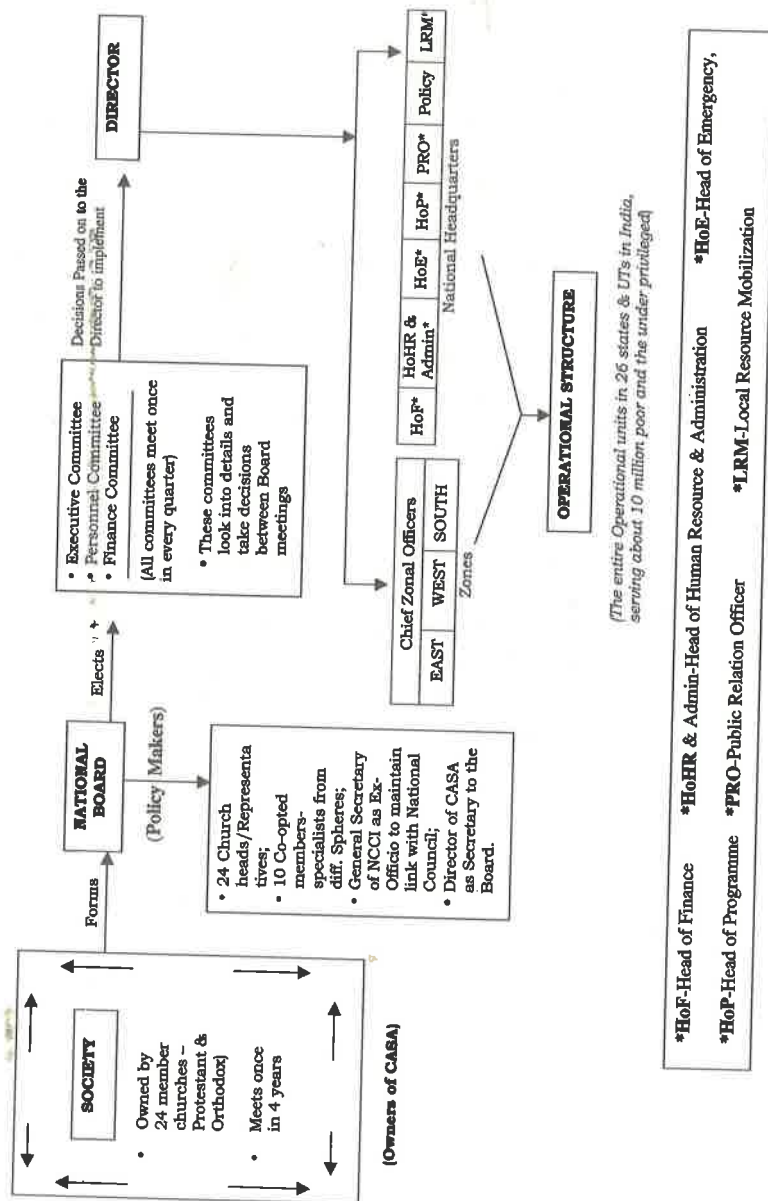
Appendix B

MAJOR CONSULTATIONS HELD IN LAST TEN YEARS

Sl. No.	YEAR	NATIONAL CONSULTATIONS / WORKSHOPS	VENUE
1.	1997	Golden Jubilee celebrations of CASA	New Delhi
2.	1999	National Consultation of Partners on Partnership/Cooperation	New Delhi
3.	2000	National Workshop on Gender	Chennai
4.		National Workshop on Panchayat Raj Institutions	Raipur
5.		National Consultation of Voluntary Organizations	Delhi
6.		Facilitating Grassroots Democracy, Workshop on PRI	Shimla
7.	2001	National Workshop on Food Security	Khandala
8.		National Workshop on Trauma Counselling	Bangalore
9.	2002	Participatory Strategic Planning of CASA	Calcutta
10.	2003	State Level Convention on BPL, Rajasthan	Jaipur
11.		Challenges in Measuring Poverty Levels and Targeting Programmes	Bhopal
12.	2004	World Social Forum	Mumbai
13.		National Workshop on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (PME)	Bangalore
14.		National Workshop on Right to Food	Indore
15.	2005	Rally of Women Leaders of PRI	Lucknow
16.		National Church Leaders Consultation on Tsunami	Mahabali-puram
17.		Maharashtra Social Forum	Ahmednagar

18.	2006	National Church Leaders' Consultation on Right to Information Act	Bangalore
19.		National Consultation on Millennium Development Goals	Kolkata
20.		India Social Forum	New Delhi
21.		National Consultation on Urban Voters Awareness And Education Campaign	Uttar Pradesh
22.	2007	World Social Forum	Nairobi, Kenya
23.		Maharashtra Social Forum	Ahmednagar
24.		Northeast Social Forum	Nagaland, Manipur, Assam
25.		Disaster Management Fair	Shimla
26.		State wise NREGA Campaign	12 States
27.		National Consultation on NREGA	New Delhi
28.		National Workshop on Local Capacity For Peace	Betul
29.		National Workshop on Performance Management System	New Delhi
30.		National Church Leaders Consultation on Tsunami	Pondicherry

