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## Rotaractors hit the waves with the Surfers Unite Rotarian Fellowship

Posted on March 12, 2019 by Brett Morey, Founder & Chair of the Surfers Unite Rotarian Fellowship, and member of the Rotary Club of La Jolla Golden Triangle, San Diego, USA on [rotaryservice.com](http://rotaryservice.com)



Our Rotaract Learn to Surf & Degree 33 Surfboards Demo Event was a tremendous success in San Diego earlier this year. We tried to cap the participants to 25, but with Rotaractors attending the International Assembly in San Diego for the first time in history, let's just say the place to be was in Del Mar - *Where the Turf Meets the Surf*. We had local Rotaractors from San Diego State University (SDSU), University of California San Diego (UCSD), Pacific Beach as well as Rotaractors from Australia, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Mexico, New Zealand and Singapore. It was truly a great time for all and this event absolutely epitomizes what the *Surfers Unite Rotarian Fellowship (SURF)* is all about.



Our goal is to include young professionals into Rotary through the fellowship's exciting events. Learn more about how the fellowship was formed and what we hope to achieve through the video below. Be sure to check out our website as we have over 600 members in 27 countries and growing.

Photo by Mark Ochendusko

## 20 Years, 1.2 Million Families: How Madurai's Iron Lady Broke the Circle of Poverty

By Ananya Barua, March 11, 2019

Such was his reverence of her work that former Prime Minister, AB Vajpayee, bent down to touch the feet of this incredible woman.

Tucked away deep into the dense forests of Tamil Nadu, Pullucheri is one of many rural settlements in India which does not show up on maps, and briefly appears on the way, during bus or train journeys. Much like its geographical location, its socio-economic situation was also far removed from common knowledge.

A village inhabited by debt-stricken farmers and laborers, it had the same tragic tale of exploitation, until the day a woman dared to step up and defy the system.

Her courage and grit not only helped her but the entire village to rise above their problems and break the shackles of oppression, perpetrated for decades, by the tyrannical triad of landlords, money-lenders and the monsoon.

### Madurai's Iron lady



Chinna Pillai was married into the village at the age of 12, and soon took to toiling on the fields of Alagar Kovil, a village in the Madurai district. The farmers and laborers working in Alagar Kovil come from several settlements in the area, including Pullucheri.

With two sons and three daughters to support, she and her husband, Perumal, became a part of the population of landless laborers who were buried under the debts of landlords and money-lenders, carrying out a subtle form of oppression.

Compromise and unquestionable acceptance was the law of the land, where suffering, sickness, death, illiteracy and the exorbitant interest rate (more than 300%), was all a commonplace occurrence.

But, for this young bride, giving up her rights for a life of injustice was never acceptable.

"Letting someone else decide my future was never an option. So, I would request the landlord, politely but repeatedly, for better wages for my group. Some were annoyed by the nagging, but it was what we deserved, and so I fought on," says Chinna Pillai, to *The Better India*. Thanks to her consistent efforts to drag the community out of its misery, Pullucheri, has become a model of self-sufficiency. It has its own banking system—Kalanjiam—a microcredit movement, which has empowered hundreds of women and their families in the last three decades now.

Speaking about her journey, she says, "*I began my work as a labor contract leader of a group, which consisted of women working in the fields just like me. Being unorganized, there was no consolidated effort to ask for what we deserve. However, by setting up the group, we not only exerted a unified pressure on the landlords but also initiated our own savings unit to secure our future.*"

Her efforts, which began in 1990, soon attracted development activists to arrive with more effective solutions. One of them was MP Vasimalai, the head of the Dhan Foundation, who came with the idea of multiplying the small savings of these women, into large returns that could holistically benefit the community.

*Persuading the villagers was a challenge. Chinna Pillai became the bridge between the two. She convinced her group of women to join, and thus together they opened 'the Granary of Pullucheri.'*

It all began with 15 women contributing Rs 20 a month. The cumulative amount was lent to a group member who needed the most. In return, that member would pay an interest of 60% per annum.



Though it seemed a high rate, was rather a blessing compared to the usual 300% interest rate asked by the landlords and money-lenders.

The fire of change was lit and as a result, in a matter of six months, the Kalanjiam SHG (Self Help Group) began to lend as much as Rs 1000 a month. Members were now not just using the money for emergencies, but also to launch new businesses.

