SERVE LEARN LEAD

Reflections on Leadership and Development

Edited by
Rajni Bakshi

Preface by
Amartya Sen

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Serve Learn Lead:
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First Indian Edition, 2012.
ISBN-978-93-817220-8-4

Published by arrangement with the American India Foundation and

AMBER BOOKS
D-9, DEFENCE COLONY,
NEW DELHI-110024
Email: amberbooks09@gmail.com

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Suggested contribution at Rs. 500 per copy.

Printed at Param Offsetters, New Delhi, India.

dedicated to the spirit of
Service and Swaraj

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"He changed human beings by regarding them not as what they were but as though they were what they wished to be, and as though the good in them was all of them."

– *The Life of Mahatma Gandhi* by Louis Fischer

Preface

Ten years ago, following the devastating earthquake in Gujarat, a group of Indian Americans came together to form the American India Foundation (AIF): they also created a program called Service Corps for young Americans to work on the recovery efforts. Over time, this effort has evolved into a sustained program of support for Indian NGOs.

The conceptualization of this program was always grounded in creating a personal link between young Americans and India's social development. It was an opportunity for young Americans, in the spirit of service, to participate in, contribute to and help solve some of the largest social development challenges faced by any country. In the process, our expectation was that the individuals who participated in this program would find, nurture and develop the qualities of what Mahatma Gandhi called "servant leadership."

During the ten years of history of the William J. Clinton Fellowship for Service in India, over 250 individuals have participated in this process of self-realization and development, and have built a permanent link of understanding and empathy between the two countries. Thousands of people including family, friends, benefactors and beneficiaries in both countries have been touched by this Fellowship.

This book, with its theme of "Leadership", includes a glimpse into the life journeys of some of these Fellows. It attempts to capture the young voices of those inspired by the traditions of leadership and development in the areas of technology, politics, social change and economic progress, among others in the United States and India. Together, these stories underpin and honour the overall concept and spirit the Fellowship attempts to capture.

It gives me great pleasure to congratulate AIF for ten years of service and I look forward to seeing the William J. Clinton Fellowship for Service in India strengthen the ties between our two countries. I also express my own appreciation of the wonderful work that the AIF Fellows are doing, and add to that my recognitions of the skill with which Rajni Bakshi has put together this book.

Professor Amartya Sen
Nobel Prize Laureate in Economics
Professor of Economics and Philosophy at Harvard University

Editorial

The year 1893 has a quixotic significance in the history of East-West journeys.

It was in this year that Swami Vivekananda travelled to the USA to place the insights of Hindu philosophy before the Parliament of the World's Religions at Chicago.

It was also the year that Annie Besant, a leader of the Theosophical Society in Britain, first came to India.

It was the year that Aurobindo Ghosh, who had been shipped overseas at the age of five in order to be turned into a proper Englishman, returned to India after completing his education at Cambridge.

Above all, it was the year in which Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was sent on a short-term assignment to South Africa.

For over a century now transcontinental journeys of discovery have shaped not just individual lives but the dynamic between India and the West.

Years spent in the West shaped the Swami's ideas about how to create mechanisms for collective action to serve the under-privileged while also fostering the spiritual evolution of the individual.

Besant's prolific career as an advocate of freedom from colonial rule, and numerous other progressive causes, made her a towering figure of early 20th century India.

Ghosh, better known as Sri Aurobindo, went on to explore new depths of mysticism and inspired the creation of Auroville, a "universal town" where people from all nations can live in peace and progressive harmony.

Gandhi's story of transformation, through a wide variety of experiences over two decades in South Africa, is the best known. His inner journey shaped not merely India's freedom struggle but opened the way for a new paradigm of power.

Memories of such epochal figures may not directly inform contemporary transcontinental Fellowships that enable young people to spend an extended period in an unfamiliar location half way across the world. And yet, a Fellowship program dedicated to the ideals of "Serve-Learn-Lead" inevitably brings to mind the limitless potential of such journeys to shape the inner life of individuals and the dynamic between different cultures.

These transformational processes can neither be easily mapped nor should we attempt to evaluate or judge them. Perhaps we are called upon to quietly, slowly and patiently observe such journeys over decades. Any one keen to do so will find a rich and mixed fare in the tentative dispatches included in this volume.

Reading these essays by 13 AIF Fellows I was, first and foremost, struck by the longing for community. There is more here than a palpable enjoyment of the spontaneous human bonds that the young travelers have formed across India. Far more crucial is the conviction, emphasized by some of the essayists, that *community* is the basis for an

ethical society. As Ben Lenzner says the richness of cross cultural dialog *in person*, cannot be matched by the multiple ways in which technology now allows us to be "connected" across continents.

As several of the essayists express various shades of this sentiment it becomes clear that this is not just youthful romanticism. Their definition of values is practical and grounded in contemporary realities. There seems to be agreement among all the writers that the future well-being of people across the world depends not so much on donors, aid and service but on fostering an open, cooperative and empowering social-economic milieu. What they crave are facilitating community structures based on 21st century standards of human rights and basic dignity for all. But how is this to happen?

As the narratives share moments of insight from the activities close to the ground, there are glimpses of partial answers. Aditi Desai shares a sense of pride in her heritage – her grandfather accompanied Gandhiji on the Dandi March – and links it to living mentors who have taught her the importance of acknowledging our debt to those whose work we build upon.

Others reaffirm the primary importance of non-judgmental *acceptance*, rather than mere tolerance, of those who are different from us. Mathew French elaborates on how important it is to "meet people where they are". Marc Alongi explains how and why sustainability is not a matter of scale but rather about heart and change within as well

as outside. Nicole Fox feels that fostering a sense of global responsibility is the most critical challenge – be the change you want to see.

Beyond this agreement on fundamentals are divergent views on how to ensure the well-being of those who have been chronically deprived of both basic material needs and human rights. At one end of the spectrum there is enthusiastic confidence in "social enterprise" being able to do far more than NGOs have achieved with their indefinite dependence on grants. In some cases there is acute disenchantment with NGOs as vehicles for large-scale change.

At the other end of the spectrum are those who perceive a deeper systemic malaise which perpetuates inequity and indignity. While some seem to feel that innovation and a more socially responsive market system can solve problems of poverty and social injustice. Others are clear that unless we, as Renita Shah says, venture to "question the unquestionable" there is little hope of getting either equity or justice.

This collection of essays thus reflects the wider public discourse which is divided along similar lines. There is valorization of innovations that help to tweak the prevailing system of market capitalism in the hope of humanizing it. And then there are more fundamental critiques that seek to redefine development by questioning the dominance of the money-profit motive and focusing on actual human well-being rather than metrics about consumption of goods and services. As Sarah Spear writes, development is not so much

material advancement but increased integrity. And this, as some of the Fellows imply, is a global challenge.

On returning to the comforts of the USA, after the Fellowship period in India, Kirsten Anderson feels with renewed certainty that the first world is not a model for other countries. Her personal experience is reinforced by two mega trends of our times – accelerating ecological crisis and endemic financial instability. It is now clear that the model of development and progress which emerged in the West in the 20th century is not sustainable at a planetary scale.

This radically alters the context in which one way movement by talented young people from the developed countries, to serve and learn in the under-developed world, was first conceived. It may be time to consider a two-way exchange which enables individuals from different backgrounds to explore various dimensions of fostering ecologically, socially and financially sustainable communities in the USA and India.

As several of the essays here show, some AIF Fellows are introspecting about the challenges before their home country. The Occupy Wall Street phenomenon energizes them because they are deeply disturbed by the inequities in America. They see the protests and unrest of 2011 as an opportunity, rather than a challenge, for it signals the push for a new paradigm that would be more equitable.

This search for a new paradigm is necessarily transcontinental and multi-directional. While it will have to grapple with unique local realities this quest cannot be

confined by national boundaries. It will inevitably draw on the richness of a long-standing, though somewhat subterranean, exchange between West and East.

Indian spiritual texts, including the Bhagvad Gita, influenced Henry David Thoreau in the mid 19th century. In the first decade of the 20th century Gandhi's life and political career were shaped by his reading of Thoreau's seminal text *Civil Disobedience*. In the early 1950s the American Methodist missionary James Lawson came to India to study Gandhi's non-violent satyagraha and went on to become a mentor to Martin Luther King. Gandhian methods shaped the American Civil Rights Movement which not only changed the nature of race relations in the USA but also continue to inspire struggles across the world.

This continuing exchange is not always visible as it unfolds. Nor are the inner transformations being wrought through the Fellowship process. Just how this will feed into fulfilling the longing for new paradigms of development and prosperity is a puzzle, one that can only be solved by being lived with hope.

Rajni Bakshi

1

No Beginning

by Aditi Desai

During a recent visit to Thailand, I read a simple yet profound statement written on a stupa in Chiang Mai. "Why worry about the end if there is no beginning." It blew me away and took me back to a video interview I conducted during my AIF Fellowship in 2006.

After graduating from Smith College, I received an AIF Fellowship to work at a grassroots non-profit in Ahmedabad, Gujarat. During my tenure at Utthan, I created an hour-long documentary about Utthan's Peace Program, which had been initiated after the communal violence that occurred in Gujarat in 2002. The excitement of being allowed to do this project wore off quickly, but the fright of working on my first documentary did not disappear quite as fast. I quickly saw that this would be an extremely daunting task. With no real budget, an inexperienced crew of one, my own equipment consisting of only a video camera and a microphone and no other resources – my hands were never fuller. The video was

eventually used as a tool to share Utthan's grassroots peace strategies with other peace building programs in Gujarat.

During my last week of interviewing members of Utthan, I interviewed my mentor, Dr. Meera Velayudhan, the creator of Utthan's Peace Program. I asked Meera how she had begun working in the non-profit field and why she had decided to pursue gender studies. What Meera said next completely floored me. Instead of starting with her own life, Meera began describing her mother's life as an activist. She could not begin with her own experiences because they were too interconnected with her mother's experiences and life choices.

After finishing the interview, I was in a complete daze. Meera's words had brought my own life and work into

Karachi, Pakistan: Attending the World Social Forum with Utthan co-workers, Pallavi and Jaya, and my mentor Meera Velayudhan.

perspective. I was not reinventing the wheel and I certainly was not working in a vacuum. Instead, I was part of something much larger. My work with women was part of a continuum of work begun by the millions of women who had come before me. Their struggle ignited my journey. On that day, I learned that whatever work I was doing would be meaningful only if I understood my place in this slow, but progressive, movement.

Meera's words made me reflect beyond myself to my grandfather and his impact on the community where he chose to live. Receiving his MBBS in Mumbai, my grandfather chose to leave the city and moved to rural Gujarat where he was the only doctor for miles around. Choosing to serve in a region where his skills were needed, my grandfather chose social change over social status. He practiced his craft in service of others regardless of caste, creed and socio-economic status thus meeting the needs of all who sought his services. During the struggle for Independence, he walked in the Salt March with Gandhi and was imprisoned for his anti-British sentiments. He was a man who believed in action and embodied Gandhi's philosophy of being the change that he wanted to see.

Although my grandfather died one year before I made my entrance into the world, I knew him through the stories my family shared. However, it took interviewing Meera to realize how deeply his life's work influenced my own. Following in his footsteps and the footsteps of Meera and her mother, I accepted the AIF Fellowship. It was an

Dr. Haridutta Vasanji Desai, my grandfather.

opportunity to work on issues I felt passionate about and help continue fostering the social change begun by all those who came before me. My grandfather had raised the stakes and I was ready to lead the charge.

My grandfather used medicine as his medium and I decided that my medium would be visual media. I thought that creating visual media could bring these issues from the margins into the mainstream, from the individual to the masses. As Patricia Aufderheide asserts, "Advocates and activists have often chosen documentary because it is a relatively low-budget way to counter the *status quo* as expressed in mainstream media."[1] Our aims were the same, but our choice of tools different. While I had long ago learned the power of cinema to entertain, it was during college that I realized the power of visual media as a tool for social change.

In my entrance essay for the graduate filmmaking program at American University, I wrote about how watching the documentary, *Shores of Silence*, changed the way I looked at the medium of film. Watching *Shores of Silence* and hearing about its impact on public policy from

[1] Patricia Aufderheide, Documentary Film: A Very Short Introduction (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 78.

the director, Mike Pandey, forever changed the way I viewed media. After watching Pandey's film and hearing the outcry from wildlife non-profits, the Government of India banned the killing of whale sharks on Indian shores. Hearing this, I realized that media can be about much more than just entertainment. It can be a force for social change. That was the "Ah-ha" moment for me. I knew then that I wanted to harness the power of visual media as a tool for social change.

Having worked on multiple short films focusing on issues such as the depletion of oysters in the Chesapeake Bay and raising awareness about a non-profit that provides suits

Jivdaya Charitable Trusts Ahmedabad, Gujarat: Filming animal hospital volunteers on Uttarayan day for my documentary "Entangled".

for low-income women – I have used media to share stories in the hope of creating awareness and facilitating change. For me, filmmaking is just a tool to help people connect with each other. It is a medium for the work that I am passionate about. From my journey through the AIF Fellowship up until my current Fellowship with the Pew Charitable Trusts, I now believe that good leadership and long-term change happen when people are open to understanding each other, willing to learning from each other and mutually invested in fostering change that positively impacts the community as a whole. Multiple case studies and events show how different forms of media can bring together (social media in Egypt) or divide (radio station Radio Television Libre des Mille Collines during the Rwandan Genocide) communities.

In the end visual media, lobbying or policy research, are all the same. They are tools for a larger purpose. People and places are constantly fluid and changing. In order to continue working on positive social change initiatives we must change and adapt our practices to remain relevant and effective. Although some situations necessitate change, that is not always a bad thing.

Life is very similar to the practice of documentary filmmaking where the only certainty is uncertainty. Since we are recording real life events, nothing is certain. Things can change in an instant. For me, that is the beauty and inherent challenge of documentary filmmaking. Regardless of how many lessons we learn, nothing can ever prepare us for the reality of a new production. Staying humble is easy

because there really is no chance for feeling overly confident in such a dynamic environment. Humility is a necessity in this industry because it keeps me open to learning from the situation and from the people around me. As the Tibetan Buddhist nun Pema Chodron says, "Letting there be room for not knowing is the most important thing of all. We try to do what we think is going to help. But we don't know. We never know if we're going to fall flat or sit up tall. When there's a big disappointment, we don't know if that's the end of the story. It may be just the beginning of a great adventure."[2]

In the context of social change and advocacy, I do not believe that this responsibility can be laid solely on the shoulders of any one person. It takes the continuous work of multiple individuals whose work coalesces in a beautiful fusion to create deep and perpetual change.

[2] Pema Chodron, When Things Fall Apart: Heart Advice for Difficult Times (Boston: Shambala Publications, Inc., 1997), 12.

2

Frontier Markets: Seeking a Balance Between Social Impact and Profits

by Ajaita Shah

I was an AIF (Service Corps) Fellow in 2006. I wanted to serve as a Fellow for several reasons. Firstly, to understand the dichotomies of India: the poor vs. the rich, urban vs. rural, developed vs. underdeveloped, growth vs. disasters, innovation vs. conservatism, unity vs. diversity. Secondly, I sought to find a balance between social impact and profitability. Thirdly, I was keen to understand my role as an NRI, and how I can become a leader in bridging gaps between the US and India. The Fellowship, as well as my work after the Fellowship, have been exhilarating and put me on the path to accomplish my goals.

