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Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: priority theme: promoting empowerment of people in achieving poverty eradication, social integration and full employment and decent work for all

Statement submitted by Movement for a Better World, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.



Statement

According to Paolo Freire, people are empowered when they recognize connections between their individual problems and experiences and the social contexts in which they are embedded.

Taking Paolo Freire as the key proponent of empowerment of people in any context, it is in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* where the mechanisms for education and the relationship between education and social integration are more readily explained.

David McClelland's theory of motivation is another major aspect in what we call "empowerment". He states that a person's needs are influenced by their cultural background and life experiences. In *Human Motivation*, he writes that the majority of these needs can be classified as needs for affiliation, achievement or power and that a person's motivation and effectiveness can be increased through an environment, which provides them with their ideal mix of each of the three needs. One can argue whether, in a setting of extreme poverty, there is any motivation other than survival and the satisfaction of people's basic needs. As a result of his multicultural studies, he has concluded that there is an inner drive towards those needs, although not in the same sense that a capitalist-driven society understands them. It is therefore imperative to examine whether the actors involved have other pressing basic needs that are to be addressed before attempting further processes.

It is our contention that the empowerment process begins once the participants realize that it is not the presupposed interests of the proponents but the needs and interests of the participants that must be addressed.

For reasons of space, we present below an outline of the steps so as to give an idea of what is involved in the process.

Diagnosis

- (a) The profile of the disenfranchised:
 - (i) *Fear of freedom*: an overwhelming sensation of a disembodiment devoid of any sense of connection to others. The behavioural manifestations can be seen as total disregard for the body, care of the self and body functions (sometimes, but not always, linked to substance abuse) in the midst of society (on the streets) seeking to express freedom, when in fact there is none and, paradoxically, demanding acceptance;
 - (ii) *The overwhelming need for adaptation and dependence as a survival strategy*: a submissive behaviour in the face of larger-than-life figures who are perceived as "allowing" one to exist. The satisfaction of elementary basic needs depends on others;
- (b) Detecting levels of motivation and the need for affiliation:
 - (i) Motivation is inversely related to stimulation in that the more stimulation from outside sources, the less motivation emerges from within the person. Motivation needs space and encouragement to emerge;
 - (ii) The need for affiliation is, in the "tribal" sense, the need to be together, such as membership in a gang, a political party, a strong peer group, a club or

another civic or cultural collective. This need for affiliation expands and spirals towards more sophisticated levels, where a person may feel the ultimate satisfaction, for example, of being a part of the universe;

(c) The four faces of power:

(i) “Power” can be seen as the force exerted over others (negative power) or as exerting influence on behalf of others (positive power). Those who exercise positive power have concern for group goals and are engaged in developing strategies to achieve those goals;

(ii) McClelland outlines four manifestations of positive power:

- *The power received*: empowerment from outside (initially parents and caregivers, later peers and co-workers, friends and family);
- *The inner power (of self)*: autonomous power that emerges when first empowered from the outside, i.e., each level of power that we achieve rests on the previous form of power that has been internalized, in this case it is the “I can” of power;
- *The power proffered to others*: analogous to the power received and internalized, that we in turn have transformed into the power of self. It is exercised towards others to influence actions, achieve goals or empower others. Leadership roles rest on this face of power;
- *Sharing of power among all or the “we” of power*: the three preceding faces of power are transformed into this power. The leader has empowered the rest so that personal interests are transformed into the interests of the larger group. This can be summed up by the concept “our motivation is something much larger than individual motivation: we are encouraged by the achievements and goals of the group”.

Education and “conscientization”

The role of education

Freire denounced the “banking style” of education in which the teacher becomes a character who narrates “education” to her or his students, patiently listening, turning students into receptacles to be filled by the teacher. Education, as the practice of freedom, must begin by breaking the conventional roles of the student and the teacher (oppressed/oppressor) through dialogue (the encounter of people in conversation in order to name the world), which makes the student/teacher relationship reciprocal. We are all participants in educating one another and ourselves.

Dialogics is an instrument to free the colonized through the use of cooperation, unity, organization and cultural synthesis. The dynamic is through the use of common symbols and meanings, as applied to everyday living and relationships. Anti-dialogics, in turn, uses conquest, manipulation, cultural invasion and the concept of divide and rule.

Praxis

A revolution is adequate and necessary to obtain freedom whenever there is an unbearable dynamic of oppression/submission for a whole population, or a

particular group, which infringes on any or all of the rights of those human beings. According to Hanna Arendt, revolution is something radical enough to change the fabric of government and/or society. It is justified when a significant number of people can establish their oppression based on the violation of their basic human rights and the failure of lawful means by which to seek redress for those violations.

In answer to the question as to what type of revolution is necessary, it must be pointed out that violent and non-violent revolutions have occurred in the past. Recently, we have witnessed the *Indignados* in Spain and the “Occupy Wall Street” movement in the United States of America. Civil disobedience as a revolution, or the uprising of special interest groups, have been a mainstay for people who have realized that their situation and that of others can no longer be tolerated, where there are definite and obvious situations of infringement of liberties, human rights and the well-being of the population.

A violent revolution, where the lives of people are put in jeopardy, cannot be justified. Acts of violence are and will continue to be violations of domestic law and perhaps sometimes even international law. The cost is, however, much higher than mere violation of laws.

A silent revolution occurs when an empowered community, conscious of its strength, presents and practises alternative ways of survival and solutions to their common problems, in the name of a common good, able to be extrapolated to other instances, when there is a multiplication of consensus on issues.

Social integration as the key for empowerment

“Minorities” is a sociological concept used to name the differentiation from a social majority, which can be based on one or more observable human characteristics, such as ethnicity, race, gender, wealth or sexual orientation.

“Immigrants” are defined as people moving to and settling in a country or region to which they are not native. Although the definition does not include the process by which “settlers” adapt or congregate in cultural conglomerates, the host country has any number of expectations regarding the acceptance and permanence of these people.

The notion of intercultural dialogue and its practice overcomes the political notion of multiculturalism, which tends to presuppose the rights of the host country over those of the immigrant groups.

Employment and decent work for all

In order to procure employment and decent work for all, there is an urgent need to implement new economies that rely on the value of work and production. “New economies” is a term used to describe the result of the transition from a manufacturing-based economy to a service-based economy. In certain contexts, this would include the recovery of bartering in the context of communities, with small-scale food production for the community. Included in the concept are sanitation and waste disposal measures to ensure the health and well-being of the community.

Self-generation and self-management of small enterprises constitute the answer to the underlying problem of employment with a shift in the concept of unemployment. People become the new entrepreneurs of small micro-businesses

that meet needs not covered by the gargantuan businesses established only for profit, which rely on outsourcing and other such measures, thereby decreasing the possibility of local employment.

Conclusion

This schema pretends to describe, albeit scantily, a process by which a community is able to attain self-management. There are many presuppositions in the background that, for lack of space, have been left out. In the process they need to be explained in detail. The model proposed is a work in progress.
