draft

Dynamics of Internationally Aided Farming System Research Programmes : "A Gospel of Dirty Hand"[1]

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The problem of donor influence, often not very helpful, has been discussed in the literature mainly in the context of aid for development projects. Lele and Goldsmith (1987) provided a very complimentary account of the assistance received by India from USAID and Rockfellor foundation for building up agricultural universities . There is no doubt that if host agency is careful enough, many of the hazardous influences of donor agencies can be minimized and useful impacts maximised.

With increasing problem of adverse balance of payment, my fear is that the influence of donor agencies (providing valuable foreign exchange) is likely to increase. I appreciate the initiative of professional associations like AFSRE to provide platform for open discussion on such issues . I hope that these discussions will lead to some rethinking among the donor community.

I had earlier provided an account of the effort made by a donor agency in India to tempt a host country professional coming in the way (rightly of course) of the agency's plans to push a particular model of development of so called waste lands (Gupta, 1986). In this paper I discuss my tentative impressions about the donor influence in South Asia in promoting a particular kind of institutional structures for FSR/OFR. I have not taken the views of concerned donor agencies into account because it is so difficult to uncover them[3].

International concern on Donor Influence

While reviewing the development of African farming systems Collinson (1988) highlighted the slow pace of change in Institutions in assimilating or accommodating farming systems research (FSR) as a useful new approach in East and Southern African countries. He recognized that the promotion of FSR was based primarily on the donor support from USAID, the World Bank, the IFED, IDRC, ODA, SIDA, FAO etc. The traditional on-station research team, he observed, felt neglected. They believe that the new research tool had pre-empted much of the donor money available for on-station research.

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   The responsibility of the views is entirely mine and none of the institutions which have supported my work or have found it difficult to support my work are implicated here.

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3. However, I intend to seek the views of donor agencies through professional channels . Whether I succeed in the matter remains to be seen. The result of this struggle will be reported in the future meetings on Farming systems research unless the concerned agencies succeed in pushing this subject away from the agenda.

Resultant resentment among the on-station scientists, he added, made the effective linkage of FSR with commodity and disciplinary research difficult. He listed several other facets of donor procedures, such as :

> donors demand attention : The controls of donors by countries in this region is weak. . . . .a particularly widespread problem in the development of (professional) capacity with donor funding has been the quality of the technical assistants and the way it has been brought to bear on the FSR process. . . . .a 40% chargeable overhead has looked particularly attractive to impoverished US universities over the last ten years. Nor they have been reticent in unloading older tenured staff on to their contract projects to free-up tracks for younger feister staff to move into....These criticisms apart, given the budget situation of NARS in many countries of the region, it has to be acknowledged that there could have been little headway in FSR without donor funds and technical assistance[4]. The technical assistance experience, however, is, so far less clearly beneficial for the long term prospects of the FSR process. Some watchdog on donor substance and the style is needed. Funding fads are counterproductive; short term contracts and the lack of real career opportunity keep technical assistance weak and private sector or university contracting keeps it 'obedient' in terms of donor whims(1988).

Collinson argued for a need for long term perspective with a consistent set of strategies and avoidance of tendency by donors to attempt to become managers. He also felt that profession of agricultural economics can indeed help. He concluded, "it should be seen to be involved, to coordinate professional discussion on where to go and how, and to promote professionalism in LDCs so that local agricultural economists build up a capacity to better evaluate these issues for themselves and for their countries" (Collinson, 1988).

This long reference to Collinson's paper is primarily intended to suggest that many issues I am going to raise in this paper are not entirely new though the context in which I am raising them is quite different from the African countries. Academic endowments in India or Bangladesh -countries with which I am more familiar - are far richer than in most African countries. The conclusion still stands. That is the professional peer groups in various countries must provide the arena where accountability of donor agencies should be enforced.This unfortunately is not happening.

