Using Interactive Planning to Create a Child Protection Framework in an NGO Setting
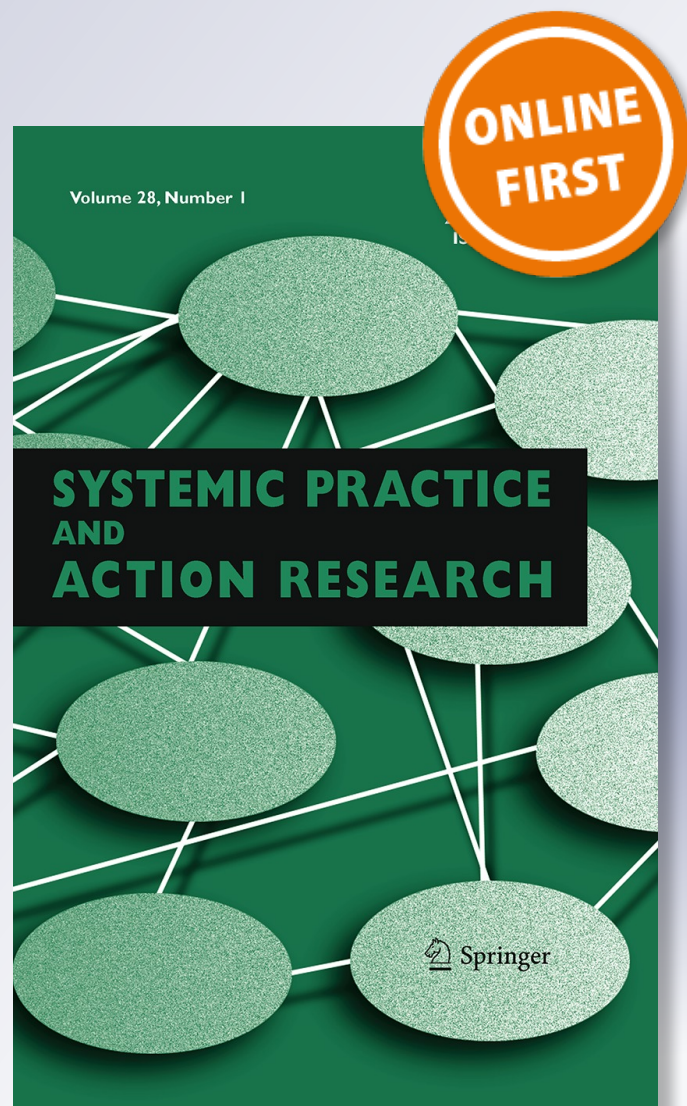
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Using Interactive Planning to Create a Child Protection Framework in an NGO Setting
Case Study of a Consultancy Project in India

Rajneesh Chowdhury

Abstract   This paper offers a critical reflection of how the interactive planning approach was used to develop a child protection framework for a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) in India. The case in point is Universal Team for Social Action and Help (UTSAH), an NGO that the author consulted with between October-2013 and December-2013. UTSAH was in existence for over two-and-half years then. It was at a stage of self-transformation in order to surface as an agency in social action and as an effective voice in the child rights advocacy space, for the future. In order to realize this vision, the organization worked closely with the author to develop a child protection framework to support its work. In this paper, the author attempts to describe the intervention undertaken, highlighting its participatory and inclusive nature. An emergent critique is also presented that offers a retrospective appreciation of the approach and framework, in light of the argument that it is practical and realistic. Deliberations presented here are believed to be beneficial and informative for both academicians and practitioners of systems thinking and for professionals working in the development sector.

Keywords   Child protection · UTSAH · Systems thinking · Interactive planning · Program delivery model

Introduction

This paper presents a case study deliberation of how interactive planning (IP) was used to create a child protection framework and its corresponding program delivery model for a Non-Government Organization (NGO) in India. The NGO—Universal Team for Social Action and Help (UTSAH)—had been in existence for over two-and-half years then, and was intending to create a robust operational framework in order to emerge as an

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organization with high implementation impact and a strong voice in child protection advocacy in India. The author was involved with UTSAH as a consultant for a period of about 3 months during October 2013–December 2013 to support in creating a child protection framework and program delivery model. This paper attempts to deliberate on the key aspects of the journey to achieve this objective. Learning from various stages of the journey has been reflected on, along with a critical appreciation of the effectiveness of the intervention itself.

First, a brief background of child rights and child protection in India is provided, leading to a discussion on how UTSAH was conceptualized and founded. Following this, the emerging requirements of the situation are narrated, followed by a discussion on why IP emerged as a chosen approach. This leads to a detailed discussion on how IP was applied to create an operational framework and future roadmap for UTSAH. The paper concludes with an emergent critique of IP as an approach for this intervention, and of the framework itself.

The author will be referred to as the "consultant" for the rest of the paper.

Child Protection in India

The right of the child has appeared as one of the most fundamental of human rights in current times with the focus of considering children as rightful citizens of their countries. The United Nations (UN) Declaration of the Rights of the Child came into force on 2nd September 1990; this declaration guarantees specific rights that are minimum entitlements and freedoms for all persons below the age of eighteen irrespective of race, color, gender, language, religion, opinions, origins, wealth, birth status or ability (Convention on the Rights of the Child 1990).

The Constitution of India makes specific references to the right of the child in various Articles, covering several parameters including access to education and healthcare, protection from hazardous environment, and protection from abuse (Sharma 2010). The Constitution of India also clearly upholds the right to equal opportunities to facilitate conditions of freedom and dignity for the child.

India also ratified the UN Convention on Rights of the Child in 1992. To foster the objectives of the Convention, the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) was set up in March 2007, under the Commission for the Protection of the Child, as an Act of the Parliament of India in 2005. The NCPCR's mandate is to ensure that all laws, programs and administrative mechanisms are in consonance with the Child Rights perspective as enshrined in the Constitution of India and also the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (NCPCR 2007).

However the ground realities are very different. According to an NGO, Child Rights and You (CRY 2007), only thirty-five per-cent of births in India are registered. One out of sixteen children die before they attain the age of one, and one out of eleven die before they are five. CRY (2007) also notes that out of all the children malnourished in the world, forty per-cent of them are in India. India is home to the highest number of child laborers in the world, with the world's largest number of sexually abused children. Added to this is the challenge of low esteem for women leading to incidences of high female infanticide, high school drop outs amongst girls and disturbingly high incidences of violence against the girl child.

Various NGOs and voluntary organizations have come to the forefront to address the alarming status of children in India. Notable amongst them are Child Rights And You,

Smile Foundation, Pratham, Akshaya Patra, Saharsh, Odanadi Seva Samasthe, ExNoRa International, and Humana People To People India, amongst others. Recent years have seen the rising reach and impact such organizations, with the landmark creation of the National Policy on the Voluntary Sector in the Year-2007. This policy represents the formal recognition of the contribution of the voluntary sector as an integral part of nation building (National Policy on the Voluntary Sector 2007).

About UTSAH

This section describes the thought behind the organization leading to the birth of UTSAH in 2011. It also describes the key initiatives and successes that shaped the formative years.

Birth of UTSAH

The birth of UTSAH was steered by its founder, Miguel Queah. Inspired by the idea of affirmative action to benefit and empower the community, Miguel was driven to adopt a proactive approach since early stages of his education. He was determined to act as an active agent for social change through the medium of, in his own words, "affirmative action to *help* people in need of care and protection".

Miguel founded UTSAH on 28th March 2011 with his partners, Pallavi Barua and Shankardev Chowdhury, in Guwahati, a city in the state of Assam (North-East of India). UTSAH stood for United Team for Social Action and Help. However, "Utsah" in the ancient Indian Sanskrit language has a deeper meaning—enthusiasm or drive. Apart from the executive team, the organization additionally had a team of active volunteers, aiming to work for the betterment of the society. Miguel Queah was unanimously appointed Chairperson to lead the organization. The team of the three partners constituted the Executive Committee. The organization was registered a Non-Government Organization (NGO) with the registration number KAM(M)/240/A-26/787. The organization started operations supported by an extended seven-member Governing Council, and a team of dedicated volunteers.

The initial framework was a basic services model offering a viable solution that would help in socially bettering the conditions of people living in deprived areas of the city through a participatory approach. The focus was on making the communities "safe for its children". To this end, the organization created the UTSAH Child Safety Chart (UTSAH Handbook 2011) that covered essential elements for children including child rights, education, health, nutrition, sanitation and safety.

The Formative Years

The first project for UTSAH in March 2011 was in a vulnerable community—Hafizna-gar—situated in the heart of Guwahati city.

