



## **Reflection on Action Document**

### **Engaging with Human Right Defenders on Ethics and Responsibility**

Rights & Responsibility Collective

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The Rights & Responsibility Collective formed in 2010 in India, affirms that the Rights and Responsibilities are integral to each other and therefore rights need to be balanced by an equal emphasis on responsibilities as the latter is the subjective dimension of human rights. It also believes in strengthening of Human Responsibility as a ‘third pillar’ to supplement the United Nations Charter for Peace & Development and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in the United Nations.

The Collective realizes that a fundamental characteristic which human beings have in common, is a sense of responsibility which is expressed in our everyday discourses; whether in families or in societies the word ‘responsibility’ comes out spontaneously than rights with the expressions like ‘why did you fail in your responsibility, you should be responsible, you should take responsibility, behave responsibly, I have responsibility etc. It is a willingness to take care of what is valued and is embedded in our ethical and moral systems and cultural traditions, which defines human relationship and behavioral patterns.

Responsibility is not an abstract concept. It is identifiable because it is concretely grounded in our relationship with each other, which means taking responsibility for something / someone / others. It is the ability of human beings to respond to challenges posed by themselves, their social and their natural environment. The concept of responsibility is a uniting idea not only transcending the citizenship of any country or membership of any nation but as the foundational basis of every human intercourse.

The Rights and Responsibility Collective has been continuously engaged in focusing on healthy dialogue and creative interaction with human right defenders. In the process of dialoguing with them

we have come across certain misconceptions and misunderstandings and certain questionings from them with regards to the principle of Human Responsibility. Our effort as a Collective is to clarify these misconceptions, political, ideological and cultural differences by highlighting the complementarity of the principles of rights with responsibilities and also to identify the areas of convergence for joint initiatives to create cultures of responsibility and co responsibility.

The Rights and Responsibility Collective and its associates through various activities created space for interactive dialogues to build Cultures of Responsibility. This proved to be a very positive experience and the lessons learnt helped immensely to develop conceptual understanding on the principle of Responsibility and Co -Responsibility. Many of the participants in the various dialogues affirmed the need for a continuous dialogue with human rights defenders to strengthen the need for evolving convergence around the principle of Human Responsibility as integral and complimentary to Human Right activism.

Though we encountered some amount of criticism and apprehension from the Human Right defenders in the initial phase of the dialogues yet after having several rounds of dialogues there is now an increasing willingness from the side of human right activists/defenders to work towards the idea of the *Universal Declaration of Human Responsibilities* as third pillar (The other two pillars are The UN Charter & the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in the UN).

#### **Objectives:**

Amongst the objectives of the Ethics & Responsibility program have been the deepening the understanding of the principle of responsibility and promoting cultures of responsibility in all spheres of life, recognition not only by states but also by citizens & major powers of influence at political, economic, social & cultural levels. This means creating deeper awareness that inspires the idea of an international effort that leads to renewed reflection in communities, civil society, different sectors of the economy and academy, as well as state, national and international governments and agencies on the relevance of individual and collective responsibility for the future of humankind and the planet has to be encouraged. Such a process will contribute to the emergence of **Cultures of Responsibility & Co-Responsibility** and serve as a catalyst for creating awareness of the need for an internationally recognised reference text, **Universal Declaration of Human Responsibilities** and of monitoring such a text once it has come about.

With this perspective in mind, Human Rights & Responsibility Collective undertook the following programs during 2010 -2012 with **multi pronged approach:**

- Identification of Human Right Activists, & people from different Inter socio professional groups to be an interface between human right activists & academic & professional communities to create &

develop a culture of responsibility in a world overwhelmed by unethical and irresponsible behavior & attitudes, irresponsibility within governments, business, education, the media, the arts, academe, and other sectors.

- Inter-socio professional dialogues on Ethics, Rights & Responsibilities with a focus on specific social & cultural issues for internalizing the principle of responsibility in the human rights domain and developing people's / professional charters for effective policies at the national & regional levels
- Inter socio professional dialogues on Ethics, Rights, Responsibilities to develop reflection on Action document

**Methodological principles & Methodology followed for realizing the objectives:**

- Building contacts with different actors both state & non state.
- Formation of core team- Rights & Responsibilities Collective
- Organize different brain storming sessions to develop conceptual framework for the various programs undertaken by the team.
- Survey and questionnaire use for understanding popular perception on rights and responsibilities.
- The workshops, seminars & networking were major activities through which discourses on creating cultures of responsibility at a larger domain especially focused on different regions of India. Through these activities the team was able to collect large body of information on views, problems, dilemmas, & awareness generation.

The reflection on action document is divided into two parts:

Part I: Interaction with Human Right Defenders and Socio -Professional Groups through dialogues, workshops and seminars

PART II: Analysis of the findings of the Questionnaires

**Part I: Interactions with Human Right Defenders and Socio-Professional Groups through dialogues, workshops and seminars**

The Rights & Responsibility Collective brings together body of theoretical and practical experiences on issues related to violation of human rights such as protection of ecological rights, gender and child rights, against unjust nuclearization, displacement, protection of livelihoods and food rights, discrimination against Dalits, sexual and religious minorities, professional Ethics etc.

The workshops, seminars organized in different regions of India and through networking and informal discussions with special interest groups like youth, children, women, state actors and other professionals were major activities. Through these activities the team was able to collect large body of information on views, problems, dilemmas, and experiences of positive actions from the grassroots, professions etc.

The composition of the participants who were drawn from different ideologies, diverse religious traditions, different social & academic backgrounds, state actors such as bureaucrats, concerned government officials, feminists & human Right defenders/ activists from different regions of India, who continuous to be a valuable asset as human resources for the 'Reflection and Action'.

Some of the dominant views emerged from the various seminars and workshops were to deepen the awareness of the need for linking local, national and international efforts and experiences with issues related to rights and responsibilities.

Some of the participants felt the need for renewed reflection in communities, civil society, different sectors of the economy and academia, as well as state, national and international governments and agencies on the relevance of interdependence, individual and collective responsibility for the future of humankind and the planet to be protected and preserved. Such a process will contribute to the emergence of cultures of responsibility and serve as a catalyst for creating awareness of the need for an internationally recognised Reference Text – '*Universal Declaration of Human Responsibilities*' and of propagating such a text in the public domain.

**Issues and concerns, problems, dilemmas and convergence emerged from different interactions with human rights defenders and professional groups:**

The need for defining and contextualising the principle of responsibility in the Asian context was the focus of the "**Dialogue Meet on Contextualizing principles of Charter of Human Responsibilities in the south Asian socio political context with special focus on India**". The theme was discussed from diverse perspectives. It was emphasized at the seminar that in order to build a culture of responsibility one need to relook at the Gandhian approach as Gandhi himself pointed out that *the concept of Rights ought to be balanced by an equal emphasis on responsibilities*. However the limitation is that in the international system no such universally agreed document exists that specifies the nature of human responsibilities and their role in promoting and creating harmony, respect for dignity and cultures and for nature, for promoting peace and for giving humans a sense of their place in a larger and mutually supporting nature and ecological resources, social, economic and political dimensions.