Donor influences and host governments

Prof. YP Singh (1978), while reviewing various factors influencing farmers' evaluation and adoption of technologies observed, "There is no royal road to learning, there is no magical cure of these problems. Of course in developing countries many magic planners, come forward with magical cure and sometimes they click better with government". He quoted Khan who observed, "Sick man are lured by the Sufis Amulat or Sadhus Nostrum. Sick governments are lured by Magical plans and just as there is no dearth of Sufis or Sadhus, there is no shortage of magic planners".

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4. This is a debatable point. In Indian case the history of cropping system research dates back to 1953 and work on combination of inorganic and organic fertilizers for sustainable yield was started even before independence in 1947. Even in Africa I am not sure that professionals could not have been discovered who believed in eco-sociological perspective . It is true that many of these saner voices will not be liked by bureaucracy and expatriate scientists may not be able spot them easily. At the same time need for strengthening hands of such a minority of the scientists can not *be* disputed. To that extent I am not sure whether absence of donor support would have necessarily been bad or that genuine FSR type work would have not started.

The donor agencies can charm the host country planners through various means not all of which are professional. But I would get into this issue later. My major contention in this paper is that despite the valid advice of "folding FSR into existing research, development, policy formulation and programme planning processes seems to be the best way forward" (Collinson, 1988), the donor agencies continue with their efforts to sectoralise the farming systems research in the developing countries.

Assuming that there is a method in their (or my) madness I have tried to summarize my impressions about donor behaviour in three parts. In the first part of the paper I trace the requirements of sustainable institution building. In part II, I demonstrate how most of the donor agencies systematically violate almost all the principles of ethics, accountability and sustainability while providing support for farming system research. In the last part I raise some questions which may be useful for the professional associations and donor agencies to reflect upon.

I am very clear that this debate has to be continued at various levels and in various fora. To what extent views of this kind will make the difference will depend upon the ability of third world professionals to forego the temptations and resist the route of servility to donor agencies for short term gain on the strength of their convictions[5]. I do not dispute the possibility that donor agencies and the providers of the resources to these agencies in the developed countries may themselves be feeling the need for reorientation.

Part I

Sustainability of Farming Systems through Sustainable Institutions

'Gospel of Dirty Hand': learning from within and the hard way

Shri K.M. Munshi, Minister of Food and Agriculture during 1950s exhorted the Indian scientists in a special general meeting of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (November 1,1950, New Delhi) to take a comprehensive view of the interrelationships between land, water and livestock resources. The ultimate objective he felt was the land transformation. He recognized the need to draw upon not only the agricultural science but also "the newer" sciences of anthropology, sociology and psychology. He organized Vana Mahotsava that is a forest festival as a national event so that every year on this occasion people would plant trees. He launched the concept of Bhoomisena (Land Army) in 1951 with the objective of 'Land Transformation' i.e. to secure the utilization of land on a rational basis so that the available resources of land, water and livestock are developed to the maximum extent. Taking a philosophical outlook in a seminar on extension at IARI (September 27, 1951) he observed,

> At the Ministry of Agriculture I found many isolated and unrelated and, therefore, insufficient activities. I wanted a comprehensive outlook, a philosophy, an urge, a faith. The conception that we must replant our philosophy of life in the soil came to me again and again. How can this be done?
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> The first thing I realized was the intimate relationship of man, his well-being and progress with the soil, sunshine, river system, forests and the natural surroundings of his native land. They are one whole; their richness and strength are one. If this equilibrium is disturbed, man dies.

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5. Many professionals do not recognise that donor agencies do not oblige any one when they disburse grants. It is their business to do so.

The Carthaginians, the Egyptians and the Babylonians of the ancient world were civilized in their time. But they favoured man at the cost of nature with the result that their lands, through over-exploitation, turned into deserts. Their empires disappeared; they were effaced from the earth.

On the other hand, many early races of men disappeared: the Nagas, Gonds and Todas, the Mayas and Red Indians remained under-developed and were driven into precarious existence in forests and mountains. They found nature too powerful for them to be exploited; forests and swamps were too powerful for them.