About the Hafiznagar Community

The Hafiznagar community had been an informal settlement for more than forty years then, along an unsafe land stretch next to a functional railway line, without any barrier. Initially, the area had more than eight-hundred settlers, most of them migrants from nearby villages,

who had come in search of better livelihood opportunities. However, since the residents had settled along a railway track, the railway authorities would evict the establishments each year by breaking and burning down the shanties, only to have the residents re-settle back in that same area due to lack of viable alternatives. Year after year, the same eviction drives, coupled with the stress of dealing with abject poverty and social isolation resulted in the people losing faith in any kind of organized living. This unrelenting vortex of insecurity of tenure along-with social discrimination turned the entire area into a ghetto (UTSAH Report on Community Needs Assessment 2011). Ghettoization gave rise to robbery, alcoholism, gambling, substance abuse, and other kinds of anti-social activities. There were transactional attempts carried out in the past by other NGOs. These were limited to distribution of food, blankets, medicines and other essentials. Hence, they failed to make any transformational and sustainable changes in the community and the mindset of the residents.

The UTSAH study of 2011 also revealed that in-spite of the dire state of existence of the community, some of the residents were aware of the importance of health and hygiene, clean surroundings, education, sanitation and other basic requirements that contribute to the overall health and wellbeing of people. They also had a desire to be self-sufficient by growing their own fruits and vegetables, and raise poultry for themselves, and earn a decent livelihood though organized economic activities. They also have hopes of education for their children and felt that by improving their overall standard of living, they and their children would benefit.

UTSAH Intervention in the Community

Since it was founded, UTSAH's approach was grounded in community action. From the very beginning the team worked alongside the residents of Hafiznagar and involved them in all activities in order to win their trust and confidence. Key aspects around child rights and protection were identified and systematic action was undertaken to resolve problem areas with the help of committed volunteers and few key influencers in their panel. The funding was initially mobilized from individual donors. Following were the salient features that defined the character of the UTSAH interventions in the formative years (during 2011 and 2012):

- *Gaining trust* The team started with making frequent visits to Hafiznagar and speak to individuals who showed interest in making a change in their lives. Natural leaders emerged from the community, who were at the core for the UTSAH team to partner with and make their inroads into the community.
- *Community drive* Two Participatory Sub-Committees were formed, from the residents of Hafiznagar itself, representing men and women in respective committees. These sub-committees were trained initially on addressing basic concern areas like health, nutrition, hygiene, violence and abuse.
- *Communication and awareness* The UTSAH team started conducting daily visits to Hafiznagar and with the help of the committees, frequent and regular communication—both individual and collective—were started on various issues and topics that would arise. Regular communication around how their actions, behaviors and living patterns negatively effected their children were listened to and acted upon, wherever possible, with sincerity.

- *Addressing deviance* Specific community norms were noted and shared with the residents on acceptable social conduct. Specific corrective action and counselling in case of flouting the community norms, were introduced.
- *Stakeholder involvement* In order to deliver impactful affirmative action, key stakeholders were sensitized of the initiatives and were taken into confidence. The UTSAH team started doing regular visits to the Indian Railways, local administration, police, health agencies (both private and government), small businesses, neighboring localities and the media. Sensitization also involved key communication and negotiations with the Indian Railways and the police.
- *Streamlined Funding* The UTSAH team started reaching out to potential donor agencies to streamline their funding and reduce dependence from individual donors. In early 2012, SMILE Foundation, a leading organization working in the field of child development started its partnership with UTSAH as part of their integrated child development program (Smile Foundation 2012). This ensured a predictable and sustained funding for UTSAH's program in Hafiznagar.

Supported by SMILE Foundation, within 2 years of the partnership between UTSAH and the Hafiznagar community, a range of affirmative drives were implemented touching education, health and hygiene, housing, nutrition and adolescent help (ANI News 2014). In the area of health, camps and awareness campaigns were organized where health records of every resident were created and maintained. Water supply was regularized with access to running water (The Assam Tribune 2012). At the community self-help level, the concept of systematic living was introduced, whereby all houses were organized in a row, specific areas were allocated for defecation, and space was introduced in front of groups of households to have a kitchen garden for self-supply of fruits and vegetables. Counseling workshops for adolescent girls were introduced where the UTSAH team brought in trained volunteers to conduct such sessions from time to time.

The UTSAH interventions, over the formative years, were fundamentally geared towards creating conditions in the community that would build safe spaces, where children can be provided with a better atmosphere where they can be developed and nurtured (The Times Of India 2013).

Emerging Requirements at UTSAH

By early 2013—2 years through its inception—UTSAH realized the need to give more structure to its community partnership approach and aspired to develop a robust framework for its community-centric initiative.

UTSAH approached the consultant in mid-2013 to explore a collaboration whereby a comprehensive framework could be developed that would give a definitive way forward for the organization. The consultant at that time was associated with Aon Hewitt, one of the world's leading management consulting firms. There were several rounds of discussions between the UTSAH Chairperson and the consultant. The problem statements highlighted by the chairperson were as follows (in his words):

"We are doing a lot, but somehow it is not getting the right form"
"We want to be playing an impactful role in the area of child rights in India"
"Currently we are fund crunched; and overcoming this is of key importance"
"UTSAH needs to create its community driven child protection framework that is unique and substantive"

"We have a unique concept of being a *Child Protector* – we need to give it shape and form"

"Communication is key and we need to give out the right messages to the external world"

"I have my own vision and mission, but at the moment it's quite fuzzy"

"We need a model that is replicable and independent of the people implementing it"

Being an organization in its nascent stage of formation and operating in the non-profit sector, it was not possible for UTSAH to materialize a commercial engagement with a professional body for advisory services. During the course of discussions between the chairperson and the consultant, the latter was convinced to partner with UTSAH on a pro-bono basis, for which he obtained a sabbatical from his employer for 2 months during November–December, 2013. On finalization of the engagement, the consultant penned down the overall emerging requirement with the chairperson—articulating and enabling the vision of UTSAH through the development of a child protection framework that is comprehensive, measurable and sustainable. This was to be substantiated by a program delivery model that will give life to the framework. A project team was constituted that included the consultant, and the three key members of UTSAH.

About Interactive Planning and Why it was Chosen

The emerging requirements at UTSAH demanded creating a strategy that would support the organization shape up as a professional and sustainable entity in the future. Being an NGO, it was considered that this strategy has to be realistic and created, understanding available resources and environmental constraints. Also, operating in the community sector, it was crucial that the target beneficiaries were involved throughout the process.

The project team attempted to arrive at an approach that would think from the target population and facilitate creating a system that is effective and efficient. The principles that drove this understanding included:

- Intent to give to the community what it is in need of
- Need for a system that ensures control and observable impact
- Requirement to develop an operational model that can enable execution and sustainability

With the above understanding, IP emerged to be a preferred approach for the situation at hand.

IP was developed by management Guru, Russell Ackoff, who, on his death, was referred to as the Einstein of problem solving (Brant 2010). Ackoff (Ackoff 1977a, b) notes three kinds of planning: Reactive, Prospective and Interactive. As the name suggests, reactive planning is undertaken on retrospect when issues arrive that are undesired or unplanned. This is the most common kind of planning, where the issues addressed, unfortunately have the tendency to become transactional. Reactive planning often lacks the ability to unravel the roots of the problems and has the danger of ending up appreciating issues at the surface level. On the contrary, prospective planning is futuristic and draws references from learning from past occurrences and ongoing events. Prospective planners are driven by scenario planning of what may happen with the assumption that there are environmental factors that are external and beyond control of the planners. Ackoff (Ackoff 1977a, b) however aspired for a highly evolved approach in the planning process where he desired to

encompass environmental constraints and uncertainties into the planning process. He proposed to achieve this by envisioning the desired ideal state in the current scenario in an attempt to change the mindset of planners to think in terms of an *ideal-seeking achievable* within the current circumstances. This was a revolutionary thinking that almost attempted to make the impossible happen by understanding the operational environment in a way that brings in factors, often considered uncontrollable, come under control by virtue of systemic appreciation and deliberation. Ackoff renders great emphasis on what is possible in the current environment. By this, he attempts to internalize factors within the frame of planning that are often considered external and out of control, which impinges upon the effectiveness of the planning process. Ackoff (Ackoff 1977a, b) refers that failures in plans are often attributed to factors beyond one's control, rather than the planners' failure to account for the same factors as part of the real world they operate in. Hence Ackoff advocated an approach whereby planning encompasses a systemic perspective that considers all stakeholders and probable constraints, and envisages a desired state that is realistic and achievable as of the current time—within a well identified framework where possible derailers can be included within the gamut considered (rather than attributing externality and hence looking at them as beyond control). Ackoff proposed a perspective in which the planner's mindset is shifted from looking at individual problems in isolation, to look at how problems interact with one another. He advocates that problems are created by the mental framework that planners operate in, at the first place. Hence the way forward lies in the ability to look at organizations and problem situations as a system in interaction, rather than external occurrences triggered by factors beyond those involved in resolving the problem situation.