Intervening in the discussions some of the participants pointed out that institutionalizing the culture of responsibility are a major challenge and task before all of us. This requires a truly functioning

democratic framework with the popular participation of citizens to challenge the irresponsible behavior of the governments and anti -people establishments. It was also pointed out that in many of the Asian countries even the media and judicial institutions are not autonomous or free. To make citizens responsible, it requires to cultivate new discourses to understand the inter relationship between rights and responsibilities. It happens that abdication of individual responsibilities that lead to the violation of human rights because it is intrinsic in the nature of responsibility that the responsible individuals respect and honour the rights of others.

The key points that have emerged often during the deliberations were that while exercising responsibility at the personal level one encounters various dilemmas such as one's location in caste, class, religion and gender which often inhibits taking position in initiating responsible action. Among the examples that were narrated, there were the incidents of communal riots in India where polarization on religious lines that is '*we and they*' are clearly manifest itself by taking sides on the basis of loyalty rather than on the basis of responsibility. In South Asian societies community belonging or group identities and loyalties become more obligatory than individual choices of taking responsible action.

Religion, whether acknowledged or otherwise, remains a constant backdrop for everyday experience and consciousness for the most of the people in Asian societies. It still continues to be a dominant organizing principle of social life, giving it unity and coherence. The axiomatic roots of our meaning systems spring from, and are nurtured by a certain religiosity. And religion, whether it is confined within 'civil society' or extends to and influences 'polity', remains the major force that shapes the dominant ethos and thereby also ecological life of the people.

It is quite paradoxical that foundation message of all religions is one of love, peace, equality, non violence and wellbeing amongst the people; however in the last few decades have seen the rise of communal politics defined as the political construction of religious identities along the religious lines and the mobilization of religious sentiments and consciousness for partisan political ends. Socially engineered prejudice, tension and conflict between religions have led to an unprecedented brutality and insecurity among communities.

Religions have a major role to play in the recovery of original values such as love, peace, justice, co-responsibility and human togetherness in Asian societies and in the world at large. The participants have stressed on the need for inter faith/religious dialogues in Asian context to explore how major religions can support in responding to the unprecedented multiple crises and how religions can respond to human aspirations for justice, peace and social harmony and facilitate in building cultures of co-responsibility towards peaceful negotiations in the violence dominated world.

The participants also pointed out that social context, family and caste relations come in the way of defining one's ability to assume responsibility to chose between what is right and wrong. Unlike

'Human Rights', which are codified and ratified by inter Governmental Organizations, Responsibility code is not systematized and developed. On the other hand responsibility principle is not defined though it is embedded and arises from the ethical and moral sphere. This calls for a deeper search for a new paradigm where responsibility becomes a central point to build a moral and political framework challenging the individualism and self centeredness -individual and collective.

Another important area of concern expressed was the responsibility versus authority and power. It was elaborated further that any power relationship which does not recognize importance of responsibilities is authoritarian and denies opportunities for others to exercise freedom with responsibility.

Based on this analysis the participants focused on the issues of power relations from gender perspective.

The patriarchal structure denies spaces for women not only to exercise rights but also to take responsibilities for making decisions within and outside the family. This means overcoming patriarchy and protecting women's dignity and rights is everyone's responsibility. This also means men also take more responsibility in sharing household work, looking after children and creating favorable social conditions and spaces for women to be free from coercive duties and obligations. The responsible behaviour in this context for both men and women is transforming the patriarchal system that very often enslaves women.

#### **Dialogues with Inter Socio- professional groups:**

Dialogues among Socio- professional groups stress the need for developing code of professional ethics and 'Charter of Responsibility' to guide their professional practices with human right perspective. It was pointed out that while both morality and ethics has something to do with human wellbeing, which defines what is right and wrong in relation to self and the other. Thus the ethics of human responsibility is not simply the code of human conduct and relationship in professional ethics but an urge to do good and be good to others which ultimately fulfils itself in love and compassion. Ethics works in a multi dimensional field at intersection of four themes such as law, morality, self and society. All these at the same time are challenged by a continued transformation of self and the other.

Responsibilities and relationships are aligned in such a way that responsibilities act as a fulcrum of balancing resources and their use in the modern capitalist consumerist society, particularly in the context of the corporate agenda of hurrying to usurp the resources which destroys human being's relationship with nature. In this context responsibility of protecting nature plays a vital role in correcting the corporate agenda for building ecological and social capital in the society by evolving the principle of corporate social responsibility and code of conduct.

## **Health & Education:**

The problems and dilemmas which different professionals have to face while exercising their professions came up for discussion. For example in the modern medical profession, the direct relation between doctor and patient are limited unlike in the past due to the advancement of technology which replaces direct approach to the patient. In this context, exercise of professional ethics need to be redefined in order to make doctor –patient relationship more accountable. Second area is commercialization and privatization of health care institutions where profit becomes sole motive and professionals are forced to maximize profit while denying the right to medical care.

The professionals from the educational institutions subjected themselves to self criticism and critical review of the educational institutions. Commercialization of education forces the teachers to mould the students to meet the requirements of the market economy. In this system the emphasis is on the information rather than self development. Through this process the values of morality and ethics and basic human values of caring and sharing are undermined. The commercialized legal profession is becoming increasingly difficult for the poor people to access the legal redressal mechanism for getting legal remedies. Many of the participants expressed that the civil servants / bureaucrats delaying decision making and implementation of various welfare programs are really affecting the poor in realizing their just entitlement rights.

## **Engaging with Bureaucrats:**

There was also sharp criticism of the prevailing bureaucratic culture. The sheer size and power which the civil services wield, allows them to be unresponsive to both the citizens and elected representatives as they are very much alienated from the everyday situations of the common people. The life time tenure system allows them to perceive themselves as permanent and indispensable. In fact, countless surveys have documented the unresponsiveness of civil servants towards the citizens. Top down governance model allows them to largely ignore citizen's rights to public services.

Bureaucracy given its position in representative governments and power that it wields, has the potential to manipulate the elected representatives and therefore influence policies for the benefit of the few. This power when it is absolutized becomes dictatorial and unresponsive to the needs of the people. It is only the individual sense of responsibility that may caution the civil servant from transgressing the limits of his power and uses his discretion to bestow favours and ally with private sector elements for mutual benefit. Bureaucracy is seen an anti democratic by many. If bureaucracy is seen as anti democratic, then how do we reconcile and legitimize it with democratic institutions?

The bureaucrats expressed the dilemmas that who though want to be honest in the exercise of their duties but very often they are unable to do so because of the pressure from the political masters. When they

want to follow their conscience and refused to follow the orders of political masters they either get transferred to remote places or demoted.

The changing regimes follow different approach to governance which creates state of instability. They also pointed out that the existing system of governance is based on the patronage system and the political bosses decide who should get what. It was also pointed that administrative responsibilities and ethics should go hand in hand and only then the good governance and the welfare provisioning by the bureaucracy would be meaningful. To guide this process '**Charter of Administrative Ethics & Responsibilities**' was finalized.