Before becoming a Fellow, I spent a lot of time working in policy-making initiatives, understanding US-India perspectives about many issues. I finally found myself wanting to work in Microfinance since that would be

the only way to really understand India, to get deep into India's heart, the rural terrains. Microfinance was extremely interesting because it was an initiative with a double-bottom line – focusing on social impact as well as scale and profitability.

AIF gave me an opportunity to further understand Microfinance through the Fellowship and I never left India. I worked with a start-up for-profit Microfinance Institutions (MFI) in Bangalore and then became the Director for a very large well-known MFI in Hyderabad. There I worked on multiple projects throughout rural India for four years. This helped me understand India in a very different way and gave me the opportunity to understand scalable initiatives for rural and peri-urban households. On the basis of this experience I decided to start my own social enterprise, Frontier Markets.

Frontier Markets is a rural marketing, sales, and service distribution company providing access to affordable and quality consumer durables to Bottom of the Pyramid (BOP) households. It focuses on products in clean energy, agriculture, health, and water sanitation. Frontier Markets works with local partner channels like Microfinance institutions and locally trained field staff to educate, relate with and reach-out to households to provide them affordable products and services. We have started operations in rural India and are working with clean energy products like solar lights, pumps, mobile chargers, home-lighting systems and more.

As India opens up to investment in clean energy, healthcare, education, infrastructure, and more, social entrepreneurs are taking their passion for development and combining it with market savvy to create scalable and sustainable business models. Here are a few lessons from my experiences in this sector and in India:

- India is becoming a platform for experimentation, innovation, and change. Global leaders look at initiatives in India and then attempt to replicate these in other developing nations of Africa, and in China. For example, solar initiatives and supply-chain models in India are being replicated in China; additionally, many MFI companies target China as their next market after experiences in India.
- Global entrepreneurs need to start sharing lessons learned – not just with each other but also with target investors, related organizations and others in the eco-system.
- Increasingly there are business opportunities in rural India. But companies trying to enter that market do not know enough about how to proceed. The people, the land, the values, and systems are a mystery to them.
- Investors are beginning to move in the right direction to balance social and commercial interests. But they still have a lot more to learn – about the market and the challenges posed by language barriers, cultural differences, government bureaucracy – and above all the dynamic with other companies working in the same space.

- Rural Indian households lack many things but these are not market gaps. They are instead astonishing gaps of basic social and economic infrastructure – poor roads, poor electric connectivity, poor education, poor nourishment, and poor employment opportunities.
- Entrepreneurs who have engaged with development work in rural areas understand that the best way to serve the under-served is through on-the-ground initiatives rather than top-down measures.

Working in the Microfinance sector has taught me a lot and shaped my perceptions of India. Microfinance started with an attempt to have a sustainable business that focuses on the betterment of low-income households. There are too many people in India who need loans to advance their businesses or to facilitate self-employment. The government and conventional banks both public and private just do not have the capacity to meet these needs. Thus, India needs Microfinance institutions to cover those gaps. We just need to be more responsible in the field and there are some Microfinance institutions who currently act responsibly in their areas.

This sector has been extremely revolutionary in its efforts to balance for-profit gains and create direct social impact. Microfinance was, and in many ways still does, empower women, build community and localize efforts to create access to finance and thus foster income-generating activities. While many MFIs are working well, some have not managed to balance profit making with sustaining

community spirit. Innovative efforts to promote low-cost housing finance, affordable life insurance, health insurance, urgently needed market linkages, financial literacy programs and vocational training have all been overshadowed by a lack of appropriate government regulation. Corruption and mismanagement have also resulted in the demise of some institutions following backlash by local governments and Microfinance clients. Nevertheless there are many MFIs whose work demonstrates that if the systems are right, and intent and focus are good, you can make a difference.

Through Frontier Markets, I have been paying careful attention to the crisis in the MFI sector and have always gauged our own partners' ability to prioritize both financial and social performance. I have not and will not work with "super commercial and aggressive" MFIs that either do not have control over their field activities, or do not prioritize responsible financing by assessing their member's ability to afford and handle loans.

I have taken the lessons learned from Microfinance and applied it to my own company's mission and operations. I know it is possible to serve the poor at scale. Frontier Markets' mission is to provide affordable, quality products to low-income households to improve their lives – including clean energy, agriculture, healthcare, and water sanitation products. I use various assessment and social performance tools to help me track my efforts to help the poor. My field staff is focused not merely on sales and targets, but rather on household satisfaction and interaction. There are incentives

for positive feedbacks and I monitor how many times a field staff decides not to sell a stove to a woman because she does not have the capacity to handle a loan. Thus, it is important to motivate my field staff to act responsibly and not through greed.

For me, India means growth and possibilities. Yet social entrepreneurs face many difficulties. India's government is still divided. Politics comes before prosperity. We have yet to see a unanimous acceptance of globalization and privatization. Efforts to help entrepreneurs gain access to capital and infrastructure to build their businesses are still stalled. Indians are both excited and skeptical about the future. It is up to entrepreneurs like me to show that we can succeed in our ventures while protecting the poor. As long as we do not lose sight of the ultimate goal – the betterment of the underdeveloped and the underprivileged – we can be successful in our endeavors. It will be my personal energy, intent and drive that will help me make a significant difference in the lives of rural low-income households.

3

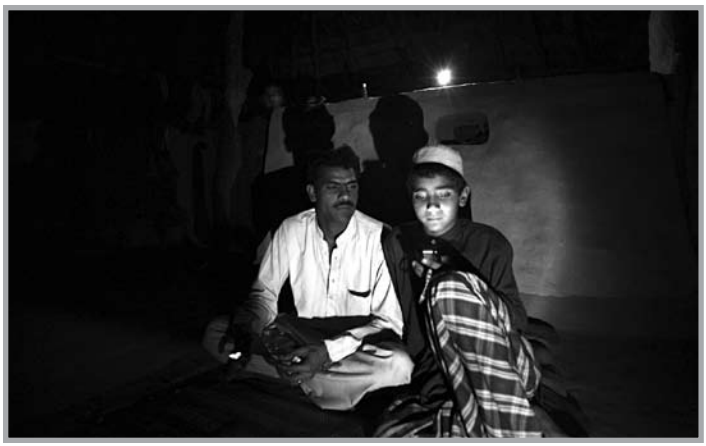
Bollywood on Handheld Himalayan Screens: Reflections on Development and Community

by Ben Lenzner

Blue lights from iPads illuminate the diverse faces riding New York City subway cars. Similar blue lights illuminate the faces of Van Gujjar nomads in the remote villages of the Shivalik Mountains of northern India. Far from electricity, surrounded by the natural world, Van Gujjars watch Bollywood dance sequences sitting in a hut in a forest a few hours from Dehradun.

Just eleven years after the year 2000 the online world has invaded our planet and technology has become, as Marshall McLuhan famously said, "extensions of ourselves."[1] Devices of all shapes and sizes, from cell phones to bank cards, can be found almost everywhere.

[1] Marshall McLuhan, Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), 23



Sitting in his family's winter dehra, Shirafat Ali watches a Bollywood dance sequence on the smartphone of a family friend

As the speed of technology has become swifter than ever, the dissemination of information has allowed for local issues to go worldwide instantaneously. Yet, what I think is most important, both as a former AIF Fellow and also as a global citizen, is the vital need to maintain a *personal, cross-cultural dialogue* throughout communities and societies. Technology creates the impression that we can be more informed about the world from a distance. Yet my experience working and studying abroad in both India and Canada has reaffirmed a simple truth. If one does not visit or work, study or explore a country, nor meet a community or a person in the flesh, then much has been lost in translation. Misunderstandings, both miniscule and massive, can be amplified by mere digital knowledge.

Working as an AIF Fellow in 2005-2006 and then returning for a photography project with the Van Gujjar community in the spring and summer of 2008 and 2009, reinforced the significant value of interpersonal relationships with both pockets of people and individuals throughout the world. For all that technology offers us, the true importance of friendships and conversations while breaking flatbread cannot be measured. It is only then that we realize how differently we experience the world and yet how much we have in common.

Here in the United States we take many things for granted. For instance, we all know that man walked on the moon. If we want to know more, we investigate on the Internet. Yet for the Van Gujjars, the idea that man walked on the moon is not so cut and dry. Why? For one, in a community with low rates of literacy, some may have heard about space travel, but many have not. Though technology is starting to penetrate rural India, the Internet has barely made its mark. According to the World Bank, in 2009 only 5.3% of the Indian population had regular access to the Internet, compared to 78.2% in the United States and 28.8% in China.[2] Therefore, a conversation about space travel that soon merges into a discussion about the number of passengers on airplanes flying overhead may on the surface appear like idle chatter. But at a deeper level

[2] World Development, Indicators, Internet Users (Per 100 People)http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IT.NET.USER.P2?cid=GPD_44 (2009).

it is about the exchange of information and how systems of knowledge are changing, in rural India and throughout the world.

In some places, communities based in oral traditions are leap-frogging, skipping literacy and landing directly in a world of media literacy. And although the Van Gujjar community may have a lack of literacy and general knowledge about the world, the other side of the coin is that their knowledge of the natural world far surpasses that of ours. These nomadic, pastoral people, rooted in oral tradition, have a bounty of wisdom passed down from generations. We all know about the moon and Neil Armstrong, but they know about ways to survive in the forests and mountains of the Himalayas. Yet this information and culture is constantly at the brink of extinction through relocation and assimilation into a hi-tech society. And such communities are everywhere in India, both in rural areas and within large cities. What does this all mean for non-governmental organizations working with these communities?

Often in the world of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and development work, there is a need to define success through numbers, to turn the impact of the work being done into percentages and pie charts. Quantitative analysis is important, yet qualitative analysis of the impact of development work is equally significant. India is a sub-continent rich in oral traditions. The stories of our work, our successes and failures should be shared not just in numbers but also in true tales of life – as stories that we can relate to

as neighbors and colleagues and friends, from New Delhi to New York, from Pune to Portland. If I am told that in the last ten years a NGO has opened twenty schools in the state of Uttarakhand, perhaps I am interested. If I am told a story, with pictures, about how both children and teachers are attending regularly and thus thriving in a supportive learning environment then I am impressed, excited and inspired.

Of course, this is a big challenge. For example, I worked for a NGO that opened a significant number of schools in Uttarakhand. But the challenge was not building rural schools. The tough part was guaranteeing the continuous presence of good teachers, securing safe transport to school for students and re-instilling the value of education within the various communities of Uttarakhand. This turned out to be the most important and difficult test, and failure was easy. Why? Because the NGO built rural schools, had an inaugural ceremony, and then all the funders disappeared. Returning a few months later we found schools without teachers and low levels of enrollment.

Even in the USA there is a tendency to define success in numbers. A good example is the Washington DC testing debacle. In DC, test scores soared, yet further review showed there was city-wide misconduct in testing – the upward scores were a lie. In the United States if testing shows progress, we take it for granted. In India, if we say 20 rural schools were built in five years, we also take it for granted. But the real picture can only be pieced together

by looking behind these flat figures and asking: What does this data mean on the ground? Are the students learning? How are they learning? And what can we do to make these projects self-sufficient?

We also have a tendency to talk much more about the terrible disparities of income and opportunity in India. But at present this is also true of the United States. In a time of financial crisis, money was used to prevent the complete collapse of the wealthiest banking conglomerates. But at the same time our children are being offered a sub-standard education. We have failed them and truly we should be ashamed if that is what, as a whole, we have offered our youth.

There are other failures upon which we, in the USA, need to reflect on in order to situate ourselves globally. An America with 24 hours of electricity, 365 days out of a year, should look to India and critically observe what sort of changes can be made at home, which luxuries can be scaled back in order to balance our existence with our natural world. An Indian can look to the United States, an older yet still young democracy, and see what mistakes the United States has made as a world power, in the hope that as India grows into a larger and larger world power it doesn't make the same mistakes as Uncle Sam.

Money is merely paper. Life is precious. We share this planet with one another. We cannot let greed overtake our ethical and moral obligations to this earth. If that means that as Americans we must look to India and decide to give up furnace style hot water 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and

install Indian style switch-on-when-needed water geysers or even better, solar geysers into each and every home, then we must not delay.

Our sacrifices must be actions that fundamentally change the ways in which we live. Even though technology is now an extension of ourselves, we must remember to return to our roots and remind ourselves that we are all neighbors and not just online. Societies that are rapidly growing by extracting perishable resources from the earth without much thought to future generations must be reminded that we are all in this together.

There is no doubt in my mind, that striving toward more ethical societies involves embracing community ideals. The United States for certain needs a better education system and universal health care. Perhaps it's time for Americans to reflect and realize that there are some things that we can do to help our citizens, our community. Having everyone chip in for health care would be an important place to start. India made a decision a long time back that as a community of one billion people, they could not afford to wait on drug patents. Often it is imperative to think outside the box and in this case, India decided that it could not afford to follow, both economically and ethically, the legal time lines for the production of generic drugs. This is positive action at its finest.

In theory, India has done the same with *The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act,* 2006. On paper, India is on the forefront of indigenous rights with the Forest Rights Act legislation.

This act allows for tribal communities to claim, and at times reclaim, their ancestral homelands through documentation of their lineage and connection to their land. This is ground breaking legislation when it comes to tribal and indigenous rights throughout the world. Yet in many states, almost three years after ratification, there has been no move towards implementation.

In my travels with Van Gujjar families I found that the Forest Rights Act is seen as an exciting prospect. It is a dream of a sustainable future. Yet most Van Gujjars cannot read. They have navigated the steep terrain of the Himalayas for generations upon generations. Yet for them, traversing the halls of the Uttarakhand state government can be more intimidating than any river crossing or 3000 meter mountain ascent. This is where cross-cultural dialogue and community building becomes imperative. But it is hard. There is only one NGO that I know of, the Society for Promotion of Himalayan Indigenous Activities (SOPHIA), based in Dehradun, that works solely with this community and they need all the help they can get.

SOPHIA has facilitated cross cultural dialogue not across oceans but locally, in and around the state capital of Dehradun, where people's impressions about the Van Gujjar community are colored by stereotypes. More than 15 years ago SOPHIA started a milk program whereby the NGO bought milk and bypassed the middle man directly, selling exclusively Van Gujjar buffalo milk in and around Dehradun. Instantly, Van Gujjar families got a better price

for their product and Dehradun residents, by receiving milk directly and solely from the Van Gujjars, began to understand their culture much better. A nearby community residing on the outskirts of the city, which had otherwise been almost invisible, became familiar. This is a similar experience to going to a local farmer's market in the United States and meeting the person you buy asparagus or honey from – talking to them and learning who they are, exploring their values and their struggles.

So there we are. We can all go back to checking our email and twittering the world. It is inevitable that we are all connected and with the help of the Internet, "knowledge" is accessible to us 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year. But we also must remember that the work we do is not online, it never has been nor will it ever be. Technology aids our understanding and helps us to share our stories, but the real learning and the true work will always continue to be in the field, at the head of the classroom, on the streets of the United States and in the villages, forests and slums of India.

