

Challenges and solutions for urban social movements: Lessons from experiences of SDI affiliates

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Abstract: Shack/Slum Dwellers International (SDI) is a transnational network of local slum-dweller organizations who have come together at the city and national level to form federations of the urban poor. The network operates in cities in over 30 countries from Asia, Latin America and Africa. Over the past 14 years SDI has developed a set of developmental rituals and practices for which it is now well known. SDI affiliates at the city and country level are trained in these rituals. They are also trained in transferring these skills to other community-based organizations in their own countries and beyond. Among the rituals that have evolved within SDI is a strategy of using community savings-and-credit schemes as the social glue within slum settlements to form robust federations of urban poor. These federations have gone well beyond merely providing access to finance for home-improvements in these slums. But despite this, there are serious conflicts in the federating process. This paper is based on 17 case-studies of cities where SDI is currently working. The author will make an effort to disentangle how SDI has succeeded in replicating itself in these cities while asking the following questions.

- What are broad general categories of actors in the federating process and the types of conflicts among them?
- How does each of these categories of conflict manifest themselves at different SDI sites?
- What are the different strategies and tactics employed to resolve or get around such conflicts at different sites? Or how do the various SDI affiliates evolve to adapt to the local matrix of conflicts?
- Are there lessons for the federations, professionals, funding agencies, and politicians in how to deal with these conflicts?

Keywords: collective action, slums, developing countries, credit and savings groups, housing finance, SDI.

The introduction of SDI should include the following - their history, their goals, their methods, their successes.

INTRODUCTION

“ I think we can help magnify the voices of the social and labor movements. But at the same time I think we must also take a constructively critical role, point out the similarities that are often concealed in the differences, attempt syntheses where we can, help build alliances and coalitions, translate (always a difficult task) in sensitive ways what is happening into a more general counter-hegemonic, anti-neoliberal and anti-capitalist discourse. Political activists are invariably preoccupied with their immediate tasks and these tasks can sometimes be all-consuming of time, energy and slender resources. But those that I meet in my travels are also hungry for general ideas and perspectives that they can use and that situate what they are doing in a broader context. They do not care for dogma or for arid theoreticism (into which we academics sometimes descend). But they plainly value the opportunity for dialogue, as do I. Out of this, new ways of thinking (theoretically) and acting (practically) are gradually beginning to emerge. I am hopeful for this global movement in formation.

”

(David Harvey 2007 in an interview published in *Development and Change*.)

This paper shares the optimism of David Harvey and addresses the need for reflective and critical thinking that he underscores as important in guiding the theory and practice of social movements. One such movement taking roots in urban areas of many developing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America is the Slum/Shack Dwellers International (SDI).

SDI is a transnational network of local slum dweller organizations that have come together at the city and national level to form federations of the urban poor. Whilst men are not excluded, the majority of members are women. Over the past 14 years SDI has

developed a set of developmental rituals and practices for which it is now well known. SDI affiliates at the city and country level are trained in these rituals. They are also trained in transferring these skills to other community-based organizations in their own countries and beyond ([SDI website](#)).

History

The origins of SDI lie in a Mumbai-based coalition of a group of poor slum-dwellers and some urban professionals who have together been changing the terms of recognition for the urban poor and enriching the cultural capacity to aspire among its members through a strategy that creates a double helix between local activism and global networking. (Appadurai 2004, p 70) The movement here consists of three partners, who together constitute the Mumbai Alliance. The three partners have different histories. SPARC is a nongovernmental organization (NGO) formed by social work professionals in 1984 to work with problems of urban poverty in Mumbai. The National Slum Dwellers Foundation is a powerful grassroots organization established in 1974 and is a community-based organization which also has its historical base in Mumbai. Finally, Mahila Milan is an organization of poor women, set up in 1986, with its base in Mumbai and a network throughout India, which is focused on women's issues in relation to urban poverty and is especially concerned with local and self-organized savings schemes among the very poor. All three organizations, which refer to themselves collectively as the Alliance, are united in their concerns with gaining secure tenure in land, adequate and durable housing, and access to urban infrastructure, notably to electricity, transport, sanitation, and allied services. The Alliance has successfully changed the way plans are made, and accountability defined for projects, programs, and policies that relate to the urban poor in their favor. In 1996, the Alliance joined like-minded organizations from other countries and founded an international federation of national and city-wide federations of urban poor calling itself the Slum/Shack Dwellers International (SDI). This has not only helped them achieve a critical mass and therefore greater voice in national and international negotiations, but has also helped them learn from a greater diversity of practices of collective action and evolve robust well-tested rituals that has the greatest impact in the lives of the urban poor.

SDI's Key Rituals

The SDI affiliates from around the world have evolved a number of practices that, if applied well, were found to change the power dynamics in the city in favor of the urban poor. These practices have been perfected over the years and ritualized and spread across all its members. Some of the key rituals include the following:

- Daily savings as a mobilizing and developmental tool, creating accountability, self-reliance and financial and human resource management skills.
- The participation of women and the most marginalized members of slum communities as central to any participatory effort.
- Community learning and solidarity through horizontal exchange programs.
- Grassroots driven land identification for resettlement.
- Incremental human settlement development.
- Grassroots driven gathering of information through surveys, enumerations and settlement profiles.
- Solution-finding through negotiations and dialogue.
- Community-based shelter training, including house models, community action planning and community design.

- Small core groups of professionals to provide technical and financial support to Federations.
- Consistent engagement with local authorities through urban poor funds, enumeration data and citywide development strategies.
- International advocacy in order to strengthen local (city level) initiatives.

Successful civic-driven change has come from the enhanced negotiation power of the SDI affiliates due to the possession of three assets: financial asset of the federation in the form of savings, a critical mass in terms of the number of members within the federations, and knowledge in the form of information collected through slum census and household surveys.

So far SDI model has worked in cities in over 17 countries spread across Latin America, Asia and Africa - almost all places where it has been tried providing there is a commitment on the part of the community to invest and see the process through. What does the model need to succeed? A local residential population, peer-to-peer community exchanges, a support NGO able to provide support. But are these conditions a given for all cities? Has SDI developed a common vocabulary and a set of tools that can offer lessons for other urban social movements to get around commonly faced but significant challenges? We get into the conceptualization of these challenges later but these challenges include building organizations, elaborating ideologies, and socialize and mobilize constituencies and engage in the self-development of its members. These challenges are faced by the movements in achieving their goal, i.e. in sustaining the movement, and achieving intended results which are most often to bring about structural change in the system of decision-making.

