Domains and characterisation of social work

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The word domain here refers to the constellation of tasks that an organisation executes. An organisation works in a task environment. The latter comprises the broad community in which it exists, namely

(i)   The public it serves - customers or clients,

(ii)   the people who provide it with resources - investors in the case of a for-profit entity and donors or the state in the case of an NGO,

(iii)   the regulators of the specific domain -Directorate of Health for someone offering health services or Directorate of Education for those who work on pedagogy or improving learning outcomes, etc and

(iv)   competitors who provide similar services.

Naturally the word competitor drawn from the commercial world has no exact parallel in the social sector. However, there often are many organisations working for a similar cause in either very similar or different situations and in their own manner. They do demand resources from donors and the state and demand regulatory clearances. As the donors / state have limited resources, they need to allocate them judiciously; therefore there is an inevitable choice to be made between the multiple entities demanding the resources. When many NGOs compete for the same resources, possibly even in case of regulatory clearances or public outreach, the state may have to choose a few NGOs. When this task environment considers a focal NGO offering a particular service as normal, we may assume that there is a consensus on the domain in the task environment. Henceforth the word domain is used to represent that set of activities about which a consensus is reached.

In this chapter we look at domains in which the social workers profiled here are engaged. We characterise these domains on certain attributes. We then explore two dimensions from the case profiles in the context of these characterisations. The first pertains to the choice of a domain and the second to the difficulty and challenges in making significant progress in the chosen domain.

Characterisation - I

Sanitised domain

There is an overall agreement in society that it is important to reduce the prevalence of communicable and non-communicable diseases among the poor, besides catering to the nutrition needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating mothers and children. After all, if the NGO is effective, it only results in better overall performance of the district. Thus anyone working in this field has social and possibly official acceptance. Everyone agrees that the task that the NGO concerned is undertaking is genuinely a desirable, useful task. This agreement may not, and usually does not, translate automatically into any significant material support even from the official agencies. This may be due to their resource constraints. Or this may be due to their perception that providing such material support to NGOs will only strengthen the contrast between the quality and diligence of services provided by the NGO vis a vis the state agency concerned. There also are efforts to exercise stricter control on the way NGO service providers work than on equivalent state agents when the need for exercising controls arises. But in the main, providing health services is viewed as desirable and reflects well on the NGO. A similar positive outlook could prevail for NGOs that undertake promotion of better agriculture, landscape planning and development, installation of water harvesting structures, encouraging higher enrolment and longer retention in schools and so on. When the society and the state consider the tasks good and desirable, they passively encourage the NGO to carry out the same. There may be tacit or even explicit encouragement and at times grudging and halting sharing of resources. For easy reference, I will refer to this class as sanitised domains. The conventional term used for such work is constructive development initiatives.

Contested domain

On the other hand there are many domains of NGO work where the state or even the community is either in a denial mode or has not yet recognised the existence of the problem. For instance no district administrator formally agrees that there is prevalence of child labour or trafficking of children and women from his district. No state government admits that it has failed to control the rampant misuse of pre-natal sex determination that has led to worsening sex ratio. No one agrees about the reality of pathetic, near-slavery conditions for labourers in brick kilns or sweet shops. Prevalence of domestic violence, dowry related abuse of women and similar incidents are brushed under the carpet. State does not want to take cognisance of child sex abuse or ills like sheikh marriages. Atrocities on Dalits are not considered to be happening at all. Usurious money lending practices

leading to farmer suicides are vehemently denied. Death due to starvation is studiously denied.

There is a range of social ills that the state chooses not to acknowledge. When an NGO works to prevent such heinous acts, to fight the legitimacy that society accords them or to provide succour to the victims, it becomes a nuisance for the state officers and even to the rest of the society. The NGO is often identified as a troublemaker out to paint the society in black. Established and locally powerful people who could perhaps be connected with some of these acts feel exposed and threatened. Often in connivance with lower echelons of bureaucracy and police personnel, they institute measures aimed at controlling, compromising or eliminating the presence of the NGO.