Man and his environment must act and react on each other perpetually to escape the fate of races that lived in conditions in which equilibrium had been disturbed and they knew not how to restore it. Land Transformation is, therefore, the art of maintaining the equilibrium between man and his environment". (1951 : 119, emphasis mine)

if a better definition of the farming system research and its goals, philosophy and purpose is available I am not aware. Is it possible to dispute the logic of hydrological cycle and the nutrition cycle that he speit out to visualize linkages between crop, livestock, tree etc. In 1952, while speaking about The Gospel of Dirty Hand he said.

For the soil, hand of the worker on the land is the magic touch which starts the unbroken change of action and reaction from the soil to the spirit, transforming the organism of life.... Informative publicity has no power to move the collective mind to action. Such power comes from an idea tabloided in an expressive and significant phrase which moves men to action. We know the power in the word Sathyagraha and 'Quit India' wielded in our recent history; they opened the flood gates of the mass response.....I coined the phrase land transformation - Bhu Parivarthan or Bhoomi Parivarthan - just to emphasize the anchorage of our movement in the soil. By using the word 'Extension', you are shutting the door of mass consciousness to the work before you. The word 'Extension' has no appeal to our sub conscious mind. It is an American word, the full significance of which is known obscurely only to a few; even 'extension' in education is familiar only to our academic world. It has no meaning for the vast number of our educated man; to them 'Extension is just Enlargement'. To the farmer it is strange and unfamiliar, a new-fangled, incomprehensible idea. And it is likely to encourage our middle class workers and officials to by-pass the unwelcomed gospel of the dirty hand. Let us use words which evoke a response in our sub-conscious minds (1952; 183, emphasis mine).

This is precisely the point which has been missed by most researchers involved in the game of Institution building. Be it RRA or FPR or FSR, our inability to root the concepts in the cultural and philosophical bedrock of a society prevents us from grafting or budding an idea in an already growing tree of knowledge. Transplantation of knowledge tree in the post modernist society appears queer to put it mildy and shameful to put it strongly.

The first lesson in Institution Building is to locate preferences, phrases, concepts evolved by the society even if ignored by its own elite consistently. Link new ideas to the existing concepts.Through an honest and authentic partnership build a chain. Not each link in this chain is indigenous but nor all are exotic.

Once an idea is connected to its cultural roots people try to give it a name. In our own families naming is an important ceremony when a child is born. The name becomes a basis of relationship and a reflection of a bond between seed and the flowers. It will be desirable if different

research programmes developed their own terminologies for explaining the genesis of the idea. For instance, recognizing the limited potential for increasing employment in agricultural sectors the WORKING GROUP REPORT ON AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH AND EDUCATION FOR THE EIGHTH FIVE YEAR PLAN in India, a term Rural System Research has been used. It may not be the best term. But it reflects a realization that farm and non farm aspects have to be linked up while conceptualizing inter disciplinary research programme[6].

The second principle of Institution building is that the indigenous metaphors or symbols or concepts must be identified such that ideas are not merely owned but also allowed to grow.

When an individual researcher or extension worker defines his *or* her responsibility towards the people through internal commands and not external demands it can be assumed that Institutionalization of learning is taking place.

Collegiality and team building emerge more easily when we recognize each others' inadequacy and build upon the respective strengths. Collegiality between expatriate and an national researcher can seldom emerge if this principle is not followed.

The third principle thus is that sustainability of relationships in a team or collaboration depends upon mutual trust and accountability. Accountability depends upon admission of one's ignorance and explicit acknowledgement of ideas from others[7]. If large number of research papers on a subject pursued with collaborating scientists in the third world significantly ignore references to the lessons learnt from colleague scientists and farmers, it can be safely assumed that the relationship is non sustainable.

The fourth principle is that sustainability requires a long time frame. It also requires acceptance of slower and lesser returns but in a steady manner. There is a feeling that in large number of developing countries the curriculum in the education situations has become de-linked from the indigenous knowledge stocks and cultural endowments in the wake of "modernization". The impatience to slog and willingness to learn using short cut methods is becoming a widespread way of life. Methods like rapid rural appraisal are quite handy for such people to legitimize their impatience and inability to indulge in longitudinal studies. The rapidness reflects the anxiety to get results, build relationships, use methods and select activities which can get quick recognition. It does not have to be said that culture emanating from such pursuits can never help in building sustainable institutions. Sooner or later farmers and other colleague scientists see through the game and start hedging. In any case the need for learning through informal visits to the villages has been recognized from time immemorial. During King Ashoka's time the practice of seeking the views of masses by travelling in the rural areas incognito was well established. The travellers or tour reports in British time provided graphic account of field conditions. If any thing we need emphasis on patient and rigorous method of learning.