THE PROBLEMATIZATION OF CONFLICTS

Our attempt in this paper is to look at the broad spectrum of contentions even among social movement actors. The reason is as follows: Because of this gap between the institutional system of representation and decision making and the needs and forms of action arising from the society there are a number of conflicts that arise making the sociopolitical context extremely “complex” (Melucci 1985 p.790). Therefore, we focus on the conflicts within this complex mix of actors to attempt to find a way to resolve some of them.

Contentious politics and conflict have remained central in the literature on social movements. Tarrow places the social movement and its particular dynamics historically and analytically within the universe of contention (Tarrow 1994). Collective action becomes contentious when it is used by people who lack regular access to institutions, who act in the name of new or unaccepted claims, and who behave in ways that fundamentally challenge others or authorities (Tarrow 1994 p.3). He also argues that not all contentious politics warrants the term “social movements”. He reserves the term for those sequences of contentious politics that are based on underlying social networks and resonant collective action frames, and which develop the capacity to maintain sustained challenges against powerful opponents.

But this does not mean that movements do nothing else but contend: they build organizations, elaborate ideologies, and socialize and mobilize constituencies, and their members engage in self-development and the construction of collective identities (Tarrow 1994 p.3). Some movements are profoundly apolitical, and focus on their internal lives or those of their members. But even such movements, as sociologist Craig Calhoun reminds us, encounter authorities in conflictual ways, because it is these authorities who are responsible for law and

order and for setting the norms for society (Calhoun 1994 p.21). Organizers use contention to exploit political opportunities, create collective identities, bring people together in organizations, and mobilize them against more powerful opponents. Much of the history of movement-state interaction can be read as a duet of strategy and counterstrategy between movement activists and power holders (Tarrow 1994 p.3). SDI therefore represents a very different way of organizing not based on direct confrontation but approaching contention from a position of power by first building capacity internally

Collective action can take many forms – brief or sustained, institutionalized or disruptive, humdrum or dramatic. Most of it occurs within institutions, on the part of constituted groups acting in the name of goals that would hardly raise an eyebrow. Collective action becomes contentious when it is used by people who lack regular access to institutions, who act in the name of new or unaccepted claims, and who behave in ways that fundamentally challenge others or authorities (Tarrow 1994 p.3).

[Tarrow suggests that social movements by definition are contentious whether or not they are political in nature. They have power because they challenge power holders, produce solidarities, and have meaning within particular population groups, situations, and national cultures. Will Sheela contest this view?]

[What is most interesting in Tarrow's book is that it points to the process by which people get together in sustained interaction with "opponents" and this requires a *social* solution – aggregating people with different demands and identities and in different locations in concerted campaigns of collective action. According to Tarrow, this solution involves, first, mounting collective challenges; second, drawing on social networks, common purposes, and cultural frameworks; and, third, building solidarity through connective structures and collective identities to sustain collective action. These are the main processes of social movements (Tarrow 1994 p.4). The documentation of the process of social movement at different sites of SDI shows that there are a lot of other forms of contentions that Tarrow's study does not identify. SDI therefore offers an opportunity to closely examine established theories of social movements and collective action to look at the finer details of the *social* solution that Tarrow mentions which is needed for sustained interaction with opponents. Tarrow's definition of social movement: *collective challenges, based on common purposes and social solidarities, in sustained interaction with elites, opponents, and authorities* (Tarrow 1994 p.4). Tarrow's definition of social movement has four empirical properties: collective challenge, common purpose, social solidarity, and sustained interaction. SDI recognizes each of these in different ways and that can be something that I can elaborate more here in this paper. For example, can I identify instances of collective challenge at any of the SDI sites?]

Different conflicts are important in different ways. For example, the classical Marxist problem (how to pass from class condition to class consciousness) still exists and can't be solved without taking into consideration how a collective actor is formed and how his identity is maintained.

Melucci defined social movements as *a form of collective action which is based on solidarity and which breaks the limits of the system in which action occurs but also carrying on a "conflict"*. (Solidarity and sustained drive are common in both Tarrow and Melucci's definitions. But Melucci perhaps highlighted the impact or the result of such movements more

than Tarrow?) He also writes that “actors in conflicts are increasingly temporary, and their function is to reveal the stakes, to announce to society that a fundamental problem exists in a given area. They have a growing symbolic function; one can probably speak of prophetic function. They are a kind of new media. They do not fight merely for material goals, or to increase their participation in the system. They fight for symbolic and cultural stakes, for a different meaning and orientation of social action.” (p.797)

But Melucci’s paper is about social movements in the form of peace movements against the atom bomb. Not very similar to the structural change that SDI is attempting. So it might not be useful to use Melucci’s theories in this context. He talks about conflict in a different sense. My question then would be can we classify both SDI and the peace movement of the 80s as “social movements”?

In a way, SDI represents a new form of social movement that attempts to move beyond oppositional politics (in the form of public mobilization against a particular actor) as a way to deal with “conflicts” that Melucci talks about but uses a more entrepreneurial/creative approach to move past conflicts. But as we see in SDI case, they also result in the formation of new elites but also changes the political institutions and create new patterns of behavior. But as Melucci suggests, these new kinds of conflicts can be beneficial (even though we exclude oppositional politics). “It (conflict) makes the power *visible*. In systems where the power becomes increasingly anonymous and neutral, where it is incorporated in formal procedures, to make it visible is a fundamental political achievement: the only condition for negotiating the rules and for making social decisions more transparent.” (Melucci 1985 p.813-14)

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Each of the leading Marxist theorists emphasized a different element of collective action: Marx focused on the cleavages of capitalist society that created a mobilization potential (what students of social movements would later call “grievance theory”); Lenin created the movement organizations that were necessary to structure it and prevent its dispersion into narrow corporate claims (what would be later be called “resource mobilization” by American scholars); and Gramsci centered on the need to build consensus around the party’s goals (what has come to be called “framing” and “collective identity” formation). But none of them specified the *political* conditions in which resource-poor and exploited workers could be expected to mobilize on behalf of their interests – what we will call the problem of political opportunities and constraints (Tarrow 1994 p. 13).