The second and for the journalistic writing, far more interesting contestation occurs between a group of people with vested interests and a poor, hapless community seeking justice. This of course is a very obvious case of contestation. Not only in films or sensational media reports but often in reality too, vested interest groups manipulate all relevant agencies of the state to abort, weaken, defeat or kill anyone opposing their interests. The classical 'middle range theory' of Robert Merton finds its beautiful illustration in most such cases. The first step of the vested interest groups is to deny the existence of the problem. Thus, as Jameela discovered, orthodox Muslim clergy deny anything to be wrong with marrying off girl children who have just crossed puberty; parents are brainwashed into denying it as well. The second stage is to acknowledge the problem but dismiss the proposed solution as worse than the problem itself. The third is to agree that something needs to be done and to make cosmetic changes to temporarily satisfy the proponents of change. The fourth is to claim autonomy in determining texture and pace of change. Finally the vested interest group changes only to the extent forced, while trying to protect its core interests. Naturally, social workers who take up such works have to contest at each of these stages and the task is thus one long struggle.

For easy reference I call this class as contested domains. The conventional term for this category of work is transformative development initiative. I personally find the word 'transformative' a little pretentious. For me the core issue is not transformation attempted, but the fact that it generates contestation and confrontation. Hence I prefer the term contested domain.

One can easily contrast the approach of the state and the society in the above situations. While such a contrast is both intuitive and perhaps quite ubiquitous, its relevance to the main purpose of this book is not so clear. To me it appears clear that no social worker can remain forever in the contested domain. The second situation is far more poignant: the state strikes back at perpetual dissidents as several cases in the recent past have shown. This happens even if the cause for which the social worker is struggling is just and noble. Wrath of the state can be contrived by the bureaucracy or the elected politicians who have been coopted by those who feel threatened by the efforts of the social worker. This

transpires when an NGO works towards abolishing bonded labour or improving the pathetic state of brick kiln workers or against bauxite mining in Eastern Ghats – like the agenda of NGOs Agragamee and Samata - since both involve strong vested interests. In such situations the state machinery can conceivably be manipulated by these interests to oppress the movement and the social worker.

The wrath can also occur when the state tries to paint a picture of Ramrajya to the world, and the social worker harps upon the social ill s/he is trying to eliminate. Those working to alleviate the problems of Dalits oppressed by atrocities could be cited as an example. Or it could happen because what the social worker does puts road blocks in the development plans and projects of the state - as can be seen in projects that lead to displacement.

The fourth possibility is that either out of genuine ideological inclination or because of sheer convenience, the intended goal of the social worker can be touted as being against public interest. I am reminded of the old play *An Enemy of the People* by Henrik Ibsen. In the play, Ibsen narrates how a socially conscious citizen who knows the dangers of using the water of a lake for drinking, launches a movement to stop its use; for the same reason, the state declares him an enemy of the people. People working to reduce the influence of harmful superstitions perpetuated by fraudulent godmen or people who use provisions of RTI to raise voice against land grab by powerful politicians are often portrayed as enemies of the people (epithets such as godless and anti-national come quite handy)and at times physically eliminated.

Lest it appears that I paint those working on such agenda as superheroes who are better than others and thus indirectly create a sort of hierarchy in social work, let me add a few points. I am sure that it is not possible for social workers working even in sanitised domains to avoid confrontation with the state; besides the opprobrium and discomforts such confrontation brings. I am putting forth my understanding of the nature of interaction between social workers and their respective NGOs on the one hand and the state on the other. I do not doubt that a few handful exceptions can be found to the seemingly discouraging statements that follow; but these are so few in relation to the total scale of such interactions that it tends to prove the rule rather than challenge it.

People familiar with the work and ethos of social development in the country know that the state is a difficult and insecure partner. The administrative costs of the state are so large and most state governments are thoroughly bankrupt that they do not want to allocate funds for development work being executed by NGOs. At times external donors mandate involving NGOs as partners and allocating them funds. Even when such formal agreements exist, the state defaults on its commitment, delaying fund release that it becomes irrelevant. The state machinery is statist and stausquoist by nature. Absence of outcome measurement makes the state functionaries indifferent to results and blind adherents to procedures. The archaic administrative system permits the local district head to claim credit for anything good that happens in his district. Often external donors are taken to NGO sites to showcase

the achievements of state-run projects funded by them. The project may not even be the one the donor funded. Such instances are so many that one could write a book on them.