By 1998, the Kalanjiam Movement had finally begun. The community leaders vouched to spread the concept of Kalanjiam Community Banking to far-flung areas of the country. Owing to their efforts, in 29 years, it has spread across 63 districts at 250 blocks in 13 states covering 60,000 SHGs encompassing 1.2 million families in its fold.

**Chinna Pillai never had the opportunity to educate herself, thanks to her efforts, her children and those of her community have been assigned a sum of money which will be spent on their education.**



“Education is the strongest tool of change, and I want the next generation to be well-equipped with it so that no one can take advantage of their trust. Through the savings unit and education, I want every poor villager of India to come out of their compromised economic state and lead the dignified life they deserve,” says the 67-year-old leader.

Her forceful and relentless fight for the community, not only earned her a position as the member of the *Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU)* to further pro-poor initiatives but also made her one of the five women to receive the *Stree Shakti Puraskar* in 1999.

**In an iconic moment, overwhelmed by her work, former PM, Atal Bihari Vajpayee bent down to touch her feet in respect while handing over the award.**

She also received the *Janaki Devi Bajaj Puraskar Award* in 2001, the *Porkizhi Award* in 2001, the *Avvaiyar Award* in the year 2018 from the TN Government, and most recently in 2019, the *Padma Shri Award* for her service to the country.

Yet it is not the numerous accolades that define her success.

“Those women driving the movement further, have given me the real award,” says the hero, whose stellar example will continue to inspire thousands more in the years to come.

*Continued from the previous issue of Spectrum*

### **We didn't see this coming**

*By Bill and Melinda Gates, February 12, 2019*

*How would you describe 2018? Was it what you expected?*

*In the year's annual letter, Bill and Melinda Gates are highlighting things that have surprised them. Earlier, we posted the following surprises:*

**SURPRISE #1 Africa is the youngest continent. Its median age is the lowest in the world.**

**SURPRISE #2 DNA tests can find serial killers and could also help prevent premature birth. Scientists have discovered a potential link between pre-term labor and certain genes.**

**SURPRISE #3 We will build an entire New York City every month for 40 years! The world's building stock will double by 2060.**

**SURPRISE #4: Data can be sexist. How much more time do girls spend on chores than boys do? 9 hours, 2 hours We don't know**

**SURPRISE #5 You can learn a lot about processing your anger from teenage boys.**

**SURPRISE #6: There's a nationalist case for globalism. Countries like the U.S. invest in foreign aid because it makes the world more stable and secure.**

**Melinda:** Nationalism is a word we've been hearing a lot more often these days. It's also one of the most loaded words in our 21st-century politics. While it's come to mean different things to different people (and carry different connotations and insinuations), at its core, nationalism is the belief that a country's first obligation is to itself. There's an element of that that I think many of us would agree with.

Bill and I love our country. We believe in what it stands for. We agree that our leaders have a duty to protect it. And for all of those reasons, we consider global engagement our patriotic duty.

We're not alone. You may remember that both times the White House threatened to make severe cuts to America's foreign aid budget, some of the loudest voices of protest came from members of Congress and U.S. military leaders who argued that these investments are vital to protecting American interests.

The reason that countries like the U.S. invest in foreign aid is that it increases stability abroad and security at home. Strengthening health systems overseas decreases the chance of a deadly pathogen like Ebola becoming a global epidemic. And ensuring that every parent everywhere has the opportunity to raise safe, educated, healthy kids makes it less likely that they will embark on desperate journeys to seek better lives elsewhere.

There is nothing about putting your country first that requires turning your back on the rest of the world. If anything, the opposite is true.

**Bill:** We're going to be making this case over and over in the next couple of years, because this is a crucial time in global health, and the kind of go-it-alone approach Melinda described could cause a major setback.

In 2019, governments will need to recommit to funding for the Global Fund, one of the biggest health efforts in the world. And Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, will need to raise money in 2020.

It's hard to overstate how much good these projects have done in the world. Since 2002, when it was created to combat AIDS, TB, and malaria, the Global Fund and its partners have saved 27 million lives. Since 2000, Gavi has provided basic vaccines to more than 690 million kids. That's like vaccinating nearly every person in Europe.