Tarrow provides a review of some of the leading theorists in collective action and social movements in his book. Marxist theorists were followed by the collective behavior theorists who started from the assumption that collective behavior was outside the routines of everyday life, and few of them specified its relationship to the political. But in the 1960s a new social movement cycle hit in Europe and North America, which made the collective behavior theorists lose their popularity. There was a growing conviction of social movement scholars that grievances alone cannot explain mobilization. Indeed, Olson argued that rational people guided by individual interest might well avoid taking action when they see that others are willing to take it for them. But Olson had little to say beyond the individual level of motivation and aggregation. How could his theory be reconciled with the movement cycle of the 1960s?

- Can we identify broad general categories of actors in urban processes and the types of conflicts among them?
- How do each of these categories of conflict manifest themselves at different SDI sites?
- What are the different strategies and tactics employed to resolve or get around such conflicts at different sites? Or how do the various SDI affiliates evolve to adapt to the local matrix of conflicts?
- Are there lessons for the federations, professionals, funding agencies, and politicians in how to deal with these conflicts?

Method:

We reviewed twenty two reports and documents from the SDI website describing the operations of its various affiliates in different parts of the world. We also used our own observations and communications with key actors in at the SDI secretariat. The contents were coded in order to identify the different kinds of conflicts among various actors and how SDI affiliates "dealt" with them.

FINDINGS

SDI affiliates have been using both strategies and tactics (to use Certeau's words) in dealing with the different sets of conflicts inherent in their activities with different actors. A strategy is an entity that is recognized as an authority – it may be anything from an institution or a commercial outfit to an individual whose behavior coincides with the author's proposed definition of "strategic". A strategy may enjoy status as the dominant order, or be sanctioned by the powers that be. It manifests itself physically in its site/s of operations (offices/headquarters) and in its products (laws, language, rituals, commercial goods, literature, art, inventions, discourse). It has use of dedicated resources, and is expected to incur considerable overheads. Because it represents an enormous investment in space (actual buildings and assets) and time (its own history, traditions), its ways are set. It cannot be expected to be capable of breaking up and regrouping easily, something which a tactical model does naturally.

Certeau's *tactical* model describes individuals or groups which are fragmented in terms of space and maintain no specific site of operation (no headquarters), but who are capable of swiftly combining according to a current necessity. Therefore, necessity spurs a tactic into existence, while with a strategy, need is a thing that might have to be created after the product.

As an example of how both strategies and tactics are used simultaneously in the context of SDI, lets take the case of the Homeless People's Federation of the Philippines. Mark Swilling notes about the HPFP in the Philippines that despite a formal national code of policies and national programme of the HPFP, these policies and programmes are constantly shifting in ways that are common to such movements the world over in *tactical* response to various emergent situations. On the one hand, there is a formal programme - a *strategy* in Certeau's words, often formulated in a language that fits with the funding priorities of a particular donor or group of donors. On the other, there are tactics employed in response to the reality of everyday activities which are more driven by daily pressures and demands than by the codified structure of the grant agreement.

An important aspect of SDI affiliates is that they have tended to avoid merely to build up

extra-state oppositional bases for protest coupled with demands for change, but focus on building up the capacity to participate in the implementation of these changes often in partnership with the state. The state is seen as a necessary evil in their practices.

WHO ARE THE ACTORS?

WHAT ARE THE CATEGORIES OF CONFLICTS?

WITHIN COMMUNITIES -

The conflicts among different groups within a community can arise from many different factors. The most common differences are among easily distinguishable groups such as tenants versus land/shack owners or between those who have lived in the community for longer versus the recently arrived ones. There are also conflicts between the men and women folks in how they perceive the problem and what means they chose to deal with a situation. Based on our research, we could identify the following categories of conflicts among communities where SDI affiliates work.

1) Conflict over methods of resistance (some community members choose affiliation with political parties, others choose legal recourse, or violence; still others choose to work together in partnership with the government and other powers that be.);

SDI affiliates' responses include both strategies and tactics. Strengthening the solidarity and organization of the community is the key. This makes seeking patronage from politicians or political parties or slum lords less attractive for most people and feeds back into further strengthening the community solidarity in terms of the choice of means to deal with their immediate needs. Also most SDI affiliates have been able to maintain neutrality within the local party politics and have worked with whoever is in power. There are exceptions to this of course and these exceptions have faced problems because of taking sides (South Africa and Zimbabwe). Legal recourse has been used in some cases but these are expensive and time-consuming. They work best perhaps when the communities as a group understand the implications and are able to see the process through despite high costs and the time.

2) Gender based differences in power and priorities even within households;

The Orissa case (Mitlin 2006) ([report 83](#)) suggests that women have collectively resisted their men-folk's demands (e.g. hiding their saved money) and bargained with them to attend meetings if they expected to have a say in the community decision-making. In the case of Zimbabwe (SDI) ([document 15](#)), the women members of the federation worked towards creating the basis for "sustainable entitlements", such as land tenure, services and affordable housing instead of engaging in acts of defiance for their immediate sufferings (preferred by the men in the community), i.e. women took a longer term approach to the problems at hand. The only way for them to get entitlements such as land, housing and infrastructure was to survive and endure the evictions and demolitions until such time that the state concedes to the futility of their actions and allows resettlement and even a relaxation of regulations. If the right precedents are set during this uneasy interregnum, protective legislation could follow and later even legal entitlements. (It was the savings that allowed bargaining possible for the women and not just with outsiders but also with their own men-folks. In most federations women have been in the leadership role although men have not been excluded from the process. [Is it a deliberate choice on the part of SDI or is it merely coincidental?](#))

3) Tenants versus owners;