By virtue of this thought, his approach enables planners to constantly bridge the gap between what the reality is and what it should be in the current times, as he believes that an organization's future depends as much on what is done to bridge the gap between what is ideal and real in current times, as on what is done in order to reach its ideal state in the future. In his own words, planners are better off by directing their energies to "the design of a desirable present and the selection or invention of ways of approximating it as closely as possible" (Ackoff 2001: p. 3).

Ackoff (2001) subjects IP to two constraints—Technological Feasibility and Operational Viability—and one condition—Learning and Adaptation. The constraints set a clear boundary for the planners to deliberate on solutions that are achievable and attainable within current technological or resource realities. At the same time, solutions that are operational and viable within the existing environment. In other words, it should be able to exist in harmony within the current eco-system. The condition of learning is crucial so that it ensures that the current system is adaptive to changing requirements from internal and external stakeholders. It also mandates that it is susceptible to its own redesign with learning from the successes and failures that it encounters in its life time. Hence, Ackoff advocates a system that is well defined, which, at the same time is not static, but open to change and adaptation.

As Lumbo (2007) notes, IP brings the following advantages to the table:

- *Realistic* IP supports creation of strategies that are not esoteric and distant, but are in accordance with the situation on ground, and enables a close approximation of the desired reality.
- *Holistic* The approach looks at systemic interrelationships within and outside the entity.

- *Participative* IP works on the ground with participative tools that involve stakeholders and the project "subjects" in all the critical stages of understanding to design to implementation.
- *Empowering* Participation renders empowerment to people and enables them to own the process and the design. This helps creating buy-in from the target audience. This is an important requirement, as the intervention envisioned to create a self-controlled system in terms of implementation.
- *Creative* IP enables creativity and out-of-box thinking as it offers the opportunity to create a system from ground zero. Use of different techniques and tools are also encouraged to bring in effective impact.
- *Action-oriented* Since IP offers a participative and empowering environment for the system design, it also facilitates ease of implementation because of the buy-in created for the same from key stakeholders. Also, the various stages of the exercise help the consultant to work on resource allocation and implementation controls that facilitates an action-oriented model on the ground.
- *Flexible* IP in itself is a flexible approach with no water-tight guidelines or application areas. The different stages of the approach can be treated with a certain degree of fluidity. It is also applicable to a variety of situations and contexts.

IP can be categorized under the interpretive paradigm of social systems. This paradigm lends the perspective that social systems can be understood when one immerses themselves into the situation of the target group and looks inside-out (Burrell and Morgan 1979).

However, it is to be noted that the consultant consciously chose not to wear blinkers whilst working under a preferred paradigm or approach. Learning and tools from various other perspectives and methodologies were borrowed through the intervention as per relevance and applicability. This introduced a complementarist angle in the approach, which has been prevalent and popular in systems science. Various academicians and practitioners have documented the benefits of this kind of an approach; these include Clarke (2001), who talks of 'Mixing Methods', Jackson (2003), who talks of 'Total Systems Intervention', Lehaney (1996), who talks of 'Mixed-Mode Modelling', Mingers and Brocklesby (1997), who talk of 'Multimethodology', Flood (1995), who talks of a 'Complementarist Framework', and Taket and White (1996), who talk of 'Pragmatic Pluralism', amongst others. Evidence of a blended approach in a large organization restructuring exercise was also documented by Chowdhury (2012).

IP, when used in systems design, has five broad phases. Each of these phases has been introduced at a turn in the following sections along-with a discussion of the intervention that was undertaken.

The Intervention

The IP approach has five distinct phases: (1) Formulating the mess, (2) Ends planning, (3) Means planning, (4) Resource planning, and (5) Design of implementation and control. Considering that the system design needs to incorporate the learning character in its model and be open to accommodating changes within and outside the system, each of these phases may not be considered to be exclusive, but as interconnected and evolving. As Jackson notes, "… none of the phases, let alone the whole process, should ever be regarded as completed" (Jackson 2000: p. 236).

Each of the above phases is taken up in turn, in the discussion below.

Formulating the Mess

Although, as the name suggests, the first phase is about the "mess", this essentially involves appreciating the situation in-depth. This phase is about comprehensively understanding the organization from possible factors that effect its functioning, impinge upon its effectiveness and efficiency, and influences its future direction.

As the first phase, the consultant facilitated two individual interactions with the chairperson, two interactive sessions with the executive committee and four immersive field-visits in the Hafiznagar community in November 2013. The objective was to understand the current situation and future direction from the UTSAH management, and appreciate the perspectives of the residents of Hafiznagar. Immersive field visits with the community were conducted where the consultant sat alongside the resident committees and probed specific aspects of their life and the change they have observed, through open ended exploratory pointers.

Insights from the above interactions can be classified under the following broad parameters.

Current Situation Through Leadership Perspective

UTSAH was then a two-and-half year old registered voluntary organization, a crucial time in its history. In that particular time span, it recognized that its focus is on child rights and protection. All the founding team members came from different backgrounds and none had a related background in social work. The diversity brought in several strengths to the team—whereas the chairperson (Miguel Queah) was the strategist, the deputy-chairperson (Pallavi Baruah) was the execution driver, and the chief spokesperson (Shankardev Chowdhury) played the role of the treasurer and led external communications. Along with the support of the Governing Council and the extended team of volunteers, the team identified certain key success factors and involved themselves in leveraging the same: organization management, onsite implementation of plans, fund raising, public relations, external networking and government liaison.

In the Hafiznagar community itself, UTSAH successfully brought about visible and impactful change that included: organizing of houses in a pattern and sequentially numbering them, regularized water supply, health camps, setting up of a community center, opening of a non-formal school in partnership with SMILE Foundation, and giving all children an opportunity to education, and reduced incidences of deviant behavior. Funds were also mobilized successfully from the government and private philanthropists to aid operations (Web India News 2012).

However, the team's strategies and approaches were shaped by personal learning and on the field experience. The team leveraged on successes and learnt from what did not work favorably. This meant that at times successes were not institutionalized and the learning-curve was gradual.

The Organization's Eco-System

As part of understanding the situation, it was important to understand the wider eco-system within which UTSAH operates. To this end, a stakeholder analysis was carried out to appreciate the touch-points for the community and the intervening agency, and understand their impact. Discussions with the Executive Committee and the community leaders from

Hafiznagar highlighted specific factors that can act as opportunities, and also those that that can pose challenges as derailers. Some of these are mentioned below:

- *Civic bodies* The local municipality, water supply, sewage disposal agencies, and other civic bodies play a key role in maintaining a healthy and hygienic living environment. Often, many of these services are inaccessible to deprived and vulnerable communities leading to an environment that is not conducive for effective living.
- *Health agencies* Local health agencies—both public and private—play a proactive role in ensuring a healthy life for the residents—in particular, women and children. Unfortunately, the residents were found to be generally unaware of health services in the vicinity, or the local agencies were not proactive enough to come forward to the community to offer their support.
- *Police* The police plays an important role as custodians of law and order in the community and the surrounding area. Due to unfortunate circumstance of the lack of regular income, many of the residents fall prey to crime and anti-social behavior. It is the responsibility of the police to restore peace and lawful existence of the community. However at most times, the police also resorts to rude and unacceptable behavior against suspects. This creates a continual sense of distrust between the police and the community, resulting in an ever increasing gap.
- *Education bodies* Education is the cornerstone to make the child future-ready, and hence education bodies play a crucial role in enabling the same. Local schools, colleges and vocational institutions are important stakeholders who can act as partners to impart training and education to children in the community, in a commercial or non-commercial basis.
- *Local industries* Local industries can impart relevant training to the adults and guardians of children and facilitate various employment opportunities for employable adults and make the children employment-ready for the future. This directly contributes to regularizing income and towards the overall economic wellbeing of the community. Their funds can also be leveraged under their corporate social responsibility commitments, and directed to enabling various community development projects that have been planned for.
- *Funding agencies* Designated national and international funding agencies mobilize funds and allocate the same for social and developmental causes, based on merit and eligibility. These agencies can make a substantial impact by channelizing funds for specific time periods for focused interventions. These have the potential of being made more regularized, based on impact measurement and target achievement.
- *Child right bodies* There are a range of national and international child right bodies that can act as strategic partners to mobilize affirmative action in the community, and by virtue of their authority and recognition, can make a significant impact in protecting and upholding the rights of the child.
- *Civil society* The civil society can impact child-centric developmental initiatives in a significant way. From coming forward as active volunteers to deliver programs, to creating far-reaching awareness and mobilizing funds, the civil society can act as the agency for action for the organization and the community. The community exists in the same space as that of the civil society, and by building effective bridges between the two, perceived gaps between the community and civil society can be overcome, which can itself act as a catalyst for change.
- *Government* The government is the most critical stakeholder in bringing several of the above initiatives to life, by acting as an effective facilitator. Providing timely

clearances to civic bodies, opening up the right sources of funds, enabling access to pre-approved dues for children, giving timely clearances to projects, and approving the right partnerships, the government can effectively facilitate seamless functioning of the system. However, bureaucracy and red-tapism remains a significant challenge for many of the initiatives to be realized.