### **Engaging with Environmental Activists:**

Environment is the one area around which a large number of people are now mobilizing and which transcends national/religious/ ethnic etc boundaries. Dialogue with environmentalists and those who were concerned with ecological issues has brought insights to the need for recognition of cultures of responsibility practising in our communities. The highlighting was on re-definition of the concept of sustainability as a holistic concept, and not one merely restricted to the supposedly "sustainable" exploitation of nature for human benefit, the necessity of moving beyond anthropocentrism and in particular the purely human-centered approach embodied in most human rights discourses. The promotion of the notion of Eco-Justice should be based on the 'wholeness of life' beyond the fragmentation imposed by contemporary society, media and academic disciplines. While this implies the recognition of limits to human consumption and impact on the globe, it is important to promote the idea that limits does not imply a loss of the richness of life, but rather the rediscovery of alternative lifestyles more in harmony with nature and imposing less stress on the planet and its bio-systems. This new paradigm has rooted in our civilizational past and this world view lived by various communities before the onslaught of the modernity.

It is generally felt that there are several inspiring elements in the world view of the indigenous people such as the sense of wholeness in them. The indigenous people have without defining lived a culture of responsibility in protecting the wholeness of creation. To them nature was not a sum of objects to be used or manipulated. Nature was always seen as the extension of their being and was a source of life. Since in the modernist world view science has fragmented human consciousness and compartmentalized world into disparate sections it is difficult to grasp the sense of wholeness of the indigenous communities.

The uniqueness of some of the dialogue meetings was that several interesting questions were raised to clarify and define the notion of responsibility. Although all were aware about the human rights unfortunately many of the participants were new to the notion of responsibility. The participants were very eager to understand the interrelationship between human responsibility and human right issues.



The elaborate discussions, which culminated in a view that major professionals like social workers, doctors, nurses, lawyers, engineers, sociologists, anthropologists, scientists, researchers and areas like human rights, environment, religion, business etc require greater shared responsibilities. Therefore teams should be formed among the professionals and experts in the area to articulate a model 'Charter of Human Responsibilities'. Consequently, there could be an inter-professional dialogue that could set the tone for principle that are common and should be part of the general Charter of Human Responsibilities. It was also suggested that each professional and social group should have separate charter principles to guide and evaluate their actions.

### **Networking & concrete outcome**

#### **Child Rights & Citizen's Responsibility:**

The protection of children and their right to dignified childhood is an integral part of Rights and Responsibility Collective. The Collective constantly interact with child rights groups to protect, promote and preserve the best interest of the children and create a society that is child friendly. Also to cultivate and promote a culture of responsibility to improve the life of children, protect their rights & freedom: and that all children deserve respect and special care and protection to develop and grow. Issues concerned to the discharge of responsibilities by the stakeholders are the perspective that guides the Collective interaction with child right activists. The interaction is based on our analysis that child abuse is a cause of serious concern in South Asian society. Children form the majority of the population in South Asia. They have positive inalienable rights to a home, to care and protection from a family, a decent standard of living, right to education, right to wholesome nutrition and good health. They have a right to protection under the state laws and equal opportunities in all walks of life.

However the South Asian reality is that there is often inhuman heinous behaviour towards the innocent child. What is the role of parents and civil society in the protection of child's dignity? What is the role of professionals such as doctors, lawyers, judges, police, policy makers, educationists, religious leaders towards children? What are the responsibilities of educational and other formative institutions towards children? What are the responsibilities of the state towards upholding the rights of child and how well are these responsibilities fulfilled through day to day functioning of government departments and long term welfare schemes? Why do the concerned institutions fail in their duties? The shared responsibility of protection of children and prevention of child abuse lies equally with parents, families, communities, educational institutions, judiciary, doctors, state officials, religious leaders and civil society. Although awareness is being created, yet exploitation and abuse of children still persists, disguised in different forms.

Based on this above questioning Collective took up a campaign to make every citizen has responsibility to protect, care and nurture every child that comes into being.

The issues identified for the campaign were child labour, sexual slavery, sale & trafficking of children, use of children in drug trafficking, the physical, sexual, psychological abuse of children; within families like incest, discrimination against children with HIV/AIDS, differently abled, forced displacement of children with and without their families in violent social or in armed conflicts, and it is also the prevalent practice in many south Asian countries children are used as combatants in dangerous conflict zones.

The campaign on child rights has brought together a large number of social activists, NGO networks and professionals came together to share their experiences and developed a '**Citizen's Charter of Responsibilities towards Children**' as a guide for initiating responsible actions to protect the wellbeing of the children. Over all there has been a strong view emerged that 'responsibility' is not just an abstract concept but implies responsibility towards all sections of disadvantaged groups and such is an active term not simply a descriptive one.

### **A preliminary version -Universal Charter of Human Responsibilities**

Another effort made by the Collective was to bring out the 'Universal Charter of Human Responsibilities'. A drafting group of socio –professionals, who have been actively involved in the process, has developed a preliminary version of Universal **Charter of Human Responsibilities**. It aims at building cultures of responsibility and co-responsibility by generating widespread discussions and awareness about imperatives of internalizing the concept and practices of responsibility in order to foster healthy relationships among human beings, among societies and between humankind and eco systems to constitute new 'Sustainable World Order'. This Universal Charter made some impact among the public and continuous to be a point for discussions and used as awareness campaign building material.

From the various interactions the Collective was able to learn important lessons. These lessons provide basis for redefining the future activities of Rights and Responsibility Collective. Some of the questions raised in the various dialogue meetings need to be reflected deeply to build a universal consensus. Some of the important questions are listed below:

- How to define responsibility principles under divergent socio political and ecological context especially in a pluralistic society with divergent faiths, religious practices, ethical norms and moral principles and to arrive at point of convergence?
- What is the distinction between Responsibility principle and duty? In Indian and South Asian context principle of duty overlaps with the responsibility. Responsibility is more of an individual choice and on the other hand duty is a community obligation which is integral to the social ethical cord prevailing in the communities.

- Responsibility principle is more context related whether it could be theoretically constructed as a universal principle with a common definition?
- How do we define the inter relationship between rights and responsibilities? The question was raised in the context of the human right activism of today which works independently of human responsibility principle. The participants felt the urgent need for integration.

Further probing into some of these questions, could provide clarity and purpose in building universal acceptance on the need for ‘Human Responsibility and Co-responsibility ’ as an ethical prerequisite for ensuring the dignity of life.

To ensure this process the Collective felt that some of these questions were very basic to understand the multiple dimensions of the challenge raised during the interactions with human right defenders and hence need further probing and require more data and analysis on people’s perception on responsibilities to develop a theoretical coherence for a deeper understanding and clarity on the question of ‘Responsibility’. This has led to developing a methodology of eliciting information through questionnaire.

## **PART II: Analysis of the findings of the Questionnaires**

As an effort to clarify misconceptions- political, ideological and cultural differences and to help formulate practical steps to implement a future Charter of Human Responsibilities, a questionnaire was prepared to elicit the views of the human right defenders and others to develop theoretical basis to popularize the concept of responsibility and co- responsibility. Two types of questionnaires were prepared; the first one was served to a few persons to assess the response and subsequently based on the responses a shortened one was prepared and served to 70 selected persons consisting of social activists, human right defenders, gender/ children/ consumer/ civil/ elders rights groups, academicians, lawyers, judges, doctors, educationists, civil servants, media persons, environmentalists, Religious leaders, youth etc from India, Nepal, Brazil and France. About 60 persons responded to the questionnaires. (Two questionnaires appended in Annex A.)