Many of the SDI affiliates have engaged in lobbying and facilitating land regularization for slum dwellers. This has brought the interests of those who are tenants of informal housing in sharp relief with those from whom these tenants rent these housing units. SDI has not evolved a very clear and uniformly generalizable solution that can be applied to all sites to such conflicts. Its affiliates have however attempted to reduce the fear among owners as well as tenants by pre-empting the process of finding available land for resettlement. When both sections of the community realize how much land will be available at the relocation site, they feel more confident about including the other party in the process (SDI)(Report 2.) The nature of conflict differs across sites. In Uganda, for example, where most of the slum-dwellers are tenants living in structures owned by absentee landlords, SDI affiliates have been working to convince the Ministry and the city council that they help them to convince the land and structure owners to sell the land to the poor tenant slum dwellers (SDI 2006c) (report 84). Partnership in the forms of a win-win solution, again, seems to be key to bringing change. A particular challenge in the Kenyan context is dealing with the fact that many slum dwellers are tenants – they live in structures and on land that belong to landlords. Some people living in settlements own many dwelling units. The aim of Pamoja Trust (a SDI affiliate in Kenya) is to support the poorest of the poor, but it does not want to support the status quo of landlord ownership and structure ownership. It will not build a house in any settlement where people do not share what little there is. There have been cases of people who own up to 30 units of housing who have had a change of heart, kept one for themselves and given the remaining 29 to the tenants who live in them, but most landlords are reluctant to give up a source of rental income (SDI 2006c). A clear policy decision was taken with the lands and housing ministry to make sure that each family would only get one unit of housing so that the system of tenancy in informal settlements would end. Pamjoa has also worked on the UN Habitat Cities Without Slums programme by mapping and enumerating all the informal settlements. Planning for the development of those settlements has commenced with the lands and housing ministry. A slumdweller Sara Njeri Chege said it has taken four years of negotiation to achieve consensus between tenants and landlords in her settlement. Now that there is certainty that each family will only get title to a single unit of land, the land and housing ministry has given permission for housing construction to begin (SDI 2006c). In this case, Pamoja Trust was able to use the Ministry's leverage to bring the landlords to the negotiating table. This might not work in all cases especially when the *de facto* landlords are powerful actors within the ruling political party. For example, at Caledonia in Zimbabwe, all farms occupied after the 2000 farm invasions are being run by committees of 'war veterans' who are to all intents and purposes law unto themselves. While the land has become state land the Ministry of Local Government has very little say. In fact most government officers are scared of war veterans. There was an added complication in that there are two committees at Caledonia or Tongoville as it is now called. Government had been negotiating with one Committee while the other led by a faction leadership was not happy to have the Porta Farm community move. This would mean only 200 families could be moved to Caledonia (SDI).

4) Different perceptions of entitlements based on the length of residency;
This is similar to the conflict described above.

5) Different leverage for negotiations;
Different communities have different leverage to negotiate a deal. Dividing the claim-making process by communities make it harder for the low-profile communities to exercise leverage over the process. The argument is that negotiations over high-profile cases like the railway slum dwellers in Mumbai ignore the old practice of "sticking it to the poor" in other parts of the city where they do not have a leverage such as to block the railway lines (Marquand

2000). (report 11). (Are their examples of one area's federation standing up in support of another area's claims?)

6) Active members versus others.

This has been a difficult issue with most federations. The active members who are part of the savings group in a community often complain that there are free riders who do not save but benefit from the organization of those who save when their slum is upgraded.

A possible solution can be drawn from Olson's theorization of the issue. Olson p.133: An organization that did nothing except lobby to obtain a collective good for some large group would not have a source of rewards or positive selective incentives it could offer potential members. Only an organization that also sold private or non-collective products, or provided social or recreational benefits to individual members, would have a source of these positive inducements. In page 51: The incentive must be "selective" so that those who do not join the organization working for the group's interest, or in other ways contribute to the attainment of the group's interest, can be treated differently from those who do. These "selective incentives" can be either negative or positive, in that they can either coerce by punishing those who fail to bear an allocated share of the costs of the group action, or they can be positive inducements offered to those who act in the group interest. SDI affiliates through their savings and credit groups have established a mechanism to sell private or non-collective products in the form of financial services. These services act as selective inducements to those who participate in the savings group. Therefore by focusing on making the savings and credit groups work, SDI affiliates have created a much firmer basis for collective action than merely lobbying to obtain collective goods from the state.

Based on documents on SDI affiliates, there are a few observations that might be useful in this context. Overall, smaller groups are more cohesive and work better as communities than larger groups. The ideal size of groups is between 20 to 40 families. As such, plans of the relocation settlements should try and create clusters of 20 to 40 families (Hasan 2002).

(Report 19) Small residentially coherent groups worked better for savings groups than those with dispersed membership. Olson has shown that certain small groups can provide themselves with collective goods without relying on coercion or any positive inducements apart from the collective good itself (Olson 1965). This is because in some small groups each of the members, or at least one of them, will find that his personal gain from having the collective good exceeds the total cost of providing some amount of that collective good; there are members who would be better off if the collective good were provided, even if they had to pay the entire cost of providing it themselves, than they would be if it were not provided. (p.33). Olson looked at it through the glasses of an economist but he also mentions that the same conclusion was arrived at by a philosopher, David Hume (Hume 1911) with a different set of arguments. Hume's argument rests on the idea that in smaller groups, the members can know each other's mind; and each must perceive that the immediate consequence of his failing in his part, is the abandoning of the whole project.

So the solution might lie in a design of an institution by which people who do not participate in the savings groups can be motivated to participate. The personal benefits of joining needs to be enhanced. (what are the personal benefits for those who are currently joining in the savings scheme? Are the cost of joining the savings groups different (based on their relative poverty or affluence or source of fixed income) among community members because of which some members cannot afford to join? If so, how can we redress this problem?)

We can generalize all the above findings in the following way: Collective action works best when there is a shared expectation among neighbors. This is similar to the study between Chhinnamool and DMSC in Kolkata. The prostitutes had greater shared interests than Chhinnamool members. But despite this, shared expectations can also be created by savings groups as SDI has done.

BETWEEN COMMUNITY and ITS LEADERS -

Mention about Granovetter (threshold model in collective action). The distribution of different thresholds that people have at which they participate in collective action is a crucial factor. For example, an individual in a community might participate in some form of collective action only when at least 20 percent of the community's members have joined in such action. There might be others who have a threshold of 10 percent or 80 percent. There might also be individuals with 0 threshold, which would mean that they would initiate or lead some form of action with potential to benefit a collective even when no one within the collective joins her/him in the effort. Based on this model, the problem of conflict between active members versus non-members gradually becomes less of a problem as more and more people join the active members group within the community as thresholds are reached for others to join the membership.

Because social movements seldom neither possess selective incentives or constraints over followers, nor are bound by institutional routines, leadership has a creative function in selecting forms of collective action. Leaders invent, adapt, and combine various forms of contention to gain support from people who might otherwise stay at home (Tarrow 1994).