Identifying Challenges and Opportunity Areas

The leadership interactions and the stakeholder mapping surfaced several issues centering around the key success factors. The consultant integrated the feedback and led a deliberation with the wider Governing Council of UTSAH on the articulated eco-system and identified opportunities and derailers associated, during which a reference projection was made where it was considered how the situation for UTSAH would emerge in the future if no change was made in the way it is operating. Based on the same assumptions, the discussion revealed several parameters that could lead to its own destruction if proactive and corrective action steps were not undertaken.

The following key opportunity areas were identified as crucial for UTSAH:

- *Overall direction* The organization had a noble intent and the team was committed to the same. However the leadership was still fuzzy on articulation of the core mission they were working towards. The executive committee had not gone through a formal direction setting. This resulted many of the interventions to happen by default, rather than by design. The team was learning on the ground and by virtue of experience. Although the intent of creating safe and conducive spaces for children was well understood, it was not articulated in clear terms of deliverables, resulting in a situation where the cascade of the intent to the larger team was often 'lost in translation'. A key opportunity area identified was to set the overall direction for the organization.
- *Clear set of objectives* Following from the above point, success of the interventions were incidental. The team was driven by implementation, rather than planned action. This resulted in a situation where every action was a success, and where measuring success itself lacked objective criteria. Hence objective setting for the interventions was identified as a clear need for UTSAH. Along with this, it was agreed that objectives need to be driven by the SMART thinking—specific, measurable, assignable, realistic and time bound.
- *Operating principles* It was realized during the deliberations that UTSAH leadership was driven by the thought of enabling a just and rights-based society with the essential element of a helping attitude at its center. The team adopted an approach that had community action as its core and adopted a working model. Articulating its operating framework and defining the guiding principles were identified as opportunities for UTSAH that would instill the right spirit and attitude in whoever associates with the organization.
- *Identifying drivers for success* Reflection on the various challenges posed by the operating model and the wider eco-system led to the understanding that the team needed to take a proactive approach to be prepared for the same so that it can work on an action plan on the drivers for success. Identifying and working on a set of key enablers emerged as an opportunity area.

Immersion in the Community

The consultant conducted four immersive interactions in the Hafiznagar community.

The first interaction involved a half-day visit in the community. The consultant was greeted by the natural leaders from the community, who then led him for an interactive visit through the site. The consultant also had the opportunity to meet key individuals in the community and understand their perspective of the UTSAH intervention.

The second and the third interactions were focus group discussions (FGD) with men's and women's groups. Representative groups of ten men and ten women were formed and were met with individually as two groups. An open-ended discussion guideline was used by the consultant to delve into some of the key insights and understanding of the community. The discussion guideline covered the following broad areas:

- Change observed since UTSAH came in
- What worked well
- What could be done better
- What support they needed going forward

The fourth immersion exercise with the community involved the consultant engaging with the children in a creative dialogue to appreciate the change they experienced and letting them share what they would like to see for themselves in the future. For the creative dialogue, the consultant borrowed the concept of "River of Life", a tool that was used by Wanless (2013) in Africa to enable certain tribes to depict their life pictorially like the flow of a river. This is a powerful tool that unleashes the creativity of the respondent in expressing their perspective on change, which they may be otherwise unable to express in words. As part of the interaction, the consultant brought together seven children in the community and explained them the concept and instructed them to draw their life since UTSAH entered the community, represented like a flow of time. The children were selected by the UTSAH volunteers, based on their creative merit. Following is an example of a "River of Life" (Fig. 1).

Through the above depictions, the participants depicted the changes their lives went through, in the two-and-half years since UTSAH came in. The consultant discussed the meaning of the drawings with the participants and it was understood that that there was significant change in the above time span. The narration suggested that earlier the area was dirty and unhygienic to live in, resulting in widespread prevalence of diseases and infections. Many of the children were addicted to smoking and alcohol, and substance abuse was widespread. The exposed railway track posed a significant safety hazard and accidents and deaths were common. To make the situation worse, the police would regularly harass residents and children, and the community witnessed periodic evictions. The changes depicted in the drawings point out to how the spaces became cleaner and safer for children, and that life became much better for everyone. There is access to healthcare facilities, children do not smoke anymore, presence of school for the children, house numbers assigned to every house, no robberies and children have stopped using foul language.

Individual interactions were conducted with the seven children on what they would like for themselves in the future. Key messages were captured around support required with education, infrastructure and careers.
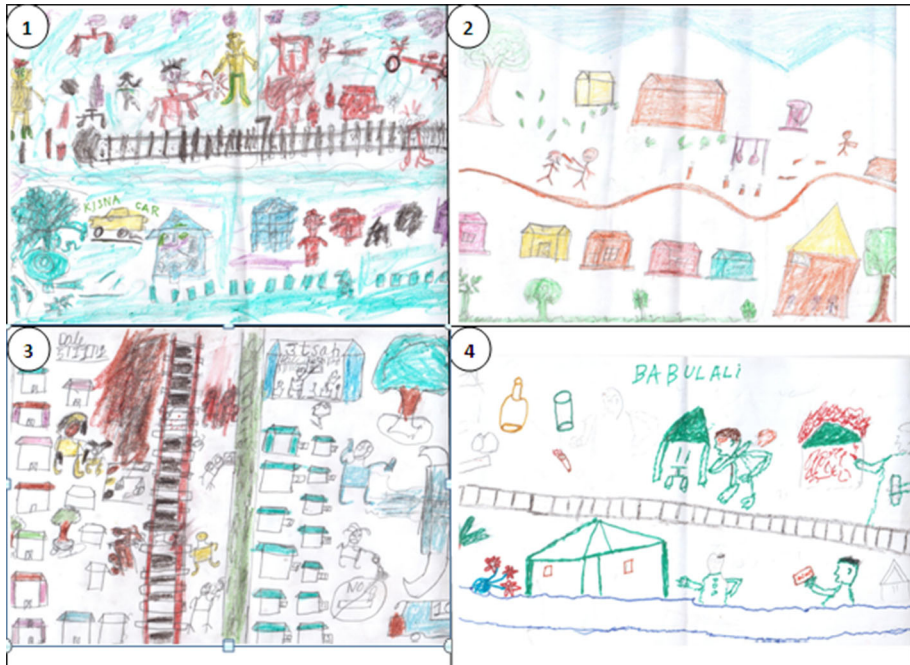
Fig. 1 Select illustrations of "River Of Life" drawings

Weaving it Together

The consultant presented the key understanding and insights from the above steps to the UTSAH executive team, and led a discussion in order to agree at a proposed solution for the way forward. The solution included developing an Operating Framework and associated program delivery model for UTSAH. Interactive sessions were designed and scheduled between the consultant and the Executive Committee in the first half of December-2013, to design the same. It was understood from the various leadership discussions that the guiding philosophy is the overarching right to life, and whatever initiatives the team would undertake within that philosophy need to center around community empowerment and sustainability.

IP enabled the consultant to involve organizational leadership and stakeholders in a structured manner. The formalized process paved the way for a realistic subsequent ends planning phase. Similar structure of work has been documented by Lumbo (2007) in his reference to the IP based work with ALCOA, Tennessee (USA), where structured teams were formed considering a wide array of influencers to work on realistic solutions to address the company's capital investments to improve operations.

Ends Planning

This is the second phase of IP, which seeks to work towards identifying the end state that needs to be pursued. In this engagement, it was clear that UTSAH required articulation of a clear direction, operating framework, and program delivery model. The consultant led

targeted workshops with the executive committee to address the emerging requirements. The following discussion elaborates the process and the outcome for addressing each emerging requirement.