However, the bureaucracy knows the NGOs that execute works properly and those that do not. So an inevitable uneasy relationship develops between the state officers and an NGO that performs well. The state is the first to claim credit if things go right; but the state tells the officer concerned to learn from the NGO! Given the short tenure of officers, and their dedication being more personal than institutional, continuity in relations is a far cry. Often a successor considers it his solemn duty to undo and fault whatever his predecessor had done. If things do not go according to plan or when the community is against even formally approved state schemes, the state finds scapegoats in NGOs. Given these admittedly undocumented but well-known features, it is well-nigh impossible for any significant social worker to avoid confrontation with state officials and machinery. The way the state strikes back on NGOs working on sanitised domains is by delaying or even denying committed funding, finding fault in the utilisation of funds, accounts, compliances, particularly with the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA), publicly holding them responsible for some of the glaring policy failures, etc.

Civil society has become quite vocal and strong and the courts have started coming to the rescue of civil society workers unjustly oppressed by the state for the wrong reasons. However the fact is that the power of the state is both ubiquitous and substantial. Therefore confrontation with the state and associated discomforts and opprobrium are occupational hazards for social workers. This would be the case with even the outstanding social workers we have profiled. Hence it is interesting to explore their behaviour, experience and responses. What has been the preference while choosing the domain and its rationale as revealed by these profiles? How do they cope with these problems? What diverse strategies are possible and seen to be used in practice? How have these social workers coped with reality? I try to summarise my understanding of this facet in Table 1.

Confrontations with the state

It comes through prominently that a majority of these social workers has been engaged in sanitised domains. This reflects much more on the choice of the domain rather than on the situation of the social sector itself. I would have in fact been quite surprised had it been otherwise. After all most of my contacts in the field of social work - and those of my colleagues in Tata Trusts – are with people engaged in constructive social work. But it is also true that a fair number of people working in sanitised domains face confrontations.

For instance, Akeina's organisation was a pioneer in the field of starting SHGs in Nagaland and went through the usual struggles that SHGs have with banks. Nagaland being a 'problem' state from the point of recoveries, banks were even more reluctant and she had a tough time getting things off the ground. She has also been questioning the state in polite,

tactful manner to ensure that the right things get done without affecting egos. Their organisation has been questioning the inclusion of rubber plants in *jhum* plantations since they believe that it is not the right plant for their region. Anil Verma has received significant blessings and support from the state for promoting SRI jointly in Bihar; but his work on diversion-based irrigation work had some contestation with vested interests and even with elements of left wing extremism (LWE). And he continuously contests the reluctance of established scientific communities in accepting and legitimising the no-chemical-input agriculture that he advocates.

With his position as a member of the National Advisory Council under the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government and riding the crest of the farmer producer company movement in the state, Ashis has limited occasions to contest the state. But his work does involve adversarial exchanges with the state. Chingmak mobilised the community to press the state to deliver on its responsibility as a prime health service provider; but he also worked with them to mobilise money. He had to negotiate space and legitimacy for his work with the church, a very dominant entity in the region as also the underground, an ever present reality. So contestation was not wholly avoidable despite being in a sanitised domain.

Johnny and Yogesh are respected medical professionals in their respective states and their organisations have formidable reputation of service to the needy and the neglected. Yet, they have had to work hard to overcome established prejudices and change the views, policies and programmes of the state. In both the cases, the overpowering presence of LWE brings them into situations where their positions could get questioned. Johnny said that even under severe duress, he refuses to go into the jungle to treat people. This stand of his has made him acceptable to everyone. Madhukar seldom experienced a situation of open contestation with the state. Osama was indeed a first mover in the domain of his organisation; a domain that has been forward-looking and a sort of 'difficult to contest' domain.

