



RI District 3291

October 26, 2019

PRESIDENT □ DR SUDHA CHAUDHARY

CLUB NO □ 78956

Spectrum

Weekly bulletin of Rotary Club of Salt Lake Metropolitan Kolkata

SECRETARY □ KUSUM CHAMARIA

CHARTERED ON □ APRIL 30, 2008



VOL 12A □ NO 17

EDITOR □ BL AJITSARIA

WEBSITE □ www.rcslmk.org

Lean Thinking and the 2019 Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences

Posted on 21 Oct 2019 by Jon Miller, Gemba Academy*



A few years ago, I read and blogged about the book Poor Economics and the key lessons it offered for change efforts such as Lean transformations. Congratulations are in order to the co-authors who won the 2019 Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences.

This is an opportunity to revisit some of their basic thinking on effective approaches to address the problem of poverty and the parallels with Lean efforts to increase wealth.

Get the problem statement right. When we ask the wrong question, we are almost guaranteed to get the wrong answer. Poverty is a complex problem whose long-term solution is almost never “add money”. The word itself is too vague for us to be able to envision a meaningful target condition. In Lean thinking, A3 problem solving dedicates half of the page space and a great deal of time in clarifying the problem, describing it in the customer’s language, stratifying it, narrowing the scope of action and identifying root causes, before proposing any sort of solution.

Break down big problems. Addressing poverty requires breaking down this huge problem into many smaller problems that can be addressed one at a time. There is no single solution to address the entirety of a large problem. People who sell large, comprehensive solutions to complex, nuanced problems are doing so most often serve their own interests, to meet an artificial timeline and/or to further their own ideologies. Breaking problems down allows more people to be engaged in being part of the solution. It helps maintain momentum through a series of small successes along the way. Practitioners of successful Lean efforts have found these things to be true.

Experiment through the zone of uncertainty. There are many situations where aid workers, governments, economists and so forth are not sure exactly what to do about reducing poverty. Duflo, Banerjee and Kremer ran hundreds of randomized

control trials across a dozens of countries. They won the Nobel in part for demonstrating that such experiments were an effective way to test theories and possible solutions to poverty-related issues. Whether solving complex problems in society or in business, a laboratory approach can be useful.

Implement the practices that are known to work. examples for proven poverty alleviation actions include quality education at an early age, preventive health care, and helping people to own and learn how to take care of value-creating assets. Good information, good health and positive cash flow are the very foundation of any enterprise. Stabilization is a known solution whether in poverty reduction or Lean wealth-building via the reduction of losses, waste, variation and burden.

Good ideas perform badly when we ignore context. A great example of this is the advice to boil water for twenty minutes to purify water and prevent illness. This seems like a no-brainer, a quick win, a just-do-it. But people who are poor may ignore this advice. Why? They lack a kitchen timer. They may wish to save the fuel cost of twenty minutes to boil water. They may be too busy or too distracted to add this new step to their routine. Helping someone put even such a simple new behavior into practice requires that we understand the context of their life. Only then do we have a chance of helping them to understand the benefits of spending time in a different way. Ditto Lean.

It’s nice that the Nobel Prize committee has recognized Lean thinking in this way, even if indirectly.

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Interactors build global partnership to empower community in Zambia

Posted on October 23, 2019 by Carol Hermann, Co-Chair for the Interact Club of Lodi, United States



Although there are 8,331 miles between Lodi, Wisconsin, USA and Munyambala, Zambia, there is no distance between caring for each other’s communities. The Interact Club of Lodi has been working with the people of Munyambala to take action and create lasting change by establishing a piggery to provide sustainable food security to Munyambala, a rural village that suffered from crop drought.

Through the relationship, the Lodi community trained youth in community economic development, understanding of

economic inequality, building both self-esteem, and leadership skills. Both partners fostered greater cultural understanding, built a strong international friendship, and cultivated their passion for serving others.