The **purpose of the questionnaire** had three main elements:

- To elicit views from Human Rights defenders as to how far the notion of Human Responsibility enhanced their Human Rights activism.
- To identify instances where such Human Rights proponents had experienced any barriers linking rights with responsibilities.

-To elicit views on the need for a Universal Charter of Human Responsibilities parallel to the existing Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The questionnaires were administered in late summer 2012 and completed submissions received by early December 2012.

The areas of involvement of the respondents are the following:

**Areas of Involvement** (Some in multiple areas of involvement)

Rights – Human / Children’s / Women’s/ Indigenous people’s/Farmers’/Consumers’ / Elders’ /Socio-political- economic-cultural; Law - Civil / Constitutional; Environment / Ecology; Education / Research / Training; Research & study; Dalits; Youth; Media / Communications; Electoral Reforms; Democracy & Local Governance; Justice & Peace ; Culture; Development; Urban / Rural; Welfare Schemes & Services; Labour; Agriculture; Health; Religion.

**The main findings are categorized in the following frame work:**

1. People’s perception on Rights & Responsibilities
2. Obstacles & constraints
3. Dilemmas , cultural differences and areas of conflict
4. Areas of convergence
5. Areas of responsible actions

**1. People’s perception on Rights & Responsibilities:**

**1.1 The need for evolving Code of Human Responsibilities & Co Responsibilities in some sense or the other continuous to be the moral and ethical basis for creating responsible citizens to protect and safeguard individual and collective rights of human and non human beings** was articulated by many of the respondents. They have also maintained that responsibilities and rights are integral to each other. Therefore the seemingly perceived dichotomy between rights and responsibilities that exists in today’s contemporary human rights discourses is antithetical to the inter-connectivity and inter-dependence of beings in the universe. This calls for a sense of obligation to carry out and develop an outlook that is not ego centric and parochial or the interests and rights of a particular community. It invokes and challenges us to be truly responsible, not only towards the humankind, but towards all sentient beings and all forms of life on this planet.

-For some of the respondents, **responsibility is not merely responding to the material conditions of life but it is the manifestation of our very being.** Our responsibility is not the conclusion of the

application of rule, but the free response of our being to the very challenge that existence confronts us with. The feeling of responsibility goes with being human. It is part of the feeling of wanting to be accountable; one cannot be accountable for what lies beyond one's awareness. The ontological unity of the human race inspires and morally challenges us to assume universal responsibility. Some of the respondents have pointed out that the importance of realizing the universal dimension of principle of responsibility which is rooted and grounded in the ontological unity of being and becoming in the world, i.e, one's being –in-the-world-with-others, concerns one's social space comprising of the network of interpersonal relations and 'spiritual space' embracing aspirations, insights, and belief - systems.

1.2. Some of the respondents have mentioned that **every human being living on this earth is responsible not only for himself /herself, but responsible for everything that is happening**, how each of us translate that in our human and social relationships? Not as an intellectual conclusion, as an ideal, and so on; but the truth is that we are standing on the ground which is common to all humankind, and feel totally responsible, then our action towards society, towards the world in which we are actually belong. It is our sense of responsibility urges us to bring about tremendous change in the world which is full of violence and competitiveness between nations. This responsibility arises because we are all part of society and partake the tremendous sorrow of men and women and share in our effort to overcome pain and anxiety.

1.3. For some of the respondents, the emphasis was on **the importance of responsibility in human relationship**, which means that relationship is life, relationship is the foundation of existence, relationship is absolutely necessary, and otherwise we cannot exist. Relationship means responsible cooperation. Everything is involved in that one word. Relation means taking care, love, generosity; all that's implied.

1.4. To be responsible means for some, **to assume the role of management/co-management of our various spaces of life and relationships**. Since we are all inter-connected, we have rights and responsibilities towards ourselves, towards Mother Earth, towards our neighbors and towards society and humankind. Responsibility also means to restore the rights to ancestral habitation, ecology, landscape, culture, freedom, justice, peace, individual dignity and our collective well-being.

1.5. A view that came up strongly emphasized that in **traditional societies the principle of responsibility was so central to their way of living, philosophical and ethical discourse** defining attitudes, values, pattern of behavior as well as it defined moral code of conducts; rights, duties and obligations towards each other and the community and the planet at large. Norms were largely unwritten, and individuals were bound to one another in a web of mutual interdependence that touched

all aspects of life, from family to work to the few leisure activities that such societies enjoyed. The modern society on the other hand was the framework of laws and other formal regulations that characterized large, urban, industrial societies. Social relationships were more formalized and impersonal; individuals did not depend on one another for mutual support to nearly the same extent and were therefore much less morally obligated.

1.6. Some of the respondents have argued that **in the context of Asian societies where large number of people are deprived** of their economic, social and cultural rights and many of the poor are deprived of their rights to be human, it is imperative to protect their rights and simultaneously responsibly challenge the socio political systems realizing the fact that human beings are responsible for structures that reinforce and maintain poverty, oppression and injustice. It is therefore the responsibility of human beings to work for appropriate solutions to solve this problem and it is possible.

1.7. There is a general consensus among the respondents that **human responsibility plays an important role in defending Human Rights**. The notion of responsibility goes in tandem with the feeling of not being only responsible but being entrusted with rights. It calls to intervene in situation of injustice and protect the aggrieved party with all sorts of help and brings the existing human rights violation to the public. Responsibility implies that the active support of other people in the struggle for justice and a joint effort towards the wellbeing of all. It is only through a feeling of responsibility towards the community, through compassion for our fellow human beings and through assistance rendered to those weaker than ourselves that the inter-personal relationships, which form the basis of human community and togetherness can develop. Social responsibility implies that building solidarity which is the strongest force in the struggle against injustice.

1.8. According to some **every right has a responsibility and culture of responsibility can overcome the fallout of a purely rights-based society**. Rights cannot be unlimited. For instance, Government servants have a right to agitate for a rightful pay, but they also have the responsibilities and duties to give the necessary output. In every occupation there are duties to be performed which carry responsibilities. In exercising our responsibilities, we may have to play by the rules most of the time to avoid unnecessary problems to other people nearby. We also need to make exceptional compromises and sacrifices sometimes on humanitarian grounds.

1.9. Some of the respondents pointed out **that the right discourse gained more visibility and also social and political dimensions than Responsibility**. The rights are legally binding in so far as they allow individuals, groups and civil institutions to cite human rights while enforcing their rights- especially against the State. Secondly in public discourse we hear more about the violation of individual rights than about abdication of individual responsibility. Yet, it is the abdication of

individual responsibility that leads to the violation of individual rights, because it is intrinsic in nature of responsibility that responsible individuals respect and honour the rights of others.

1.10. Some have observed that **legal responsibility implies a prior contract, at least implicitly.** Ethical responsibility demands at least tacitly acknowledged moral code. We have responsibility towards others (legal), and towards ourselves (ethical). The phenomenon of ethics and responsibility must continue to be the moral basis of the modern day society, political economy and as well as governance. In a modern capitalist society, relationships are based on 'contract', for example, a formal agreement that an employee will provide a certain quantity of labour in return for a certain quantity of wages from the employer. Everything is spelled out in the wage contract and is therefore enforceable by the State; there are no age-old obligations or duties that accompany the exchange of money for services. Unlike in traditional relationship defined by status, the contract relationship is not morally binding and either party can break it at any time provided the terms of contract are fulfilled.