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6. In Indian context, with decreasing prospects of employment increase in agricultural and industrial sector due to popularization of capital intensive technologies, importance of rural non-farm sector is being realized at long last. Farming systems perspective by ignoring non-farm aspects may thus prove to be limiting. I have argued in an accompanying paper that the **portfolio approach** helps in overcoming this limitation(Gupta, 1990).

7. It is frustrating to find that the references to work on farmers' technical knowledge published in India in 1969 and pursued through post graduate thesis in 1967 under the guidance of Prof Y P Singh continues to be ignored by almost all the western scholars on the subject. Prof. Singh had guided these theses on indigenous animal husbandry knowledge much before these things became fashionable in the west. The pity of course is the neglect of such work even by the national scientists. Many of them pursue different research directions popular in the west and take pride in sourcing their ideas to western references even if such references are available indigenously.

Fifth principle is that for institutionalizing a small change in a sub system at one level one has to pursue several changes simultaneously in other sus-systems and at different levels (Mathur and Gupta 1984). It is obvious that one cannot attempt changes in too many sub systems simultaneously in an ongoing system if sustainable results have to be achieved. Which changes would trigger positive externalities in which organizations will depend upon organizational history and distribution of power. Emphasizing a particular sub system and bestowing far too much of attention may itself antagonize professionals in other sub systems. The lines of communication as Collinson noted earlier with on-station research scientists may get snapped if too much attention was paid to only on farm research[8].

Ashby et al felt that an excessive concern with methods was perhaps diverting the attention of researchers from talking interactively with farmers. They added, "asking farmer's questions has become an industry. Listening to farmers has been forgotten has a research tool" (Chambers, Pacey and Thrupp 1989; 103). We may add that listening by itself may help but not sufficiently. The theoretical framework in which sense is made or meanings are drawn is as important as perception of a phenomena. Extending Popper's premise that theory precedes data, Amartya Sen in a paper on 'Description as a Choice' highlights the problems that we face while describing a phenomena for predictive or prescriptive purposes (1981).

The Sixth principle is that it is essential to build a coherent set of assumptions and conceptual relationships between various sub systems before launching a learning excursion. Since any theory can succeed in explaining a phenomena only partially. The surprise must be anticipated . Through these surprises the theory would get reviewed, revised and sometimes totally transformed by the practical experiences. Institution building can seldom be achieved in the absence of an explicit theoretical framework.

My studies of Institution Building in various types of organizations ranging from banks, public administration, voluntary organizations and research systems have shown that horizontal accountability between farmers and the scientists cannot be built unless vertical accountability between senior and the junior scientists is established. There are many different ways in which the accountability can be established as discussed elsewhere (Gupta 1987).

The seventh principle of Institution Building thus is to monitor both the vertical and horizontal accountability.

The eighth principle is that ' A change not monitored is the change not desired' (Gupta 1984). Unless the top management in a research organization monitors the feedback from farmers, extension workers, on-farm research and its effect on the design on farming system research, it is unlikely that durable linkages will ever get built between different subsystems. The feedback both in technical and administrative matters influences the motivation and morale of the scientists as

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8. It is for this reason that I had suggested for improvement in capacity for on farm research through improvement in overall research management system in a joint institution building programme of research between NDUAT, Faizabad and IIM Ahmedahad. It is a different point that the concerned donor agency for whatever reason tried its best to disrupt the linkage lest it became another example of low cost and high results as was the case in Bangladesh too.