Appendix C

GOVERNANCE & ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURES OF CASA

Appendix D

LEADERSHIP OF CASA (1947 – 2007)

INCUMBENCY CHART OF DIRECTORS OF CASA

Sl.	Name	Designation	From	To
1	Dr. E. C. Bhatt	Secretary, NCCI	Sept 1947	-
2	Dr. E. D. Lucas	Director of Relief	Sept 1947	Nov 1948
3	Dr. Donald Ebricht	Director of Relief	1949	Dec 1951
4	Dr. Donald Rugh	Director	Jan 1952	Nov 1956
5	Mr. Ranjit Chetsingh		Nov 1956	Sept 1957
6	Rev. Edward Benedict	Acting Director	1957	1958
7	Mr. J.S.S. Malelu		1958	Dec 1961
8	Capt. Alexander Jethro		1962	1966
9	Mr. Stephen Mathai		1966	1971
10	Mr. Idrak Bhatt		Aug 1971	Oct 1971
11	Mr. H.B. Kadambavanam	Executive Secretary	Oct 1971	1972
12	Mr. S. Ponraj	Executive Secretary	1972	1974
13	Mr. T. S. Francis	Special Officer	Sept 1974	Jan 1975
14	P.C. Joseph	Special Officer (later Director)	Feb 1975	July 1977
15	Major J.K. Michael	Director Designate Director	Jan 1977 July 177	July 1977 May 2001
16	Dr. Sushant Agrawal	Director	July 2001	to date

OFFICE BEARERS OF CASA NATIONAL BOARD FROM 1979 TILL OCTOBER 2007

1979 – 1982 Bishop Eric A. Mitchell (Chairperson)
 Rev. Dr. G. Thomas Edward (Vice Chairperson)
 Rt. Rev. F.C. Jonathan (Honorary Treasurer)

1983 – 1986 Bishop M. Elia Peter (Chairperson)
 Most Rev. I. Jesudasan (Vice Chairperson)
 Rt. Rev. F.C. Jonathan (Honorary Treasurer)

- 1987 – 1990 Rt. Rev. F. C. Jonathan (Chairperson)
 Most Rev. Dr. Mar Aprem (Vice Chairperson)
 Most Rev. M. M. Tudu (Honorary Treasurer)
- 1991 – 1994 Rt. Rev. F. C. Jonathan (Chairperson)
 Most Rev. Dr. P. Victor Premasagar (Vice Chairperson)
 Dr. (Mrs) Mabelle Arole (Honorary Treasurer)
- 1995 – 1998 Dr. (Mrs) Mabelle Arole (Chairperson)
 Rt. Rev. Dr. Joseph Mar Irenaeus (Vice Chairperson)
 Mr. B. Samrom Bage (Honorary Treasurer)
- 1999 – 2002 Rt. Rev. D. K. Mohanty (Chairperson)
 Rt. Rev. Dr. Joseph Mar Irenaeus (Vice Chairperson)
 Rev. S.C. David (Honorary Treasurer)
- 2003 – 2006 Rt. Rev. Dr. Joseph Mar Irenaeus (Chairperson)
 Most Rev. Z. James Terom (Vice Chairperson)
 Rev. S.C. David (Honorary Treasurer)
- 2007 - Rt. Rev. Dr. Joseph Mar Irenaeus (Chairperson)
 Most Rev. Dr. B. P. Sugandhar (Vice Chairperson)
 Rev. S.C. David (Honorary Treasurer)

Appendix E

GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS USED BY CASA

ACT	Action by Churches Together
ARC	Area Resource Centre
BIG	Bio-Intensive Garden
BPL	Below Poverty Line
CARSA	Christian Agency for Relief and Social Action
CASA	Church's Auxiliary for Social Action
CASARD	Christian Agency for Social Action Relief and Development
CBCI	Catholic Bishops Conference of India
CBDP	Community Based Disaster Preparedness
CBOs	Community-Based Organization
CCDB	Christian Commission for Development in Bangladesh
CFC	Collective Forms of Co-Operation
CHRI	Commonwealth Human Rights Initiatives
CMAI	Christian Medical Association of India
CNI	Church of North India
CONDA	Confederation of Nagaland Development Agency
CORAGS	Committee on Relief and Gift Supplies
CPR	Civil And Political Rights
CRR	Cheque Release Registrar
CRS	Civil And Political Rights
CSM	Corn, Soya And Milk
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
CVOs	Community, Partners (Church) and Voluntary Organisations
CWS	Church World Service
DMTF	Disaster Mitigation Task Force
DPNEI	Development Programme in North East India
ESR	Economic and Social Rights
FFCD	Food for Community Development
FFW	Food for Work
GELC	Gossener Evangelical Lutheran Church
GM	Genetically Modified
GRL	Grassroots Level
HCC	Hindustani Covenant Church
HDI	Human Development Index

HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/ Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
HPD	Human Potential Development
HRLN	Human Rights Law Network
IAY	Indira Awas Yojna
IBS	Individual Beneficiary Scheme
IDP	Internally Displaced People
IIM	Indian Institute of Management
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IRDP	Integrated Rural Development Programme
JKVM	Jan Kendrit Vikas Manch
KJV	King James Versions
KMSS	Krishak Mukti Sangram Samity
LCD	Lowest Common Denominators
LCP	Local Capacities for Peace
LF	Lymphatic Filariasis
LPG	Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization
LSN	Lok Sahbhagi Manch
LWR	Lutheran World Relief
MCC	Mennonite Central Committee
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MLA	Member of Legislature Assemble
MM	Mahila Mandal
MNC	Multi-National Company
MPEDA	Marine Product Export Development Authority
MP	Member of Parliaments
NCCI	National Christian Council of India, later National Council of Churches in India
NEB	New English Bible
NEN	North East Network
NGOS	Non-Governmental Organizations
NHPC	National Hydro Power Corporation
NIRD	National Institute of Rural Development
NIV	New International Version
NREGA	National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
NSSO	National Sample Survey Organisation
OBC	Other Backward Classes
OD	Organizational Development
OXFAM	Oxford Committee on Famine Relief
PAT	People's Action For Transformation
PDS	Public Distribution System

PL-480	Public Law-480
PME	Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation
PO	People's Organization
PPME	Participatory Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation
PPP	Parliament to People Programme
PRIA	Participatory Research in Asia
RBA	Rights-Based Approach
RCDRC	Raipur Churches Development and Relief Committee
REDS	Rural Employment Development Society
RIAP	Regional Inter Agency Partnership
RLCP	Restoration of Lost Childhood Project
RRC	Regional Resource Centre
RSV	Revised Standard Version
RTI	Right To Information
SCMI	Student Christian Movement Of India
SC	Schedule Caste
SEP	Social Education Programme
SEZ	Special Economic Zone
SGRY	Sampoorna Gramin Rozgar Yojna
SHG	Self-Help Group
TEV	Today's English Version
TNCS	Trans-National Corporations
TOC	Training of Community Workers
TOT	Training of Trainers
TOM	Training of Manager
UK	United Kingdom
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNO	United Nations Organisation
USA	United States of America
VDO	Voluntary Development Organization
VO	Voluntary Organization
WHO	World Health Organization
WSF	World Social Forum
WTO	World Trade Organization
YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association
YWCA	Young Women's Christians Association

Appendix F

GLOSSARY OF OTHER NON-ENGLISH WORDS USED IN THE BOOK

Hindi /Non-English Words	English Meaning
Aam admi	Common Man
Aam janata	Common People
Asli jagat	Real World
Adharma	Injustice / Unreligious
Adivasis	Tribals
Antodaya	Poorest of the poor/ landless poor people
Azadi	Freedom
Dalits	Earlier they were called "untouchables". They are the exploited mass, who are at the lowest rank of the Caste system practiced in India.
Dal-roti	Basic Food (Cereals-Flat Bread)
Deshi	Indian
Dharma	Religion
Dharna	Protest Rally
Gita	Hindu Religious Scripture
Gram Panchayat	Gram Panchayats are local government bodies at the village level in India
Gram Sabha	Gram Sabha is a body consisting of persons registered in the electoral rolls of a village or a group of villages which elect a Panchayat.
Gram Sansad	Gram Sansad is a body constituted with all the voters in a constituency of the Gram Panchayat
Harijan	A term coined by Gandhiji referring to the Dalits
Insaf	Justice
Jal	Water
Jal Biradri	Water Sharing Communities
Jamin	Land
Janata	People
Janwar	Animal
Jowar	This is a <i>Sorghum</i> species, used for food, as 'flat-breads'/roti, in India
Jangal	Jungle
Karma	Action: It is believed to be a sum of all that an individual has done, is currently doing and will do

Koran	Religious Scripture of Islam
Mahila Mandal	Women's Group
Mahila Samiti	Women's Committee
Mahila Sangam	Women's Collective
Mai-baap	Mother & Father
Mandal	Group
Mantra	Mystical magic words recited in a poem
Manusmriti	The law given by the Saint Manu in the Hindu Mythology, which depicts Caste system
Maya jagat	Mystical world
Mukti	Liberation
Nabii	Prophet
Nagarpalika	Municipality
Panchayati Raj	Local Self Governance
Pujari	Priest
Sabhas	Meetings
Sadhu	Saint
Sangham	Collective
Sarvodaya	Universal Upliftment
Smritis	"that which is remembered"
Dandi	It's a place in Gujarat where Mahatma Gandhi had broken the salt tax from the british
Swadeshi	Indian
Swadharma	Own Religion
Swaraj	Own Rule
Tsunami	Originally a japanese word which means - a series of waves created when a body of water, such as an ocean, is rapidly displaced
Varnashrama dharma	Caste System
Vedanta	a school of philosophy within Hinduism dealing with the nature of reality
Vedas	'Knowledge' – This is large corpus of texts originating in Ancient India.
Videshi	Foreign
Vikas Manch	Development Forum
Yahweh	God
Yuvak Mandals	Youth Group
Zamindars	Land Lord