The state appreciates Pramod's work in the field of child protection. But due to general beliefs and orthodoxies, he has to constantly defend his philosophy that reunification of an unaccompanied child with his / her family is the best solution. Rajesh Singhi's agenda of working with the women of socially backward but economically stable Meo community is in line with the state objectives and hence his efforts did not create contestation with the state. Of course the work involved persuasion of the community leaders. Suresh Kumar was focussed on the compassion component of their work so as to avoid contestation completely. He just had to work on the reluctance of the medical fraternity in recognising the role of community volunteers in palliative care. Neither Sarbani nor Vandana had to face opposition from the state in performing their work in the chosen domain of mental health related services. But they had the task of persuading the state in changing or introducing policies on the subject.

The contestations referred above tend to be somewhat less poignant about appropriate methods. These confrontations are slightly sharper forms of debates about the best way to address a problem e.g. tackle malaria, improve nutrition of children under three years of age, look after children without adult protection, and tackle distress arising out of recurrent floods. The subject matter experts of the state believe in some method while the field experience of the social workers indicate a different method. As is to be expected, the establishment tends to maintain status quo. Whether this insistence arises out of xenophobic fear of innovation or due to vested interests that would prefer status quo, the opposition can be strong. Social workers push for what they consider to be more effective. Hence a confrontation ensues, at times resulting in a little acrid interaction between the two sides.

Ashif, Sudhir, Jameela and Vivek to some extent, experienced serious contestations while working in contested domains. Ashif's work involves helping Dalits suffering from social discrimination and atrocities to get justice. He works in a deeply traditional, feudal society where a certain degree of legitimacy to oppression of Dalits pervades the society and the echelons of bureaucracy, often manned by members of privileged sections of the same society. This contestation took several forms including harassment, use of police cases to cow them down and so on.

During discussions with those working in contested domains, it was clear that coping with diverse mechanisms adopted by the establishment to make the social worker give up was a routine part of the profession. Sudhir told me how the state machinery and the local units of LWE picked on their colleague in the field. He works for the rights and wellbeing of poor rural workers who migrate across states. The state accused him of being supportive of LWE. The latter wanted his colleague to meet them. His wry comment was, "The situation is bad enough and if my colleague meets the LWE personnel, we will be finished, as then the police will really get after us."

Jameela has to deal with superstitious beliefs and strength of people exploiting impoverished parents of young girls. She has little confrontation with the government per se. But the strong men of the community exert a real and tangible force with which she must contend. These are the people whose photographs one sees in large banners put up by various political parties. They support one or the other political party and therefore have strong influence on the police. And her group has to work among them despite incidents that they would not like to see happening. Her tactic has been to evolve alignment with the more considerate and conscientious elements within the community and use their social presence to deal with the musclemen.

Table 1

Choice of domain, experience of confrontation with the state and ways of coping

Num ber	Social worker	Choice of domain	Experience of confrontation with the state or other actors	Method of coping
1	Akeina	Sanitised domain - livelihoods	Not narrated	Persuasion and tactful exchanges
2	Anil	Sanitised domain – SRI, livelihoods	Not narrated, 'contest' in the sense of demonstrating efficacy of SRI	Evidence-based argumentation on scientific principles
3	Ashif	Contested domain - atrocities and injustice to Dalits	Quite a normal feature of the work	Community mobilisation, use of media in highlighting issues
4	Ashis	Sanitised domain - PIM, FPC, responsible crops	Not narrated	
5	Chingmak	Sanitised - health services	Manages residual contestation by aligning with the state and the church	Using community mobilisation to press the state to deliver
6	Eklavya	Mixed: sanitised to the extent of services such as potable water or toilets but contested in terms of changing the overall response to floods	Contestation in terms of change of mindsets from flood as cause for relief to resilience	Community mobilisation and education
7	Jameela	Contested domain - working	Strongly contested domain, contestation	Avoidance of open conflict, alignment with