Before I was invited by the Government of Bangladesh (GOB) for strengthening FSR programme at BALI, several western experts had been invited for many years with unsatisfactory results . The moment extraordinary team spirit was generated and excellent conceptual and operational insights were gained through collaborative efforts , no attempt was spared by the concerned aid agency supporting FSR programme for GOB to prevent the continuity. There may have been several other reasons for such a behavior. I was insisting that due credit was given to Bangladeshi experts and senior administrators for drawing inspiration for recasting the research management agenda. This was necessary for institutionalization of new ideas. It would have also generated self reliance among counter part institutions.

individuals as well as the members of the groups (Mathai, Pareek and Rao, 1978).

The Ninth principle of sustainable institution building is to generate * lateral learning' situations to neutralize hierarchical barriers in research bureaucracies. Through the workshops organised for the purpose , I discovered a tremendous reserve of dormant or latent knowledge among the scientists or professionals working in different sub systems of an organization . This knowledge is often not accessible to the managers of the same system because of the barriers to learning from 'below and within'. Once the environment of 'lateral learning' is generated , this knowledge manifests itself.

The learning is necessary not merely among the members of the research team but also the donor agencies, local host organizations and the experts - native or expatriate.[9]

There are several other aspects of Institution Building which need to be considered while appraising the role of donor agencies such as (a) demystification of expert power[10], (b) dependency between rich and poor farmers vis-a-vis dependency between client and consultant (Gupta 1986), (c) the role of expatriate consultants in countries with colonial past and thus relative contempt for local expertise[11], (d) need for role and value clarification so that ethical basis of learning attribution, errors and consequent costs may be properly accounted for, (e) the incentives and professional reward system in relation to departmental, disciplinary and programme objectives, if) the norms of finance and accounts vis-a-vis distribution of resources within the team members and (g) accountability towards the farmers vis-a-vis generation of false hopes. The discussion on these issues will be presented in the revised draft of the paper. It will suffice to say that a large gap seems to exist between the rhetoric and reality of developing technologies for sustainable farming systems because sustainability of institutions has not been properly considered.

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9. The trilateral linkages between the donor agency, host agency and the consultant or the experts can be useful and viable only if attempts are not made to use each other . It has often been seen that a difficult but a 'competent' researcher may be tolerated by a donor agency so long as credibility of its own programme is not built up. Once this purpose is achieved, the donor agency may use the classic maxim of divide and rule and try to break teams and disrupt collaboration. It is true that such disruptions can succeed only if the local networks are weak. It is obvious that such attempts by some of the donor agencies in a large country with strong professional institutions can only have very marginal consequence for the long term development of society.

10. Some times in the name of training in RRA and other such fads, false rationality is adduced to commonsensical approaches. It is not surprising that such methods are adopted only by certain type of organizations-the foreign funded high profile NGOs whose credibility in national systems may not always be very high.

11. In a particular case a rice breeder with an excellent record of breeding varieties for harsh environment (through conventional methods) was making some interesting attempt to screen left over seeds of advanced lines under farmers' conditions. Even before the results were collected for two or three years and analysed rigorously, the concerned aid agency along with other 'experts' got the intuitive approach published as a new approach to breeding varieties for harsh environments. The national expert who pointed out the inadequacy in the method, ways of collecting data and suggested improvements became suspect in the eyes of the breeder. Excellent program was disrupted due to the anxiety of aid agency to claim success in a premature manner. Neither any improvements were brought about nor the same breeder continued with any of these methods in his own breeding programme.

Subsequently an I ARC also got into the situation. It sent a survey schedule to a national agricultural research programme for finding out constraints in rice production .The data was collected by national scientists and sent for analysis to the IARC. Before the results were out, design of on-farm research programme was already on the ground without any evidence of any lesson having been learnt from the farmers. This happened in 1988-89. CGIAR. reviews claim that FSR approach has been refined by the IARCs and lessons have been learnt. I do not of course imply at all that part of the blame should not go to the national planners who acquiesce in such deals.