Appendix G

BIBLIOGRAPHY

(Including Personal Interviews and Visits)

PERSONAL VISITS:

- » Visit South Zone in May, 2007, particularly the tsunami affected areas in Nagapattinam Sector -- Cuddalore, Kumarapettai, Sonangkuppam, Puspavanam and Perumalpettai.
- » Visited East Zone in June of this year particularly, Berhampur area.
- » Visited CASA Headquarters in New Delhi to become familiar with its life and work.

PERSONAL INTERVIEWS:

- » Meeting the Director in April of this year.
- » Meeting the CASA Office staff individually as well as in groups.
- » Meeting separately the Chief Zonal Officers of East and South Zones. I was also able to attend their respective Committee Meetings and talk separately with some of the Committee members.

CASA CONSULTATIONS:

- » I was requested to do a Bible Study and participate in the Church Leaders Consultation on the MDGs between 4th and 6th December, 2006.
- » I was requested to speak and participated in a Consultation organised by the East Zone in September of this year on People: Their Roots, Identity and Rights.

BOOK ON CASA:

Mar Aprem From Relief to Development: A Profile of CASA, 1979.
 Titus George, From Despair to Hope: 50 years of CASA, 1997
The Long March: A Profile of CASA, 1997.

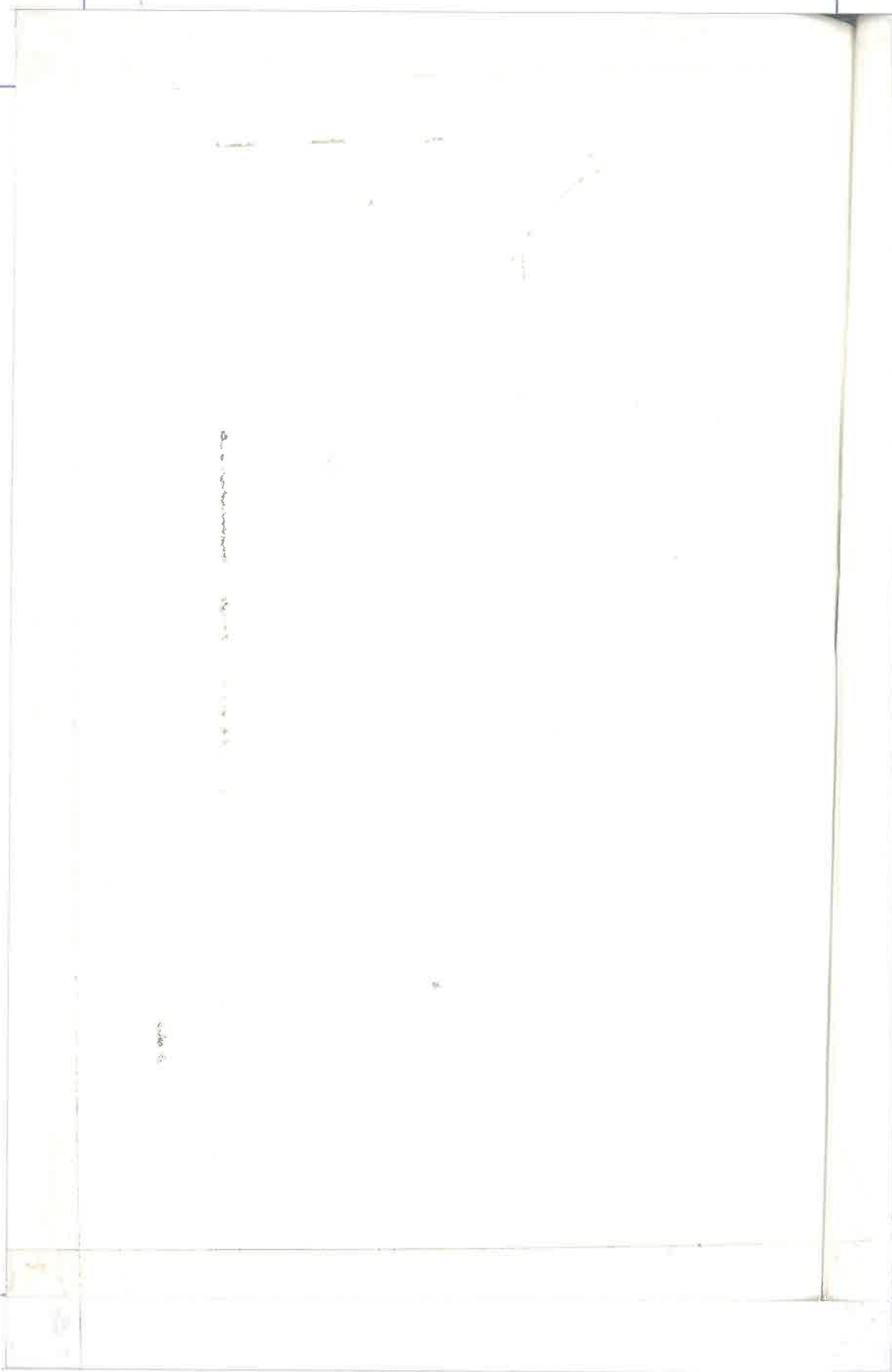
OTHER CASA PUBLICATIONS:

- » Facilitating Grassroots Democracy: Panchayats in the New Millennium, October, 2000.
- » Rebuilding the lives of the Poor: Development Paradigm and

- Perspective in the New Millennium, November, 2001.
- » Strengthening the Indomitable Spirit of the People of Orissa: Orissa Supercyclone Rehabilitation Programme, 2001.
 - » CASA IN ACTION -- The News Bulletin of CASA.
 - » ANNUAL REPORTS OF CASA.
 - » Bengali booklet on Disaster Management, 2003.
 - » Rebuilding Lives: CASA's Response to Tsunami, 2005.
 - » Gram Sabha Awareness Campaign Report, organised by CASA and Jan Kendrit Vikas Manch, Lucknow, 2005.
 - » External Review of the Core Programme of CASA, a Report, 2004.
 - » Gender Policy of CASA, 2006-07.
 - » RBA in CASA: Understanding and Integration Strategies, 2006.
 - » Development Paradigm & Perspective Plan 2003-2013, CASA
 - » Realizing Social Transformation. . Towards Paradigm Shift, March, 2007.
 - » Youth Internship Programme – 2008.
 - » CASA Chhattishgarh CFC Phase I : Evaluation Study, 2006.
 - » Impact Study of SHGs conducted in East Zone, A Report, May June, 2006.
 - » CASA's RTI Findings in Assam, 2006-07.
 - » Psycho-Social Support: Handbook for Facilitators, South Zone, CASA, 2006.
 - » Director's Report entitled, NOT BY BREAD ALONE -- Presented to the CASA Society on 9 January, 2007.
 - » AN ARTICLE: "Orphans of the Storm", in Arthur G. McPhee, the Road to Delhi: Bishop Pickett Remembered, 1890-1981 (Bangalore: SAIACS Press, 2005), Chapter 28, pp. 317-330.

Appendix H

Journey of 60 years
through the eye of the Camera
(1947-2007)



When CASA was Born - From the pages of History

Immediate help worth over \$ 1,000,000 is to be recommended to Geneva by the international team of rehabilitation experts who have just completed a two-month's visit to Assam and India for a programme to be carried out by the National Christian Council.



Mr. Andrew Mouravieff, Apostol, (left) Senior Representative of the World Council of Churches on Refugee Resettlement problems, talking to the Medical Officer at Rudrapur (U.P.) Refugee Camp during his recent tour.

Centre (facing Camera) is the Resettlement Officer with Mr. Alec Jethro, Director of the Committee on Relief and Gift Supplies of the National Christian Council of India, which will administer funds provided by the World Council of Churches.

Mr. Alec Jethro, Director, CORAGS with WCC representatives.



Our P.R.O. doesn't seem to have got himself in any of the other photographs in this issue like everybody else, so here he is. Derick Garnier is obviously planning another of his tours since he is having a discussion with P. S. Kulkarni, formerly Programme Officer, and John Singh, Material Aid Officer. Has he got a visit to Bombay in mind, because Mr. Kulkarni is taking over from Mr. Bhaseen as Port Representative when the latter departs on his tour of the United States?

Derick Garnier, PRO, CORAGS
(Standing) with his colleagues.

DON RUGH IS BACK

Don Rugh, who served as the Director of Relief for the National Christian Council of India, and Church World Service representative from 1952 to 1956, has returned to India with the Relief Committee of the National Christian Council of India as Assistant Director of Field Programmes.



him, as proposed by AFPRO, encouraged him to offer to assist, if needed.

Don Rugh, Director, NCC
Relief (1966).

We sadly announce the sudden passing away of our Chairman on Saturday, December 3. His last message follows:



OUR ATTENTION this Christmas is painfully riveted on the terrible problem of hunger in India. Poor people by the tens of thousands are hungering for food. Calamities of nature and selfishness of man have conspired together to bring about this terrible state of affairs. The conscience and sympathy of the world have been roused. The work of the CORAGS and AFPRO has assumed a new and urgent significance.

Mahatma Gandhi once said that "to the poor man, God comes in the form of a bread" it would indeed be a tragic irony to speak to the starving millions of India about God's love when they are dying of hunger. May we, as we distribute food, remember the words of Jesus: "I am the bread of Life". Many more are starving for this "Bread", "which a man may eat and not die". We Christians have a special responsibility to make Him known "in breaking of bread", through our love and humble service."

M. G. Dharmaraj
Chairman, CORAGS

Mr. M.G.
Dharmaraj,
Chairman,
CORAGS.