In cooperation, community comes in many forms. One autumn afternoon many years back, sitting on the steps of a travel agency in Dehradun, I saw three young boys meandering through a dusty street, weaving in and out of motorbikes, pulling a rope of some sort, though what they were dragging I could not ascertain. In due time, I realized that these kids were dragging a big, massive magnet rolling and flopping and weaving along one side of Dehradun's

main street, Rajpur Road. They were hoping that a rupee or a necklace, a ring or some keys might get caught in its timeless pull. That vision has always stayed in mind. It is a reminder that spirited innovation, along with leadership and greatness, combined with community, comes in multiple shapes and sizes and creates many levels and layers of inventive creations.

We must take a minute or an hour, a day or a week, to step back in order to experience the living world around us, in order to have a conversation with a neighbor, a friend, and a stranger. Technology may be a tool to share our successes and failures, yet real community building must take place on dusty roads, next to overflowing rivers and on the banks of dry streams. We must never forget the power of the human touch. For no matter how much they try, pie charts and excel spreadsheets will never be human nor express human experience. We must share bread and water, laughter and tears, both together as neighbors on this large globe and on a local level, as smaller communities in the villages and cul-de-sacs of our world. These are the places where communities and innovation are built and maintained. No matter where technology takes us, no matter what each and every one of us does, we must never forget that our vital work is in the field. It is and always will be a lifeline.

4

Grandma Knows Best: Total Ignorance of Self and Leadership in International Development

by Brian Heilman

"Immaturity lies only in total ignorance of self. To understand yourself is the beginning of wisdom."
– J. Krishnamurti, *Freedom From The Known*

Michael Jackson accomplished it in eight words set to a perfect pop groove. Gandhi accomplished it in just three words still etched on the conscience of the world.

It's a simple idea, one you already know.

But since you have joined me in my introspective, autobiographical moment, I'm going to give credit to my grandma for the earliest iteration of this message to hit my ears. Her version took four words: practice what you preach. There it is. If you're short on time, feel free to get on with your day. You have hereby been reminded to practice what you preach, to start with the man/woman in the mirror, and

to "be the change." Give props to grandma, Michael, and Gandhiji, and go forth.

As I approach the point where I have spent a decade of my life working toward objectives of social change, I find myself repeatedly encountering the same crisis of identity, the same "total ignorance of self," that Krishnamurti mentions in the quotation above. This holds for me, it holds for our professional field, and perhaps most damningly it holds for my country: who are we to be demanding any great change in the world when we don't have our own injustices figured out?

I agree that this point is painfully obvious, with extra emphasis on *painful*. It is no less important for being so.

Currently, I help advise small nonprofits around the world who work to reduce the prevalence of violence against women in their communities. Although we're based in the U.S., my colleagues and I help design and then evaluate many kinds of violence prevention projects around the globe. We do good work, and because our partner organizations are so diligent we ultimately have a role in improving the safety of thousands of women.

As a professional working to end violence, I am accustomed to the development field's usual cocktail of emotions. I feel, as I imagine many of us do, a deep sense of reward and meaning from organizing my life around such an important objective. At the same time, I can suffer serious bouts of depression due to the heavy subject matter surrounding me on a daily basis. This too seems customary

for our field. Challenge, reward, even sadness: these are emotions we excel at. But we're considerably less adept at introspection, I'm finding.

It's Our Culture

Let me share an extended example from my work. In most of our projects around the world, courageous educators from our partner organizations engage their peers and neighbors in conversations that attempt to deconstruct the *cultural* underpinnings of violence in their communities. Often, we find, the first line of defense among empowered stakeholders in these communities is the idea that certain violent acts are "their culture" and thus sacrosanct. As we work to craft the perfect messages to challenge this cultural defense of violence, the interplay between culture and violence becomes a matter of daily importance for people working in this field.

But I'm saddened to be realizing how un-self-aware we are when analyzing this interplay between culture and violence. How can we miss the big picture so badly, so often?

It is easy for us, especially those of us based in the West, to stigmatize those specific "cultural" behaviors underpinning violence that the international community now renounces. Child marriage, polygamy, and female genital cutting come readily to mind, among others. To be sure, it is truly a breakthrough that the world is increasingly paying attention to these issues, legislating against them,

providing support to survivors, and bringing perpetrators to justice. The cultural relativist defense of these violent practices – the one claiming that "child marriage/polygamy/female genital cutting is our culture, and outsiders have no right to tell us otherwise!" – is rightly being rejected in the defense of "universal human rights."

But rejecting the cultural relativist defense of violent practices isn't, after all, the same as concluding that culture and violence have *no* connection. Culture and violence *are* intimately connected. *All* cultures still do a great deal to exacerbate the crisis of violence against women – even our own!

Part of this problem is probably the fact that it's easier to stigmatize a discrete, subjective act of violence than to deconstruct and eliminate the complex web of *structures* and *symbols*, themselves no less cultural in nature, that underpin dynamics of violence.[1] In what might be called my own native culture there may be somewhat fewer discrete acts of violence against women that are immediately reprehensible in the way female genital cutting is. But hidden in plain sight, even with the most cursory "glance in the mirror", are endless examples of structures and symbols supporting violence in all of our proverbial backyards.

At a structural level, our governments continue to prioritize violent means of conflict resolution instead of

[1] My three-part taxonomy of violent acts, structures, and symbols references a similar framework set forth by Slavoj Žižek in Violence: Six Sideways Reflections. (Macmillan, 2008).

opting for alternatives. The U.S. government allocates more money to its military – itself a crucial cultural archetype for violent conflict resolution – than the rest of the world combined. India's approach is similar, aggressively expanding its nuclear weaponry and keeping Kashmir the most heavily military-occupied territory on earth. But this problem extends far beyond the Pentagon or New Delhi. Consider this: it is common for spectators at a seemingly apolitical "cultural" event like a football game in the U.S. to cheer a flyover by fighter jets. It is unlikely that any attendees acknowledge this moment as a "cultural underpinning of violence," but I believe that is exactly what it is. In that moment, we who purport to be the world's leading proponents of universal human rights are in effect celebrating violent conflict resolution.

Our symbols and language, from school textbooks to popular TV shows and beyond, also continue to uphold violence. To an uncritical ear, the message still rings loud and clear: men and women are unequal, and sometimes violence is the only way to resolve conflicts. Media representations of women and men still rest on rigid, unequal, and violent stereotypes not as a matter of routine, but as a standard of excellence. The highest-rated U.S. TV comedy series of recent years, "Two and a Half Men," centers almost entirely around the alcoholic, misogynistic exploits of Charlie Sheen's main character. Commercial breaks provide no respite, as young men learn that using a certain deodorant will make women their sexual possessions. Research shows time and again that

the inequitable attitudes proffered by these symbols link directly to a man's likelihood to perpetrate violence against a woman, and even to the likelihood of a woman justifying that violence.

These examples are only a tiny sample of all that exists. Of course, there are important dissenting voices and nonviolent structures/symbols across the globe as well. And it is important to recognize that culture is neither static nor uniform, even though certain self-entitled groups might try to claim sole cultural authenticity, whether it is the religious right in America or adherents of *Hindutva* in India. Violence is certainly not the *only* authentic characteristic of American or Indian society. But at the end of the day, even in the absence of widespread child marriage, polygamy, and female genital cutting, some 22% of women in the USA have experienced intimate partner violence in their lifetimes. In India this figure nears 40%, and no data in either – or *any* – country suggest a downward trend in this violence. Something far beyond any assortment of discrete violent acts continues to drive this phenomenon.

All of this leaves us as activists with a much bigger task than sanctimoniously rejecting the cultural relativist defense of violence against women. Instead, we need to understand and dismantle the complex ways in which *all* global and local cultures support the practice of violence against women. This is not easy work, and it impels us to turn our gaze at least as much inward as outward. We can't expect our quote-unquote "beneficiary" communities around the world

to unravel the violence in their cultures when we refuse to recognize the violence in our own.

War on War

What exactly does this mean in action, you might rightly be wondering. Certainly no single activist can, simply by acknowledging violent structures and symbols in her/his native culture, quickly and fundamentally transform them. It would be unproductively cynical (if not tragic!) to abandon our good work around the world until our home countries transform into nonviolent, egalitarian utopias. But actively acknowledging the pernicious violence in our home cultures will, I believe, help us to recognize similar violent structures and symbols when they permeate *our own work*.

Yes, I am suggesting that our work to prevent violence (or to promote equal access to education, or to empower women economically) can itself be violent, or unequal, or disempowering. And here is where young leaders in our field have the most opportunity to dramatically increase the effectiveness of our efforts at promoting nonviolence and empowerment by applying the skill of critical introspection.

Consider another easy example from the violence prevention field. Our policy advocacy efforts have coalesced in recent years around a bill, introduced in the last two congressional sessions, called the International Violence

Against Women Act or IVAWA. This bill has powerful supporters in Congress and the Obama administration, including Senator John Kerry and Vice President Joe Biden. If passed, though that is extremely unlikely in the current Congress, the bill would drastically increase funding for violence prevention projects around the world, among other steps.

However, IVAWA also contains a prominent example of unwitting symbolic violence. The most recently introduced version of the bill opens with the overarching objective statement: "To combat international violence against women and girls." Read that again. Yes, "combat" is the second word of the bill. So militarized is the U.S. legislative environment and approach to foreign affairs that even an effort to *reduce* violence is done by "combat."

Sure, it's only one word. But those of us working in this field know that terms like this are ubiquitous in our professional language. We routinely "target" our beneficiaries, or "mobilize" a "strategic intervention" to "trigger" nonviolence. Huh?

This is not, in my view, a superficial critique. I believe that the use of military metaphors reveals a powerful subconscious violence in our problem-solving thought process that can undermine the effectiveness of our work, no matter how well intentioned. Our lack of self-awareness about our hypocritical language is likely to be far more evident to our beneficiary communities, who have not yet learned to tune out these inappropriate metaphors, than

we ever consider. A leader whose language gets in the way of her message will never persuade anyone. I'm proud of the Center for Women's Global Leadership at Rutgers University, the creators of the global 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence and Militarism campaign, for their recent focus on militarism as a particularly potent driver of violence against women.[1]

In addition to the symbolic violence of our field's figurative language, structural violence permeates violence prevention and development work as well. The new vigor for philanthropy among multinational corporations comes to mind as a particularly salient example. The very existence of these corporations, who grow and succeed by squelching competition, destroying natural habitats, and amassing wealth for an elite minority, clearly contradicts the goals of economic equality and nonviolence. Yet due to the enormous financial resources they are now making available for philanthropic or humanitarian purposes, we as practitioners face the difficult decision between rejecting these donors in principle (and perhaps failing financially) or aligning our well-intentioned work with what some are calling corporate "greed-washing." When we predictably choose the latter, we suddenly find our work to prevent violence dependent upon the violence of resource extraction, hostile takeover, and capitalist competition. With friends like these, to borrow another phrase, who needs enemies?

[1] Read more about this very self-aware move at the CWGL's website http://16dayscwgl.rutgers.edu

The Leader in the Mirror

So here we are. We've acknowledged the breadth of violence in our own cultures and then explored how this violence can manifest symbolically and structurally to undermine international violence prevention work. I suppose that, to an extent, I was trying to persuade you with the various points and observations above. But more importantly, I was trying to model the type of introspection and "knowledge of self" that I find conspicuously absent in international development work. It's up to you to accept or reject the points above, and more importantly to apply this type of introspection more specifically to your country, your culture and your corner of the international development landscape.

But when you do, please don't forget the most important introspection of all: that which happens between you and the leader in the mirror. For while each of us is unlikely to wield individual influence over the dynamics I've identified above, from global militarism to corporate greed-washing, we do have influence over ourselves and by extension our peers, colleagues, friends, and advisors.

First and foremost, of course, reject violent acts. But also, please do take the time to examine how you model nonviolence, equality, and empowerment in your immediate words and actions. At an individual level, abandon the hypocrisy that our countries and professional fields still exhibit.

Make an effort to root out violent, disempowering structures and symbols from your interaction with the world. Wherever interruption and one-upmanship prevail in professional meetings, offer compassionate and attentive listening. Where everyone around you advances only her or his own ideas, reframe the discussion with that endangered conversational tool: the sincere, non-rhetorical, non-sarcastic *question.* I honestly believe that these lost arts – active listening and sincere curiosity – are powerful ways not only to model empowerment but also to improve the effectiveness of professional teams. One can structure teams and meetings, too, in such a way as to empower. Bring together many different types of people, for instance, to promote equality and diversity of ideas as opposed to further entrenching any singular "expertise" tied to one school of thought or educational credential.

The point is not simply that these are the morally right things to do, though of course they are. These are also more effective ways of advancing the international pursuit of nonviolence and empowerment – than the less self-aware, less grandma-approved methods. As we have seen, there are still far too many countries, organizations, and leaders hoping against hope that the "change they want to see in the world" will come about in spite of their failure to model this change.

Krishnamurti said that understanding oneself is the beginning of wisdom. I have attempted to apply this insight to leadership in international development by arguing that

our "total ignorance of self" not only keeps us from wisdom but also undermines our efforts to affect meaningful change in the world. The only antidote to this ignorance is the proven formula that grandma and Gandhiji proclaimed long ago, with a healthy dash of our out-of-practice introspection! May we heed their advice, and may our organizations and countries soon follow suit.

5

In Search of Community

By Kirsten Anderson

As we cross cultures and continents, accumulating frequent flier miles and following trending topics on twitter, finding community is becoming more complicated, more impenetrable and yet more fluid. As development practitioners in an ever-increasingly global world, we need to redefine community and our place in it – at home and abroad.

As an AIF Fellow living in India, community did not come easy initially. It took time, but it was omnipresent. I slowly found it as it found me. Community came in the form of the aunty downstairs who lectured me about coming home late (especially as a single woman). Or the colleagues I ate lunch with everyday that freely shared their various curries, vegetables and rice dishes as if it was a potluck and told me when I needed to add more chilies or salt to my attempts at South Indian food. Or the *annas*, brothers, that ran the fruit stall outside the temple, near the bus stand

whom I would pass on my way home from work. They knew which mangoes I would like and accommodated my horrific language skills with grace. Over time these people quickly became my built-in community. I was dependent on them for services, products, conversation and friendship.

Finding community in the United States, after living in Asia for seven years, has been a challenge. Community as interaction and relationships is not a built in feature of the "communities" we live in. Co-workers sit quietly in the lunchroom. "I'm on my lunch break," they say if you try to engage them in conversation. Neighbors knock on your door to complain about your wind chime, but do not to welcome you to the neighborhood. And fruit stalls are limited to weekly seasonal farmers markets or plastic perfect rows of produce at the local grocery store. After living and working in India for over four years and Japan for three years, and feeling a part of multiple communities, returning to the United States has been alienating. It feels as if our communities are in crisis. Instead of engaging with and knowing the people I interact with everyday I sit at my computer searching online dating profiles and social networking sites such as meetup.com to find community.

Our cities in the United States have been built and developed around our reliance on the family car. We need houses with two and three car garages to keep the cars safe at night. We need large sprawling parking lots to house our cars while we shop. And we need wide suburban streets to transport ourselves between the shopping malls and our

homes. We have built communities around cars, not people. Consequently, we spend significant time in our cars – alone – listening to the radio, yelling at bad drivers and wishing we were with the people we loved. We have built a country in love with cars, not community.