Part II

Dynamics of Donor Experience

It has to be acknowledged that like any other sub system of society donor agencies also have their own internal contradictions. There are forces which are very sensitive to the concerns of the disadvantaged social groups and often articulate their observations very forcefully. At the same time there are voices, often the dominant ones, which assume a patronizing role and consequently acquire a set of manipulative strategies to influence the research programme of the host agencies. Inadequate theoretical clarity and conceptual soundness may guide interventions which can neither be institutionalized in the local context nor create good role models.

1. One of the most painful experiences that I have had relates to the judgments passed by the western experts on local work. Some of them deliberately reinforce mediocrity by rating a research work as excellent when it may just be good and good when it is just plane bad. I have seen "experts" certifying to the excellence of the programmes which even a lay person could see as highly inadequate. While I do not deny the need for positive reinforcement my own feeling is that such certification is guided more often by the tendency for mutual back scratching . The implication of such certification is that when a host country expert identifies or points out the inadequacy he or she becomes suspect. The colonial legacy somehow still continues to generate deference in the mind of some of the native scientists towards the western 'experts'. The result is that one of the most important conditions of sustainability that of embedding an institutional renewable process in the local professional networks is nullified.

   it is obvious that the long term development of a nation's capability to answer various types of challenges depends upon the strength of its internal professional peer groups. To ensure that the host scientists speak in eulogizing terms when the review missions come, the donor agencies do not often mind compromising even if the urge for excellence gets diluted in the process. This becomes more painful when as a third world scholar consultant I have seen the potential and demonstrated genius of colleagues in the research organizations in developing countries. Why should a donor agency be keen to provide too quick or too easy certification of excellence and nip the urge for excellence in bud? My hypothesis is that with increasing inability of the scientists in Centres of Agricultural research and donor agencies to keep up the pace of technological development achieved in 70's, the results are sought to be shown in a short time frame. If technologies have not been developed , the donors can at least show that the methods have been learned or that maps or "diagrammes" have been made[12].

   My fear is that compromises of the kind mentioned above already are leading to drying up of resources for the ARCs for this purpose. I will not be surprised if donor agencies also are advised by their sponsors to either move away or change their strategies. This paper may in that case be helpful in identifying the type of changes required.

2. "Monitoring generates design" has been a well known principle in development management(Weick, 1979, Gupta, 1981).On what issues is ones' performance monitored determines to some extent the incentives structures that exist for the people in an organization. If the action taken on the feedback from farmers and extension workers even in the normal channels is not monitored, is there a case for building new linkages or starting new on-farm research programmes? it has been admitted that linkage of this type has not been easy to forge (Merrill-

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12. For an interesting critique of IRA as an example of technology transfer' from IARCS to national programmes , see Biggs and Farringtan(1990).

Sands, Ewell, Biggs , Mc Allister, 1989; 12).

I have argued that before new on -farm research programmes or FSR programmes are started , the evidence on utilizing existing feedback through Kisan Melas (Farmers' Fairs), training programmes of farmers and extension workers , letters, media, field visits etc.,must be collected. Donor agencies have ignored this suggestion almost consistently in all cases. I will not be surprised if we find after some time all the extension divisions , or operation research pro grammes or cropping system research programmes being relabeled as FSRPs.

Another reason for lack of effective linkages is that foreign experts often lack prior experience of research in developing countries. They lack the experience of managing collaborative programmes in their own countries as well. Such experts when inducted to achieve what they themselves were incompetent to achieve end up increasing the distance of on-farm research group from the on-station scientists.

If it is agreed that, "procedures and methods of on farm client oriented research are still evolving, particularly with respect to developing effective farmers participation" (Merrill-Sands et al, 1989; 22) than would it not be proper encourage experiments by the third world scientists and farmers on their own .In the meanwhile scholars in the developed countries may like to try incorporating the interests of disadvantaged farmers and farm workers in the research agenda of western agricultural universities . This will give them useful institutional experience which could then be transferred to the developing countries where ever appropriate .Busch (1985),Kloppenburg(1987) Oasa (1981) Hadwiger (1982) etc., provide a few examples of this kind. . It is strange that expertise is claimed and sort to be transferred when there is none.