Mr. M.A. Daniel, General Administrator of the National Christian Council Relief Committee, presenting sewing machines to Thutop Tulku, Representative at Rajpur(Dehra Dun) of H. H. Sakya Trizin Rimpochee.

Mr. M. A.
Daniel,
General
Administrator
of NCC Relief
Committee.



Douglas W.
Cook, Associate
Director,
December 1965.



M. G.
Dharamraj,
Chairman
CORAGS,
1965.



Philip Rathod was a N.C.C. Relief Committee 'Contact Person' from 1961 until his death on 27th August 1965 and was the volunteer in charge of 20 feeding centres under the CORAGS Feeding Programme. Born on 2nd Nov. 1904, he was the son of Magan Lal, an employee of the pharmaceutical company, Kemp & Co., in Bombay. Fond of singing & playing a musical instrument, he joined the Revenue Dept. in 1924. A year later he married Sumitraben in the Methodist Church at Baroda, after which he was appointed to Dohad. He eventually became the Taluka Magistrate until he retired in 1959.

Mr. Philip
Rathod,
NCC Relief
Committee
Contact
person (1961-
1965).



Waskom Pickett in conversation with Jawaharlal Nehru; Bishop Marshall Reed from Michigan is next to Pickett; Douglas Pickett is third from the left.

Bishop
Waskom
Pickett (1st
from left) in
conversation
with the
Prime
Minister
Nehru.
(Photo credit
: Road to
Delhi by
Arthur
McPhee).

Early Days of CASA

FEEDING CALCUTTA'S BUSTEE DWELLERS



The time is 6-15 a.m. Bustees bring their buckets and bowls to wash at a hydrant in the street, oblivious of the women and children lining up outside the cemetery wall at Bhowanipore. Each child will receive a cup of milk and a chapatti or two biscuits



The mobile van arrives at one of the stopping centres on the "milk round" where cheery faces greet its arrival.



A tribal woman of Orissa, who receives food for her family, working on a road building project. Photo: R. P. Singh

A woman from Orissa during Food for Work programme.



A tribal woman of Bihar feeds her baby with food served at a free kitchen in the jungles of Latchar. Their bowls are made of tree leaves.



Famine takes its toll.
A Tribal woman from Bihar receives food from CORAGS.



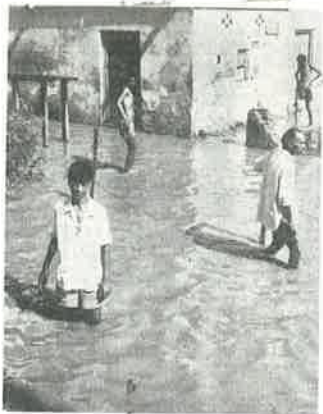
Children queue up to receive their rations in a feeding programme of the National Christian Council Relief Committee.



A farmer of Bihar sowing the hybrid maize seed in his fields. CORAGS subsidised the cost of seed.



Children enjoy a mid-day meal in a feeding programme run by the National Christian Council Relief Committee in Chandwa Block, Bihar.



Residents of a colony in Midnapur, W. Bengal wading through a flooded street.



Rev. Ernest Y. Campbell (wearing cap) evacuating a flood-hit family of Sabhapur village in the Wazirabad block of Delhi on his light aluminum outboard motor boat provided by CORAGS.

CORAGS' flood Relief operation in West Bengal.

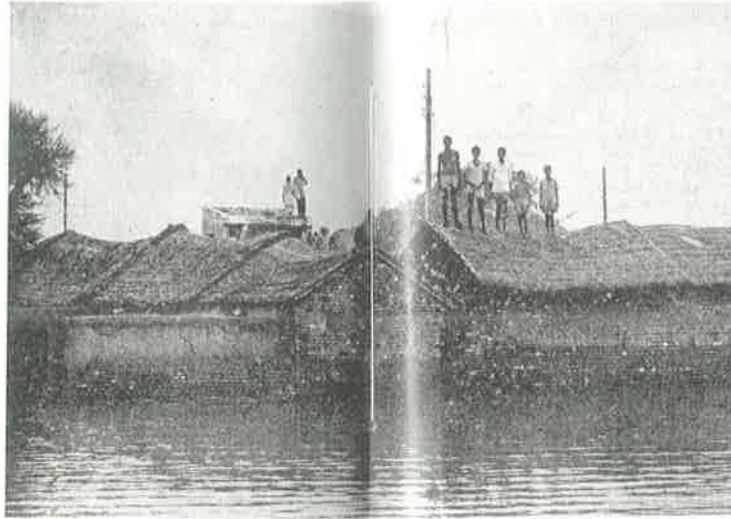


Villagers of Osulapura digging a well.



Children enjoy milk, distributed by CORAGS.

Need Based Approach



Villagers of Jagatpur, one of the flood-hit villages near Delhi, leave a sigh of relief as they spot from the top of their thatched-roof huts the National Christian Council Flood Relief party. The water of Jamuna river was at places 4 to 5 feet high, as can be seen from the marks on the walls.