The first bricks

The Lodi Interact connection to Zambia was introduced by a Rotarian from Lodi that knew an aid worker in Munyambala. From there, the Interactors communicated by texts, calls, video and photography concurrent with the project. Through funding to the aid worker, Lodi Interact was able to finance building the first pig pen and purchase the first six pigs for \$1000 USD. Pigs have a fast reproduction cycle and subsequent sales of offspring to new piggeries will reduce herd diseases and provide sustainable revenue. Profits from the pigs sold outside the community will pay for school fees, school uniforms, and food. Within the community, the pigs provide a source of protein and food security. The pigs eat what humans will not, such as the corn husks, cobs, bushes, stalks, and spoiled vegetables.



Building progress

Zambian District 9210 Governor Douglas also asked the Lodi Interact Club to mentor a new Interact Club in Lusaka, Zambia, in an effort to establish their club, become sister clubs, and coordinate projects in the future. Interactor Stella said, "Lodi Interact has done so many little projects for the community, and huge projects for other countries. One of my proudest achievements in Rotary is supporting the piggery in Zambia. I couldn't believe that something so small, like a brat stand, could raise so much money and awareness of both Interact and Rotary's worldwide

connections, but most importantly make a difference in a rural area of Zambia. It's truly incredible to receive photos, videos, and texts from our new friends in Munyambala, even though it may be just a pig farm to us, which we have plenty of in Lodi, it is very valued and important to their lives."



Buying the pigs

Interact clubs bring together young people ages 12-18 to develop leadership skills while discovering the power of Service Above Self.

Rotarian Code of Conduct

Here is the updated Rotarian Code of Conduct; the last aspect has been a welcomed and long awaited addition in Jan 2019:

As a Rotarian, I will:

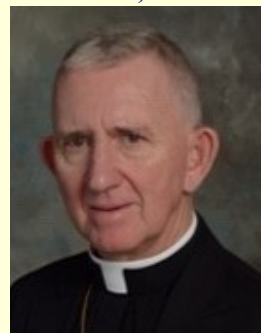
- Act with integrity and high ethical standards in my personal and professional life
- Deal fairly with others and treat them and their occupations with respect
- Use my professional skills through Rotary to: mentor young people, help those with special needs, and improve people's quality of life in my community and in the world
- Avoid behavior that reflects adversely on Rotary or other Rotarians.

Help maintain a harassment-free environment in Rotary meetings, events, and activities, report any suspected harassment, and help ensure non-retaliation to those individuals that report harassment

Rotary members don't turn a blind eye to need

Posted on October 22, 2019 by Paddy Rooney, governor of District 7390 (Pennsylvania, USA)

This is the second in a series of reflections on Rotary's Vision Statement: Together, we see a world where people unite and take action to create lasting change – across the globe, in our communities, and in ourselves.



It is said that the greatest problem with adolescents is that they are selective listeners; although I personally believe that the problem is not limited to adolescents! We all hear what we want to hear and choose to ignore those things that we don't want to hear. We pick and choose from the information offered to us, accepting that which pleases us to hear at the moment and ignoring that which we find uncomfortable.

And if that is true for hearing and listening, it is equally true for seeing. We have become selective in what we see, again ignoring those things that make us uncomfortable and seeing only those things that please and satisfy us.

But the problem with such selective seeing is that we can easily miss those things that are critical and important. We would rather frame our reality around those things we see which reinforce our own perceptions and beliefs rather than the sometimes brutal reality which is our world today.

As Rotarians we choose to see those around the world who are dying from diseases because there is no clean water or sanitation; we choose to see those who are displaced children of war or other humanitarian crises; we choose to see those who live without hope because there is no sustainable economic development plan to lift them out of poverty.

We see because the world has chosen to turn a blind eye to these issues, these problems, these crises. But we are Rotarians and we have chosen to open our eyes to the needs of the world and our communities and having seen we cannot turn away.

True sometimes the images are hard to see. But then other images offer themselves for us to see – the parent who cries knowing that those two drops will save her child from polio; the faces of the children when that clear, clean water bubbles up from the earth; and the families who know that we have helped to bring peace and resolution to the conflicts that afflict our world. That is why WE are Rotarians...because TOGETHER we are open and ready to SEE.