3. Some of the problems of getting resources for solving problems which lie at the intersection of two different disciplines or which affect the interest of multinational corporations are no less serious in the developed countries. In a memorandum to Select Committee on Science and Technology, Agricultural and Environmental Research, (Session 1983-84, Fourth Report ,House of Lords, HMSO London, 1984). Dr. Potts, Director of the Game Conservancy Research Institute, observed,

" Part of the reason why the above work (involving some of the fundamental questions being raised about the impact of modern agriculture on pesticides "tread mill" effect) is now so difficult to finance is that the responsibility for solving the questions does not rest clearly with any one source of funding. There is no one customer for such a bird watching brief on farm land which is not clearly associated with either agricultural or environmental interest.....One obvious difficulty is in the long term nature of the work, indeed we now considered that ten years are needed to establish a reasonable base line. Grants given by national environment research council are usually for three years..... At a time of reducing research budget as at present long term funding is particularly difficult unless there is a special provision for it "(1984, 159).

While discussing various remedies later,Potts suggested that quite radical changes were needed in the system. Otherwise he feared that requests "for finance at the interface will merely shuffle from pigeon hole to pigeon hole as quite literally I found in trying to set up the Sussex work in 1970....." He further suggested that responsibility for supporting such research lying at the interface of agriculture and environment must be fixed. A new source of fund in his view should be found for long term monitoring of this interface. Priorities he suggested should be reviewed regularly "so that the new long term projects can be started and less important one dropped, to prevent 'fossilization'".

in another communication to the Lord Melchett on 19th April 1984 Dr. Pots reported that he had no financial support from AFRC at all and have had none for two years because it was reported that Rothamsted and GCRI might hope to do the work. The lesson is obvious . The interest of

Rothamsted experiment station in propagating the myth that soils could continue to produce at the same level, if not more, indefinitely if only the inorganic nutrients are supplied is well known . And also is known that no extraordinary environmental impacts of use of such intensive chemicals are foreseen at this station.

Will it not make sense for donor agencies to support research by third world scholars on the issue of institutional reform, modifying research agenda, building links between different objectives of farmers, consumers etc., in developed world ? Perhaps such a research will also help explain why the same multinational corporations or research institutions supported by them will thwart attempts for institutional reform in third world. In addition to this , insights gained from such research will help third world scholars anticipate some of the institutional problems likely to be faced when their agricultural sector gets more commercialized .Sustainability of FSR depends on linkages between relevant research in the developed world with the corresponding research in the developing world.

Another lesson from this instance is about the importance of long term research for generating technology for sustainable development. It is this type of funding which developing countries need most and yet as I repeatedly argued , it is precisely such areas of research which are at present out of the funding portfolios of donor agencies.

4. Strengthening of farming system research as a sectoral activity instead of a framework or an approach or methodology is another major damage being inflicted by the donor agencies. India has had cropping system research programme since 1953. It is true that there is a scope of lot of improvements. But would these changes occur by a review of 40 years experience and search for local innovations or by transfer of guidelines and manuals in the preparation of which collaborating scientists have not been involved ? The fact that India has a very rich endowment of social scientists and for a very long time, should it not be common sensical that the strategies for change and support should be differently conceptualized in India. It pains me when I see the efforts being made to teach concepts of survey research or analysis of data at a level of rigour which would not be acceptable even for an under graduate class in any reputed social science school in the country. There is no accountability unfortunately of such attempts and the result is that a routine or a very minor improvement is celebrated beyond reasonable limits.

5. Donor agencies may tolerate dissent and plurality as long as it did not disturb the basic edifice of their framework. The moment their framework was disturbed various ways -professional or not so professional - were used to marginalize such critics. It is a different point that the professional peer group in certain countries like India are far stronger than perhaps even in some of the developed countries. And therefore issues which fall in the domain of organizational politics carry the day in professional peer groups. If professional groups in developed and developing world interact on finding out ways of providing mechanisms of quality control, one can hope of improvements in near future.