1) Desire for exerting influence over the community in order to promote the leader's narrow self-interest;

As is often the case, the leadership within the communities tend to become fairly strong and act as the gatekeepers, spokespeople and decision makers for the entire federation. This leadership style emerges for many reasons. First, it is the practice of leadership that has emerged through the political systems and hence the models with which people are most familiar. Second, external groups work with the leadership that emerges, subtly drawing them away from their membership even if this is not what is intended. Third, members themselves may want a strong leader that promises success and "rescue" rather than one that urges self-reliance and action. SDI *strategies* to deal with this include: The NGO partner of some of the SDI affiliates try to help the Federation observe these processes and reflect on their implications. They seek to discuss the issues, showing the Federation leaders that such practices undermine their collective process and exclude members of the Federation. Through this and other support, they have to empower other leaders, particularly women active within their savings scheme, to challenge this behavior. A difficult situation emerged in Paradip where one male leader established a position of considerable dominance (although this was not only a gender issue). However, over time and with such discussions (?? Elaborate on this), practices changed and alternative leadership styles emerged. The process in Paradip is now strongly centered on local savings schemes, perhaps because of the women's earlier experiences with alternative approaches to leadership (Mitlin 2006)(Report 83). Even in Madagascar, SDI has pointed out the potential problems, the inherent dangers and the huge responsibility that the leaders were taking upon themselves by adopting such an approach to leadership. It is always crucial that the members have their own voice and make their own decisions (Bolnick 2001). Report 15. Sometimes, SDI plays a more direct role in mediating such conflicts. For example, in the case of Zambia, SDI just promotes other cities'

federations over Lusaka (in this case, Livingstone) for international exchanges as a way of punishing the leadership in Lusaka. This acts as a disincentive for self-serving leaders (SDI 2004). **Report 48**. SDI therefore uses community exchanges as a means of exerting leverage over local leadership. **(How about the leadership of SDI beyond the local level? Or is that outside the purview of this paper?)**

2) The leader lacks the trust of the community in handling money;

This can be the case when there is a prior history of cheating within the community. This is addressed by careful design of the savings scheme within the community. Regardless of being a public savings account, every one knows how much has been deposited. Every deposited cent is registered by the treasurer in a passbook along with the name, value, day and a signature of the depositor and the receiver. This information is registered again in a bigger book, as a deposit proof. The collected money is deposited in a bank account, with no credit card. All transactions require all treasurers' signature. According to Stefania Heren, social worker and a NGO Interação member, each resident know how much was invested. People are also free to close their accounts. Doing that, ex-collaborators get the invested money back. There's no misunderstanding, each depositor is up to date of their own contributions in the community account (SDI 2006a). **Document 19**. After explaining about the savings groups in Namibia, and how the poor people get strength from their savings, one member from the first community was very skeptical. Previous savings disappeared with the person who had the money, and there are people with no money (SDI 2005). **Report 51**. In the Philippines, there has been a formation program catering to the current set of community volunteers, those who have expressed interest in participating more actively, and those who the community feels have the potential for leadership. Workshops and training on legal matters, engineering and architecture, financial management, leadership, and organizational development provide a structured environment for learning. On the other hand, the horizontal community exchanges in local, national, and international levels serve as unstructured educational experiences. Also significant to the formation of leaders and other helpers has been the institutionalization of regular meetings, feedback systems, reflection sessions, and monitoring mechanisms. These have engendered a mentality of mentoring and continuous learning where both old and neophyte volunteers benefits from the group's collective experiences. Volunteers from new member communities are also invited to participate through hands-on activities in program implementation with established programs. This has served to increase the learning curve, allowing newly organized communities to benefit from the experience of more established communities (SDI). **Report 94**. Despite the challenges in how leaders are perceived by the community, the issue of leadership was raised by a number of groups. In Livingstone, Zambia, they indicated that they now wanted to choose someone who would help them to coordinate the programmes (SDI 2004). **Report 48**.

3) Compromises made by community leaders and the risks that this might lead to unsustainability of the current leadership.

The long-term financial viability of the leadership group is not that clear. They all insist that they are volunteers, but they also benefit from some sort of stipend and reimbursement of costs. It is clear that most could find permanent jobs and earn more (especially given the skills and capacities they have developed over time from their involvement in movement), thus suggesting that their families are either cross-subsidizing their work, or paying the price of non-earned potential income. The reason for this arrangement is obviously related to concerns about entrenching a professionalized self-interested leadership. This advantage, however, could either result in a loss of leadership capacity over time (if individuals are forced by family circumstances to find more lucrative jobs), or a failure to attract new leadership into

what might be perceived to be a financially crippling role. This, in turn, could reinforce the entrenchment of a self-interested leadership that knows how to work the stipend system in ways that may not always be apparent to the outsider (Swilling 2007).

BETWEEN COMMUNITY AND POLITICAL PARTIES -

1) Parties see the community organizing as a loss of its own power to orchestrate the interests of the communities;

The political groupings remain anxious about the Federation. They do not like the idea of people being organized by anyone other than themselves (in the case of each political party). They are used to having the role of being representatives of the poor...With the strong level of local organization, councillors and other local politicians stay silent but behind the Federation's back they try to organize against it and test the strength of the process (Mitlin 2006). **Report 83**. Elizabeth Ngwenya (Vic Falls Saving Scheme): We learnt a lot. Despite the fact that a very positive relationship exists between the Municipality and the Federation, it was obvious the Municipality does not give prominence to the Federation and their ability to enhance development. Municipality there seem to view the Federation as a project rather than as a process (SDI 2000). **Report 9**. Political parties lose the opportunity to offer patronage in return for guaranteed votes. There is also the perception that political parties are more powerful than the combined strength of the community. In South Africa, discussions with the officials revealed a serious obstacle to SDI's efforts to broker a deal between the City and the communities affected by the upgrading plan. The elected councilors from the Wards in question are deeply suspicious of the South African Federation, and are essentially stonewalling our proposal for an enumeration (at no cost to the City). Naturally the councilors are concerned about losing political influence, but more ominously, the Federation's reputation in Cape Town appears to include some very negative political interactions in the past. Violating the golden rule of the Federation strategy, the Western Cape Federation has not always remained apolitical, and is seen as aligned to a particular 'faction' in the regional African National Congress. This made the job of the federation much harder, and the sought-for partnership may be stillborn because of it. Another unsettling (but no unexpected) bit of information gleaned from the officials was that some national officials who publicly appear to support the Federation's approach to the City of Cape Town are privately warning City officials against it, out of fear of losing control of the process (Baumann). **Report 29 by Ted Baumann**.