		with victims of sheikh marriages and other issues of oppressed women	more with orthodox members within the community	liberal and progressive members of the community, focusing on desirable aspects of absorption of modern education
8	Johnny	Sanitised domain - health services and education of tribal children	Contestation with regard to policy matters	Builds strong goodwill with health department
9	Madhukar	Sanitised domain - multiple activities of livelihoods	No contestation	
10	Mamoon	Sanitised domain - education	No contestation	
11	Nimesh	Not applicable as Nimesh is essentially a donor and a facilitator of chosen partners. The domains are chosen by partners.		
12	Osama	Sanitised domain - digital empowerment	No contestation	
13	Pramod	Mixed terrain but sanitised domain - uniting unaccompanied children with their families	Contestation mostly with other established voices in the same field, not with the state.	Low key and persistent action
14	Prithibhusan	Mixed: sanitised domain in education and	Contestation experienced in curbing corruption in	Coping by strong links with community, acting as a sane force in a

		livelihoods but contested in child trafficking	flood relief and in checking child trafficking	turbulent ethos using media
15	Rajesh	Sanitised domain - microcredit, education	No contestation, working with persuasion	
16	Sarat	Sanitised domain - microcredit, livelihoods	No contestation	
17	Sarbani	Sanitised domain - mental health services to homeless	No contestation, positive interaction	
18	Sudhir	Contested domain - rights of brick kiln workers	Faces tough challenges including allegation of links with LWE	Ensuring that their own workers stay strictly within the bounds of law and persistent and peaceful action using extant laws
19	Suresh	Sanitised domain - compassion to terminally ill	No contestation	
20	Vandana	Sanitised domain - mental health	No contestation	
21	Vivek	Mixed: services to fishermen and uniting them against market forces	Some contestation with the then established trade though not with the state	Manages contestation through workers' union or political activism
22	Yogesh	Largely sanitised domain but strands of contestation on matters in health policy	Contestation regarding methods of work and goals of policy.	Manages by using proven performance and wide acclaim to persuade policy makers

Characterisation-II

The domain of any social worker and his NGO can be characterised by two other dimensions: level of intended beneficiary and the nature of engagement of the social worker in the domain. The level of intended beneficiaries can be an individual, a household, a village community, the whole society or perhaps future generations. A curative health service provider cures an individual. The work of a livelihoods promoter benefits a household. An educationist improving a school helps the whole community whose children study in the school. A social worker trying to change the state policy on, say persons with disability, has the potential to impact the entire society. Finally efforts of environmentalists trying to conserve flora and fauna and create a sustainable ecological environment benefit future generations or more immediately long-term future of current generations.

The second dimension is the nature of engagement. The engagement could involve for instance, just one time provision of something that is needed: we give uniforms to school children or loan to a family to meet medical costs, etc. The engagement could involve regular, periodic supply of material inputs such as food, medicine, seeds, etc. The engagement could involve teaching or building skills of individuals. The engagement could involve tutoring and mentoring a group of people and motivating them to be assertive in their interactions with employers, local governments or state administration. The engagement could involve collaborating with multiple agencies to make a complex set of developments in the village come through. Or an engagement could be of multiple facets, involving each of these and some more.

Table 2

combines these two dimensions and suggests that readers create a characterisation of the organisation. Current entries in the cells are purely illustrative.

Table 2
Characterising domains of social work

Nature of engagement	Level of primary intended beneficiary					
	An individual	A household	Village community	Broader society	Entire nation	Future generations
One time supply of inputs	A loan to pay fees		Installation of water tank			
Periodic supply of material or other inputs	Mid-day meal for children	THR for infants and lactating mothers				
Teaching, training, skill building	Literacy					
Mentoring, capacity building, hand-holding			Creating empowered gram sabha			
Impacting power relationship between stakeholders				Changing gender roles; rights based work with brick kiln workers		
Collaborating with the state			Creating irrigation facility			
Making investments in infrastructure		House construction	Creating raised platforms in flood-prone areas	River embankments	New cancer treatment facilities	
Changing broad resource use						Landscape planning

One can see that when these two dimensions, namely, level of intended beneficiary and the nature of engagement are seen together, we can assess the hurdles the social workers face, ease or difficulty s/he encounters in making the work durable and sustainable, his /her ability to scale it and replicate it in multiple places and so on. We encourage readers to situate the work of the profiled social workers in this framework and to understand why they make some choices, and what those choices mean to them in executing and growing the work.