1.11. **Ethics and morality defines responsibility and governs our actions in society** according to some. Human freedom is an essential ingredient of responsibility. It restricts irresponsible behavior and action, thus for example; freedom to make unlimited profit as the greatest value, does not give scope for ethics and morality. The very natural inclination to respond spontaneously is being constantly overrun by the media at the behest of the market economy that globalizes poverty and individual profit. No guidelines will work, if the unjust base is not uprooted and destroyed. Discarding responsibilities would simply mean perpetuating injustice and deprivation of rights.

1.12. **Only when we have built up people who practice responsibility as citizens, we may be able to challenge the system that is corrupt,** have pointed out by many, i.e., having an integral approach to social change with the element of responsibility integrated. It is in six stages: The methodologies are the following:

- Ethics: Values and Principles; Seeds of Responsibility are planted.
- Human Rights: When ethics are violated, then human rights are also violated; Responsibility should become integral to the process of completing the cycle of rights.
- Pedagogy: Learning processes are such so as to preserve and respect ethics and human rights; Pedagogy of Responsibility.
- Psychological Support: We are a wounded people in body, mind, emotions and spirit. We need psychological help to be healed and start again. Responsibility needs to be balanced with commitment to respond to the crisis situation.
- Management: We need new organizations and structures grounded on the principles of human responsibility, ethical, moral and rights based, respecting and valuing the feelings of others to prevent further personal hurt and damage.

- Participatory Action Research on responsible actions: The search for answers will be participatory, exploring new possibilities, recording successes and building on them. Promotion of responsibility becomes a major area of action reflection action cycle.

1.13. For some **Human Responsibility approach makes us respect the rights of others/groups/neighbours before asking for our own rights.** Human rights discourse will enlighten us about our rights but does not teach us about our part. While exercising those rights we need to be aware of our own actions. We cannot abuse our power to exercise our right by blindly acquiring our own rights at the cost of others. That is where the human responsibility approach comes on the scene. Very often the right based approach leads to conflict and confrontation because exclusively demanding one's rights goes against the rights of others. That is where the human responsibility approach becomes essential where everybody's rights are respected.

1.14. Many have observed that **the goal of human right approach and human responsibility approach are the same but the way to achieve is different.** Only human perception makes it different. We should focus on human responsibility approach combined with human rights approach. If all responsible leaders, politicians, Government, civil servants, general public fulfill their responsibilities, no one in the society is deprived of their rights. Doing ourselves is better than asking other to do. When parents fulfill their responsibility towards their children, children reciprocate. People with responsibility do not dilute the essential character of Human Rights. "We are all responsible for everyone else. But I am more responsible than all others." – Alyosha, the youngest of the Brothers Karamasov. The concept of responsibility is unlimited and unquantifiable.

## **2. Obstacles & Constraints:**

2.1. Rights are accorded by particular kinds of institutions such as governments' structures, laws, employment contracts or voluntary agreements or associations. But whereas responsibilities spring from the realm of subjectivity and the **lack of objectification makes responsibilities less visible** and nonquantifiable as articulated by many of the respondents.

2.2. **Lack of compassion for other beings.** Compassion for some begins by taking the good of others as one's own motive for action. As soon as compassion aroused, the weal and woe of another are nearest to the heart in exactly the same way as one's own. Thus the compassion is the well-spring from where responsibility flows.

2.3. **Lack of democratic spaces** is one of the greatest obstacles to the realization of freedom and responsibility.



2.4. **The present educational system today**, some have pointed out moving away from value based education that makes people responsible. It is now reduced to instructions which are techno centric to produce wealth. It does not feed the imagination and creativity of the younger generations. It is self centric and for individual pursuits and not for the common good. The education system is geared to a utilitarian twist to its courses, which many fear, would take the humanness away and obstruct the creative spaces; the very purpose of education is exploring the self and the universe as integral.

2.5. Many feel that **lack of enlightened leadership who fails to provide responsible governance** to protect the welfare and wellbeing of all. Today's political leadership is very often indulging in the pursuit of their own partisan interest and discriminates against the common masses.

2.6. **Lack of positive support from the media to propagate the notion of ethical responsibility.** The media is a powerful instrument which shapes the opinion and world view of the citizens can play an important role in balancing the human rights discourse with the responsibility many of the respondents have pointed out and also pointed out it can influence the government to bring out appropriate legislation and policies to make responsibilities legally binding and enforceable.

2.7. Some of the participants have pointed out **the barriers to responsible action**;

a) **At individual level: lack of awareness to defend the dignity of human life.** People resort to irresponsible actions because there is no ethical reference by those in power, which degrades human beings. Ego-centric attitudes, rigidity of thought and intellectual bias and individualistic behavior prevent possibility of initiating responsible action.

b) **At institutional level: lack of collective vision and commitment**, lack of openness to absorb new thinking, patriarchy, hierarchy, all types of vertical authoritarian forms of social organizations that not rely on the empowerment and sharing of rights and responsibilities of both the individual and collective. Another constraint is compartmentalization of the institution, which has moved away from social goals.

2.8. It was observed by some that **lack of legislation and awareness on individual level and lack of whistleblower protection law** on institutional level prevents initiation of responsible action. Lack of formulation and legislation of Responsibility Code of Conduct obstructs society from standing up to protect the rights of the others.

2.9. Some have felt that **lack of understanding and dialogue between human right defenders and the promoters of Charter of Human Responsibilities.** This has led to certain misunderstandings where the right defenders feel that emphasis on responsibility may dilute the ideological pursuit of rights and this has led to the lack of realization of synergies and complementarities between them.

2.10. **Reluctance of the scientific community, researchers, students**, to promote the culture of co responsibility in their specific fields and promote the values of co responsibility in all areas of life seen as one of the obstacles by many.

2.11. Many have articulated that **without responsibility to oneself and to others focusing exclusively on rights without linking with responsible actions by the human rights defenders** is creating dependency syndrome rather than self-reliance among the people. In a weak civil society, people are neither aware nor assertive of their rights. Rights cannot be guaranteed without citizens carrying out their responsibilities.

2.12. Some have pointed out that like the well developed theoretical coherence and well articulated conceptual basis on human rights, **the notion of responsibility lacks such theoretical and methodological coherence**. Dissemination of rights is easier than motivation for responsibilities. Lack of understanding about the role of responsibility in initiating actions towards human rights defense mechanisms is the main reason that prevents the possibility of initiating responsible action.

2.12. **The barriers in dissemination of the ideas of rights and responsibilities** are many and seem insurmountable, such as class, caste, region, ethnicity, gender, etc. divide people and communities on identity basis and goes against the universality of human responsibility.

At Individual level: A refusal to perceive the holistic picture- refusing to accept that my behavior impacts the whole community and thereby affects me in return.

At Institutional level: Same, but on a larger scale.