Philosophy, Vision and Mission

In order to give direction to the organization, the Philosophy, Vision and Mission needed to be articulated. This was done in a 1-day workshop setting with the Executive Committee. Through the various interactions with the organization leadership, the very idea of the right to life surfaced on numerous occasions as a driving philosophy for the team. The chairperson was inspired by the right to life, which has found various interpretations in the United States Declaration of Independence, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Constitution of India, the European Convention of Human Rights, and in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Right to Life 2014).

As part of the focused discussions, various interpretations of the right to life and their implications in practice were presented and deliberated upon. The team unanimously agreed on framing the UTSAH philosophy of existence as:

"[We are] driven by the philosophy of an unrestricted Right to Life that has freedom, dignity and meaning."

Articulation of the above philosophy drew inspiration from the various sources mentioned above. Attempt was made to identify specific meaning with every term used. "Unrestricted" relates to free will of people and their "freedom" to live life as per their wish. The word "dignity" points to the understanding that life goes beyond customary existence and every life deserves a just and equitable plane in the society including access to education, health, security and a means of livelihood, so that an individual is able to derive "meaning" out of their existence.

Once the philosophy was articulated, the consultant endeavored to build focus in the team and facilitated deliberations around a vision and a mission. A vision is an overall direction that serves as a lighthouse. It communicates the purpose and values of the organization (Diffen 2013). For articulation of the vision statement, all the three members of the Executive Committee were individually asked to reflect on the key words that inspired their involvement and work. Insights drawn from the immersive interactions with the community were shared with the team. It is noteworthy to share at this stage that when UTSAH initially came into formation, child protection was not the identified focus; the child surfaced as the center point as the work and involvement progressed. During its formative period, the organization had a wide range of areas it was working on, including—youth, culture, environment and old age, apart from children. Hence, the words that came out during this discussion were beyond child protection. This spirit of keeping the scope of work open was passionately discussed, and the team agreed that they needed to keep their space open to work on critical areas in the future apart from children too. The vision statement that was articulated was:

"The achievement of a just and equitable society where all its people are empowered to live and thrive."

In the vision statement above, thrust was given on "equitable" rather than "equality"; the team is driven by the idea to create conditions in society that can facilitate equitable access for individuals to realize their right to life that has freedom, dignity and meaning. At the same time, the team strongly believes in an approach that can "empower" people so that they are can "live" and optimize the conditions to "thrive".

Once the vision was established, as the next key step, it was important to set the way forward for UTSAH in terms of its reason for existence and achievable aspirations. Whilst a vision is directional, a mission is aspirational. As Ackoff writes, a Mission should: "(a) identify the way(s) by which the organization will seek to be effective and unique, (b) unify all its stakeholders in the pursuit of one or more common purposes, and once formulated, (c) make a significant difference in what the organization does, and (d) make progress toward the organization's objectives measurable. (Ackoff 2001: p. 8)." The mission statement may change, but it should still tie back to its original values and principles as envisaged in the vision (Mission Statement Vs Mission Statement 2013).

Considering the above parameters, a detailed deliberation was held in order to arrive at the following mission statement for UTSAH:

"Creating safer spaces that ensure survival and protection, and fosters the development of children who are in need of care and protection."

The mission articulated was driven by an aspiration of what could be achieved in the foreseeable future considering the prevalent opportunities and challenges. Safer spaces here not only refer to physical space, but also to emotional and psychological spaces that can be optimized by creating effective conditions in which the child can grow and develop.

The next section discusses how the mission was drilled down into specific actionables, so that the organization is able to realize its aspiration.

Specifying Objectives for UTSAH

The team was then in a stage where it had a guiding philosophy, a directional vision and an aspirational mission; the next step was to further drill this down to actionable objectives that are aligned to the same. Driven by the idea of community based action for child protection and based on research of the work already carried out and on similar developmental work in other parts of the world, the consultant presented a long-list of objectives within the parameters of rights, education, shelter, livelihood, health and hygiene. Given that the organization was still in its formative stage, and resource mobilization was a significant challenge, the guiding factor here was to set objectives that were manageable, realistic and achievable, yet are able to make an impact. In order to achieve this, the consultant adopted the approach of space–time compression, where deciding on the objective were guided by the understanding of what could be achievable in the current scenario by compressing the space and time since the organization's inception till the time the current initiative was being carried out. This meant that the team was led to internalize the challenges that it faced since it was founded; yet at the same time reflecting on what had been the lacunae that could have been eradicated if they were cognizant of the same and had taken proactive steps to address them. Considering these factors led forming of a mindset where the team could think in terms of specifying "the properties that they would like the organization and its actions to have" (Jackson 2000: p. 236), and whereby "the closest approximation of this design that is believed to be attainable" (Jackson 2000: p. 238) is formulated. This is guided under the principles of idealized design that directs planners to think of the ideal system that can be realized *right now* considering known challenges are addressed, and the design is guided by the factors of feasibility and viability (Ackoff 2001).

The team prioritized and selected the most critical objectives for the child in a vulnerable community from the long-list presented. Following were the select list of core objectives for the child (in any residential community that UTSAH would partner with):

1. Protecting The Child
2. Education For All
3. Healthy and Hygienic Living Conditions
4. Access To Water
5. Adequate Documentation
6. Livelihood Platform For Guardian
7. Effective Living Environment

Every core objective was then drilled down to three-four specific goals and every specific goal had four-five target actions. An example is given below.

It was also important to appreciate those factors that may act as influencers or derailers for every initiative. Based on this understanding, Critical Success Factors (CSF) were identified for every core objective for the child. It is to be understood that some CSFs were overlapping between the various core objectives (Fig. 2).

A detailed document on core objectives, specific goals, target actions and CSFs were agreed and closed with the UTSAH team. It was made sure that every initiative is aligned to the philosophy, vision and mission of the organization.

Means Planning

If end planning is about the "what", means planning is about the "how". This phase seeks to open a deliberation on the enablers that are required in order to realize the objectives and on the approach that needs to be adopted in order to successfully deliver on the program.

Articulating Guiding Principles

The consultant worked alongside the UTSAH Executive Committee to articulate specific guiding principles for the team. These were like the spirit of UTSAH that anyone who is associated with the organization would be expected to demonstrate. A detailed deliberation was facilitated by the consultant to arrive at the following guiding principles:

1. *Rights-based Approach* Fostering the fundamental right to a dignified life. This approach is also epitomized in the driving philosophy of the organization.
2. *Helping Attitude* The inherent attitude to help anyone in need, especially those who are vulnerable to exploitation.
3. *Non-Discriminatory* No discrimination on grounds of color, race, ethnicity, religion, sex, sexual orientation and identity, and nationality.
4. *Community Action* Adopting and implementing consequential action that is based on community drive and empowerment.
5. *Creating Change Agency* An approach that believes in 'teaching how to fish' rather than 'fishing and passing on the fish'. This ensures sustainable impact.

Core Objective	Specific Goal	Target Action
Education for All	Literacy for every child	Initiating education program in the community
		Educating parents about importance of the child's education
		Providing stationery items (books, bags, pencils, shoes)
		Training parents on managing funds & saving for child education
		Mobilize all children to attend the education program

Fig. 2 Elaboration of the core objectives—an illustration

6. *Boundary Critique** Constantly questioning one's assumptions and worldviews so that boundaries are continually challenged, introducing the element of critical inquiry in one's own perspectives and works.

7. *Everyone as Child Protector* An aspiration that every citizen in the society has an obligation to be a protector of the child.

   *The term *Boundary Critique* has been borrowed from Ulrich (2002).

It was agreed that anyone working with UTSAH at any level of association must display behaviors to uphold the above guiding principles. These were also agreed to be formed part of induction of all members including employees, advisors and volunteers for the future.

Reflecting on Enablers

The discussions, during the previous stage of ends planning, where the core objectives were set, also deliberated on challenges or roadblocks to the various initiatives since the organization's inception. Operating under the principles of idealized design, the consultant led the deliberations towards identifying constrains and solutions that could be identified by compressing time and space, as discussed above (in "Specifying objectives for UTSAH" section). The focus was on identifying what would enable the objectives to be realized.

As a result of the deliberations, the following emerged as the key enablers for UTSAH that the team would need to leverage on, for future success:

1. *Successful fund raising* Specific initiatives that will attract predictable flow of funds from identified sources in order to enable smooth implementation of planned activities.

2. *Program delivery models* Implementation of planned initiatives, pillared on robust and comprehensive delivery models that are comprehensive and replicable.

3. *Effective communication* Sharing key messages internally and externally through planned media strategies in order to achieve desired scale and impact.

4. *External partnerships* Identify and create requisite partnerships with external stakeholders, optimizing opportunities and overcoming bottlenecks.