World Polio Day cheers major achievements towards global polio eradication

By Ryan Hyland, October 24, 2019



Rotary and its partners in the **Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI)** are celebrating a major milestone this World Polio Day: confirmation that a second type of the wild poliovirus has been eradicated, which is a significant step toward the ultimate goal of a polio-free world.

Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, director-general of the World Health Organization (WHO), announced the historic feat in a video address during Rotary's Global Online Update on 24 October. He said an independent commission of health experts certified the global eradication of the type 3 strain, which hasn't been detected anywhere in the world since Nigeria identified a case of polio that it caused in November 2012. The type 2 strain was certified as eradicated in 2015.

"That leaves just wild poliovirus type 1," Tedros said. He also commended Rotary's long fight against polio. "Everything you [Rotary] have done has brought us to the brink of a polio-free world."

Tedros balanced the good news with a note of caution, saying that the biggest enemy of global eradication is complacency. He encouraged Rotary members to redouble their efforts.



Rotary and its partners in the Global Polio Eradication Initiative have helped immunize more than 2.5 billion children against polio in 122 countries.

"If we stopped now, the virus would resurge and could once again cause more than 200,000 new cases every year," said Tedros. **"We must stay the course. Together, we can make sure the children of the future only learn about polio in history books."**

Rotary's World Polio Day program this year was streamed on Facebook in multiple languages and multiple time zones around the world. The program, which was sponsored by UNICEF USA and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, featured TV presenter and Paralympics' medalist Ade Adepitan, supermodel Isabeli Fontana, science educator Bill Nye, and actress Archie Panjabi.

The program also featured never-before-seen footage of three Rotary members working to protect children from polio in their home countries of India, Pakistan, and Ukraine. In Pakistan, **Rotarian Tayyaba Gul** works with a team of health workers to educate mothers and children about the importance of polio vaccination. **Dr. Hemendra Verma** of India encourages his fellow Rotary members and our partners to make sure health workers and volunteers reach every child. And Ukrainian **Rotarian Sergii Zavadskiy** oversees an advocacy and awareness program that uses social media and public events to educate people who are reluctant to have their children vaccinated. These three heroes of the polio eradication effort show what it means to be a dedicated volunteer, and represent the efforts of Rotarians all over the world.



Rotary members in the fight to eradicate polio, from left, Tayyaba Gul, Dr. Hemendra Verma, and Sergil Zavadskiy.

Adepitan, a polio survivor who contracted the disease as a child in Nigeria, praised the efforts in that country, which hasn't reported finding wild poliovirus in more than three years. "This is massive news," Adepitan said.

We meet 2nd and 4th Saturdays at GPT Group, JC 25, Salt Lake, Kolkata 700098 at 6.00 PM

Printed by Dr Sudha Chaudhary, President, Rotary Club of Salt Lake Metropolitan Kolkata • Editor: BL Ajitsaria

For private circulation only • Web site: www.rcslmk.org

Nigeria's milestone clears the way for the entire WHO African region to be certified wild poliovirus-free next year. Adepitan reminded people just how far the continent has come, saying that even a decade ago, Africa reported nearly 75 percent of all polio cases worldwide.

"Today more than a billion African people are at the cusp of a future where wild polio is a disease of the past," he said. "We're not done. We're in pursuit of an even greater triumph - a world without polio. I can't wait."

Scientist Bill Nye talked about some people's reluctance to use vaccines, which he called a dangerous issue around the world. "As the conversation around vaccines becomes more hostile, we're seeing an increase in outbreaks of preventable diseases. It's not just measles. It's rotavirus. Tetanus. Even polio," he said. However, he said: "The science on vaccinations is settled. There is no dispute."

Look even just at what Rotary and its partners have achieved since 1988, when the GPEI was formed, Nye said. Three decades ago, the disease affected 350,000 children in one year. Because of massive vaccination campaigns around the world, the number of polio cases has decreased by more than 99.9 percent.