NCC Relief Committee helps the marooned people of Jagatpur, near Delhi.



Blankets distributed to the children of Great Commission Kids Academy, Dimapur, Nagaland.



The Rev. S. K. Biswas, Assistant Parish at St. Paul's Cathedral takes his turn in helping with the early morning feeding programme. Milk is prepared in the cathedral precincts from dried milk powder provided by the Food for Peace Programme of the U.S. Government. This mother has a family of five to feed.



Each row of houses has its water supply with a half-gallon and drinking pot. Costing Rs. 900/- each, they provide drinking water as well as being the bathing and laundry center. The children have so splash in the cool water during the hot months or when they get the chance.



Packages of multi vitamin tablets and milk powder being unloaded from the DC 6B of the Sterling Airways, Denmark, at the Palam air port, Delhi.

Multivitamin tablets and Milk arriving from Denmark for CORAGS.



FFCD work in North.

Issue Based Approach



SHG Meeting, South zone, 2003-2004.



CORE Programme, West zone, 2004-2005.



Rajasthan Development Programme, 2003-2004.



Tri Agency Programme, 1996-1997.



Core Programme, 2000-2001.



ERP, Tank digging under FFCD, 2002-2003.

Rights Based Approach



Panchyati Raj Meeting of Women, Lucknow, 2005-2006.



Protest Rally by Communities, 2001-2002.



NGOs in WB - Fish Farming Group, Prasadpur, 2002-2003.



Package Programme, Poster on Women's Reservation, 2003-2004.



Women's Day celebration in South Zone, 1996-1997.

Disaster and Emergency



Training on
Rescue, CBDP,
2003-2004.



CBDP, NEI,
DMTE, 2004-
2005.



Assam Floods.
2003.



Emergency relief
passing through
difficult terrain,
2000-2001.



Kumarpettai
disaster shelter,
October 2006-04.



CASA's Proposed Programmes in Gujarat.



Boats given
to Tsunami
Victims by
CASA.



West Bengal
City Based
Disaster
Preparation
Programme,
2005-2006.



CASA's
Tsunami
Housing
Programme
in South
India.



Children's Park
for Tsunami
Victims.



Church Leaders
from WCC,
NCCI, CSI with
the Director of
CASA.



Director with the
Tsunami Victim
Children.



Director of
CASA with
Tsunami
Victims.



DMTF in
Action.



Officers of
CASA visiting
the Tsunami
Rehabilitation
centre in
Andaman
Islands.

Stakeholders of CASA

COMMUNITY



Eastern Rajasthan Package Programme, 2001-2002.



Development Programme in North East India, 1996-1997.



Core Programme, Village Level Planning Meeting, 1998-1999.

RESOURCE PARTNERS



John Nduna, Director, ACT and Rev. Cornelia of BFW at the TRRP Inauguration at Cuddalore.



Rev. Dr. Sam Kobia, Secretary General, WCC in Action at Housing Project of CASA in South India.



Resource Partners at the Round Table meeting of CASA.



Northern Partners of CASA at the ACT Exec. Com. meeting.

CHURCH LEADERS



Church
leaders
Consultation
for tsunami
rehabilitation.



Multipurpose
Disaster
Shelter
brick laying
ceremony
by Rev. Dr.
Sam Kobia,
Secretary
General,
WCC.



Field Visits
with church
leaders on a
bullock cart.



New National Board of CASA, 2007.



New National Board of CASA, 2007.

GOVERNMENT



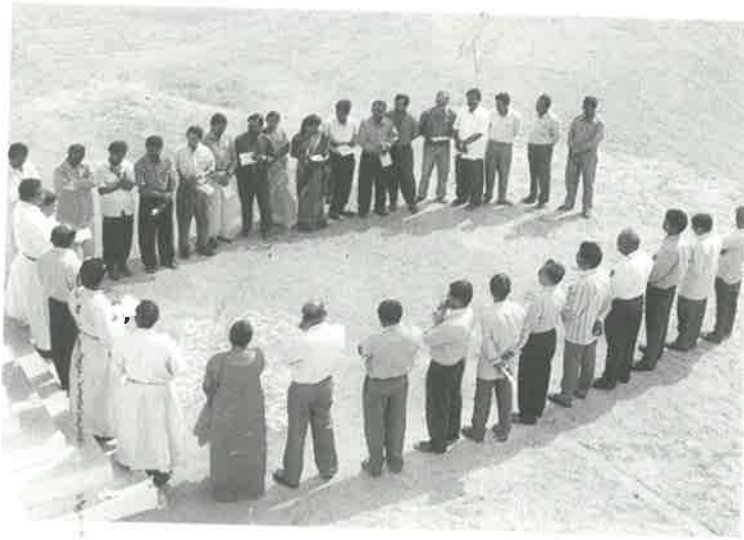
CASA Felicitates the Chief Minister of Nagaland, 1999-2000.