To me these results are astonishing. They show what's possible when we act on the idea that all of us have a stake in the health and well-being of the poorest. It's also incredibly cost-effective: Rich countries spend around 0.1 percent of their budgets on health aid.

But I worry that wealthy countries are turning inward and will take such a limited view of their own self-interest that they'll decide these efforts aren't worth the cost. Or that even if everyone agrees in principle that aid is important, they'll be so polarized that their political allegiances will keep them from taking action.

That would be a disaster. Today more than 17 million people with HIV get medicine from the Global Fund. Without it, they will die.

That's one reason why Melinda and I are always talking about success stories. At a time when new outrages seem to dominate the headlines every day, we want to keep reminding people that life is getting better for millions of people in the world's poorest countries, thanks in part to smart investments in health. Even if you only care about the welfare of your fellow citizens, these investments are overwhelmingly smart things to do. Progress benefits everyone.

**SURPRISE #7 When was the modern flush toilet patented?**

**Bill:** Nearly eight years ago, Melinda and I challenged engineers and scientists around the world to reinvent the toilet. More than 2 billion people around the world lack access to a decent toilet. Their waste often ends up in the environment, untreated, killing nearly 800

**We meet 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Saturdays at the Auditorium at 9<sup>th</sup> floor, JC 25, Salt Lake, Kolkata 700098 at 5.00 PM**

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children every day. And exporting rich-world sanitation solutions isn't an option, because they require sewer systems that are too expensive to build and need a lot of water.

Last year we organized a toilet fair in Beijing, where I got to check out a number of next-gen toilets in person and even shared the stage with a beaker of human feces.

Several companies are business-ready. Their inventions check almost all the boxes: They kill pathogens, can keep pace with the needs of fast-growing urban areas, and don't require sewer infrastructure, external water sources, or continuous electricity to operate. The only area where they currently fall short is cost, which is why our foundation is investing in more R&D to help make them affordable for the poor.

So what does the next generation of toilets look like? At first glance, not that different. They don't exactly look like something out of a sci-fi novel.



The real magic happens out of sight. Unlike today's commodes, the toilets of the future are self-contained. They're essentially tiny treatment plants capable of killing pathogens and rendering waste safe on their own. Many of them even turn human feces and urine into useful byproducts, like fertilizer for crops and water for hand washing. They might not be the sexiest innovations in the world, but the toilets of the future will save millions of lives.

**Melinda:** They'll also improve lives, especially for women and girls. Life without a toilet is hard for anyone, but it tends to be women and girls who suffer most.

Bill and I have both met women who have suffered kidney damage from holding in urine all night to avoid a risky trip to dangerous public facilities. We've met others whose only place to defecate is in an open field, so they restrict their food intake all day and wait for cover of darkness to relieve themselves in relative privacy. There's also some qualitative evidence that suggests that girls are more likely to miss school during their periods when their school doesn't have a decent toilet. (When you learn just how entrenched stigma around periods still is in many places, you can start to understand why someone would rather fall behind on her studies or miss wages than risk humiliation.)

If you're anything like me, I'm guessing toilets aren't your favorite topic of conversation. But if you care about keeping girls in school, expanding women's economic participation, and protecting them against violence, then we have to be willing to talk about toilets.

*To be continued*

### 3 things about the 3rd One Planet Summit

March 13, 2019 World Bank Group

*The World Bank Group is stepping up its climate support for Africa by committing \$22.5 billion over 2021-2025. This more than doubles*

*the commitment to climate-related projects over the last five years. The funding is part of the Bank Group's 2025 Targets to Step Up Climate Action, launched in December 2018.*

The announcement will be made ahead of the third **One Planet Summit (OPS)** which is taking place in Nairobi, Kenya on March 14, 2019 at the United Nations.

Hosted by the World Bank Group, the French Government, the Kenya Government, and the United Nations, OPS will focus on ways to accelerate and step-up climate action in Africa and specifically on expanding renewable energy, protecting biodiversity, and boosting adaptation and resilience.

#### 1. What is the big deal about 2019?

The IPCC's recent 1.5C report highlighted the need for far greater climate action around the world, especially in Africa where the needs are greatest. Countries are now preparing to update their national climate action plans ahead of the UN's 2020 climate conference. Later this year, the UNSG will host a major summit to drive greater ambition ahead of 2020.