6. I have maintained that Biological scientists can acquire social science skills faster than vice versa. I see no reason why attempts should not be made to broaden the dialogue within the biological science systems. Thanks to the support from a particular aid agency I had organized sessions on social science aspects of farmers' participation in technological development and diffusion in two international conferences held in India. Both the meetings- on plant physiology and agronomy helped achieve a greater penetration of the message than would have been the case if I had been talking to only the economists or the sociologists. It is an important lesson that donor agencies may like to keep in their mind . Seeding ideas through professional associations may take it longer largely because the scrutiny is going to be stronger.

7. Institutional Approach to embedding an idea requires that we keep the role of donor agencies in a low key. Just like developing countries may have intellectual expertise but not the money to sell it, donor agencies also may have money to disburse but not necessarily intellectual expertise of relevant type in all the cases. If proper combination of respective resources and endowments has to be achieved than the issue of politics and ethics underlying donor-donee interaction has to be more rigorously debated.

8. It is well known that civil servants and some of the elite technocrats might allow donor agencies a greater say in this matter than is proper- perhaps to advance their own career goals. This is a problem faced by most soft states. It will be shame if well meaning donor agencies contributed to this malice just in order to safeguard their own interests. In any case such interactions can never be sustainable.

9. In some of the countries donor agencies have started territorialising their influence. They divide the country into their spares of influences either spatially or sectorally . The result is creation of monopolies in certain sectors or spaces. If monopoly is bad it is certainly bad in research funding. In farming system research in India has to be supported by any one particular agency it clearly means that plurality of perspectives, methodologies and approaches would be given a go by. Would this be considered healthy , in a long term professional perspective even within any developed country, is doubtful. Some broad specialization is of course understandable .

10. Almost in all the cases of donor supported FSR programmes I have noticed a conspicuous absence of any attempt to share data with the providers of the same i.e. the farmers. Sharing is useful because it helps not only fulfill ethical but also the scientific purposes.

11. One can not add without subtracting ' is an old lesson in public administration. There is a strong tendency in donor supported but also some other FSR programmes to add too many objectives to a programme . This leads to a thin spread of the resources . In many cases every component suffers. Before adding new functions, tasks or objectives it will be useful to identify the items which will be cut .

Part III

Areas of Convergence: Can Bridges be built

Given an ideological transformation all over the world it is futile to argue that Bridges cannot be built among responsible researchers in the third world and the responsible counterparts in the national and international funding agencies. However, much will depend upon whether such an interaction is sought to be initiated from the position of the strength or from the position of dependency. It is also dependent upon the willingness of donor agencies to concede the fact that in certain areas of institution building, far richer experience may exist in the Institutions of say India than some other countries . Would then a reverse transfer of knowledge be initiated by the donor agencies? Will donor agencies recognise the need for reviewing the farming systems research in developed countries by the professionals of the developing world ?

Would it be possible to hope that theoretical dimensions of farming system research would receive as much attention if not more as the methodological dimensions ?

Accountability to professional groups as mentioned earlier is a necessary condition though not sufficient. Search for sufficient conditions requires that the dialogue on the dynamics of aid politics and ethics takes place more explicitly. My own feeling is that such a dialogue is likely to take place more easily if the scholars based in Universities and Institutes and not much dependent on donor agencies for their own survival are involved both in the developed and the developing countries.

'The Gospel of Dirty Hand' that Munshi talked about 40 years ago needs to be gone through by the donor agencies as also others. The issue of research programme which is responsive to the interests of disadvantaged social groups is not just a matter of methods. It is an issue of ethics, politics, institutions and accountability. The relationship between soil and the spirit can not be forged by aid agencies which are not willing to have patience to reinforce rigourous methods of learning.

My regret is that disagreements are often converted into signs of mutual disrespect. In that case, the dialogue would cease to take place in academic arena.

I hope my views in this paper will generate genuine dialogue among the donor agencies as also among the professional groups. But I am not sure. It is a pessimistic note on which I end this paper. But that seems to be a more honest and authentic statement at my current level of predicaments[13].

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13. This is a preliminary unedited draft . I would appreciate if this paper is not quoted without prior reference . I will also appreciate if the readers will share with me their own experience in this regard -akg.

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