Mr. J K Michael, Director, CASA discussing the relief programme with Mrs Sheila Dixit, Chief Minister, Delhi

Former Director, CASA , Major Michael with Mrs. Sheila Dixit,
CM, Delhi.

CASA STAFF



CASA staff at a Core Programme.



CASA delegation at the 9th WCC Assembly, Brazil.



CASA Staff during a National Meeting, 2007.



CASA Staff at the National Planning Review Meeting, 2007.

Health



Lymphatic
Filariasis
Foot Care
Demonstration,
2003-2004.



Village Level
Awareness
Programme
against
Filaria.



Dr. Isaac Nath inspecting a group of leprosy patients at the Home. In the foreground are four Tibetan refugees whose exposures at the Home are met by CORAGS., Dolma Patan, Tobji Somohumbo, Sonam Sambo, Sonam Narygam.

CORAGS
working
with Leprosy
patients.

International Solidarity through WSF



Anna Hazare
at the MSF.
CASA took
the lead in
organising it.



CASA Rally
against
Imperialism
in India Social
Forum -2006
at New Delhi.



CASA
delegation
at the India
Social Forum,
2006 at New
Delhi.



Cultural Troupe of CASA at WSF - 2007, Nairobi.



CASA Exhibition Stall at WSF-2007, Nairobi.



About the Author

Rev. Dr. Somen Das is a well-respected theologian, who has taught Christian Theology & Ethics for the past 40 years. After studying for M.Th. from Princeton College, and obtaining Ph.D. from Boston in USA, Dr. Das taught for 18 years at the United Theological College at Bangalore. In 1989, he shifted to West Bengal to serve as the Principal of Bishop's College, Kolkotta for 11 years. At the beginning of new Millenium in 2000, he shifted to the Serampore College (Hooghly District)-the first institution to be given the status of a university in 1829 in India, and founded by the missionaries Joshua Marshman, William Carey and William Ward (The Serampore Trio).

Somen Das has always interacted with the Christian Social Action Groups, Social Movements and Ecumenical organizations thus mixing "theology" with "activism". He has played a crucial role in laying a firm foundation of faith in a number of these through direct involvement and providing leadership. It is committed theologians like him who deepen the faith dimension of the Christian Social Action, simultaneously challenging them from Biblical perspective. Instead of condemning and criticizing social activism while sitting in the cozy environ of a theological college, Dr. Somen Das has come out into the open and joined it to share in the joys and frustration of the suffering and struggling people in their march towards establishing a new social order based on peace, justice, freedom, equality and dignity. He has been not only an active member of the Raipur Churches Development & Relief Committee (a grass-roots level ecumenical organization for radical social change) but served as its Chairperson for 7 years.

He is already the author of many books, and continued to contribute regularly for theological journals and periodicals. Prominent among these are : Christian Ethics & Indian Ethos, The Church & The World, SAMVEDNA TO MUKTI (From Empathy to Emancipation) published by ISPCK.

Dr. Somēn Das has participated in several national and international consultations and seminars organized by World Council of Churches, Christian Conference of Asia, National Council of Churches in India, Church's Auxiliary for Social Action (CASA), Student Christian Movement of India, Young Men's Christian Association and various Churches in India. He was also the Chairperson of Research Programme of the South Asia Theological Research Institute (SATHRI) for many years, and has examined doctoral, M.Th. and BD dissertations and examinations.

We hope that this book will help the Civil Society Organisations, the government, the community, the resource partners and above all help CASA to retrospect into the past and strategically plan for the future course of action towards a Transformational Development.

I, on behalf of the Board of CASA would like to wish all the stakeholders a very Happy Diamond Jubilee and a happy reading.

Most Rev. Dr. Joseph Mar Irenaeus
Chairman, CASA

Metropolitan, Mar Thoma Syrian Church of Malabar, Kerala

I feel proud that Dr. Somen Das, a noted theologian acknowledged across the globe, has been able to capture the realities and flavour of CASA's existence and work in such a short span of time, and has come out with this book which would continue to challenge CASA in the years to come that this organization is not merely a non-governmental organisation, but a Faith-Based Organisation to serve the creation of the Lord, and hence the title **"Mission Redefined"**.

Sushant Agrawal
Director, CASA



Rev. Dr. Somen Das, PhD
Boston, USA

Dr. Das taught for 18 years at the United Theological College at Bangalore. In 1989, he moved to West Bengal to serve as the Principal of Bishop's College, Kolkata for 11 years. In 2000, he shifted to the Serampore College (Hooghly District). Somen Das has always interacted with the Christian Social Action Groups, Social Movements and Ecumenical organizations thus mixing "theology" with "activism". He has played a crucial role in laying a firm foundation of faith in a number of these initiatives through direct involvement and providing leadership. He has authored many books and continued to contribute regularly for theological journals and periodicals. Prominent among these are: Christian Ethics & Indian Ethos, The Church & The World, SAMVEDNA TO MUKTI (From Empathy to Emancipation) published by ISPCK.



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