A key moment to build momentum, is the third One Planet Summit, taking place on March 14 in Nairobi, Kenya. This brings together leaders from government and the private sector, entrepreneurs, donors, international organizations and other global stakeholders. Building on previous One Planet events (Paris, December 2017 and New York, September 2018), this third event will also highlight Africa's climate leadership, with a particular focus on renewable energy, protecting biodiversity, and boosting adaptation and resilience.

#### 2. What is the World Bank Group doing at OPS?

As one of the co-hosts of the event, the Bank Group has been a key partner in the One Planet Summit series. Interim President Kristalina Georgieva will give a keynote speech at the high-level segment along with President Uhuru Kenyatta of Kenya, President Emmanuel Macron of France, and UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed, reinforcing the Bank Group's commitment to scale up its climate action in Africa.

The Bank Group is facilitating a number of sessions throughout the day: thematic panel discussions on major climate issues and opportunities for Africa; pitch hubs, which will showcase innovative projects; and closed-door deal rooms which will connect companies and policymakers on green initiatives in Africa. The Bank Group will also host Facebook Live interviews with Summit participants and delegates.

#### 3. What is the World Bank Group announcing at the Summit?

The Bank Group will provide \$22.5 billion for Africa for climate adaptation and mitigation for the five years from 2021-2025. This more than doubles our commitment to climate-related projects over the last five years. This support builds on the ongoing Africa Climate Business Plan, which has already delivered 176 projects for climate-resilient development in Africa. Read the press release here.

Recognizing that a number of countries in Africa are among the most vulnerable to global climate shocks and stresses, and in line with these new climate financing commitments and future direction of the Africa Climate Business Plan, more than half of \$22.5 billion financing will be devoted to supporting adaptation and resilience in Africa. That would amount to about \$12-\$12.5 billion over the 5 years 2021-2025.

This funding supports increasing adaptation and resilience to major climate impacts like catastrophic floods, droughts, water scarcity, coastal erosion as well as preparing countries for a low carbon sustainable future.

An Emission Reductions Purchase Agreement (ERPA) will be signed between the World Bank - as trustee of the Carbon Initiative for Development (Ci-Dev) trust fund - and Kenya Tea Development Agency Power Company Ltd. (KTDA Power). The contract is slated to purchase carbon credits from small hydropower plants that provide power to 350,000 smallholder tea farmers and 39 of their regional tea factories in Kenya. The new ERPA brings the Ci-Dev portfolio to more than \$73 million in implementation.

The World Bank will scale up engagement with Rwanda and Kenya on their nationally determined contributions (NDCs). The World

Bank, under the framework of the NDC Partnership, and with generous support from Germany's BMZ, will carry out NDC intensive engagements with Rwanda and Kenya.

## Working for 35 Years, Ex-Banker Grows Lush 2 Acre Forest in the Middle of Kochi!

*Located in metro city of Kochi, Alungal Farms is his labor of love and sweat. It boasts over 2000 varieties of rare medicinal plants, 400 varieties of fruits, different flowers, vegetables, herbs, and even spices - all of which thrive in wild harmony!*

*By Jovita Aranha, March 12, 2019*

Approximately 650 years ago, when the inquisition of Goa by the Portuguese led to mass conversions, a huge group of people fled the state in rickety boats, hiding in gigantic cooking vessels. They settled in the coastal areas of Kerala.

AV Purushothama Kamath's ancestors were among this group, and when he was a child, his mother would narrate stories about how the former Maharaja of Kochi welcomed their community.

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, his father purchased a rest house from the king in Ernakulam and converted it into a family home - the same one that Kamath currently resides in.

Evidently, the 130-year-old home has a rich history attached to it. However, its ancient windows and intricate tiles are not what we wish to focus on. *The subject of this story is the two-acre man-made forest, which lies at the heart of this home.*



*AV Purushothama Kamath with a rare variety of Jackfruit (Valliplavu) in his forest*

Located in the bustling metro city of Kochi, Alungal Farms is Kamath's labor of love and sweat. It boasts over 2000 varieties of rare medicinal plants, 400 varieties of fruits, different flowers, vegetables, herbs, and even spices - all of which thrive in wild harmony!