2) Ruling parties see them as closer to the opposition parties (this conflict is much worse when there are different parties at different levels of the government).

SDI strategy has been to strengthen the power and the solidarity of the federations relative to politicians by expanding the savings groups. SDI tactics include: In some exchange events, when a community, or federation or city network knows that some people are coming, they work out a federation event which is useful to them, so they can use those visitors. That way, there is a quid pro quo. Often times, hosts take their exchange visitors and negotiate their business in front of them. When communities in Pune, for example, were trying to get land tenure for settlements and exploring house building in 1992, they utilized the presence of exchange visitors from South Africa, Bombay and Bangalore to draw the city's attention to their ideas. Foreigners are foreigners, and in many places that carries weight. The day after a big community house design jamboree in Pandavnagar, the local headlines ran South African Team Faults India for neglecting the Poor (SDI). **Report 4**. The Alliance of SPARC, NSDF and MM has consistently shied away from party political processes. It has shunned "politics" in this narrow sense of the term. In fact, as community mobilization proceeds apace and as people find solutions by aligning with the alliance, political parties are sitting up and

beginning to take notice. Innumerable requests have been made to A.Jockin, head of NSDF, to attend party meetings and the federation is being cultivated by many party interests. Yet, the alliance is clear that as organizations, they will never enter the political fray or electoral arena. Individual members have the right to participate in these processes but they are unequivocally told that they cannot use the organization's name or resources. Apart from being based upon the principle that people's movements should ringwall themselves against party political processes, this ethic commends itself because the alliance is not seen as a competitor in electoral politics. Its credibility and performance remain untouched by the ups and downs of electoral fortunes and misfortunes. Such is the approach of the alliance towards different elements of the apparatus of the State (Burra and Mahadevan). **Report 25**. Sonia said civil society has put a lot of pressure on NGOs to take a stand against the government. HPFP has resisted this pressure because its credibility is based on a non-partisan approach of buying land and building houses without government help (SDI 2006c). **Report 84**. He said the struggle to get the authorities on their side came from the government assuming that people who live in shacks do not support the government. The message of the savings groups has been to say that if government upgrades the slums, it will win support in those areas (SDI 2006c). **Report 84** The idea is to take the idea of political patronage and turning it upside down. In Zimbabwe, the federation is building a partnership with the Ministry of Local Government to construct houses. It is the only organisation which has permission to build houses in Harare, Bulawayo, Victoria Falls and other towns. Davious said there is no point in complaining about the Zimbabwe government. Few Zimbabweans understand how the ZHPF can be apolitical at this time, but the reason for its success is that it is completely apolitical, that it stands only for the good of the poor (SDI 2006c). **Report 84** (tactics versus strategy)

Such conflicts are much worse when there are different parties at different levels of the government. In 2000, the mayor in Bhubaneswar, Orissa in India became involved in one settlement because he feared that DAWN was working with higher levels of government to change the land allocation process (Mitlin 2006). **Report 83**. Same thing also happened in Joe Slovo, South Africa. (Huchzermeyer). In that case the intergovernmental relations were not well defined and therefore problematic. The Bulawayo Municipality official acknowledged that their City Policies had not been pro-poor and this had made it very difficult for them to find a way to work with communities of the urban poor who approached them. The Bulawayo Federation had consistently sort to engage the City around land issues for over four years with no success, until an exchange visit between the Bulawayo City Official, the Bulawayo Federation and the Windhoek Municipality with the Shack Dwellers Federation of Namibia. This visit resulted in a better understanding of what the Federation in Bulawayo had been proposing over the four years. The Bulawayo Federation has since carried out a joint survey with the City in Killarney, a squatter settlement in the outskirts of Bulawayo, where the Federation had organized groups. The city and the Federation has gone further and are working on a development of 100 housing units together and an additional 260 families had been allocated plots in the aftermath of evictions spearheaded by Central Government. The City will provide all technical expertise to the project and the community is mobilizing the resources as well as the labour that will be required for the installation of the infrastructure as well as housing construction (SDI 2006b). **Report 81**

BETWEEN COMMUNITY AND STATE -

the main reasons to engage with the State is the fact that it either owns, controls or regulates most of the commodities that the urban poor need: land, water, sanitation, secure tenure, electricity and housing finance, to name a few. For non-state actors to go to scale on slum

upgrading, there is no alternative but to engage with the State and its institutions (Burra and Mahadevan). **Report 25**. One danger of concentrating only upon critiquing the State is that people become cynical about State action and may turn to wholesale alternatives like the market. At least the State is accountable in principle in democratic theory, however weak the mechanisms to hold it accountable might be. An unfettered market could well be a worse option from the point of view of the urban poor. If one is able to influence the State and compel it to adopt pro-poor measures, such reform promotes inclusive democracy and counters tendencies towards extremist politics, whether of the left or right variety. Our belief is that changing the orientation of the State depends on community mobilization (“I must listen to you because you speak for large numbers”) as also upon strategic alliance with key elements of the State apparatus. * Even if much of the bureaucracy is venal and wayward, it would be simplistic and unfair to tar all of them with the same brush. Our experience has been that there are good people in every walk of life and one must search them out, develop partnerships with them and thereby impact State policy and programme. Such persons then become champions of progressive causes and movements. Another important insight we have gleaned is that we are welcomed warmly when we go armed with solutions rather than problems. The founding of partnerships is smoothened. It is obviously more difficult to deal with corrupt officials but if they control the policy and the goods that poor people want, there is no alternative but to work with them.