2.13. Some of the respondents articulated their views that **militarization is another factor that impinges upon just and responsible governance**. The bogey of national security, the idolization of the military, the glorification of the role of the armed forces all gnaw at the roots of responsible governance and democracy. The armed forces in some of the countries of South Asia act as power superior to other organs of the state and often run, overtly or covertly, the country. The existence of ‘Special Power Acts’, immunity from prosecution, the provision to declare ‘disturbed areas’ and to impose limited emergencies all vitiate the concept and practice of just governance. In such areas or arenas controlled by the military forces, social justice is almost non-existent.

2.14. **The developed countries are promoting military competitions and rivalries among the poor nations**. This **irresponsibility of the powerful ones** has led to heavy and ever increasing expenditure on arms, armaments, and armed forces establishments. Needless to say, that the military competition lead to diversion of critical resources away from poverty eradication, welfare developments etc to

military expenditure. If the military expenditure could have been reduced by the poor countries, the problems of poverty as well as provision of potable water and sanitation facilities, health care, etc in particularly the rural areas and yet billion are spent each year on maintaining and expanding the military establishment.

2.15. **The increased incidence of extreme climate changes** is likely to be very severe in the tropics. The people of the South, especially the people of South Asia, are witnessing increased natural disasters that have devastating impacts.

2.16. **The powerless of marginalized poor:** The dominant economic system of corporate globalization with its inherent quest for profit-maximization and its consequent disregard for human and ecological needs has made the situation worse. Local livelihoods are thus sacrificed for the sake of exploitation of natural resources that are transformed into commodities, and later marketed. The waste products are then dumped into the South affecting the health and environment.

### **3. Dilemmas, cultural differences and areas of conflict:**

3.1. **The idea of culture is definitely something quite challenging to define.** Perhaps, one could just about safely state that culture constitutes the collective ideas that human beings live by, and these cultural values differ from community to community and place to place and altered certainly from time to time. However, there are certain forces that shape and define human society in historical, political, social and ideological terms, and which serve to condition and manipulate human lives. The larger percentiles of humanity accept these and live by those silently and orderly but the sensitive minorities who are awakened to these fetters respond differently.

3.2. Each world-view many have pointed out, offers the possibility of deriving from it a sense of universal responsibility, but **each culture may have different visions and interpret and justify this responsibility in diverse forms.** To be sure, our contemporary situation calls for the working out towards political consensus for dealing with the problems of human conviviality, but no culture should impose its views on another.

3.3. Some of the respondents noted that **concerning our understanding of universal responsibility in a world in which responsibilities sometimes conflict,** and the precise notion of universalization that is involved here, were intended to suggest possible directions for conceptual refinement. The problem, however, focuses on urgent, practical concerns. We may ask, simply, how can one actualize an ethic of universal responsibility in a world of rampant irresponsibility?

3.4. Some have pointed out **the moral consciousness is a universal phenomenon**; that is to say, everyone possesses a sense of right and wrong. However, **everyone may not agree on what is wrong, and the question of a universal morality can thus become an issue.**

3.5. According to **the law of karma** each of us creates our own cycle of action and reaction. Our past thoughts, speech and behavior have shaped our present reality, and our actions, thoughts and speech now will in turn affect our future. The influence of karma carries over from one lifetime to the next, remaining through the latent state between death and rebirth. The law of karma accounts for the circumstances of one's birth, one's individual nature and the differences among all living beings and their environments. The idea of karma however, contained an element of determinism, however what makes a person noble or humble is not birth but actions taken.

3.6. **Religion, culture and ideology promoting a passive acceptance of today's society and conditions our world-view.** This fatalistic world-view such as 'it is my fate, this is how the world is; nothing can be done; we are powerless' etc prevents responsible action to change the unjust structures.

3.7. **There are also political differences on the rights between Eastern and Western world views.** According to some countries the entire framework of individual human rights, are artifacts of Western liberalism, and that any attempt to impose respect for such a set of rights on Asian cultures is simply a new version of imperialism.

3.8. **For the present day political system ethics seems to be irreverent.** The needed pragmatic political behavior is something different from a global ethic; and, furthermore different from our problem. What we urgently need is a different political dialogical dialogue for a global ethic inclusive of the role of the ancestors, essence of all traditions and the place of all other living beings.

3.9. **The question of caste system and its relationship with human rights and responsibilities is a complex one** and it goes against the fundamental unity of human beings that is all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of sisterhood /brotherhood.

3.10. **The displacement of large number of people** from their habitat without right to resettlement deprives them of exercising their collective rights and the State fails in its responsibility to protect them.

3.11. One of **the failures of the responsible governance which creates dilemma for responsible action is the inability of state to arrest and check individual and mass atrocities against religious, ethnic, and linguistic minorities, 'lower' castes, and women.** These again have two components. The first is the continuous existence of such atrocities - often considered individual or localized. The second

is the acquisition by such atrocities of the character of pogroms. The pogroms may be religious, ethnic, linguistic, or even political. This condition like these not only divides people but also restricts space for responsible action.

3.12. **Women in many of the Asian societies are not free from the patriarchal system.** Generally, women labour under a dual burden of domestic and occupational toil, and find only the lowest paid jobs, often in keeping with the traditional patriarchal image of feminine nature and capacities. Women are not only the worst sufferers in poverty but victims of violence of generalized nature – ethnic, communal, and caste. Rape is still used as a weapon. The masculine ‘defense’ against group atrocities on women seems to be imposition of ever-greater curbs, and of restrictive codes of dress and conduct. The status of women is an obvious indicator of the deficiency of responsible governance, and the failure of the rulers to deliver gender justice. The human right defenders are faced with several dilemmas on gender question because the women belong to diverse ethnic, religious and caste groups that make it difficult to develop a common platform for women’s emancipation.

3.13. **In South Asian countries the family structures are highly hierarchic and patriarchal.** There is space for neither expression of dissent nor for any consultation/ discussion and thereby denies freedom. The woman rarely is credited with wisdom or commonsense or basic intelligence. She has rarely any say in economic or social matters that concern the society. This condition also creates a major deficiency in the democratic processes as well as the processes towards any just governance.

3.14. **The current spate of modernity propelled by capitalism and ideologised by neo-liberalism seeks to establish hegemony** by shaping popular consciousness in order to re-order the normative value structures, meaning systems, norms, pattern of social behavior and institutions to conform to the requirements of global capital. The cultural onslaught which we are experiencing today is therefore an attempt to establish cultural hegemony as a precursor to an all- embracing domination by shaping popular consciousness. The citizens find themselves not only more and more politically alienated but the inversion of personal consciousness of being a citizen into an individualistic consumer without any social goals and ideals. The state as space for peaceful resolution of various forms of social conflict remains fragile as political institutions have been robbed of their relevance and there is the danger of the whole normative framework of democracy being undermined and thus space for responsible action is subverted.

3.15. **Corruption now pervades all wings-** legislature, executive, and judiciary. Apart from perverting just and responsible governance, it also saps belief in the system and perpetuates a cynical attitude that leads to further corruption.

3.16. Somewhere down the line **the younger generation seems to have lost the most important quality that makes a person a good human being.** Concern for others is a mark of culture that one

hardly gets to see today. In the rat race of life almost all the good things have been pushed under the carpet and forgotten.