The bustling and sprawling city of Chennai, India, on the other hand, is a network of fishing villages that have swollen to the size of a metropolis. The villages were originally designed and built to accommodate bullock carts, animals and pedestrians – a smaller more local grid that relied on human interaction to function and prosper. Today, the city struggles as cars, buses and trucks flood the narrow roadways. Modern engineering and design has added the ring road and overpasses to transport vehicles through congested neighborhoods not originally built for cars and trucks. But in the narrow avenues and side streets, a sense of community – the acceptance, enjoyment and reliance on others – still exists. Neighbors are your family, colleagues share lunch boxes and the fruit vendor knows your favorite mangoes.

Living, working and serving in India was a unique experience. It forced me to interact with the people I relied on and spent time with everyday. It forced me out of my comfort zone and into a community that is active, alive and warm. It forced me to build relationships with everyone around me. In comparison, the United States feels cold and stale. My attempts to interact with my community in the United States have often left me feeling lonely and

alienated. In our big houses and driving our big cars it is more convenient to live without interacting with anyone in our community.

However, in an effort to nourish my own community, I have made a personal choice to live life less conveniently. I do not own a car and rely on my bicycle or public transportation. I closed my accounts at a national bank and started banking with a community bank where the employees remember my name and offer me a cup of coffee. During the holidays I made all my gifts and only shopped at grocery stores, local businesses and thrift shops. But I still struggle to find the warmth of community that I felt in India. I still do not know my neighbors or the people I buy my produce from.

Americans have happily imported Indian culture. We have commercialized yoga, drink the Starbucks version of chai and Whole Foods sells tiffin boxes as a sustainable food storage alternative. But perhaps we need to import ideas of community from India. Our communities need to be redesigned to focus on relationships and people instead of feeding and sustaining our vehicles. For example, neighborhoods need small business centers where people can shop locally and leave their cars at home.

Living life in a first world "developed" country again, reinforces the idea that the first world is not to be a model for other countries. What does "developed" mean for India or Uganda? What does that community look like in those countries? Perhaps the first world should be asking Indians to start local grassroots community development projects

in Harlem, Detroit or even the bike-loving farmer market haven of Portland, Oregon. Perhaps there are some lessons Americans can learn from India and other developing countries?

As development practitioners, we must understand and discuss what community is before we can develop it. What type of community environment and relationships are we trying to foster? What standards and ideas of community are we using when we discuss "community development" globally versus locally? As returning development practitioners, how do we nourish our communities in the United States? The United States is facing a crisis of community. Understanding and building healthy communities is the most critical challenge of the future.

6

Funding Community Organizations: Helping and Hurting

by Lauren Logiudice

We are living in a time of profound change. Individuals and communities throughout the world are awakening to the fact that they have the power to balance inequalities in their communities. There is a sense that the powers that have not been responsible with their authority and that the time has come to change that reality. The fate of development organizations in both the United States and India is either to work with this change or lose their mission my resisting it.

Development work, by definition and construction, is inherently flawed. The groups that are targeted for "development" usually do not have adequate resources. The financial backing to create these resources must then come from outside the community. Sometimes the development organization has a top-down method in which programs are created without involving the community in a meaningful

way. Sometimes the development organization deploys grassroots methods of program development. Other times an organization will form from the efforts of concerned community members. In all cases, resources to sustain development programs come from outside the community they serve. This creates a conflict with community needs and available resources.

The mounting protests across the world in the past two years show that communities are starting to question the influence of power. This means the communities that are served by development organizations will have growing

Some of the protestors sent to represent Sangama

discontent with the conflicts inherent in obtaining resources from outside the community. This presents an enormous opportunity for development organizations to evolve into more effective agents of change.

While working with Sangama in Bangalore, I observed how a grassroots organization must struggle for its autonomy to obtain the resources necessary for growth and survival. Sangama was founded in 1999 as part of a MacArthur Foundation Fellowship by community member and founder Elavarthi Manohar. The organization originally provided a space for sexuality minorities in Bangalore to meet and help each other, but quickly grew into an information,

Sex Workers Rights protest in 2006

education, and activist center, and then later into a crisis intervention and resource center. Because it was founded by community members its goals were closely aligned with community needs.

The MacArthur Fellowship was an outside resource. When the Fellowship ended, so did the community's resource. Sangama then needed to obtain other sources of income. Since the sexuality minority community does not have the resources to support the organization's efforts, they searched abroad and obtained several grants and eventually began to partner with the Gates Foundation's Avahan HIV prevention project, Karnataka Health Promotion Trust (KHPT). This partnership provided much needed revenue to open more community centers and to expand outreach services.

KHPT did try to involve the community in the decision making and program creation, but the mandate of the funding changed Sangama's focus as an organization. The expanded services, which now constituted more than half of Sangama's total programming, were geared towards HIV prevention and men on the gay spectrum (simply using "gay men" excludes the multitude of identities that exist within the culture such as "kothi" and "panthi", local terms that are more complex than Western terms). What started as an organization to work for rights of all sexuality minorities, both men and women, turned into an organization that works primarily for HIV prevention and gay men.

Sangama's mandate and mission have not changed. Publicly, they advocate for the rights of both men and women

At a Sangama community center in Bangalore

on the gay spectrum. It is impossible to ignore, however, the deep impact that the increased funds for HIV had on the organization's programs and focus. The partnership with the Gates foundation required significant energy from the program coordinators, as there were extensive requirements for compliance. Female community members spoke out about the growing disparity in services and there were a few attempts to integrate women into the new programming, but what could the managers really do? The new money was for HIV programming aimed toward men on the gay spectrum and the managers were responsible with making sure it was spent that way. Thus, outside resources affected the development process for sexuality minorities in Bangalore.

Sangama's activist wing was a unifying factor for the community. This should come as no surprise because Sangama fostered a sense of responsibility and duty in all members of its community since its inception. Most people who received services were involved in activism. The grant money had changed Sangama to a large degree but it was only because of the efforts of the leadership that the organization still maintained this aspect.

During my tenure at Sangama there was considerable momentum to coordinate protests for the repeal of Section 377, a piece of legislation in the Indian Penal Code that criminalizes homosexuality as an activity "against the order of nature." This law was revised by the High Court of Delhi in 2009 to exclude homosexuality, after the coordinated efforts of community and law groups.

In 2006, I attended a massive protest in New Delhi for the repeal of Section 377. Sangama was a participating organization in this protest and was able to bring individuals from different sections of the sexuality minority community to New Delhi. This healed some of the wounds caused by the funding dilemma. Such activism was a method for community members to channel rage against the *status quo* and create action for change. When everyone returned to Bangalore they were reminded that inequality within the organization still exists, but for one day different factions of one community were united to work for a common cause.

Funding for a community organization will inevitably come from the outside and this will present problems. As the

protests around the world suggest, people are increasingly aware of inequality inherent in the *status quo*. Direct action empowers community members to challenge this oppression. Development organizations are part of the *status quo*. It is their responsibility to determine how to help their target community while giving up their own power in the process.

7

Service-Corps: Lessons in Leadership and Sustainability

by Marc Alongi

Reality check: the naïve college graduate experiences it not long after arriving in a "3rd world" country with noble aspirations. Mine came twice. First, after I realized that my service job description was only a vague idea. Second, when my reserves of optimism dovetailed with a waning "romanticization" of rural Himalayan life. Initially I was patient when I was told by my mentor, who was also the CEO of the NGO, that I wouldn't actually be coordinating an effort to address the need for vocational programs for students in classes 10-12. Instead I was told to observe the NGO's model school, Ashram Paryarvaran Vidyalaya (APV), and think of ways to improve it. So, I humbly took my new notepad and spent three weeks observing the teachers, students and life of the school. During that time I was approached repeatedly by teachers who asked if I would

The APV School

teach English. Because I hadn't come to teach English, I respectfully declined and ultimately made the dreaded phone call to my project coordinator in Delhi.

I didn't think I'd be the one to give up on my service corps placement. But the challenge of working to move beyond the *status quo* within that organization seemed like an insurmountable hurdle. The model school, which had received significant sums of money from a large international development agency, had spent fifteen years steeped in a teacher-centered pedagogy which valued rote learning like all the other schools in the area. There was no effort to go beyond this. To top it off, I frequently saw the faculty resort to corporal punishment to address discipline

problems and lack of scholastic achievement. In an effort to be open-minded to cultural differences, I consciously withheld my own perspectives on education, hoping to find positive outcomes for students. Unfortunately, I found students who were afraid to ask questions and share ideas in class and spent much of their energy conforming to the rigid expectations of the teachers. Few of them found joy or had a genuine interest in learning. I also didn't see any indication that the administration or faculty had any interest in improving. Not only was there a void of learning, there was only a façade of accountability.

The project coordinator in Delhi picked up the phone on an October day and was excited to hear from me. I was one of the few who had unpredictable access to a landline telephone and no internet. She listened to my grievances. Perhaps the cathartic session allowed me to muster the courage to think outside the box and seek out alternatives before abandoning my placement. I confronted my mentor, with whom until that point I was unable to honestly communicate my doubts and frustrations. Surprisingly the aging man, affectionately called Uncleji, suggested I take a trip down to Dehradun to visit Anand Dwivedi, an educator and former employee of the NGO.

Anandji and I spent our first four hours together sitting cross-legged in a small room, in his friend's house where he was staying. The floor was covered in blue upholstered hand-made mats. The walls were bare and hundreds of copies of Anandji's latest book, *Dance of the Bee*, were

stacked horizontally on the shelves. Time disappeared as our conversations developed fluidly from discussions about education and history to psychology and spirituality. I left inspired, giving Anandji a long hug that I'll never forget and an agreement that he'd come up to the school in the mountains and lead a workshop for the teachers.

As I reflect on that day eight years ago, I now realize that meeting to be at the core of leadership and change. The conversation was symbolic of what would come. It was, at its core, bursting with courage, wisdom and integrity. Anandji agreed to facilitate a workshop at the school and made the trip up to the school with only a small backpack. During

Students using and managing the library

that week, we compared the challenges in the school with our own visions of what could be. The result: an inspired vision to do something entirely new. Perhaps the stars were aligned properly, but it so happened that the development agency was ending the stream of funding for the school at the end of that year and Uncleji agreed to help us take over the K-4 classes for the rest of the year as an experiment. Anandji never left. Today the school takes pride in the amount of student-led activity, high attendance rates and numerous music recordings by students. A large majority of alumni also score at the top of their class in the local high school examinations

The obvious question is how did we manage to make and sustain such positive change?

Building a Shared Vision

Anandji and I both knew that our shared vision, a result of our conversations, needed to be shared by teachers as well. The vision was to create a culture of mindfulness and relevance for both teachers and student learners. In order for teachers to understand that vision, they needed time to have first hand experience with the life of a learner. Above all, that learning had to be introspective as well. The teachers agreed to live together, work together and practice mindfulness through sitting meditation. Those were the teachers who came and stayed. These initial steps provided the basic structures we needed to sustain our core values.

Traits of the Leader

We decided to find high school and collegiate teachers who would be able to live in residence near the school. Many community members doubted that such young individuals could be effective teachers. However, despite a considerable amount of criticism from the community, the young teachers learned quickly and proved to be capable of effective instructional practices. Because of the culture of learning that Anandji and I created, the stage was set for Anandji's natural leadership traits to blossom. His charisma and wisdom captivated the teachers. He tended to their learning and their questions, patiently creating real learners in his teachers and building a deep sense of trust.

Symbolism and Values

Gradually, students learned to help manage and direct certain aspects of the school routines. Groups of students became involved in the details of the morning assembly, a time for mindfulness practice and music. They chose the songs, organized the practice sessions and managed the instruments. Older students would also be responsible for the support of younger students during both the awareness practice and music. In the school's previous model, there were daily routines that included student participation. But there were few opportunities for the students to experience leadership. The values they were taught were more along the

Manisha

lines of obedience and duty, rather than awareness and stewardship.

Over the past eight years we have conducted frequent interviews with students regarding their perspectives on what they think about the school. I have been amazed at the frequency with which students are able to articulate the effects the school's culture has had on their learning, whether intrapersonal, social or academic.

Manisha – "Before I didn't know much Math, English or Hindi. Through meditation I've been progressing. I do not only meditate at school. I also meditate at home… sometimes for half an hour, sometimes for an hour."

Arun – "I was in fourth grade when the new style of education started in this school. After that we started learning new things and teaching them to other students. In this way the younger student will learn, and the one who is teaching will also learn because he is reviewing what he already learned. And this

Arun

knowledge goes deeper into the mind of the teacher… When a child is teaching another child, the learner learns very fast because the two are friends."

Assembly became a symbol for the heart of the school and the organization. Anandji capitalized on this. During tough times, he called special assemblies where we would always first do awareness practices focused on the breath, body and bird sounds, music and then have a discussion. On one occasion there was a theft in the school. A special assembly was called and after music, Anandji described the situation. We sat in silence for two minutes until a girl in the fourth grade class stood up with tears in her eyes and claimed responsibility. If we believe that trust is a core value to any organization, we have to provide a safe space where individuals can express ideas and share vulnerabilities. It was clear to everyone that there was no need for a punishment. The student vowed to return the item and shared her sincere apology. Rarely have I seen this approach to problem solving, or such a response from a student. I attribute it to the symbolic space of Assembly. There is nothing different about the room itself, but students respect it as if it was sacred. Perhaps, having a common vision and shared beliefs, allowed teachers and students to find even those more introspective, and sacred, moments of collaborative learning.

On another day, I walked down the rainy path from our teachers' residence, Ganesh Bhawan, thinking that I was the only one late to Assembly. The bell had sounded and the noise of students playing in the yard had subsided.

I rushed to the Assembly and placed my shoes outside the door. Inside the students were sitting in meditation. I looked for Anandji. He wasn't there, nor any other teachers. A big smile came to my face and I sat, closed my eyes and drew in a long breath. In education circles, the best discussions are focused on what students do. It was clear to me at that moment that many of the students in that room had a deep understanding of what the school is about.

Culture of Learning

There are two dimensions to the culture of learning at APV. The first has to do with the teacher as a learner and the second with student as a learner. One of the central problems we encountered during our workshop days with the teachers from the previous program at that school was that many of those individuals had what Stanford psychologist Carol Dweck would call a "fixed mindset," that is, a mindset that precludes one from even attempting to learn something new. It was rare for those teachers to identify gaps in their own knowledge and teaching practice. Anandji and I both knew that the culture of learning we sought to create would need an inspiring environment. This requires that the leadership, including teachers, must deeply engage in the process of social, emotional and academic learning themselves.

As the community of teachers cultivated a "growth" mindset, it became natural for them to share their plans for student learning. They engaged in collaborative

Shanti, an APV teacher, conducting a Math lesson

brainstorming about how to address issues in the classroom. Over the past eight years, I've watched a number of teachers who arrived at APV with little understanding of Math, poor reading skills and no English, emerge with creative Math activities for students, become avid readers and learn better English than the English teachers at the local high school. Not only is the spirit of learning contagious for the students, but it is yielding better curriculum, assessment and instructional practices.