1) Conflict over limited resources (sometimes in the form of urban vs. rural); Most evictions happen because of conflict over resources, in particular, conflict over land. As report 15 suggests, evictions can also be seen as opportunities for community building. When the people of Tana, Madagascar were evicted they came to CDA (a NGO started by a Jesuit priest) for assistance. CDA made accommodation available to them in a village that CDA owns and that was built as accommodation it training institute. The families who were evicted were given until the end of January to remain on the CDA premises. In November the Director of the programme went to Europe to meet with some of their Northern partners. In Germany they met with Misereor who suggested they get in touch with Shack Dwellers International (SDI). In the first week of January Joel Bolnick, Secretary of SDI and Fr. Jorge Anzorena of Selavip travelled to Tana to meet CDA and the people who were evicted (Bolnick 2001). **Report 15**. Similarly in Mumbai, in February/March 2001, the Alliance had to cope with an unexpected eviction: the Indian Railways demolished over 2,000 huts along the Harbour railway line – which was against state government policy and against the stipulations of the Mumbai Urban Transport Project (SDI). **Document 9**. Again these evictions helped mobilize the community towards a common goal.

The savings program has matured into a community integration process of SDI that has allowed urban poor communities to come together to be able to negotiate with the state for a better deal for their community. For example, in the Philippines, the federation was able to mobilize approximately US \$3.5 million in pooled resources for subsistence and the development of their respective communities. Called the Urban Poor Development Fund (UPDF), structures and policies are currently being formulated on how this could be utilized as the community’s counterpart in negotiating with government and the private sector in the community-led shelter finance facility that is being envisioned. As they foreground community-led processes and initiatives, they break the pervasive negative depiction of the poor as problems to the development of society, on one hand; and on the other, mobilize resources that provide the means to support family expenditures. Engaging government and the private sector has given them inroads into previously inaccessible structures of governance and corporate institutions (SDI). **Report 94**.

Ruby: Initially, the government did not know the program of the federation. The initiatives were done only with the community themselves to combat the issues confronting them. Issues like demolition and eviction due to insecurity of land tenure. Savings was an answer to this problem. Through time and members' perseverance, savings increased for land acquisition. Later we realized that there is a need to engage with the government for land acquisition and delivery of social services. On our part, we already have our counterpart, our savings and the counterpart from the government is also expected. Sharing of resources lead for the federation and the government become good partners for development. * Maurice: Start mapping the area and take some photos of the actual residents which would serve as an evidence of staying in the community. This is for security purposes (Ruby, et al. 2004). **Report 46**

When negotiation fails, the federation tries to take their issue to senior political leaders. If even they cannot help them they sometimes take the legal recourse. At a settlement, Kalpana Labour Colony and Telqu Sana in Orissa in India, the federation got a stay order and there is no possibility of being evicted. (Mitlin 2006) [But this is a difficult strategy, it is necessary to go the courts every three months and to pay Rs 10,000 in legal fees.]”

2) Conflicts over accountability for unmet promises;

Favela dweller Gilson Dos Santos said he comes from a slum in Osasco where the municipality demolished the shacks of 300 families, took the community to a resettlement area, and promised them housing within six months. Five years later nothing had happened. Then Interação visited the community to explain savings schemes and offer partnership with the community. Twenty families started a savings scheme at that time; now there are 50 families. Members of the South African federation came into the community on an exchange visit. The community steadfastly believes it will eventually achieve its aim of building its own houses. Many things have changed already. A direct channel of communication has been established with the municipal housing office, and there are meetings every two months. The land used to be in private hands, but the municipality has bought the land for the housing project. A survey of the land has been done to determine the infrastructural needs. It is likely that housing construction will begin next year (SDI 2006c). **Report 84**

3) Inadequate or inappropriate institutions of property rights;

Institutions for property rights don't support innovative ownership mechanisms that would provide tenure to the poor. Responding to a question on regularisation, Inês said the issue of land ownership is one of the main challenges. There is currently no legal instrument for collective ownership in Brazil – the only way to give title is after identifying individual plots. She said the current draft of a law on land makes provision for collective title (SDI 2006c). **Report 84**

4) Changes in the institutions of local governance leads to discontinuity.

Changes in the institutions of local governance risks the danger of losing the working arrangement that has been established with the federations. Davious said something that he had learned from the current conference is that signing memoranda of understanding with officials is important. None of the current co-operation agreements with local government has been written down and the danger is that, when a council changes, the entire working arrangement has to be re-established. The Minister of Local Government, Public Works and Urban Development has replaced the elected council of Harare with a commission. Although the Federation has struggled to establish a relationship with the Harare commission, it has continued to engage rather than to demonstrate. Its 'demonstration' is to

keep knocking on doors and negotiating (SDI 2006c). **Report 84.**

COMMUNITY VS. NGO -

1) Fear that the NGO will take over the control of the process; they agreed with my observation that their role encourages savings and credit by putting an 'objective' third party into the process. And yet our Indian allies have always resisted any moves in this direction for the South African Federation. Perhaps they thought South African NGO people would end up dominating the process, or that the Federation has to get the basics right before it can risk the SPARC approach. Perhaps the SPARC technical role is driven by the NGO against community wishes. But it could also be that South African savings and credit practise never had a Celine d' Cruz to play that intimate 'third party' role, giving a savings scheme or two the confidence to take the risk of trusting each other and the 'system', and providing an example of the rest (Baumann). Report 29. * SDFN formally constituted itself into a Federation in 1998 after almost 9 years in which housing groups functioned under the umbrella of the Namibia Housing Action Group. This was necessitated by the realization that the groups were very depended on the NHAG Support Service, stifling a proper peoples process. In the two years that the Federation started, they have been significant strides taken in terms of how SDFN members relate to the NGO and other institutions as well as development within the Federation itself. Report 9. Its less of a conflict but more a fear. 1) Fear that the NGO will take over control of the process.

2) Professionals/external versus the local.

Our discussions further with Tina in the afternoon continued and after theorizing a bit about the meaning of civil society (we just know how to do this we have not yet academized our practices enough) she expresses her concern are about outsiders bringing development strategies for the Angolans and how the Angolans do not internalize these approaches. (something we all can relate to and have to be careful of not becoming ourselves). For instance the Luanda Urban Poverty Programme, a DFID supported program, with its English name, is not even known by the government officials and the local people do not understand the words (SDI 2005). **Report 51**

The groups indicated that they badly needed money to support their activities. In fact, they pointed out that most of their programmes' success was hinged on the assumption that financial resources were made available. Here, they reminded the team that they had been promised by a team that had come earlier that a budget of US\$2 500,00 was going to be disbursed by SDI via Zimbabwe. * The Livingstone people also highlighted that, like Lusaka counterparts, they were facing serious communication problems. They therefore requested support to help them foot both transport and telephone costs (SDI 2004). **Report 48**

Somsook Boonyabancha said professionals must facilitate development that is based around people. In her view, 99% of professionals want to do development on behalf of people instead of with them. This is a disempowering approach. Report 84. Sheela Patel said most of the structures in informal areas have been built by poor artisans who have not received any formal training. Most people have developed the necessary skills by working on construction sites at some time. The biggest issue is not a lack of professional training, it is providing a bridge to the formal documentation that would fulfil government funding requirements. In her view, the role of professionals is to provide documentation to meet formal requirements. Report 84.