Akeina is engaged in multiple livelihood projects. The projects involve community organisation, landscape treatment, improvement of crops, etc. Her organisation thus has a household as its primary beneficiary in all its livelihoods programmes. But landscape programmes that improve availability of water, fodder, etc benefit the entire village or community. The engagement involves multiple tasks: supply of materials, mentoring and teaching new skills, building capacities in managing community assets, etc. This involves a degree of collaboration with agencies like NABARD and the state.

Anil Verma has been promoting system of root intensification (SRI), particularly with extremely poor small holder farmers. Thus the level of intended beneficiary in the main is a household. The task involves building capacities of farmers, for undertaking appropriate agricultural operations for growing crops in the SRI mode. Anil had also undertaken construction of a few diversion-based irrigation projects. He collaborates extensively with the state government, with agricultural research organisations, etc.

Ashis works primarily in improving agronomy of chosen crops such as cotton, pulses, and soybean. The farm household is the intended beneficiary. Their projects on management of irrigation canals, construction of check dams and the like benefit the local community by improving availability of water. In addition, these projects contribute to the livelihoods of participating households. The engagement involves building farmer producer companies (FPC), supply of seeds through them, building skills for responsible cropping (which limits the use of chemicals to as little an extent as possible), procurement of produce from farmers, marketing the produce, etc. Their work involves a substantial and ongoing collaborative engagement with many agencies.

Ashif works primarily with Dalit communities involved in conservancy work. The level of intended beneficiary is sometimes an individual (in cases of redressing atrocities and discrimination), but more frequently households. The engagement primarily requires working with a relatively hostile establishment that has its own agenda and policies. Work involves mentoring communities to stand for their rights, as well as collaborating with state agencies.

Chingmak works with dispersed communities in sparsely populated remote areas of Nagaland, providing them with healthcare services and livelihood support. The intended primary beneficiary is either an individual or a household. There is a degree of collaboration involved in engaging with the government's health department.

Primary intended beneficiaries of Eklavya's work are households that suffer displacement, loss of property and insecurity due to floods. Since floods hit thousands of households at the same time, one may argue that the primary intended beneficiaries are members of communities living in flood-prone regions. The work involves mobilising and mentoring these communities for collective flood mitigation efforts, collaborating with state agencies and to some extent supply of inputs and training of people.

The primary intended beneficiaries of Jameela's work are individual women who fall victim to various forms of abuse such as sheikh marriages and domestic violence. By consistently working towards alleviation of their distress and by creating a climate of opinion that is more friendly towards young women, she also contributes to the well-being of a large community of women. Her activities include supporting, and providing shelter, training and skill building to women affected by one of these scourges. Her work involves a degree of collaboration with state agencies.

The primary intended beneficiaries of Johnny Oommen's work are the communities in the chosen 53 villages where the organisation has its outreach programmes. However, through his larger engagement, his work has benefited a large number of people living in malaria-prone terrains of Odisha. His activities include patient care, prescribing medication, training and mentoring, besides capacity building and collaboration with multiple agencies.

Primary intended beneficiaries of Madhukar's work - mostly connected with enhancement of livelihoods - are participating households. His previous work of providing shelter and education to wards of sex workers was intended to benefit individuals. Some of the landscape work as well as restoration of ponds benefited village communities. The works involved supply of key inputs, skill building, mentoring as well as collaborating with diverse state agencies.

The primary intended beneficiaries of Mamoon's work are individual children who study in his school. The activity involves provision of usual inputs at school, organising teachers and helping students with their education.

Osama has facilitated organisations adopt IT to their needs and enabled organisations to do better marketing. The beneficiaries are thus agencies who in turn benefit households and communities. His work involves providing technology, training, mentoring and connecting.