Empowerment and Distributive Leadership

Another aspect of leadership that has brought APV to where it is today, and will continue to be an element

on which the sustainability of our project depends, is distributive leadership. This refers to the empowerment of the teachers to take on greater responsibility and begin to see themselves as change agents in the field of education. Real change is largely a question of enhanced human capital. Much depends on those who not only themselves live passionately and are open to great ideas, but also have the courage and wherewithal to guide others in the process. This is at the heart of APVs challenges for the future – to be a model school producing leaders who have integrity, a passion for learning and an understanding of organization and human resource development.

Challenges of the Political Leadership

Within any organization there are different constituencies with different visions and values. One of the most significant challenges for APV in the beginning was creating and protecting a bubble within which our team of educators and students could learn and grow without excessive distraction and interference from community members who held different opinions about education. But as APV's program gained support from larger numbers of parents in the villages, there remained the challenge of maintaining constructive dialogue with leaders of the organization hosting APV. Over the past couple years, APV's leadership team has made efforts to build bridges with it's parent organization's leaders, working to develop a common vision. However, this process

has been fraught with conflict and fundamental ideological differences. It is now of paramount importance that the leadership at APV uses this political frame for examining opportunities to create allies and minimize conflict that could interfere with APV's future growth. Much of the headaches and heartaches we have experienced since 2003 have been related to inter-organization political conflicts and conflicts with development agencies with which APV contracts to host teacher education workshops. Effective leadership requires constant communication with other leaders that may be able to support the work of APV.

Change

From the fall of 2003, Anandji and I had a shared vision of what we believed would inspire and engage a community in learning. It has been deeply fulfilling to watch the project exceed my expectations and change the way I view what is possible when individuals collaborate to make change. After leaving the APV campus in 2005 to pursue a Masters of Arts in Teaching, I thought constantly about the transformative experience I so serendipitously fell into. I've returned every year (except for one) to spend part of the summer with the students and my close friends on the APV team. Even though I keep in frequent contact through Skype, it is reinvigorating to experience again the energy that is noted by countless visitors to APV. I have also watched the school evolve and change. The flexibility of the organization to change and

learn, without losing sight of its vision, has been one of its strengths. Certainly, the future is unknown and the ability for the APV team to innovate and embrace challenges and opportunities is of utmost importance.

As I look back to those initial moments of doubt and disbelief as an American India Foundation Service Corps Fellow new to life on the mountainside, I feel a profound sense of gratitude that I have been able to experience what has turned out to be deep and sustained change. Sustainability is not a matter of scale. Much to the chagrin of so many counterparts and professionals in the business of development, I have continued to stick with my heart. When you see deep change in a community and experience firsthand your own transformation alongside colleagues with whom you have developed strong bonds of trust, it is easy to understand the idea of sustainability. Our story and accomplishments have spoken for themselves and we've been able to find funding to continue the project along the way. In any organization, large or small, sustainability is always an issue and it doesn't always center on money. The APV experience helped me realize that it is equally, if not more important that organizational leaders address the problem of sustainability by sharing and communicating not only a common vision, but a vision that comes from a place of integrity, love and inspiration.

8

Representation Through Resistance

by Marjorie R. Schulman

Popular movements of resistance can compel societies to value and implement inclusive policies and practices. These movements give voice to the needs and opinions of economically and politically under-represented individuals, and in so doing facilitate the growth of democracy. Resistance movements across the world and throughout history have resulted in increased inclusion of majority demands in decisions that impact societies, communities, and families. Popular movements that effectively galvanize a cross-section of people alter public discourse and can lead to long-term impacts such as changes in laws and political landscapes.

This essay will highlight the Singur controversy in West Bengal and the Occupy Wall Street movement currently reverberating throughout the United States and beyond, as examples of resistance movements that serve as counterweights to the imbalance of power between the minority of individuals who hold economic and political

power and those who do not. I will also highlight how movements have the potential to help bridge the gap between popular opinion and public policy.

During my AIF Fellowship in Kolkata, in 2006 and 2007, I was drawn to reading daily accounts of the events occurring at the time in Singur, a town in West Bengal. It was in Singur that the state government had permitted a private company, Tata Motors, to locate a new plant to manufacture the low-cost Nano car. In order to facilitate the takeover of inhabited and fertile farmland for this purpose, the government applied a law that permitted land to be taken for projects that benefit the public. In Singur farmers' land would be taken in order to accommodate one of the wealthiest multinational companies in the world.

In the name of industrialization the state government began the land acquisition and hand-over process without adequate explanation about the project or any real dialogue with individual farmers. In the absence of real consultation there was little buy-in by the local farmers. This was coupled with a historical understanding that the government could not be relied upon to act in their best interests. Thus many farmers stood up to demand that their interests be heard and together they opposed the development of the plant.

The resistance in Singur grew into a movement as farmers formed alliances with NGOs, middle-class intellectuals, activists, and political Opposition Party leaders at the state level. With the entry of nationally known figures and Opposition leaders, the movement gained greater

recognition and press coverage. This increased pressure on Tata and the state government. More than two years after farmers galvanized this movement Tata announced that the plant would pull out of West Bengal and move to Gujarat.

Today, the aftershocks of the Singur controversy remain. Farmers whose land had been unwillingly confiscated await the return of land deeds. Meanwhile, farmers who voluntarily gave up their land for compensation, the promise of improved infrastructure, and a new market for their goods and services, are left disillusioned and with few income-generating opportunities. At the state level Mamata Banerjee, a figure who had been the primary voice of the opposition party and the opposition to the Tata location in 2006 was elected Chief Minister of West Bengal, partly as a consequence of the Tata resistance movement in Singur. Today, the Chief Minister seeks to entice Tata Motors back to West Bengal.

There are a number of takeaways from the Singur experience. The ongoing collective resistance of the farmers and their allies affected the economic climate in West Bengal and demonstrated that large influential corporations do not hold unchecked power. The situation also demonstrated that directly affected communities must be able to participate in real dialogue and decision-making in the early stages of development projects that will affect their communities and families. Greater stakeholder engagement and participation in these decisions would potentially signal more democratic and equitable development practices.

The Singur controversy underscores the complicated environments within which resistance movements come to life. These movements are also influenced by and concurrently influence the world around them; they take in historical memory and provide the groundwork for future ideas, tactics, hopes, and expectations. In 2007, as resistance in Singur strengthened, farmers in Nandigram, a rural area of West Bengal, also rose up collectively, in this case to oppose the State government's hand-over of their land for use by chemical companies. The coexisting movements in Singur and Nandigram not only influenced each other, but also stimulated national discourse and debate about the role of the State, land-rights, corporate power, and issues surrounding industrialization. However, both movements paid heavy prices for their resistance, including the deaths of residents, and reports of rape and brutality by ruling party members and police.

Resistance movements throughout the world are interconnected and influence one another, particularly as social media becomes more accessible and widely used. Historically some resistance movements in the United States have incorporated and adapted ideas and tactics from India, particularly Gandhi's methods and philosophies. Recently, international reverberations from resistance movements in Egypt, Tunisia, and elsewhere influenced the mobilization of Occupy Wall Street in the United States. Not only were Occupiers inspired by the power of mass resistance but also the need for a home grown mass movement in the U.S.

Occupy Movement solidarity poster in English

became relevant to more people as more Americans directly experienced the impacts of an economic downturn. Occupy Wall Street's principal slogan "We are the 99%" is broad enough to enable individuals, often with disparate interests, from around the country and the world, to identify with and gather under the communal umbrella of the 99 percent.

The Occupy Wall Street movement has sought to underscore the ever-widening gap between those with wealth and those without, and the increasingly influential and powerful corporate interests that disproportionately influence the political landscape. In a short period of time, Occupy Wall Street has succeeded in forcing issues of socio-economic inequality, homelessness, joblessness, and corporate power to the forefront of American consciousness and discourse. Whether one agrees with the ideology or not, the terminology of the 99% has spread throughout households, educational institutions, the halls of Congress, and all forms of popular media to become a generally recognized principle.

In November 2011, during a visit to Kolkata, I saw posters, in both English and Bengali, calling for a march

in solidarity with Occupy Wall Street, saying "We are the 99%." The posters not only remind us that the world is watching the actions of the US, but also demonstrates the influence of Occupy Wall Street's rhetoric and the ability for cross-cultural identification of the movement's underlying message. The long-term impacts of the Occupy Wall Street movement cannot be predicted, but both supporters and detractors around the world are paying close attention to what will come next. While we should be careful not to overemphasize the impact so far of the Occupy Movement, we must acknowledge the power of the message and successful alliances that the movement has already fostered.

The Occupy Movement has the potential for long-term change if the message is kept at the forefront of national and international discourse, the movement's tactics remain flexible and adaptable, and communities continue to work together for the ideals and ideas that the movement has put forward. Like the farmers in Singur, the Occupy Wall Street movement has the potential to force decision-makers to consider the interests and needs of the people who are directly influenced by their policies and in so doing shows participants and observers the power of their own collective action. The movement also serves as a reminder to those with economic and political power that their decisions will be closely scrutinized. Importantly, successful collective action also has the power to influence and inspire individuals and communities to take action on the issues that matter most.

As income inequality grows and corporate interests are increasingly influential in political decisions, particularly in India and the United States, popular resistance movements are essential to ensure that the interests of those with little economic and political power exercise influence. However, it is also important to recognize that resistance movements are influenced by a variety of external circumstances and stakeholders, including the largest development donors and NGOs. Arundhati Roy writes about the "NGOization of resistance," referring to the way in which some NGOs and their largest funders play a role in muting resistance movements. She argues that large NGOs are beholden to their donors, which tend to be large development agencies many of which represent political, corporate, and/or Western interests that are not directly connected to the communities that are being served.

These large NGOs may offer services that had previously been provided by the state or would otherwise be demanded as rights by citizens collectively. In this way, the largest funders play a role in placating communities by funding NGOs to carry out projects that are smaller in scale, less effective, and less influential than they could be if demanded by a movement of citizens. Roy argues that as citizens become dependent on the services provided by these large NGOs, an understanding of their own collective power and even their basic rights changes, further limiting collective resistance. The Singur protests were successful in forcing the relocation of the Tata car plant because they became part of a larger movement that

Occupy Movement solidarity poster in Bengali

made collective demands and asserted political pressure.

In a functioning transparent and participatory democracy community members should be involved in ongoing dialogue with elected officials and others whose decisions have significant impact on their lives. Because this ideal is not often a reality, popular organization becomes necessary to advocate for the demands of affected communities and individuals. Popular movements of resistance have, in many cases, been the only successful counterbalance to the proliferation of projects and decisions that do not represent the interests or needs of the people who would otherwise have little influence in these matters, but who experience the greatest impacts. In this way, resistance movements sow the seeds for more inclusive and representative democracies.

While resistance movements have life spans, the energy and ideas generated by them live on, sometimes through leaders who continue to advance an issue as well as through individuals and communities who are

empowered by collective action. Resistance movements may gain momentum while concurrently facing complicated internal struggles, particularly regarding their leadership. While farmers initiated the Singur movement, political figures later took on leadership roles. The Opposition Party became the mouthpiece of the movement, which may have strengthened the message but also changed the face and tenor of the movement.

On the other hand, in the case of Occupy Wall Street, despite the existence of fewer encampments and no clear leader, the ideas generated by the movement continue to inspire action and discourse around the world. There is no single formula for inspiring collective action and initiating popular movements. Resistance movements that fight for inclusion, justice, and a say at the tables of power should themselves abide by the principles for which they fight. Participants should have a voice in the decisions being made on their behalf. As systemic inequities persist and our world becomes more deeply connected, all citizens will be faced with opportunities to support, participate in, disregard, or oppose resistance movements. No matter how we choose to engage, neutrality is no longer a viable option.

9

Public Health is Common Sense

by Matthew French

India brought me to public health. I spent a year on the subcontinent after finishing my undergraduate degree, volunteering at a Buddhist nunnery in the Spiti Valley, riding trains across the length and breadth of the country, cruising the north and through Nepal on a Royal Enfield motorcycle, and finding retreat centers and good friends along the way. This journey changed my life – spiritually, emotionally, and professionally. Originally, I had planned on returning to the United States to pursue a degree in clinical psychology. But during my travels, I saw what I considered to be more critical needs. After witnessing the positive effects of various nonprofits, particularly an impressive clean water project in Bodh Gaya, public health seemed like a discipline through which I could make a solid contribution and ensure my return to India. While I clearly had a romantic view of health and development work then, idealism was a great motivator.

At that point, public health was a nebulous concept in my mind – it had no flesh. My professors in the Community Oriented Public Health Practice (COPHP) program at the University of Washington realized that most people had very little idea of what public health actually means. Therefore, our first task was to develop a working definition. I must mention the cruel methods of the COPHP program professors, who enjoyed seeing us struggle, get frustrated, fail, and, most of all, learn. As with most of our assignments, we came to the conclusion that there is no black and white, no right and wrong, and often no agreement among leaders in the field. Most everything is imprecise, vague, and some shade of gray.

Sir Donald Acheson defined public health as "the science and art of promoting health, preventing disease and prolonging life through the organized efforts of society." This is a sound definition, but from my perspective, the discipline of public health is something simpler and more comprehensive – it is common sense action, based on empirical evidence and a respect for individual human rights, resulting in positive health outcomes. At its best, public health is data-driven, rights-based, implemented without dogma, self-interest, or judgment, and its principles are the way toward true global leadership.

I have often commented to colleagues that the most interesting characteristic of public health is its counterintuitive nature. Sometimes we take actions that seem to contradict our desired outcomes. My favorite example of this is syringe

access programs (SAP). As the HIV pandemic continues to ravage the United States, particularly in low-income communities and in communities of color, one proven way to reduce transmission of the virus is through increasing access to clean syringes. Moreover, reducing transmission is only the most visible benefit. Evidence suggests that SAPs also reduce syringe-associated abscesses, reduce death due to overdose, increase safe injection practices, and increase entry into drug treatment. The data tell us that these benefits to users and their drug and sexual partners occur without any increase in drug use, unsafe syringe disposal, or crime. However, it is not surprising that many people find it difficult to rationalize facilitating a dangerous method to administer illicit substances, even though research overwhelmingly supports the effectiveness of SAPs.

Joshua M. Sharfstein, M.D., Principal Deputy Commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration, has said that "syringe exchange is now accepted as a proven intervention by all the respected scientific authorities… It's successful at getting people to treatment… it's successful against HIV." In 2009, President Obama signed the Fiscal Year 2010 Consolidated Appropriations Act, which ended a 21-year ban on using Federal funds for syringe exchange – a huge step in legitimizing SAPs. Despite this positive movement, however, we must ask the following questions: Why has it taken so long to get this far? Why have SAPs not been widely adopted as an effective intervention strategy throughout the country? Why are SAP clients often arrested

for paraphernalia violations in areas where carrying syringes with proper identification is legal?

I believe that this is the result of an inability to move past one's own biases and see what is truly in the best interest of those affected. This kind of thinking has led to high HIV incidence rates, an invisible and marginalized population of syringe users, an intolerant environment, and a serious threat to public health. Although President Obama has taken great strides toward promoting common sense public health practices in this area, SAPs are still illegal in many States and local jurisdictions. This intolerance exemplifies the leadership crisis we now face in which we elect individuals steeped in dogma, blinded by self-righteousness, and motivated by self-interest.