BETWEEN PRIVATE SECTOR AND COMMUNITY –

- 1) Profits versus the needs of the community.
A criticism that has often been levied against the SRA policy is that it generates too much TDR. This in turn strains an already burdened infrastructure. A solution to this problem emerges from the work of the Alliance. In the late 1980s, while considering various housing options, Mahila Milan leaders built homes that included a 100 sq. foot loft. This allowed poor families – where two or three generations live under one roof – a modicum of privacy in their new homes. Moreover, a couple of the Alliance’s SRA projects (i.e. Rajiv Indira Housing Society currently and Markhandeya Housing Society previously) included these loft-styled houses. And although the Alliance has been pushing for this style of homes to become standardised for slum dwellers, the builder’s lobby has been firmly against it. This is because it consumes too much FSI and reduces the profits generated. However, this type of housing truly takes into consideration the needs of the poor (Burra and Mahadevan). **Report 25**
- 2) A solution for conflicts can be partnership. Partnerships have also been formed with the private sector. The Cement Manufacturers’ Association has provided support to restore an old cement block factory in Osasco and has provided technical support for house-building to the Municipality of Hortolândia . The association decided to do this after an industry survey revealed that 70% of cement sales were to small construction entrepreneurs and people engaged in informal construction. Construction developers have made bridging finance available and helped to lower costs and improve building quality by providing support for the first housing project in Osasco. Interação is aiming to get banks to agree to granting individual loans with collective guarantees. Banks have responded by developing new housing microfinance products for federation members for land purchase, property registration expenses, collective infrastructure development and incremental home improvements. Records kept by savings schemes are used as proof that people can make a down payment, that they are able to commit themselves to regular payments, that their communities are organized, and that they have planned years into the future. The collective guarantee takes the form of a fund for people who are not able to meet an installment. Pilot projects using these products have been established in São Paulo (SDI 2006c). **Report 84**
- 3) Responding to a question on the role of the private sector in upgrading slums, Sheela Patel said the traditional private sector is not very interested, although banks are just beginning to see poor people as potential clients. Savitha Sonawane’s group taking up a construction contract could be seen as a private sector project. An important issue is that poor people must be very strong in their dealings with the private sector and government so that they are not simply seen as consumers or beneficiaries (SDI 2006c). **Report 84**.

General principles employed by SDI to respond to the conflicts:

Some of the broad categories of conflict resolution tactics and strategies are by 1) making them explicit and forcing the actors to come to terms with them; 2) negotiating a better deal for the community by strengthening its bargaining power; 3) Pre-empting the outcome of the conflict; 4) Ignoring the most difficult conflicts for later and addressing the ones that are easier and a) seeing opportunities to strive for shared interest and common goals by joining in a partnership with these other actors b) focus on external resources and ignoring internal differences;

LESSONS FOR OTHERS?

What lessons do these observations offer to other urban social movements in successfully navigating around conflicts that arise between various actors? The strategies and tactics described above are resilient but more needs to be known about leadership, funding, and the role of professionals in urban social movements.

What kind of leadership is needed to sustain change?

Leadership is a contentious issue. There is a need to go beyond charismatic personas as leaders. Leaders need to develop skills in coordination among various activities rather than for disbursing patronage and being gatekeepers to outside networks of knowledge and influence. How to encourage everyone to take up some leadership role in every capacity? Not just self-interested leadership but a leadership that can bring together shared interests and help people make the best decisions possible within differences.

How should external (state, national or international) funding be employed within activities of urban social movements like SDI?

External funding has a tendency to create new conflicts between leaders and community and between NGO partner and the CBO partner. It requires careful thought in how to best use external funding to best use without paralyzing the carefully crafted interdependence among the various actors in a society. One option is to avoid external funding to pay for staff time but instead use that funding to leverage credit for the saving and credit groups.

The Role of NGOs/professionals.

The assumption is that conflicts between different interests can be resolved by disinterested outsiders. As Sheila describes (as quoted by Bonner p 32) "We are almost tutoring both groups. Government is too arrogant; it presumes to know everything, while people don't believe the government is up to anything good."

In addition, the support NGOs of the SDI affiliates positioned themselves somewhere in between the two extremes of the continuum between the radical NGOs and the more traditional NGOs. "For some of the rights-based more radical social movements/NGOs who rely on protest and policy lobbying, the HPFP is regarded as reformist at best and welfarist at worst. The HPFP's refusal to openly join street protests against relocations related to the North Rail project is cited as an example. For the traditional developmental NGOs and micro-finance organizations, the HPFP/PACSII alliance is regarded as reckless because there are insufficient professional staff members to support all the different projects and programmes. The standard HPFP response to these criticisms is that the radical movements achieve little of tangible value for the poor by protesting, and that the traditional NGOs don't trust the communities to figure out things for themselves outside the control of the professionals."

Need for further research

Something that remains under-researched is how some of these alliances come into being. The trigger of each of these local alliances can tell a story and a pattern about how to create conditions of them to originate and thrive in places that have not seen social movements yet but where there is a need for collective action. For example, a catastrophe or major turmoil or existence of religious groups as the first seeds or putting a lot of poor people and dumping them out of the city all at once can all provide an opportunity for collective action.

When SDI affiliates have come against an insurmountable challenge, they have laid low till a more opportune time waiting for external resources to make a change in the political conditions which then provide new opportunities. **E.g. is Zimbabwe.**

Critically examining the successes and failures of urban social movements might allow us to improve on them so that they can go beyond the low hanging fruits to cater to geographical areas where it has so far been difficult to work for them. Telling the stories of different SDI affiliates to the wider audience also leads to their methods being picked up by unlikely agents to carry their methods further. Innovations in urban social movements need to be institutionalized. This paper attempts to draw lessons from the innovations from around the world within SDI affiliates that might help in this institutionalization of innovations.

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