5. *Government mobilization* Mobilize the right departments and bodies in the government machinery in order to ensure hassle-free developmental operations.

6. *Effective advisory council* Constituting an effective advisory council with members who are key influences in the eco-system where the organization operates.

7. *Research and advocacy* Generate quality research and perspectives in the area of work to emerge as an influential advocacy body in the national stage.

8. *Committed change agents* All the above to be made real by a team of highly committed employees and volunteers working as change agents to make a difference.

The UTSAH framework for child protection through community action was agreed and finalized. This is represented in the following depiction (Fig. 3).

Given the guiding principles and key enablers were identified, it was then imperative to deliberate on the resources and tools that could facilitate the implementation. This was taken up as the next phase of the exercise, discussed in the following section.

Resource Planning

This phase is regarding anticipating and forecasting on resources—including approaches, tools, information and knowledge—that enable implementation of plans on the ground.
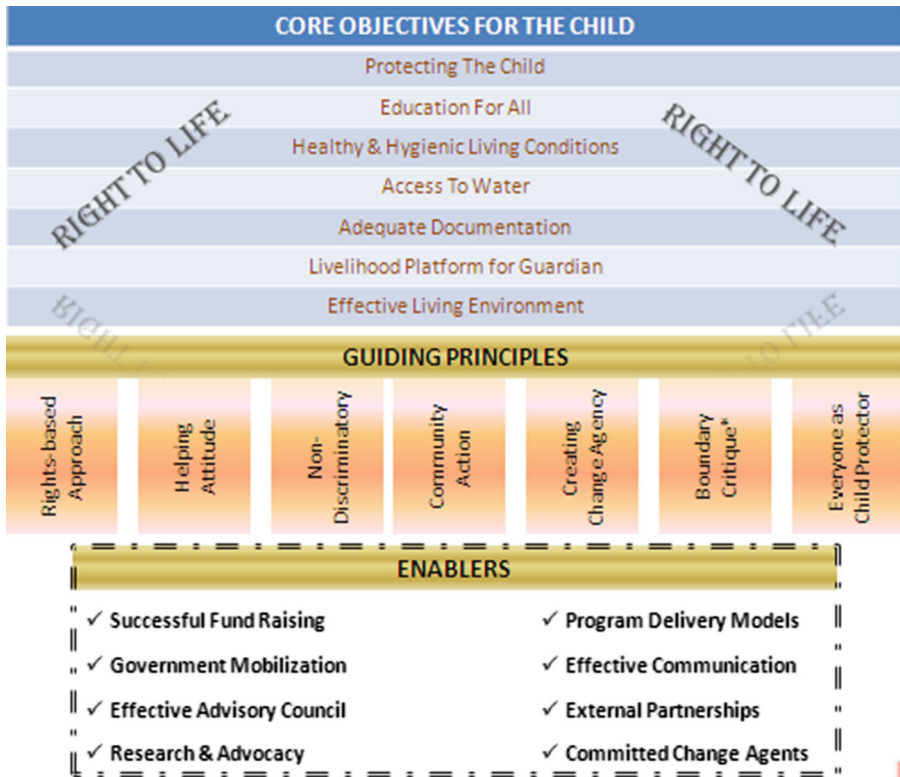
Fig. 3 UTSAH framework for child protection through community action

This is also about understanding excesses and deficiencies that could hamper optimizing the means to the end.

During deliberations between the consultant and the UTSAH team, it became clear that a robust program delivery model needed to be worked on. This needed to delineate exact steps that would lead the initiatives toward the core objectives for the child. To this end, an action planning session was organized that resulted in framing a program delivery model and outlining focused initiatives for the enablers. This is discussed below.

Program Delivery Model

The program delivery model is a clear step-wise intervention methodology for the team to partner with a specific vulnerable community. This involves the following nine steps:

1. *Identification of vulnerable community* This is the first step that would demarcate the specific geographical areas in which the development model can be initiated. Indicators of a vulnerable community were defined.
2. *Appreciation of the community* Involves appreciating the intricate social patterns of the community that give shape and form to the visible rubric of life.

3. *Identifying key stakeholders* Carrying out of detailed mapping of the contact points of the community, and identifying contributive and opportunity areas, along with challenges and derailers with each community.

4. *Immersion in the community* This step is to gain trusted access in the community through ice-breaking intervention that is sociable in character. Measures to be undertaken for successful access to the community were highlighted.

5. *Detailed information gathering* This is about key demographic information collection on the community towards creation of a detailed database. This information is to be gathered through door-to-door interviews with individual households.

6. *Public issues forums and action planning* This is a critical step involving focused discussions on collecting qualitative feedback and perspectives on the community concern areas from targeted groups. Public forums to be constituted to arrive at priorities, responsibilities and implementation timeline.

7. *Action oriented participatory committees* Involves transferring the responsibility of change to the community itself, facilitated through representative participatory committees.

8. *Implementation of the action plan* This step is action oriented involving setting the right targets and implementation of the action plan in a solution-based first response mechanism.

9. *Stabilization and sustainability* Stabilization is achieved through a strong 3-year engagement between UTSAH and the vulnerable community. This involves capacity building in the community with specific focus on participatory committees. In order to ensure sustainability, post the 3 years engagement, parameters of association of external bodies with the community were well laid out along with review parameters.

As part of the delivery approach, salient features for every step was articulated that also included definitions and terms of engagements. Specific tools were created to implement the salient features of every step. Finally this was recorded along with information sources duly indexed. This served as a resource tool-kit for any UTSAH associate to pick up and work on the field.

Focused Initiatives for Enablers

As part of planning for resources each of the eight enablers previously identified were taken up in turn for deliberation. The UTSAH team first individually charted out three strategic initiatives each for every enabler. The consultant then facilitated a session where each of these initiatives was discussed as a team. The consultant relied on the Importance-Certainty matrix of Mason and Mitroff (1981), where each initiative was plotted in four quadrants of relative importance and certainty. Three initiatives each for every enabler was finalized by the team to be carried out, in order to mobilize resources towards fulfilling the core objectives for the child.

Further details on the above cannot be provided as these form confidential part of the UTSAH resource planning.

Design of Implementation and Control

This is the final phase of IP that seeks to create adequate structures and systems to facilitate execution. Implementation is geared to the right track by periodic review and corrective action through well-defined tracking parameters and metrics. Effective control is setting

the right networks of information flow within the system and setting in place the right decision matrix in order to deliver the programs efficiently and as per design.

In the intervention under discussion, effective implementation was incorporated in the step of Stabilization and Sustainability (highlighted in "Program delivery model" Section). Active engagement is achieved through a strong three-year engagement between UTSAH and the vulnerable community. This involves capacity building in the community with specific focus on participatory action committees. Monitoring mechanisms were set in place measuring both effectiveness and efficiency to ensure the rigor introduced. In order to ensure sustainability, post the three years engagement, monitoring mechanisms were set and defined for key outcomes with oversight from UTSAH. Periodic audit and reporting on specific outcomes by external stakeholders on pre-determined parameters were also defined.

In order to ensure effective control, a future-oriented organization Governance Framework was put in place that would ensure setting the right networks of information flow within the system and setting in place the right decision matrix. It was agreed that the Governance Framework will have the following six broad constituents:

- *Chairperson* Responsible for overall direction setting of the organization
- *Executive Committee* Key working group to achieve the core objectives and promote the organization
- *Governing Council* Overall policy making and conflict resolution
- *Advisory Council* Timely strategic advice and to act as key influencer in the society
- *Employees and Volunteers* Execution of on-the-ground initiatives
- *Office Staff* Responsible to carry out administrative functions

Further details of the governance framework is provided in the exhibit below.

It was agreed that the future-oriented Governance Framework would be a learning entity and would evolve as per requirement of UTSAH. As the organization moves forward and introduces new dimensions in its commitment to the community, so will the operating model evolve. In order to address effectiveness and efficiency of the evolving system, the design of the Governance Framework will also need to be dynamic (Fig. 4).

Implementation enablement is crucial in any consulting based projects. Emphasis on implementation and control with IP as an approach has been documented to result in highly valuable tangible results in various cases, including at DuPont where performance of the Safety, Health and Environment (SHE) function improved by 50 % as a result of application of IP design (Leemann 2002).

Critique of the Intervention

This intervention, for 3 months, surfaced several important observations about IP, as an approach and in its application—reflected both as strengths and as weaknesses. This has been elaborated in the following discussion.