**3.17. South Asian societies are characterized by the presence of groups differing from each other in language, religion, and ethnicity.** Even in periods when there is no conflict these societies have at best been plural- indicating a simultaneous existence without true integration or notion of equality and justice. In other words these societies have been plural without being multi-cultural. The latter concept of course indicates equality – in notion and practice- of all the social groups. Such equality also respects differences and distinct cultural identities and practices. It rules out forced assimilation based on destruction or abandonment of identities. The absence of multi-culturalism which is a democratic aspiration and value has often led to the ethincisation of sections of these societies which lead to ethnic nationalism that is now a feature of many of these states. This leads to conflicts of rights.

**3.18. Another feature of the present politics is the fragmented vision of the ideals of the common good due to the rise of identities and identity politics.** There are two facets to this occurrence. Identity becomes in some cases a path towards greater democratization and participation in the democratic process. It also becomes a way to insist on rights and raise voice against exclusion. It is a social means to attain individual aims of betterment. On the other hand the emphasis on identity can lead to identity politics whereby generally broader alliances become difficult and common actions of all oppressed for social, economic, political, and cultural justice become difficult. There are also other more serious fall outs of the politics of identity resulting in social conflicts and efforts to dominate other groups. It also seems that the reduction in the autonomy of the state leads to an increase and increased importance of identity politics.

**3.19. Ethnic (caste/ religion/communal/ linguistic/ origin) conflicts totally jeopardize the existence of democratic institutions and the operations of democratic processes.** Ethnic wars, anti-insurgency operations, ‘war on terror’ are utterly undemocratic occurrences. Insurgency and so called ‘people’s wars’ often play the same role. Such military/ militant operations have more impacts than the obvious ones. It is well-known that they prevent any and all democratic institutions from functioning responsibly. They further, through their ideology of military logic, become exceedingly anti-woman, anti-child and also create an ecological havoc. All wars –state or anti-state – fought out on military logic – destroy the environment and effectively limit the independence of women. They also tend to destroy childhood by recruiting children as combatants. Far more in keeping with our concerns they militarize cultures and thereby destroy their vibrancy and humanitarian values.

**3.20. In the era of neo-liberal, corporate driven globalization the international financial forces and institutions** also assault and erode democratic rights through conditions and dictates that affect economic and other policies. These erode national popular economic sovereignty and render the people

powerless. The people under these conditions lose their rights and responsibilities to control their own resources and to determine their utilization.

#### **4. Areas of Convergence:**

Far from there being a conflict between the ideas of Rights and Responsibilities, respondents almost unanimously agreed that they are in fact entirely **complementary notions**. This was stated in a number of ways: as the intimate linkage of Rights and Responsibilities, as both being the two sides of the same coin, as complementary aspects of a single reality – our common life on Earth, or as reflecting the interconnection between people and between people and nature. An important aspect of this was the idea that Rights, while vital, are not unlimited, and must be balanced by the reciprocal notion of Responsibilities. While some respondents suggested that in a sense **Rights come first for the oppressed, as a necessary precondition for their being able to exercise Responsibilities**, not all agreed, and some respondents specifically argued that **Responsibilities are not only a requirement for everybody, but that the exercise of Responsibilities is an important source of strength for the oppressed**.

This balance between the two was nicely captured in the suggestion that **“The Rights discourse helps you to have a firm grip on the ongoing situation, while the Responsibility approach energizes you towards your progressive path”**. An important aspect of this is the need to include **the notion and practice of responsibility as part of everyday life**, and not as something mainly associated with the political sphere. It clearly emerged that **the goal of the human rights approach and that of the human responsibilities approach are in reality the same**, while the means to achieve them may be different. As one respondent suggested, it is mainly human perception that separates them, not objective differences.

While **many were fully supportive of the idea of a Universal Charter of Human Responsibilities**, a few suggested either that it was **not necessary to attempt to codify Responsibilities**, or that the way forward might be through **combining the UDHResponsibilities with the UDHRights into a single document**. Others, while fully supportive of the idea of creating a UDHRes, pointed out the specific social and cultural conditions of South Asia where the highly complex social structure with its variations of caste, religion, income and education, make it hard to generalize, suggesting that any Charter needs to be sensitive to cultural variations and differential access to knowledge. **The majority opinion was that responsibilities in no way dilute rights, and that there is indeed an urgent need for the formulation of a UDHResponsibilities and its acceptance as a Third Pillar of the international community**.

One important and much mentioned **area of convergence was that of gender sensitivity**, and the fact that no form of a UDHResponsibilities could succeed unless it is placed gender justice as its core.

## **5. Areas of Responsible Action:**

Fourteen main areas were widely mentioned and agreed upon where concrete action can be undertaken. These were:

5.1. The need for a **Charter for the media**, since the media is a double-edged tool. On the one hand it is immensely powerful in contemporary society and is often used irresponsibly to promote consumerism, violence, and negative social and gender attitudes and to glorify crime, conflict and greed. On the other, it has immense positive possibilities as the most accessed means of promoting positive values and disseminating the notion of responsibilities across the spectrum of virtually the whole of society.

5.2. The need for education to be oriented towards the inculcating of responsibility and for training in citizenship to substantially stress responsibility as the core of all effective and sustainable civic action. Many respondents stressed the need for **ethical and value based education** to balance the tendency in existing educational systems towards technical and knowledge based learning at the expense of any attempt to teach values.

5.3. While the political and social realms are vital areas to be addressed by a Responsibility approach, the level of ordinary everyday life should not be neglected as it is the space in which any **individual can exercise responsibility in such small ways** as energy and water saving, minimalizing waste and effectively and cleanly disposing of such waste as is generated, and through courteous behavior.

5.4. The need to combat **corruption** in all its pervasive forms was a major and recurring theme, not only because corruption is such a common form of non-responsible behavior, but also because it constantly undermines attempts to create honest and genuinely responsive political and civic action.

5.5. **Gender sensitivity** training was also constantly mentioned as gender justice and mutual respect between the genders is, as was emphasized in the previous section on Areas of Convergence, is a **core value and practice of any kind of responsible behavior**.

5.6. Since the problem of the children in South Asia have remained unresolved there needs an urgent **responsible intervention to protect the children** against all kinds of abuses. Their plight has been compounded by the traditional social order working hand in hand with the model of development. The citizens should be committed to a unified and multi-dimensional struggle to achieve justice for the children and the society.

5.7. The need to create a **Culture of Responsibility** and to **combat areas of culture that oppose responsible behavior** -whether in such areas as popular culture, or in religion, in gender stereotyping, in relation to children, or in any other cultural space.



5.8. **Consumer behavior** was identified as a major area in which responsible behavior must be exercised, rampant consumerism being the source of many of our ecological, resource waste, and values crises that we are now experiencing on a planetary level.

5.9. **Averting the tragedy of atmospheric commons requires responsible action**; that means legally binding, equitable arrangements between countries, big and small, as well as a clear rich-poor differentiation of responsibility for the carbon ‘stock’ that are historical accumulations for which the developed countries are indeed responsible. We need a strong equitable climate deal. This will not happen unless people’s movements seize the climate agenda.