Despite being a stone's throw away from a metro station and the Vyttila Mobility Hub, its canopy of lush greens is home to several migratory birds and butterflies.

And although the land sharks continue to throw bundles of money in the name of development for cents of his land, Kamath is unwilling to let commercialization ruin the sanctity of this forest.

### *Building his own forest*

Kamath began his stint as a banker in the late 70s. His job involved frequent travel, and somewhere along the way, he started to collect rare medicinal plants during his trips.

In 1984, he quit his job due to his mother's failing health and returned to his ancestral profession, farming.

He began with cultivating paddy and coconut in 8,712 sq ft of land. It was also around the same time that he actively started collecting endangered species of plants, mostly medicinal, and growing them.

In 1996, he gave up the use of chemicals and began the extensive forestation project. The method was simple. The bigger plants that could create a canopy were planted close to the boundary walls, and when you moved inside towards the home, the smaller plants, vegetables, fruiting trees, shrubs, and medicinal plants were grown.

Today, the two-acre plot houses a wide range of medicinal and fruit plants, some of which are highly endangered.

Apart from 42 varieties of mangoes alone, the forest has rare varieties of jackfruit, strawberry, sapota, bananas, apples, blackberries,

avocado, lime, star fruit, litchi, mulberry, orange, peach etc. It also has a temporary rain shelter where the family cultivates a range of vegetables and spices for daily consumption like cauliflower, cabbage, carrots, lemon, ginger, turmeric, chilies, coriander, mint, curry leaves. The highlight of the farm though is the range of medicinal plants like aloe vera, ashvattha, ashoka, rudraksham, brahmi, devadaru, eucalyptus, and jatropa to name a few. There is also a nursery with 700 varieties of plants on sale!

Every tree on the farm has a board next to it, where its scientific and Malayalam name is clearly mentioned. This is immensely helpful for students of botany and Ayurveda who come for field visits.

*The farm uses drip irrigation.* The water for the farm is sourced from a pond. The pond which doesn't dry up even in summers also acts as a reservoir for other homes in the area.

The farm has two cows and poultry like hens, cockerels, quails etc. Eggs from hens & quails are sold. The cow-dung is used as manure.

Dry leaves, kitchen waste, cow dung, cow urine, curd, jiggery and National Centre of Organic Farming's waste decomposer are used to make manure. The farm also has its own vermin-compost unit.

### *So, how do the Kamaths earn a living?*

Apart from selling their organic produce from 84 coconut trees, the banana plantation, and assorted plants, they also gain some income from a property they have rented.

Anand, who also worked as a banker for close to 16 years, adds that he decided to quit his job three years ago to carry forward his father's work. His wife, Shyama, a dentist, and two children continue to extend their full support.

### *Awards and Recognition*

Kamath's 35 years of effort have reaped rich dividends, and he has won numerous including the Kerala Biodiversity Award 2013 and the Vanamitra Award by Kerala Forest Department.

The farm has been chosen under the Central Government's initiative, which makes it a model farm school for smaller farmers to get tips on the best techniques on cultivation and improving soil health.

### *Does Kamath have a message for the youngsters?*

"We are at an age where everything has become a monetary calculation. So I have a message to give using this math itself. Assume a human being needs three oxygen cylinders to live each day, and each cylinder costs Rs 800. You spend Rs 2400 a day, and almost Rs.8,64,000 a year! However, trees give you oxygen for free."

Kamath is a Vanamitra (friend of the forest) just like his award says, in the truest sense of the word. We hope his story continues to inspire more people to take a step towards a greener and sustainable life.

## Birthdays of Rotary members in March, 2019

Subimal Bhattacharya, past Governor on March 1, 2019

## Anniversaries of Rotary members in March, 2019

Spouse Rakhi & Governor Mukul Sinha on March 10, 2019

## March is Water and Sanitation Month

## UNWIND

*Dad to Tintu: when I beat you how did you control your anger?*

*Tintu: I start cleaning the toilet.*

*Dad: How does that satisfy you?*

*Tintu: I clean it with your tooth brush.*

## TAIL PIECE

**"It is difficult to win an argument with a smart boss; but it is damn impossible to win an argument with a stupid boss !"**