"That's about as concrete as evidence gets for preventative medicine," Nye said.

Rotary's 2019 World Polio Day Online Update highlights the frontline workers who make polio eradication possible and the milestones that the program achieved this past year.

2019 proves that challenges remain

Despite these accomplishments, polio cases are rising in areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan that face tremendous challenges: They are difficult to get to and travel in, they are often not secure enough for vaccinators to do their work, and people are highly mobile. In all of 2018, these two countries reported just 33 wild poliovirus cases. The 2019 case count is so far 88, and health experts predict more cases to come.

Michel Zaffran, director of polio eradication at WHO, discussed the increased number of cases in Afghanistan and Pakistan. "At its core, polio eradication is very simple: If you vaccinate enough children in given areas, then the virus has nowhere to hide and eventually disappears," Zaffran said.

It gets more complicated, he said, when thousands of children are not being vaccinated in some areas. "The reasons vary greatly, district to district, in both countries," he added. "It could be because of hampered access due to insecurity, lack of infrastructure, lack of clean water supply, inadequate planning of campaigns, community resistance, and other reasons."

To combat any further spread of the disease, Zaffran says health workers are evaluating each area to understand why a child is missed and making customized plans to overcome the area's specific challenges.

This approach is similar to how health experts overcame the last hurdles in India, which was declared polio-free in 2014.

"I encourage Rotarians to stick with it and stay optimistic," Zaffran said. "Keep raising funds and awareness, advocate with governments. We truly are on the cusp of eradicating a disease for only the second time in human history."

If it is eradicated, polio would follow smallpox as the second human disease eliminated from the world.

Rotary has contributed more than \$2 billion to polio eradication since it launched the PolioPlus program in 1985, and is committed to raising \$50 million a year for polio eradication activities. Because of a 2-to-1 matching agreement

with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, that means that \$150 million a year goes toward fulfilling Rotary's promise to the children of the world: no child will ever again suffer the devastating effects of polio.

Birthdays of Rotary members in October

Sudip Mukherjee Governor Elect, on October 1, 2019

Sanjay Agarwal on October 5, 2019

Ansul Agrawal on October 7, 2019

Ravindrakash Sehgal, past Governor on October 14, 2019

Sekhar Mehta, 2021-22 RI President on October 14, 2019

PP Dr Chitra Ray on October 15, 2019

Kamal Seth, past Governor on October 30, 2019

Anniversary of Rotary members in October

Spouse Mamta & Governor Ajay Agarwal on October 9, 2019

October is Economic and Community Development month

Anniversary of Rotary members in November

Spouse Sudata & PDG Anjan Kumar on November 17, 2019

Spouse Jaya & PDG Angsuman on November 18, 2019

Spouse Sapna & Sanjay Agarwal on November 19, 2019

Archana & Mukesh Goyal on November 21, 2019

Dr Om & Aruna Tantia on November 27, 2019

Spouse Sushila & Indra Kumar Bagri on November 30, 2019

November is Rotary Foundation month



Coco-Cola, the plastic polluter Photo: Pixabay.com

The Coca-Cola Co has emerged as the No.1 global plastic polluter for the second consecutive year, according to a report on the top 10 plastic polluting companies in the world. The beverages brand was followed by Nestlé SA and PepsiCo Inc.

UNWINDS

After shifting to a new apartment, I needed to get my washing machine installed. I made an appointment with the company's representative who promised to come and fix it.

He failed to turn up, so I called again and was assured that he would be there within the next two days. When he didn't turn up even after a week, I was exasperated. I called him, yet again, and asked, "Do you need a band and a baaraat to come to my house and fix the washing machine?"

"Sir, you are absolutely right about the band and the baaraat," he responded. "I am getting married next week and currently on leave!" Caught off guard, I was left murmuring wedding wishes to him.

Julius Machado, Mumbai Source: Reader's digest

TAIL PIECE

Question to Martina Navratilova: How do you maintain your focus and manage to keep playing, even at 43?

Her suave response: The ball doesn't know how old I am.