5.10. Some have recommended that Governments should initiate a series of steps to build a **responsible, transparent, accountable environmental governance** such as strictly enforcing environmental laws like Air and Water Acts to control pollution; facilitate, not suppress, freedom of expression and assembly of people drawing attention to issues of environmental degradation; empower local bodies to take decisions on environmental issues; put in place Biodiversity Management Committees in all local bodies etc. The need correspondingly to recognize the environment as a central focus of any Universal Declaration of Human Responsibilities.

5.11. **Addressing the impact of climate change** calls for an urgent responsible action by the state and non state actors because the growth model based on the world view that the resources of planet Earth are unlimited and that humans can master and subjugate all of those through technology has led to a pattern of production and consumption that builds itself intensively on the notion of nearly limitless availability of natural resources.

5.12. The agreed need to work towards the creation of a **Universal Declaration of Human Responsibilities and of smaller Charters** reflecting the situation of specific professions, such as medicine and the law.

5.13. The identification of **responsive governance** as the key role and responsibility of governments, and the recognition that in the absence of this, corruption and mal- administration almost always flourish.

5.14. That we should be much more sensitive to the role of technology in our lives and of our obligation to use it responsibly, and to work towards the creation of environmentally friendly technologies and the use of **appropriate technology** in situations where they are socially, ecologically and culturally appropriate.

5.15. **A global parliament** would hopefully make the world less prone to war and other forms of political violence. A functioning assembly of elected delegates from around the world would help discredit belligerent and fundamentalist ideologies. In addition, if experience in existing multi-polity

parliaments such as India, Belgium, or the European Union is indicative, national delegations would tend to fragment based on differing class interests and policy priorities, replacing dangerously nationalist world views with far more fluid transnational parliamentary coalitions.

5.16. That **the Rights & Responsibility Collective** and other organizations and individuals should work actively to disseminate information of Responsibilities as surprisingly the notion is not at all well known or widely discussed or accepted.

**Interpretations/ Future Directions in summary form:**

1. There is no single, universal conception of responsibilities, and while there is a dictionary definition of the term, in practice it is a dynamic concept and new aspects of meaning emerge continuously as actors try it out in practice.

2. Some of the most significant emerging dimensions of responsibilities appearing in the responses include:

a. a move away from a purely anthropocentric approach to both Rights and Responsibilities towards a more inclusive one that recognizes human embeddedness in nature and human responsibility towards the biosphere on which all human life is ultimately dependent;

b. that the notions of rights and responsibilities and certainly discourse about them have been largely the preserve of the privileged. Many respondents noted that deprivation of rights often leads to a situation where it is difficult for the deprived to exercise their responsibilities, leading in a sense to a double injustice – the original deprivation and the inability to respond to it;

c. The reemergence of ethics as a category rarely referred to in conventional political discourse; d. the new challenges of climate change and the issues that arise from this including just allocation of resources; d. the role of the State and the problem of the corrupt state that does not exercise its responsibilities; e. the important but still unclarified role of culture and religion.

3. Here are levels of analysis, and there is a dialectical and dynamic relationship between them – for example the individual, community and structural levels – and it is important to keep this in mind – the final “model” should be holistic as far as possible.

4. A richer and less abstract notion of responsibilities emerges from the empirical diversity of respondent’s answers and is derived inductively and as such recognizes the diversity of positions suppressed by an externally imposed a priori definition.

5.This implies that the correct approach in researching responsibilities is practice-theory practice, which not only reflects the experience and knowledge of those “on the ground” but also suggests models of action and pedagogical possibilities for teaching responsible values without that teaching process becoming merely propaganda.

6.While societies have evolved mechanisms over the centuries for responsible management of their relationships to nature and to each other which have subsequently often be destroyed by modernization, we should not fall into the trap of anthropological romanticism as many of those mechanisms were hierarchical, patriarchal or authoritarian in their own ways.

7.Holism is essential, even though hard to achieve in practice. If this is not held up as the goal it is easy to create false or incomplete analyses and practices based on just one area while neglecting others actually linked to it. For example, social justice and environmental concern don't exclude each other, but are related at many levels.

8.Interpretation of Dharma concept in South Asian cultural context: Universal Responsibility is a modern concept, and quite naturally one asks oneself what ancient Indian term might come close to it. In western languages, synonyms of responsibility are duty and moral or legal obligation, which all correspond to ‘dharma’, one of the most important terms in ancient Indian thought and religious culture and fraught with a host of meanings.

*Dharma, the notions of law, duty or responsibility, dharma as the Buddhist ‘system of internationalist ethics’ of mind, culture, of rationality involving ‘self- transformation’, is dichotomized in Candrakirti by his mentioning a –dharma in the sentence above.*

Dharma must not simply be considered a convenient blanket term betraying a certain disregard of or deficiency in precise definition; dharma involves both enlightening theory and practice, and as such a key term pregnant with meaning its purpose to drive home to us the fact that the ‘responsibility’ of a person seriously in search of ultimate freedom and happiness for ‘self and others’, consists in her/his learning, thinking and understanding clearly and practicing accordingly and acting wisely.

9.Spontaneous responses arising from “objective” conditions (e.g. a tsunami) are often very positive and unselfish. How to convert this into “continuous” response in non-crisis situations?

10.It is important to keep in mind the goal of the transformation of structures (both rights and responsibilities have this mission) equal to Freedom from want and exploitation/freedom to Be.

The questionnaire methodology was a very useful instrument to bring out people's perception and awareness on the question of Responsibility and Co-Responsibility. The answers varied from their specific individual and social context. It also highlighted problems encountered in practicing individual and social responsibility, obstacles and constraints, dilemmas, cultural differences in understanding the notion of responsibility and areas of conflict, areas of convergence and responsible actions. The areas of the involvement of the participants contributed in defining the notion of responsibility from their specific experiential context and from their specific social locations.

### **Conclusion:**

Based on the data acquired through the questionnaire process and the analysis arrived at from the engagement with human right defenders gives a wealth of information. For the Rights and Responsibility Collective the various spaces that it has created for interactive dialogues and the questionnaire methodology on the culture of responsibility proved very positive experience to develop conceptual understanding of the principle of responsibility and co responsibility. Also many of the participants affirmed the need for continuous dialogue with human rights defenders to remove their misconceptions and misunderstandings and evolve convergence around the principle of human responsibility as supplementary and complimentary to human right activism and there is an increasing willingness from the side of human right activists/defenders to accept the idea of Universal Declaration of Human Responsibilities as third pillar. There is a general acceptance that rights should go with responsibilities.

What one could discern from the dialogues and responses from the questionnaire that there is growing perception that excessive emphasis on exercise of fundamental rights by citizens diminishes the importance of performance of correlated duties and responsibilities. The thinking that every right gives rise to a corresponding duty is based on the premise that freedom without acceptance of responsibility can destroy the freedom itself, whereas when rights and responsibilities are balanced, freedom is enhanced.

In this culture of rampant irresponsibility, responsibility as such has become almost a forgotten ethical value and moral virtue. However, it is the responsible action that alone carries with it the requisite integrity that brings about real change. Therefore, unless we can transform the present culture of irresponsibility into a culture of responsibility, social movement of any kind, including peace movements, will bear only bitter fruit, if any.

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***The Rights & Responsibility Collective***

***Ethics & Responsibility Forum***