SAPs embrace a harm reduction approach to health. While providing syringes to active drug users does not immediately bring about the desired end result of eliminating substance abuse altogether, the approach reduces the amount of harm suffered by users and the community. Similar to this philosophy, and in a sense encompassing it, is the rights-based approach often used in public health.

When living in Uttarakhand as an AIF Fellow, my partner and I attempted to implement a rights-based approach to providing HIV services to female sex workers. In the remote, though relatively large Nepali border city of Pithoragarh, sex work is an underground occupation. Many staff members of our host NGO did not even believe sex work existed in the city. Moral judgment and an inability

to see sex workers as people first and foremost created an environment of intolerance and fear, and completely halted work on the project.

Through several workshops on applying a rights-based approach to engaging sex workers, staff at the NGO began to put aside their personal views and became motivated to investigate the realities of sex work as well as the needs of the sex-worker community. Although the work still presented numerous challenges, the team slowly began implementing the intervention and we have heard that the project is now producing positive outcomes. This is another example of rigid views and projected morals sabotaging effective service provision and health promotion. It is essential that we realize these individuals have unique experiences and needs – that they may have completely different values and come from completely different cultures. It is critical in serving syringe clients and in engaging sex workers to "meet people where they are" – without judgment. This approach shows a deep respect for the individual and creates an open, cooperative, and empowering environment. To me, this really makes sense.

To improve global public health, it is also critical that we take a rights-based approach to foreign policy and national security. Irresponsible rhetoric, such as the phrase "Axis of Evil," dehumanizes populations and leads to prejudice and discrimination against whole cultures and religions. What I find most surprising is that this kind of rhetoric is often rewarded by an increase in votes! I support securing the

United States and other targeted countries against the threat of extremism, but our methods do not seem to be yielding the desired outcomes. If we look at it critically, paid and obligated war bills are in the trillions; soldiers continue to return from overseas with a host of physical and emotional ailments, which apart from the toll on individuals, families and communities also includes a huge financial burden; we have seen the slow creep of repressive security policies; we are psychologically brutalized by State-sponsored killings (similar to the effects of the death penalty); and even extremely conservative estimates put violent deaths from both Iraq and Afghanistan wars in the hundreds of thousands.

How do we give extremists this kind of power? How by the spectacular, yet militarily unimpressive, September 11 attacks have extremists succeeded in seriously affecting our nation's public health? "Tough on terror," while seemingly a sound security strategy, is increasing extremist recruitment, draining the national treasury, and creating a global environment hostile to Western powers. As a result, we are cutting, spending for social programs, health, and defense to offset the runaway debt of the last decade's two wars. Thus, we will be less healthy and less prepared for a more serious conflict. Somehow, that does not make sense.

The goal of this essay is not to promote syringe access and sex work, or to denounce armed conflict. Rather, my motivation for citing these examples is to illustrate the extremes of common sense. Our way forward is through

making a rights-based, logical investigation of the issues. It starts by looking at situations from the viewpoint of the people affected. An injection drug user, even though engaging in risky behavior, has the right to protect him or herself against contracting HIV and hepatitis – our judgment of that behavior should not factor into public health-policy decisions. Similarly, we can look at the war from the perspective of a young Afghan man. What kind of feelings will he experience as the result of violence in his community? It is not difficult to see how he might be influenced to enlist in the ranks of an extremist organization.

I believe we need to live by the reality of cause and effect – to become more outcome-oriented in our decision-making. Recently, I was asked how we could affect this change in our local, national, and international leadership. My answer was that we become the leaders we want to see – in our communities, in our workplaces, and in our nation's political offices. We elect leaders who will govern from a common sense approach and we influence policy through writing, research, discussion, debate, and dialogue. We must hold true the democratic principle that we are the drivers of our nation and create movement toward justice, health, and good old common sense.

10

Sustainability as "Meaningful" Development

by Nicole Fox

The problems of the developing world are no longer confined to remote peripheral villages. Through pictures, media, blogs, and a new generation that is more focused on travelling abroad and relaying their experiences home, the needs of developing countries are becoming better publicized and understood the world over. As those needs are understood and familiarized, people are moved to address them. The number of NGOs that are operating in India, and the number that continue to surface each year, are a clear testament to the willingness of both native citizens and foreigners to devote significant time, capital, and effort to development efforts.

Though well-intentioned, the vast volume of initiatives – from livelihood generating social entrepreneurship to efforts that address neglected tropical diseases – are not enough to make the impact needed. To find comprehensive solutions,

development workers must be invested in the country for the long term. The real, lasting solutions come from the unsexy side that cannot be encapsulated in a colourful photograph: the slow establishment of connections within a community, the patience to listen and observe before taking action, the muddling through Pilot Ideas E-H because Ideas A-D just weren't quite right, the difficult attempt to quantify qualitative programs and measure impact. Evaluating the true need for and impact of an intervention requires organizational humility to modify as needed. This is what constitutes truly meaningful – lasting – development work.

During my year in India, I consistently saw a great number of NGOs that were attempting to address similar problems in the same community. Instead of working with one another, or taking a step back to rationalize whether their idea for community improvement was not already being implemented, many groups simply went ahead with their proprietary solution. For example, many organizations are addressing health-related issues in southern India. By acting in isolation to improve health outcomes, individual NGOs or clinics lose out on valuable epidemiological data that can help track the regional spread and/or control of a disease. Though the efforts are partially effective in addressing some needs, each of these organizations could have benefitted greatly from external assessments and collaboration, rather than competition.

As the global village has become interconnected the systems needed to support that interaction have become

equally complex. Humans, by nature, act primarily in self-preservation, reacting to what they can see and feel around them. For most of our existence as a species, this self-preservation helped small groups react to changes in their environment and respond accordingly. Now that our environment is much larger, our reaction to what we see and feel can have ramifications far beyond what we can see. The products we buy, the cars we drive and the food we consume – all require transfers of energy and resources outside of our vantage point. Making sustainable choices with all of them requires an enhanced global cognisance. Many of these choices can even seem to oppose our immediate sense of personal well-being. For instance, we can choose more expensive products or less convenient methods of public transportation that are eco-friendly.

Fostering a sense of global responsibility for our actions is what I believe will be our greatest challenge over the coming century. From individuals to governments, there must be both personal awareness of the consequence of our actions, as well as institutionalized incentives to make more sustainable choices. Given the recent tangible changes in climate as well as worldwide economic stagnation, many people are starting to understand the gravity of our current tipping point. The current dissatisfaction with and overthrow of governments the world over are clear indicators that people are at least partially ready to change the current paradigm.

I believe the current state of political unrest is more an opportunity than a challenge. In a time of political

change, we have the opportunity to install leaders who do think beyond immediate needs, and will work with other leaders to ensure resources in the future. Regardless of any immediate election outcome, unrest with the *status quo* is gaining momentum. I believe it is this momentum that will begin to change choices at the community level, and eventually build a movement that will need to be addressed by those with more political power. It is up to each of us to do our part to support this momentum.

The greatest way that we can foster a more ethical society is by consistently advocating preferences that support better economical, social, and environmental outcomes. For example, we may not always be able to have our vote translated into a political figure or political decisions that we agree with. But, we always have the power to articulate what we prioritize through what we consume. If we consistently prefer products and services that are more conscious of our own impact and the impact that we have on others, companies will respond accordingly to market demands. Institutional and governmental change is slow, but pocket purchasing power will always elicit a quick response.

I believe I do some of my part to be a responsible global citizen, but I also know that I can do much more. I make an effort to buy organic and fair-trade food, but capitulate if I feel the price difference from a typical product is too great. I bike as much as possible, but roll out the car when I haven't planned well enough to accommodate biking time or want to go further than my city limits for recreation. I try

to reuse containers as much as possible, but contribute to a fair amount of disposable coffee-cup waste during long days and nights. I think that my own struggle, and awareness of it, mirrors the experience of many of my peers. The best way to keep encouraging my own improvement and the consciousness of others is to plant the seeds of awareness, to ask why others continue a certain unsustainable practice and listen when they do the same to me. By tactfully pushing each other to adhere to more sustainable practices, I believe that we can each do our part to make more conscientious decisions that are applicable and practical for our daily realities.

America and India both exert a great amount of leverage on the world stage – for very different reasons. Though waning, America's historical economic and political clout still places it at the forefront of international decisions. With growing economic and political power, the sheer number of people and innovations within India's borders are poised to exert far more influence. I believe the biggest strengths and weaknesses of both nations are the same: the desire for political power and leverage on the world stage. For America, now faced with an inevitable decline in unilateral world power, innovation will be imperative to retaining influence. For India, innovation will similarly be the shift that allows the country to capitalize and build upon its resources.

Both nations cannot obtain or maintain their global leverage if they do not do so sustainably. As America's economic and political power decreases, so too will its ability

to avert international censure of its energy and resource consumption. For India to be welcomed into the political circle of developed nations, they must find ways to develop that do not follow the destructive patterns of the developed nations a century ago. Both nations have the opportunity and ability to use these restrictions as positive influences, creating economic opportunities that can enhance the rights, health, and well-being of their societies in tandem with global influence.

It will take the coordinated effort of both individuals and nations, in both America and India, to foster ethical choices that can benefit local communities as well as ensure the rights and health of all global citizens.

11

Ramblings from a Jaded "Development" Worker

by Pooja Bhatia

Have you ever spent time in a village trying to understand why more than half of the population is not accessing the newly built clean drinking water facility? Have you tried to explain to a daily wage labourer to no avail that despite her low income of Rs.100 a day, buying a bottle of filtered water is actually saving money on future health expenses? Even though clean drinking water is considered a fundamental right and usually taken for granted in the West, according to water.org, 1 billion people globally lack access to safe drinking water, resulting in 3.5 million deaths each year from water-related diseases of which 84% are children. This means more than 6 people die each minute due to unsafe drinking water.

While potable water is a problem in BanGothodi, the small village in Rajasthan where my organization spent time understanding consumer purchase decisions, it is still not

a major concern. After our time in a handful of villages of northeastern Rajasthan it became clear that there is no particular potable water solution for all of these villages, nor one that will work across India. Each community has its own struggles, values and ideas of development. My experience as someone working in the Indian development sector has led me to question the real *goal* of development – is it providing basic human rights, arming communities with tools to change or is it short-term economic growth?

While development programs are created with the best of intentions, many times these programs are not looking at development holistically or within its current political, economic or cultural context. Problems exist across all levels. The lack of checks and balances, inadequate monitoring and evaluation techniques and misunderstanding the needs of communities are main reasons why we still cannot solve some of the most basic problems. In the years ahead, to address these problems that plague the sector as a whole, we need to create a new system of evaluation. We also need to properly assess the needs within communities by encouraging innovative leadership and promoting a holistic view of development – one that ensures equality in access to infrastructure, policy-making and governance across all segments of society.

Many philanthropists are happy to donate money to an organization, but does anyone *really* know where the money goes or who is held accountable if a program fails? Private funders and organizations often do not know what happens to their money once it is donated. Unlike businesses which

are driven by the bottom line of financial profits, social ventures and NGOs many times have no way to measure their impact.

One reason could be that the sector does not have a universal method by which to do this, most programs are evaluated on different measures and reported on with various indicators without a single standard by which to evaluate programs against each other. Another reason could be that NGOs and social organizations have ill-defined goals and deliverables, no proper monitoring and a lack of checks and balances allowing for inaccurate assessments of programs. With such miscommunication how can we ensure that a program is actually succeeding? While in pockets across the world, some development programs have improved lives at the micro level, the amount of money that has been spent on global development initiatives is astonishing and the scale of persisting, even basic, problems is *even more* appalling.

The very structure of NGOs and social organizations often contribute to poor programming. NGOs are often stuck in the vicious cycle of looking for funding, designing projects and implementation all within very specific guidelines set forth by funders. Additionally, NGOs are put under tight budget constraints, reporting requirements and donors looking for positive results, many times leaving NGOs no other choice than to alter results and outcomes to ensure the continuation of programs.

For instance, if the budget for school books is inaccurate this will be very detrimental to the project. If the budget

is too small, not enough books will be allocated and the program will be inefficient and poorly run. If the budget is too large then this gives the NGOs extra resources, which are often mismanaged. While social enterprises are taking a positive step towards moving projects away from the cycle of grants and funders and instead making sustainable business plans, there is still a significant gap between all the stakeholders – communities, funders and implementers. Whether a program is failing or succeeding, it is valuable to learn what needs to be revamped or what parts are working effectively to replicate in new areas. Understanding the failures, which are seldom talked about, can help to replicate models, experiment with innovations, and implement successful projects in the future. With more transparency built into the structure of programming from funding to implementation, NGOs can focus on creating a greater impact.

Aside from problems between funders and implementers, many times the values of NGOs do not match up with the values of the people who we are trying to help. Why do villagers want to pay for water when they get water for free, albeit full of fluoride, from the government? You say they can live longer, healthier lives, but do they want to? Since some of them can afford a TV selling clean drinking water should be easy, right? As it is with so many development programs, the perceived needs and the actual wants of the recipients are not taken into consideration when programs are literally pushed onto a community. Not enough value

is placed on education and outreach on the importance of basic services from the point of view of villagers. NGOs often design projects based on what funds are available in particular regions, not always reaching the poorest of the poor or evaluating the best option in the current context.

One NGO I worked closely with in Chhattisgarh had worked in almost every single sector over the last twenty-five years – from HIV awareness to creating livelihoods, from creating Self Help Groups (SHGs) to eliminating the use of child labor in the surrounding areas – constantly following the funders wishes and "hot" media issues. None of the programs that were once implemented are still running or even being monitored anymore. The recipients of aid often have no choice in the matter – money comes in for problems that can be easily summed up and neatly boxed or those that sound glamorous, while problems that are very simple remain unaddressed.

While we know that treating HIV receives funding worldwide, how many programs stress the importance of hygiene and sanitation and the building of proper sewage infrastructure? HIV is now more easily understood while no one wants to discuss the other shit (pun intended). This poses a huge fundamental problem in the way programs are designed and implemented and in the end, improving life in a community. Needs assessment is often poorly executed and does not accurately capture the voices of a community.

Although NGOs, and more recently social enterprises, are creating pockets of change in small corners of the world,

often the results are not in sync with existing programs or the current context of the region. In many areas, the corruption of politicians and the lack of infrastructure in urban slum areas are huge problems that are left aside while organizations are willing to provide smaller "quick fixes." While these social organizations are filling voids that governments cannot seem to fix, are we actually taking the easy way out by finding a Band-Aid solution to a problem?

Well, in the case of many communities in Rajasthan, the problem is that the water provided by the government is full of fluoride. Who is holding the government accountable for this damage? Once the Band-Aid solution runs out of money or falls apart, the same problems will exist in the community, unless we fix the root cause of the problem. There is not one answer that will remedy all, just like a business in one town will not necessarily flourish in another. Each program needs to be evaluated against similar programs in the country, or across the world, but also viewed in its own context. Instead of trying to fix a problem with aid, maybe we should focus on arming citizens with the information they need to file a Right to Information application or provide a forum for them to voice their concerns based on their current situation.

The peaceful protests against governments worldwide, Anna Hazare's movement and Occupy Wall Street, are steps in the right direction as they are providing a platform for citizens to voice their concerns. Development sector representatives can arm citizens to fight for their rights,

provide them with the tools they need to articulate their problems, and support them to stand up against unaccountable or unresponsive local panchayats by learning the rules that govern the societies in which they live.