Strengths

There were several strengths that came to surface as the intervention progressed. These were both methodological and operational.
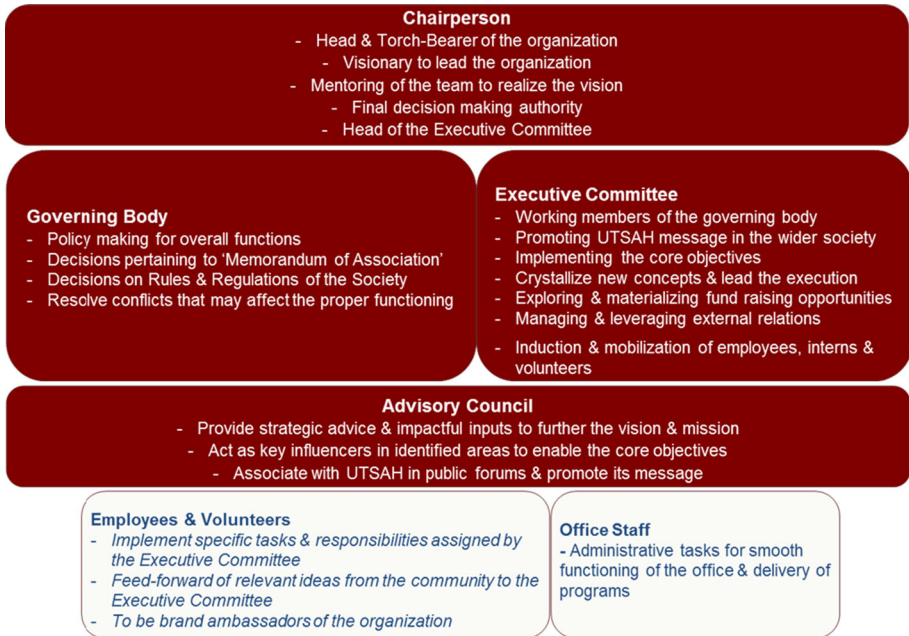
Fig. 4 UTSAH governance framework

Planning that is Realistic and Practical

Adopting an IP approach brought about a realistic perspective to the intervention. It is usual in planning exercises to be driven solely by the organizational vision and fall prey to idealistic scenarios. In such exercises constraints are often overlooked or externalized. Hence planners fall into the trap of over-ambitious target setting. IP, on the other hand, begins by "designing the system with which we would replace the existing system *right now* if we were free to replace it with whatever system we wanted" (Ackoff et al. 2001: p. 37; italics mine). Hence, the whole focus shifts to the current. Through the interactive deliberations with the UTSAH team, the consultant attempted to compress time, and make the team reflect on achievable results and missed opportunities of the elapsed-time and undertake the planning, as if it were done for the current time. The objectives that were identified, for every community that UTSAH would partner with, were designed to be achievable and possible, instilling a sense of confidence and conviction in the team. Hence planning was not for the distant utopia, but for the realistic future, under the current circumstances.

Principles that Build Foundation for the Future

The above perspective, although may seem like overbearing on the present, is not necessarily short-term focused. As Ackoff et al. (2001) note, the focus on "right now" is crucial as "we know that where we say today we would like to be 5 years from now is not where we will want to be when we get there. Things will happen between now and then that will affect our goals and objectives. By focusing on what we want right now, we can

eliminate that potential source of error" (p. 37). The consultant, through the various objective-setting deliberations, compressed the elapsed-time for the organization, where the team could have achieved desired objectives, and use this as the base for practical future planning by duly setting objectives by internalizing probably constraints and challenges. Hence, although the approach may seem present-focused, it was aptly used in the intervention to create a strong foundation for future projections.

Building a Learning Organization

A key message borrowed from the IP approach was to incorporate the learning character in the framework. It was understood by the team that there needs to be enough agility in the system so that it can respond to changing circumstances and emerging demands in the environment. This led the framework to include a set of critical success factors (CSF) against each objective that would be treated as dynamic inputs towards the achievement of the core objectives. As Ackoff et al. (2001) note, "the way of dealing with more contingencies than can be planned for separately is to design into the organization or institution enough flexibility and responsiveness so that it can change rapidly and effectively to meet whatever it encounters" (p. 54). Regular review of the CSFs would surface continuing or emerging constraints, which could be in turn used by the team in their planning and implementation. It was also important for UTSAH to learn as it operated, and with this in view, a Governance Framework was put in place that identified responsibilities and accountabilities of key members, including audit and reviews. Mechanisms were put in place that would assess impinging threats and periodically incorporate changes as demanded by the internal and external environment.

An Approach that is Participative, Deliberative and Accommodative in Design

The intervention was designed to be participative, deliberative and accommodative. A range of stakeholders was included in the exercise wherever possible. Apart from the core team members of UTSAH, volunteers and employees of the organization also played an active part in meetings, focus group discussions and thinking sessions. The Hafiznagar community was consulted in a proactive manner in order to understand their requirements and challenges. This was enabled through various participative working committee deliberations with different groups—women's, men's and children's groups—where broad-based discussions were held in order to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of development areas that finally impinge upon the wellbeing of children. Children were involved at the formative understanding and expectation setting phases, and through the "River Of Life" exercise, they were proactively engaged in the situation appreciation of the key target group.

An Outcome that is Holistic and Comprehensive

The outcome of creating an overall framework for child protection through community action was a key strength. The methodology called for a practical, participative and deliberative approach from the beginning that resulted in the emergence of key pillars in the framework—core objectives, guiding principles, enablers—founded on robust action points, execution tools and identified critical success factors. Whilst the core objectives brought in an intent and a focus, the guiding principles seeks ingraining a DNA for all

members of the organization. At the same time, the enablers help cultivate the conducive factors that can fuel the machinery to function and deliver results. Efficiency and effectiveness are brought about by the execution tools directed to reap the identified action points, contingent on the articulated critical success factors.

Thinking Sustainability

The element of sustainability is core to the operating model, brought to life by a defined 3-year partnership between UTSAH and the community, to be carried forward by capability building, awareness and systemic review mechanisms put in place post the 3 years engagement. Participatory Action Committees were designed as self-directed teams to sustain the desired change. Audit indices were put in place for external stakeholders to be reviewed based on their commitment to the community.

A systemic mindset supported the team to think success, not only in terms of efficiency, but also effectiveness. Whilst efficiency is about doing things right, effectiveness is about doing the right things.

In order to measure efficiency, specific targets were allocated for every action point and periodic performance measures across each action point was identified in terms of quantity, quality, cost and time.

The main thought driving effectiveness measure was to ensure that the program engagement make a difference to the life of the children living in the community. In order to ascertain effectiveness of the interventions, the Resilience model of Daniel and Wassell (2002) was relied on. Resilience is defined as "the capacity to transcend adversity—may be seen as a guiding principle when planning for young people whose lives have been disrupted by abuse and or neglect and who may require to be looked after away from home" (Gilligan 1997). The Resilience model itself is a comprehensive one covering the overall psychological and emotional development of the child by measuring a set of defined metrics through three evolving spheres—(1) the child, (2) family relationships, and (3) the wider community. However, considering relevance and practicality, only the Self-Esteem dimension was arrived on, as an indicative measure to ascertain effectiveness of the program. Self-Esteem is defined as an "internal sense of work and competence" in the resilience model (Daniel and Wassell 2002). Through a researched-backed set of questions, the self-esteem of the child is assessed before a partnership with a community commences, and when it draws to a close after 3 years. This model was introduced to ascertain effectiveness in the future programs of UTSAH.

The above indices to bring in efficiency and effectiveness into the framework can be seen as crucial factors to bring in sustainability for the system, during and beyond the 3-year program engagement.

Focus on Community Action

One of the strengths of the framework developed is that it is underpinned on community action. The community stands at the core of the model to ensure sustainability of impact through collaborative assessments and facilitation, even beyond the defined 3 years engagement—enabled by identified participative action committees. This facilitates greater buy-in and ownership of the initiatives undertaken.

Similar sentiments have also been noted by Jimenez (2009) with his experience of using Ackoff's approach in rural planning in Mexico. In his words, "Ackoff's model of participatory planning has proved to be very useful in applications in rural communities,

permitting not only community level input in design, but innovation, adaptation, and modification of the learning experience to permit further local control of resources" (Jimenez 2009: p. 415).