The primary intended beneficiaries of Pramod's work of uniting unaccompanied children found on railway stations are the children so identified. As his strategy comprises re-uniting them with the families, the families too can be classified as beneficiaries. His activities

include identifying children, providing them shelter and food during transit, locating their parents, undertaking necessary legal processes and re-uniting them with their parents.

Prithibhusan Deka has several lines of activities and the intended beneficiaries are individuals, households and village communities. His work involves provision of inputs during flood rescue and relief, training, building skills, and collaborating with state agencies.

The primary intended beneficiaries of Rajesh Singhi's work are women belonging to the socially backward communities in Mewat. His livelihood support activities help their households. His work involves provision of inputs, materials, training, mentoring, capacity building to the villagers, besides collaborating with state agencies.

The primary intended beneficiaries of the work of Sarbani Das and of Vandana Gopikumar are the distressed and poor homeless persons affected by mental illness. Both provide mental healthcare including medicines, patient care and shelter where warranted. They also collaborate extensively with the state health systems, police and other agencies.

The intended beneficiaries of Sarat's work are households. His landscape work benefits a wider set of people in the village communities. His microcredit operations and livelihoods promotions include provision of credit, provision of inputs such as cocoons for making silk yarn, and linking producers to markets. This does involve collaboration with many agencies including state livelihoods mission and banks.

The intended beneficiaries of Sudhir's work are families of brick kiln workers, labouring under precarious conditions and low wages. His activities involve organising, mentoring, training and supporting diverse forms of action of these workers vis a vis the kiln owners. He needs to collaborate as well as engage with the state machinery.

The intended beneficiaries of Suresh's work are the terminally ill patients needing palliative care. His work includes training of volunteers willing to provide palliative care, as well as providing medicines to patients.

Intended beneficiaries of Vivek's two or three lines of activities include fisherfolk households. His methods include providing inputs such as outboard motors for small mechanised fishing boats, providing credit, besides conducting organised fish auctions and trade.

Yogesh runs a huge, renowned hospital where the intended beneficiaries are poor patients coming from remote villages in the Achanakmar Wildlife Sanctuary in Chhattisgarh and beyond. His work comprises caregiving, providing of inputs, coaching, training and capacity building of community health workers and collaborating with state health agencies.

One can see from the above that a majority of the social workers profiled here chose to work at individual or household levels. Several points about this are noteworthy. In the first place, this tendency to work with individuals and households - palpable collection of warm humans rather than more abstract collectives so to speak, is perfectly natural if the social

workers are driven by compassion. Thus this is the most natural choice of work for what we term as sanitised domains.

Secondly, the reach and capacity of the social workers are limited in their initial stage. Naturally they start small, with individuals and with households. Thirdly, unless they have something concrete to show for their outputs, the broader society and larger aggregates are unlikely to place much credence in them. So to build credibility, they have to work on the ground, at the grassroots, with touch-and-feel individuals and households. Close perusal of the profiles reveals that the work grows bigger in sweep and starts impacting broader society over time. I suggest that this happens because of two or three concomitant factors. The first is sort of emulative. Other start-up social workers tend to learn from and emulate the work of the focal worker; also communities flock to them, make demands on them and also learn and adapt behaviours preached by them. As their reputation spreads, state officers and experts in the field visit them and often invite them as advisers. There is a mutual influence. This starts their wider role as policy influencers. In my observation, most effective policy influencers are those who have demonstrated concrete work on the ground. Their bona fides and credibility have not only been proven through their work, the impact of their work are fungible and can be applied to related fields. On the other hand, those who attempt to influence national policy without own proven base, tend to sound hollow and as self-serving mendicants.

It is possible to argue that most work at individual and household level involving provision of material and ideational input and capacity building will be in the sanitised domain as I have defined above. (This of course need not be the case: to cite a hypothetical extreme, a radical outfit provides ideological brainwashing and weapons to individuals and surely not in a sanitised mode!) I encourage the readers to evolve combinations of these three attributes: whether the work is in a sanitised or contested domain, the level of intended primary beneficiary and the nature of engagement. This may be done not only as an academic exercise but also to relate it to the personal attributes and life trajectories of the social workers profiled here or encountered elsewhere.