When we Serve-Learn-Lead we should also develop new ways of thinking, not be afraid to reveal programs that are failing and be truly honest about what we are actually doing and why we are doing it. With any new creation, the secret is in the foundation – let us focus on the solid building blocks like infrastructure, education and policies that can shape the movement and ensure long-term growth. Education that inspires creativity, problem solving and empowerment is the key. Otherwise, when the potable water plant breaks down in the village of BanGothodi in Rajasthan, what is left? …Who is held responsible? …Who suffers? …And who moves on?

12

Cautiously Optimistic About India's Development

by Renita Shah

As an American-Indian whose parents immigrated to the United States, India has been near and familiar throughout my life. I recall the long distance and poorly connected phone calls in 80's, being pulled out of primary school for family trips in the 90's and the buzz and dinner chatter about India's booming economic ascent by 2000. Varied cultural aspects, from visits to our local *mandir,* the spices in the food, to the ever famous Bollywood film and music, instilled a very natural and personal connection to India. Yet it wasn't until my university years that I became curious and drawn towards India's social and economic issues.

Through an education that focused on International Economics and Development, I became challenged by questions that addressed global and local inequalities across areas including income, gender, health, education and access

Spending time with Kutchi artisans during my time with Khamir

to resources – dilemmas that India's poverty can throw in your face. After spending some years working in the US in consulting and research, I felt personally mature and professionally capable of contributing skills to a position of service and leadership in India and joined as an AIF Fellow.

I chose to serve as a Fellow in order to contribute my resources and time to an NGO, develop skills and experience in the development sector, and gain insight into both the causes and potential solutions to social and economic disparities at the grassroots level. I worked with an established local NGO, KHAMIR Craft Resource Center,

in the Kutch District of Gujarat. KHAMIR works to sustain traditional Kutchi craft as a viable local livelihood and help rural artisans become wealth generating enterprises. For example, KHAMIR provides handloom weavers, block printing and metalwork artisans, among others, with a platform to market and sell their products at a fair price. Taking a holistic approach KHAMIR also provides program inputs including design techniques, quality improvement, product diversification, business management training, and access to financial products such as loans and health or life insurance policies that can serve as safety nets for the entire household.

I recall completing my Fellowship journey with a feeling that I needed more time to expand the breadth and depth of my project work in areas such as artisan health insurance and access to capital for small enterprises. More time to learn from my colleagues about their varied areas of expertise. More time to build relationships and listen to the communities, the backbone of my learning. And finally, more time to understand the complex, and often contradictory practices that make up India's political, economic and social systems. While I am no expert, two critical challenges that struck me most from my work in India were the institutionalized corruption and the deeply embedded gender inequalities that occur at the household level.

In a nation touted as the world's largest and most robust democracy, India incongruously functions with one of the most corrupt government bureaucracies. Through project

work, I made multiple trips to the local government office and was both baffled and amazed by its functioning chaos. During one visit, I encountered an official who described to me how he and his family had been uprooted and transferred from his 15 year posting because he challenged and refused to participate in corrupt processes. He further described how, now, it is easier and wiser for him to just blind an eye and abide by the corruption rather than to challenge the deeply rooted system.

Throughout 2011 as I watched TV and read newspapers, I witnessed India's extraordinary grassroots anti-corruption demonstrations inspired by activist Anna Hazare and the movement for a strong Lokpal Bill. I am hopeful that this is a testament to the awakening of a new generation of citizens that refuse to accept corruption as the *status quo*. As an American-Indian, living internationally, I struggle to find where I fit into the process of such change. For now, I believe educating myself, voicing my opinion and serving as an activist through remote movements, petitions, or blogs that expose the injustices is important.

The second challenge that both saddens and drives me to stay involved is India's incessant discrimination against women and girls. While I've read several news reports and books on gender inequalities, I came face to face with the silent discrimination that women and girls face at the household level while working in India. I interacted closely with a village family that chose to send just one of their four children to school, leaving the others behind to assist

with the household duties. Not to my surprise, the only son went to school and the four daughters stayed behind. After developing a good rapport with the women in the house, I inquired into this and was received with a nervous laughter and response of "*that's how life here works*". I visited another village where I heard of an elderly man, recently widowed, who had paid for his new teenage bride, likely sold against her will. I met women who were physically and verbally mistreated by their husbands.

In its preamble, India's Constitution guarantees gender equality as a fundamental right, but in practice there is minimal accountability. The last fifteen to twenty years have witnessed a surge of conventions, organizations and policy initiatives geared towards gender equality and women's rights. This is all a step in a positive and progressive direction. But the continued challenges of changing social norms, practices and human behavior remain. In order to achieve this, I think it is critical for more attention to be garnered towards social and behavioral change. I realize this is easier said in writing than done in action, but challenging practices and traditions that violate human rights is so important to break gender discrimination which is too often accepted as an inevitable norm.

Needless to say, I left India with far more questions than I came with. But what is most important to me is that I left with very different questions, which I hope is evidence of the learning and unlearning that took place. Almost two years since my Fellowship ended, I remain cautiously optimistic

about India's development and progress and continue to stand committed to addressing poverty, inequality and social justice. I have also gained more clarity that meaningful and sustainable development, be it addressing government corruption or gender inequalities, requires a change in society's power relations – an issue that is less often addressed.

Going forward, I strive to challenge myself to be a leader that is not afraid to question the unquestionable and be a bit bolder in my activism and project work. This last year of political upheaval has seen examples of such bold and brave activism through both the Arab Spring and global Occupy Movements. While the context of each differs, I do think there is a similarity in that they reflect an underlying social unrest and frustration with current uneven power relations that favor the few. Further, I believe they demonstrate the power of individual action and leadership through means of peaceful, mass demonstration. It is too early to understand what the outcomes of such movements will be, but it is hard to not be inspired by the courage and drive of such grassroots leaders.

My personal journey of service and leadership will continue to unfold as a process of learning – learning about India, learning about development and learning about myself.

13

Integrity as Development

by Sarah Spear

It was on a trekking trip to India in 2006 that I witnessed the basic unmet needs of Fellow humans and realized that I might play a role in delivering much needed services to remote, mountainous areas in emerging markets. I left my job at an American financial institution and moved to India as an AIF Fellow in 2007 to determine if I wanted to move into full-time development work in India.

I ended up living in India for three years. Following my Fellowship with the American India Foundation, I co-founded a social enterprise that I led for two years before returning to America where I currently live. When people ask me what I think of India, I say that I love it. The richness of culture, the height of the Himalayas, the closeness of community – nowhere else on earth is life lived so vibrantly.

When people ask me what I think of America, I say that I'm grateful to be back. I savor each moment with family

and friends. I now more fully appreciate the predictability of daily life and ease of navigation. This slower paced life in America has provided time and space to reflect on my experiences, particularly of running a business in India.

Integrity is a theme that runs throughout my experiences. I witnessed the presence and lack thereof with ample opportunity to also witness the outcome of such situations. Based upon what I observed, I would posit that increased integrity increases the collective impact of development efforts. I would go so far as to define development, at least in part, as increased integrity.

I think back to my most vivid memory of *baksheesh*. My company provided alphanumerically coded labels to pharmaceutical manufacturers. Manufacturers applied these labels to their medicines to safeguard medicines against the threat of counterfeits. We were anticipating a delivery of labels essential to our operations. A government agency put forth an expectation of a kick back to release the order of imported labels. I had heard about local third party consultants whose services were interned to handle these situations.

My business partner and I decided we would neither consider expediting our shipment through a small side payment nor would we hire a third party to handle the situation. Not only were we accountable to a US-based board that might question the use of such consultants but also our indignation rose at the idea of paying extra for something that was ours by right. Thus began the prolonged process

of filling out innumerable forms, generally in triplicate, running said forms back and forth between offices, and visiting the government office daily until our shipment was finally released.

My purpose in sharing this story is neither to pin responsibility on the shoulders of government nor to hold up my company as the shining star of moral fortitude. Rather, this story illustrates the institutional challenges integrity faces. These challenges are often exacerbated in emerging markets which are exactly where development efforts are focused. I provided this story to serve as a starting point from which we can begin to unravel what must shift in order for integrity to increase.

When thinking of this story, I always return to the question of origin. Why is *baksheesh* expected? Let us examine possible motives of the person expecting more than his or her usual salary. Perhaps their pay is too low to support the cost of living and this is a way to cushion their salary. Pay disparity between junior and senior officials at an office has implications for integrity. Can we label an office as full of integrity when the business head makes many, many times more than the lowest paid worker? The practice at Whole Foods, an American natural grocer, of making the salaries of all employees public has always intrigued me. What might change if I did that at my office?

Returning to the question of origin, is it possible that a kick back is expected as a means of acknowledging or appreciating the person responsible for moving the process

forward? If this is the case, then their salary is no longer sufficient recompense for doing their job. Each transaction presents a new opportunity to receive a tip for services rendered. But these motives leave responsibility in the hands of a limited fraction of employees and do not account for corruption at higher levels within organizations. Let us expand our consideration to why integrity is sometimes absent in the marketplace. Ultimately, corruption occurs because it is tolerated. It has become common practice and generally accepted.

Allow me to use this interlude to reflect upon geographical implications for integrity. I do not mean to imply that corruption exists in only one country or in only one sector of the marketplace. I reflect upon this particular issue because the evidences of integrity and lack thereof are unique in my home country (America) and in the country I called home for a time (India).

When corruption in America is uncovered, it quickly becomes a media spectacle, publically shaming the guilty parties. Company names such as Enron, WorldCom, and most recently MF Global come to the mind of any American who follows the news. Pay equity has come under close scrutiny as of late and corruption is not tolerated as evidenced by regulations such as Sarbanes Oxley. Such regulations indicate America sometimes experiences a dearth of integrity yet these regulations also indicate that action is taken to continue developing America and increasing integrity in the marketplace. As we consider development

efforts, I return to the importance of integrity particularly in emerging markets like India. Development, by definition, means growth and advancement. With that definition in mind, development requires advancement from corruption to integrity.

What needs to shift in order for integrity to increase? It may sound noble for a company to declare that they will stand up against bribery yet that can often be like shooting yourself in the foot. Standing up against an institutional practice requires both fortitude and willingness to deal with the consequences. Getting back to the previous real world example, my company's intolerance of corruption resulted in a lengthy delay of receiving goods critical to our operations. It meant that I had to call our customers and explain we were delayed in delivering our services. It meant that our competitors had more time to catch up to us. It meant that my American board had more opportunity to question why we chose to do business in India. These consequences presented significant barriers to the company's development work in India.

What if companies were to take a collective stand against graft? While there would surely be short-term consequences, the long-term benefit of increased trade and equity would result in development. Recent trends to counter corruption in India encourage me. The anti-corruption protests of last spring highlight the Indian people's desire for development. This may give us hope for a future characterized by integrity. The direction industry takes, however, depends largely on

the convictions of business leaders. We may hope that they desire positive change as much as those protesting against corruption. This applies equally to the for-profit and not-for-profit sectors, where leaders have the opportunity to advance their organizations either with integrity or by corrupt means.

Let us not forget that an upcoming generation of leaders watches our every action. We serve as examples and may serve as mentors for those future influencers. When opportunity arises to promote on the basis of meritocracy or nepotism, let us choose the fairer way of promotion on the basis of merit. When business associates come to us, looking for preferred treatment or insider information, let us refrain from leveraging our positions of influence for corrupt means. This may result in distancing ourselves from associates who do not equate development with increased integrity. But hopefully we could be concurrently creating a strong ecosystem of like-minded professionals willing to take a stand.

A collective call to action serves a purpose but we each must then choose which path we follow. If we each begin today to stand up against corruption and not tolerate it, then we really may create a groundswell that would increase integrity. The decision is critical and the timing pertinent. Development is hindered when people lack integrity. As individuals who dream of opportunity and equity for all, let us band together and today commit ourselves to this dream of development and the fight for integrity.

Ten Years On: My Love Affair with AIF's Fellowship

by Sridar Iyengar

Ah! The Fellowship. It conjures up images of good, evil, hobbits and elves, the Middle Kingdom, and more. In a way I suppose the American India Foundation's (AIF) William J. Clinton Fellowship for Service in India has all those elements, and it has been my privilege to be associated with the program as its Chair for the last several years.

I became involved with AIF during the first fundraiser following the Gujarat earthquake in 2001, which was the catalyst for the formation of the organization. At that time I was the President Elect of the Silicon Valley Chapter of The Indus Entrepreneurs (TiE) which in a way was one of the founding organizations of AIF.

In the ensuing weeks I saw groups of young people coming in and out of the TiE office. On enquiry, I was told that these were volunteers who had committed to go to India to work in Gujarat. They were being briefed at the TiE

office on their assignments and the ground level conditions in Gujarat that they would encounter (Orientation!!!). Encouraged by President Clinton, these volunteers would be the first of several batches of "Service Corps" personnel who AIF would sponsor beyond the immediate needs of the Gujarat earthquake and its aftermath. It was at that time that I made the decision to get engaged with the program.

However, my pretty much full-time commitment to TiE as its volunteer President, first of the founding Silicon Valley Chapter and later the global organization, prevented me from active involvement with AIF until 2005. In that year Lata Krishnan, the then President and coincidentally the incoming Chairman of AIF, approached me to see if I would consider joining the Board of AIF. I agreed on one condition – I wanted to be involved with the Service Corps. And so began the involvement with the program which is now the AIF's William J. Clinton Fellowship for Service in India. It has profoundly changed my life.

For the last six years, at each Orientation of a Fellowship Class, I have admitted to the group that I was vicariously living through their experiences, something I could not actually do when I was their age. My fascination, even love affair, with the Fellowship concept started in the Sixties, when many members of the Peace Corps used our house in Kolkata as their base and shared not only their experiences but their Kool-Aids and care packages in exchange for my mother's idlis, dosas and sambar. I always wished that I could do something like that. President Kennedy was one of my

heroes alongside Jawaharlal Nehru, Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela. My parents had imbued in us a great sense of "service before self" and I could think of nothing more commendable than giving up a year or more of your time to work for the betterment of others. That is why I remain in awe and admiration of the young AIF Fellows.

Involvement with the Peace Corps had its advantages in the early Sixties. Which teenage boy would not trade places with me as I walked the streets of Kolkata with Martia Singleton (we still remain in touch), the tall, blonde Peace Corps volunteer who became another elder sister to me? It was Martia who all those years ago encouraged me to come to the US, a reality which occurred twenty-plus years later. So in a way the Peace Corps brought me to AIF's Fellowship just as their departure from India was the reason why President Clinton advocated the creation of the AIF's current program.

In the six years since I became involved with this Fellowship, I have had the privilege of meeting so many talented young individuals – some bright eyed and clueless about India, and others with prior experience of this complex country – which has profoundly changed them and also their host country.

The Fellowship is one of the best Leadership programs in the world. At a macro level, it matches gifted and committed people both on the Fellowship and NGO side, presents them with the enormous challenge of making a difference in their chosen area of focus and expects them to come up with

appropriate solutions. On a micro basis there is occasional frustration at both the personal and organizational levels (including AIF). But one thing is certain. Regardless of any real time assessment or perceptions of both the Fellows and the host NGOs about the success or otherwise of their respective experiences, in the long term both are changed for the better.