Complementarity in the Approach and in the Framework

Creative application of IP as an approach allowed complementarity both in the approach undertaken, and in the emergent framework itself. Reflecting on the approach, although it falls under the broader umbrella of interpretive thinking, the consultant introduced elements of structure, systematic evaluations and predictable processes in the intervention. This was reflected in continually leading the discussions to let the team come up with control variables in order to keep track of both efficiency and effectiveness in the system. On one hand, the nature of accommodation, stakeholder participation and articulation of guiding principles as fundamental pillars, reflected interpretive characteristics. Similarly on the other hand, introduction of specific objectives, setting targets, prioritization matrices in action planning, efficiency measures, effectiveness measures through numeric rating, and setting up of a Governance Framework to ensure adequate control points in the system, reflected functionalist characteristics in the system. As better articulated by Jackson (2000), "One of the undoubted strengths of Ackoff's approach is that he does not see systems-age thinking as simply replacing machine-age thinking. Rather, he sees them as complementary and allocates space for the solving and resolving approaches within his basically dissolving orientation to social systems science" Jackson (p. 243–244). The case under consideration aptly exemplifies this statement.

Jackson (2000) summarizes the overall strength of IP as "continuous, holistic and participative and has, at its most original element, the idea that the phases of the planning process should be centered on the design of an "idealized" future. It is a methodology that effectively realizes the insight of "plan or be planned for" by endorsing it in its philosophy and providing a set of practical procedures through which the philosophical message is empowered" (p. 243).

Weaknesses

Adopting a retrospective appreciation of the intervention, several areas of focus come to the surface. Some of these are discussed below.

Power Patterns in Communication

Although the systems approach strived to drive a spirit of inclusiveness and accommodation, there was certainly the aspect of power that significantly shaped the perspectives and worldviews of the stakeholders involved in communication through the various phases of the exercise. Power here emanated from the position of privilege that the organization team members occupied with respect to the members of the community, who were in every way "beneficiaries" of their work. Through various interactions with the adults, women and children in the Hafiznagar community, there was a consistent message that surfaced that indicated that the community residents were *indebted* to UTSAH for the contribution it made in their lives. When immersion exercises were held with select groups in the community, it was evident that the change that they had witnessed in the previous few years were so significant in their lives that they failed to project how else, without UTSAH, their

own lives and lives of their children could be any better. Having said that, they did have specific recommendations which they believed were important for them. However these recommendations surfaced as a result of significant exploration and prompts by the consultant in the discussions. Similarly, when the exercise of River Of Life was carried out with the children, they were initially quite passive about what they could contribute in the drawings. However the consultant had to continually narrate their own stories to them so that they could translate the same in their drawings. The danger in this approach could be that to a certain extent, the thought and expression of the community and the children were themselves influenced by the consultant and UTSAH team, who were facilitating the various exercises.

The relation between power and communication has been documented by various philosophers; notable amongst them are Arendt (1970) and Habermas (1996). Arendt (1970) talks about the emergence of power always in relation between people or systems of people. Power can never exist in isolation, but is always relative and emerges out of differences in position between two or more people or two or more groups. Hence, someone is always *more* powerful than someone else. In her words, "Power corresponds to the human ability not just to act but to act in concert. Power is never the property of an individual; it belongs to a group and remains in existence only so long as the group keeps together" (Arendt 1970: p. 44). In the case under consideration, it is UTSAH and the community that are in the relation of power with each other, where the former clearly occupies the privileged position. Referring to the work of Habermas, this position can be taken further in his theory of communicative action where he argues that power relations lead to the extent of the more powerful gaining their legitimacy from the less powerful where the latter eventually empowers the former to dictate codes and norms for the environment in general. This leads to a situation of the powerful occupying some kind of an administrative power to shape and influence social norms. In his words, it is like "the transformation of communicative power into administrative… [that] has the character of an empowerment within the framework of statutory authorization (Habermas 1996: p. 150). This was clearly reflected in the case under consideration where the community norms were articulated by UTSAH, which was legitimized by the Hafiznagar community itself by accepting the same.

Participation Incomplete

The notion of power play discussed above (in "Power patterns in communication" section) also leads to the second weakness of this intervention. Once the model was designed and completed, considering all inputs, it was shared with select UTSAH advisors for their views and inputs. Once this was taken into consideration and the model was finalized, it was not shared back with the Hafiznagar community. This is due to the belief that whatever was designed will benefit the community in any case and it will serve as a replication model for any other vulnerable community that UTSAH partners with. Reflecting on the theory of communicative action (Habermas 1984), this was again the legitimacy that was accorded to the organization as a result of consensus in the community with the norms of action as articulated by UTSAH. In a way, this model portrays itself as an administrative mechanism that will legitimately direct the ways of life in the communities partnered with. This situation, according to Habermas (1996) lends a kind of statutory authorization to the party in the position of power. In his words, "For the transformation of communicative power into administrative has the character of an empowerment within the framework of statutory authorization" (Habermas 1996: p. 150). This creation of the framework for

UTSAH itself can be seen according itself an empowerment and a statutory authorization through the fundamental communicative power that the team carried with it.

The above understanding can lead us to believe that the notion of participation was a false notion, and the range of deliberations held with the community members and children involved participation that was fore-designed by the privileged parties, and hence, incomplete!

Over-Emphasis on Present

Influenced by the concept of idealized design (Ackoff 2006), in retrospect, it is now realized that the consultant was influenced by a bias on the present. Ackoff's lauded statement—"Gentlemen, the telephone system of the United States was destroyed last night" (Ackoff 2006: p. xxxiii)—for setting the context for an idealized design exercise, proposes the involved team to visualize the situation *here and now* and then revolve the solutions around it, within the limits of technical feasibility and operational viability. Led by this thinking, the consultant facilitated the team deliberations adopting a style of space–time compression where the team was led to discuss what could have been achieved realistically in the elapsed time, if environmental constraints could have been overcome. However the consultant had limited leading discussions on future scenario planning and conventional dream strategies, which could have also led the team to come up with radically different ideas.

Resilience Model Fragmentation

As highlighted above (in "Thinking sustainability" section) the Resilience model was adopted to introduce the concept of effectiveness measure in the program delivery model. However there is only one element of the entire model—Self-Esteem—that has been borrowed to that end. The model has other aspects that work in tandem with one another in order to assess comprehensive aspects of the child psyche and child development; these include aspects of Secure-Base and Self-Efficacy, apart from Self-Esteem. Although the former two are addressed in various core objectives for the community development programs, the impact assessment model does not create any statistical linkage between the three aspects. Whilst efficiency assessment models have been put in place to measure various aspects around Secure-Base and Self-Efficacy, these do not align to the conventional application methodology of the Resilience model. The aspect of Self-Esteem has been completely segregated in its pure form for effectiveness measurement. This may, in a way, lead to diluting the robustness of the Resilience model itself.

General Observations on IP

The weaknesses highlighted above have in many ways been noted by prominent systems thinkers in different manners of representations. Notable amongst these are the so called "Revolutionary" thinkers who saw Ackoff's approach as one that would serve to create "instruments of domination" (Dando and Bennett 1981). This school of thought argues that under the veil of interpretivism, IP actually serves to create control systems of the organizational environment where its members are led to operate within a controlled directive environment. In the case under consideration, the critique in the context of power

and communicative action (in "Power patterns in communication", "Participation incomplete" sections), in many ways reflect the argument of the "Revolutionary" thinkers.

Carrying the argument forward, Chesterton et al. (1975) and Rosenhead (1976) argue that the IP approach directs to an overbearing emphasis on a consensus overview, evading deep seated conflicts that often poisons the underlying veins in relationships in the system. In the case under consideration, it is probable that due to the privileged position already accorded to the UTSAH team, differences from the perspective of the Hafiznagar community members had already been overshadowed under the veil of privileged consensus.

Conclusion

This paper presented a discussion on how IP was used as an approach to create a community-centric child protection framework and program delivery model for an NGO in India. The paper started with a brief background on child rights and child protection in India, leading to an introduction of the background of UTSAH. Following this, the emerging requirements in the context were discussed, followed by a deliberation on how IP emerged as a preferred approach for the intervention. A detailed discussion on the intervention followed. Finally, a critique of the approach, the intervention, and the framework itself was presented.

Emotionally it was an exciting opportunity for the consultant and the UTSAH team to participate in this exercise that involved conceptualizing a framework that could create conditions that facilitate equitable access for individuals to realize their right to life that has freedom, dignity and meaning—specially focusing on children as its core. To give shape to this thought, a community-centric child protection framework was created with core objectives, guiding principles and identified enablers. Leadership and execution responsibilities were clearly identified by constituting a Governance Framework. Stakeholder participation and involvement was facilitated, guided by the tenets of systems thinking. One of the key strengths of this framework stems from the fact that the community has been considered to be at the center of the implementation model with the belief that child protection and community action are inalienably interlinked—all this aligned to the overall vision and mission that was articulated in the very beginning of the intervention.

This was a learning exercise with IP being used for a purpose like this, for the first time in India. Feedback and views from informed readers will greatly benefit to further improving this framework and serve as inputs to the consultant for future interventions.

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