I recall one Fellow in the 2004-2005 class asking at Midpoint (the half-way briefing) whether his efforts were really accelerating India's social development. This need for a direct correlation of Effort to Impact (Reward) is often difficult to demonstrate in India. I tell the Fellows that they have helped India by just being here, giving many Indians the opportunity to interact with them on a daily basis. A key part of this Fellowship is to build the personal linkages, the silken threads which though frail individually, can collectively shape the future of both the US and India.

This is not just a statement of faith on my part. I sincerely believe that long after an individual Fellow has left India, their actions, ideas shared and disagreements aired will shape the NGOs who hosted them and as a result impact India's development. In my brother's terminology the Fellows are part of an effort to move the mountain one pebble at a time.

For me the Fellowship has always been about the people involved, the Fellows, the NGO hosts, the people they serve. I have often said that the Fellowship is the actualisation of our name – sending Americans to India to

build relationships – the "silken threads" of connectivity and understanding. Over the years I have interacted with hundreds of Fellows who have participated in this program. I still remain in touch with many. I have seen the ups and noticed the downs however, camouflaged it is from me. I have felt sad when some have left the program midway for whatever reason, particularly if it is the inability to cope with the challenges India throws up at everyone, *Firangi* (foreigner) or *Desi* (local).

Having grown up in India and now spending considerable time there, but having many of my ideas and expectations shaped in the West, I am sometimes at a loss to understand some of the concerns and fears of the Fellows. But over the years I have learnt a lot from the Fellows and for that I am thankful. I marvel at the ease with which Fellows settle into the Indian way of life, do something as mundane as using public transport and public toilets which the "soft" me is now unable to do, make new friends and travel to places off the beaten path and experience India in a way few do.

Whether they know it or not their daily activities are acts of leadership and collectively it will make them better, at least better prepared to face any adverse circumstances which life may throw at them. The Fellowship, without them even realizing it fully or acknowledging it, puts each Fellow on a different leadership track (in its true sense) compared to the rest of us. A few years ago in response to the question "Why India?" a young female applicant and subsequent Fellow stated "Where else do you get a disaster on one side

of the street and a miracle on the other"? Leadership is about recognizing both and being prepared to deal with it. Over the years AIF's Fellows have done just that.

So in this the tenth year of the Fellowship, I give thanks to all the people who have made it possible and successful. The Fellows themselves who I view as my extended family, the NGO hosts who took the journey with us, the many who provided financial support to the cause and finally the great group of AIF personnel over the years who have exercised their minds to make the program relevant to creating a new generation of leaders.

The challenge of any leadership program is to constantly re-invent itself within a core philosophical framework. To date, close to three hundred young persons have participated in this leadership program in its first ten years. The current 2011 – 2012 class is the largest with many firsts – the first Indian Fellows, the first Social Enterprise Fellows. Both are part of a series of experimentation which has seen the Fellowship change the mix of the Fellows selected for the program from primarily undergraduates doing their first stint of service, to one which has a good balance of first-timers and returnees (to such programs). We have broadened the choice of host NGOs to include those engaged in justice, human rights and governance, as well as the identification of a priority list of NGOs with which AIF wants to partner over a longer period in a common cause. This process of experimentation should continue with those producing good results being retained and expanded and the less than

successful one's being reworked if not abandoned. The end goal is the same – to take AIF's Fellowship and make it the most admired and sought after Leadership Development program focused on social development in India.

AIF's William J. Clinton Fellowship is in a way at a fork in the road. One of my favorite quote-meisters, Yogi Berra the famed baseball coach said, "When you come to a fork in the road...take it". We at AIF intend to do just that.

Sridar Iyengar
Board Member and Fellowship Chair, AIF

***Sridar Iyengar** holds a Bachelor of Commerce (Honors) from the University of Calcutta and is a Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales. He also serves on the Boards of Janaagraha Center for Citizenship and Democracy, Infosys Technologies, ICICI Bank, Dr. Reddy Laboratories, Mahindra Holidays and Rediff.com, among other companies/ organizations in the U.S. and India. Until March 2002, Sridar was a partner with KPMG LLP, where he worked in the UK, US, and India practicing across all disciplines – audit, tax, consulting, and corporate finance.*

Authors' Biographies

Aditi Desai was born in Franklin, New Jersey and graduated from Smith College with a BA in Psychology and a Certificate in Asian American Studies. In 2006, Aditi received a William J. Clinton Fellowship for Service in India and moved to Ahmedabad, Gujarat. During her yearlong stay she worked for Utthan, a local non-profit.

While working as a counselor at a NJ non-profit for two years, Aditi discovered a love for creating visual media. Wanting to pursue her passion, Aditi decided to head back to academia and recently graduated with an MFA in Film & Electronic Media from American University where she was a Center for Environmental Filmmaking Scholar.

During her time at American University, Aditi interned with the National Geographic Channel, Spark Media and Discovery Communications. She also worked as an editor and producer for the National Park Service and Blue Bear

Films. Her film, "Skipjacks: A Dying Breed", screened at the DC Environmental Film Festival, aired on Maryland Public Television and won a Student Emmy. Most recently, her web series "Remembering the Pacific" won a Cine Golden Eagle and her short film "Hawks in the City" won a TIVA-DC Peer Gold Award.

Aditi is currently a Leadership Year Fellow working with the video production unit at The Pew Charitable Trusts. She is also working on her first long-form, independent documentary called, "Entangled" about Uttarayan, the competitive kite flying festival, in Ahmedabad, Gujarat and its impact on both the avian and human communities. You can learn more about it at: entangledmovie.wordpress.com.

Ajaita Shah is the Founder/CEO of Frontier Markets. Frontier Markets is a rural marketing, sales, and service distribution company providing access to affordable and quality consumer durables to BOP households. It focuses on products in clean energy, agriculture, health, and water sanitation. Ajaita was an AIF Fellow in 2006. She has four years of experience in MFIs, such as SKS Microfinance and Ujjivan Financial Services. Ajaita has worked on numerous development projects in 7 states in India. She has consulted with the World Bank about Microfinance in South Asia and Latin America. She served on the Committee of the Social Performance Task Force set up by Ford Foundation and the World Bank for Microfinance. Ajaita Shah holds a B.A. in International Relations from Tufts University.

Ben Lenzner is a photographer, film maker, storyteller and educator. Born and raised in New York City, he taught for many years at the International Center of Photography and worked as an artist in residence within the New York City public school system. He has exhibited and published his work globally, including at Toronto's Nuit Blanche. In 2005-2006, he was a recipient of AIF's William J. Clinton Fellowship for Service in India. He is equally at home bicycling through the island of Manhattan or roaming the bustling streets of New Delhi. Recently, he completed a MFA in Documentary Media from Ryerson University in Toronto. Currently, he is a PhD student in the Department of Screen and Media Studies at the University of Waikato in New Zealand. Ben will be returning to India in 2012 to begin research on the impact of new video technology on vernacular forms of documentary media in rural and indigenous communities throughout the South Pacific and Asia.

Information on his work, films, research and adventures can be found at the following:

benslenz.blogspot.com

www.vimeo.com/benlenzner

www.benlenzner.com

Brian P. Heilman is a listener, learner, evaluator and advocate working to advance gender equality and end violence against women around the world. He is currently employed as a Program Associate in the Gender, Violence, and Rights portfolio at the International Center for Research on Women. Among other previous professional experiences in India and the U.S., Brian worked to advance adolescent girls' access to quality education in rural Murshidabad, West Bengal as part of the 2007-2008 William J. Clinton Fellowship. Brian speaks Bengali and still makes regular trips to his home-away-from-home in Kolkata and Murshidabad. Brian holds a master's degree in International Affairs from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University and a Bachelor's degree in English from Saint John's University in Minnesota. Brian also writes and records pop music in his free time. He is a proud native of La Crosse, Wisconsin.

The opinions expressed in this essay are Brian's alone and do not necessarily reflect those of the International Center for Research on Women or any of Brian's prior employers.

Kirsten Anderson recently worked with Room to Read as their Girls Education Program Fellow. As a Fellow she managed, researched and wrote the report, Through Their Eyes, In Their Voices, a research compendium of stories and data analysis on disadvantaged young women's transitions to university in five developing countries. Prior to joining RtR she was the English Reading Program Manager for 2 years at Aid India in Chennai under AIF's William J. Clinton Fellowship for Service in India. Her prior experience includes 3 years of teaching experience in Japan, 2 years at AFS Intercultural Programs and has been traveling to/from India working and volunteering in the education sector for 12 years. She earned her MA in teaching English at the University of Birmingham, UK and her BA in anthropology at Grinnell College. She can be reached atKirsten.a.Anderson@googlemail.com

Lauren LoGiudice was a AIF Fellow in 2005-2006. Stationed in Bangalore, she worked with Karnataka Health Promotion Trust (KHPT) and Sangama on HIV prevention. During her tenure she designed a study to evaluate the effectiveness of condom distribution programs. The research strategy was subsequently used as part of the KHPT research program. Lauren worked on community building with the lesbian outreach wing of Sangama. In May 2006 she helped coordinate the first conference for sexuality minority women in southern India.

Currently, Lauren is a working actor based in New York City. She recently returned to India as part of the ensemble cast of "When Harry Tries to Marry," a feature film, that opened in theaters last spring.

Marc Alongi is the Director of Curriculum and Student Support at the Sequoyah School in Pasadena, California. He continues to work alongside AIF service corps Fellows Chad Roberston (2008), Charles Ianuzzi and Samir Panjwani (2009) and John Van Rooy (2010) to support the growth of APV. Marc is also currently working on his doctorate in educational leadership at the University of Southern California's Rossier School of Education.

Marjorie R. Schulman is currently the Director of Partnerships and Special Initiatives at Nontraditional Employment for Women (NEW), an NGO whose mission is to train and place women in unionized construction and related careers. Marjorie manages a department that conducts outreach to potential partners, prepares women for employment, and implements programs that support the growing community of women in nontraditional work. Marjorie began her AIF Fellowship in September 2006, and was placed with Reach India, a Kolkata-based NGO that trains and provides educational content to rural women's Self Help Groups through a network of local social-enterprises. Marjorie established partnerships with a variety of stakeholders for this newly formed NGO, created marketing materials, and provided capacity-building training to rural entrepreneurs. Prior to her service in India, Marjorie served as the Program Director of two micro-enterprise development programs in Brooklyn, NY. She also lived and worked in Guayaquil, Ecuador, where she worked for Movimiento Mi Cometa, a grassroots NGO serving and advocating for residents of an informal settlement. Marjorie received a double major in History and Cultural Geography from Clark University and a Masters in Urban Planning, with a focus on International Development, from New York University. Born in Norwalk, CT, Marjorie resides in Brooklyn, NY.

Matthew French was born and raised in Northern Virginia. He received a B.A. in psychology from the University of California, San Diego and a Masters in Public Health from the University of Washington. He is currently an HIV technical assistance manager for a Federal public health contractor in the Washington, DC metropolitan area. Matthew started his career in group homes caring for abused children in Southern California. He has worked on projects for Futures Group International, the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation Emerging Infections Network, and Public Health – Seattle and King County.

Nicole Fox was born in Columbus, Mississippi. After many years and many moves between different states, her family settled in Kintnersville, Pennsylvania. Nicole attended the George Washington University from 2004-2007, earning a B.S. in Public Health and graduating *summa cum laude*. She spent the next year in the Philippines with a Fulbright research scholarship, researching the Measles Elimination Campaign and working with the World Health Organization to conduct a meta-analysis of parasite control programs in the Western Pacific Region. After a year of trail construction and maintenance back in the United States, Nicole spent 2009-2010 in India as an AIF Fellow, working with the YRG Center for AIDS Research and Education in Chennai. Based on her experiences at the clinic, she became inspired to pursue a medical degree. Following a season working as a construction labourer in Antarctica, Nicole returned to school at the University of Utah in the fall of 2011. When not buried in her chemistry notes, Nicole enjoys rock climbing, skiing, hiking, and exploring her Utah backyard.

Pooja Bhatia is currently searching for her next purpose and adventure. After spending almost two years in Chennai working with Centre for Development Finance (CDF), a non-profit think tank of the Institute for Financial Management and Research , she is ready for a change.

At CDF, Pooja worked as a researcher helping to improve the impact of market-based solutions through rigorous qualitative research methods. Her work was driven by her interest in finding synergies between the public and private sectors to impact community development in helping to improve clean technology and by increasing access to clean drinking water services.

Pooja first moved to India as a member of the 2008-2009 William J. Clinton Fellowship for Service in India. Based in Bhilai, Chhattisgarh she helped manage a livelihoods program benefitting disadvantaged urban slum and rural youth. There, Pooja worked on developing community awareness initiatives and growth strategy with AIF for similar vocational training programs throughout India.

Prior to this, Pooja worked as a strategic planner in the Marketing Communications department at Apple, Inc. in California. She holds a B.A. in Psychology and Spanish from Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. She grew up in Toledo, Ohio as the youngest in a family of five. Her parents, brother and sister all reside in the US.

Renita Shah joined AIF as a 2009-2010 Fellow after four years of experience in the private sector working in consulting and research in California and London. During her Fellowship year, she was partnered with KHAMIR Craft Resource Centre, a grassroots NGO dedicated to preserving craft as a viable livelihood for rural artisans across the Kutch District of Gujarat.

At KHAMIR, Renita was part of the Trade and Enterprise team as well as the Development and Research team. This gave her a chance to interact with multiple stakeholders including – artisan households, local government officials, corporate funders, schools, other NGOs and buyers. These projects demanded both office time and "field work", allowing her to listen and learn alongside colleagues and members of the artisan communities we worked with.

Renita is a first-generation Indian American, of Gujarati background, raised in California. Throughout her youth, she made sporadic trips to India, but the AIF Fellowship was her first time in her home state of Gujarat. Her personal experiences through travel and education inspired her interest in international development, social justice and equality. She currently works in the social enterprise space at a social business that creates solar-powered, affordable energy solutions for rural and low-income populations in the developing world.

Renita holds an MSc in Development Management from The London School of Economics and a BA in Economics

– International Studies from the University of California, San Diego. Her interests lie in the nexus of enterprise and development, gender, the informal sector and rural development. She is a believer in innovative and effective alliances between the private, public and not-for-profit sectors as a means for development.

Sarah Spear's passion for social justice fuels her work. Currently, in her role as Executive Director of Arch Grants, Sarah oversees an effort to spur economic development in the St. Louis, Missouri region by awarding grants and providing mentoring services to start-ups. As Vice President of Communications at Love146, a nonprofit based in New Haven, Connecticut, Sarah spread the organization's vision of abolishing child exploitation. Previously, Sarah co-founded and served as CEO of Pharma Secure, a social enterprise focused on stopping sales of spurious medicines. In this capacity, Sarah established Indian operations and launched an India-wide pilot of a mobile authentication technology to protect patients. As an AIF Fellow, Sarah marketed the development activities of Muse Ecosphere, a Himalayan NGO. Prior to her Fellowship, Sarah served as Assistant Vice President at Washington Mutual, working extensively in leadership development.

ISBN 978-93-817220-8-4

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