

Social Entrepreneurship

The Stories of Transformed Lives

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Introduction

The need for social entrepreneurship in both formal and informal, direct and indirect settings is needed as part of a poor communities in order alleviate economic needs in a sustainable and healthy way.

In one study in Udaipur, India, two-thirds of the poor had a loan. Most (78%) of the loans were from relatives, shopkeepers, or moneylenders; only 6.4% of the loans were from a formal source (Banerjee & Duflo, 2011, p.159).

When looking at economic development, Dr. Grigg (2010) list ten biblical principles. I will focus on three of the principles in order to demonstrate some of the local stories of entrepreneurial uplift: *Creativity, Productivity, and Love and Human Worth.*

Creativity

Banerjee and Duflo (2011) talk about a man with a MBA from the US that they had met on an airplane. This man told them about a time he went to Mumbai right after graduating with his MBA.

One day his uncle takes him to the Stock exchange early in the morning and they stand outside just to watch two women. The women watched traffic and occasionally, when it stopped, they got up and scraped something off the ground. They repeated the process several times.

The uncle asked him if he understood what was going on. He said he was baffled so the uncle told him that the women would get up early in the morning to go pick up sea sand from the beach. They would then evenly spread the wet sand on the road before traffic. Then when the

real traffic began the cars would drive over the sand and dry it up. The women collect the refined, dry sand and would take it back to their slum to sell it.

Women in the slum used this sand to scrub their dishes. The uncle said this is a true entrepreneur, "If you have nothing, using your ingenuity to create something out of nothing" (Banerjee & Duflo, 2011, pp. 205-206). The creative spirit within entrepreneurs is the spirit of God that will uplift the down trodden to transform lives and communities.

MTU's Creative Debt Relief

An example that I've witnessed in Delhi occurred at MTU during my internship. One man, who attended the economic development course at MTU, was called out in the middle of the class to go meet with my advisor, Pastor Arun. Just before leaving he was frustrated and expressed that he could not calculate a monthly budget because every month is different. He said how could he build a savings when he owes money as well.

Later I had learned that he was a fruit walla who was given land to live on and harvest. He was given the land and told he needed to pay off the land in two years with 20% interest.

This was money he would never be able to make within two years, but even if he did, he would have to budget himself to pay all of that off in two years. The concept of budgeting and saving did not seem feasible to him. This loan has buried him alive.

He went to meet with Pastor Arun for possible solutions, ideally a loan, to help him become free from his previous debt.

Pastor Arun met with the director and financial advisor of MTU, but found they had no money to be able to give a loan.

Instead they asked him what he did. He had told them that he was just a fruit walla. Pastor Arun told him to bring his fruit to MTU twice a week and that they would buy all of their fruit for the school from him. This now gave him a more consistent and secure budget to live off of.

The solution that Pastor Arun and MTU had come up with was creative and empowering. It was not an easy temporary fix through another loan, but using the service that the man offers in order to help himself out of debt.

Tithing Employees Time

Uncle Kheem is the hired house help of our site coordinator, Dr. Thom Wolf. Uncle Kheem has been the house help for the last 11 years since Dr. Wolf and his family arrived in Delhi.

Uncle Kheem comes from a village in northern India. He had dropped out of school after two months in the eighth grade. His parents had no formal education and very little money to send him to school. Him dropping out of school was temporarily a financial uplift for his family.

Uncle Kheem had worked as house help for almost another ten years prior to working for Dr. Thom. In the time working for Dr. Thom, Dr. Thom had worked toward making sure Uncle Kheem was learning a beneficial new trade- English.

Uncle Kheem now speaks fluent English. However Dr. Thom talked to Uncle Kheem about the requirement for Christians to tithe and give to the poor. He told Uncle Kheem that he can use 10% of his work time towards learning a new skill that can help him gain other well paying jobs.

Since then Uncle Kheem has learned English, gone to a western cooking school, and is now learning basic computer skills.

Productivity: Innovation

According to Banjeer and Duflo (2011) less than 1/6 of the people from villages were willing to take a loan even though they were excluded from other formal financial services.

When going into a village they had met one man, Allal Ben Sedan that had 3 sons and 2 daughters, who were all adults. He had four cows, one donkey, and eight olive trees. He refused the loan offer to buy more cows because he said he did not have enough land for the extra cows to graze. Then when asked if he could use the loan for anything else he said no because selling the cows and olives provided enough for his family.

Fouad Abddelmoumni, founder and CEO of Al Amana, said all Ben Sedan needed was to be led to the right business plan. He said that Ben Sedan could take a loan to build a stable and buy four young cows. They would not need to graze and could be fed in the stable. Then after 8 months he could sell them and make a very good profit.

“Who is right?” is the question to be asking ourselves when approached with such dynamic situations. Both are right according to Banjeer and Duflo. They say that Fouad is right because his business plan could work. However, Sedan was right because although he could make more money, he would put in a lot more work without making enough to move up in economic status.

Productivity is producing something that is good. Sometimes this is being innovative by using already existing items or ideas to produce good.

Taxi Business Plan

The simplicity of business development and microfinance seems to be so obvious that we cannot creatively think of it. Sometimes we see the way other people do business, like Sedan, and cannot see past the precedence of that one way. Or we can become convinced that just getting the job done is good enough.

A Delhi taxi driver had spoken to a pastor about the competitiveness in the taxi business right now and the need to lower his prices. He had said he used to be able to charge more money to tourist, but now the tourist can just move on to the next taxi driver because *we all want business* and are willing to meet the customer's price.

This local pastor has worked with many foreigners over the years and has acquired wisdom into what foreigners think about when choosing a taxi.

The pastor had told the taxi driver that if he kept his car washed on the outside and vacuumed on the inside, foreigners will be willing to pay more money. Also by just buying a car incen to keep the car smelling good, foreigners will be more likely to enjoy the service and give a healthy tip.

Then the pastor went into customer service by personal care. He told the taxi driver that if he wore clean clothes that looked more professional, the foreigners would be more likely to pick him apart from other taxi drivers. Lastly, he talked to him about the goodness of patience. He said being patient with a customer will help keep the customer happy and feeling relaxed in a city that normally makes them nervous.

This taxi driver had taken the advice of the pastor to spend just a few extra

rupees on extra perks. Now he has purchased two more cars and employed two more drivers.

Medicinal distributor at MTU

One of the most popular ways of employment in the slums is self-employment. Most do not follow any legal work because of the extensive paper work that comes along with that. Especially where most people only have a third grade education; legal paper work for a business can be very confusing.

MTU had a business that is a medicinal distributor comes in to teach parents about their product. From this introduction and training of how to supplement one's income through selling their product, some of the parents were able to now be self-employed in their community.

This job was ideal for the mother of the household since it did not require specific times to work and could be adjusted to always meet the needs of the family. For a mother this was ideal to be care for the home while also helping to gain a supplement income. Taking a pre-existing business and setting up to fit the lives of women in slum communities is a productive use of resources.

Love and Human Worth

All people are created in the image of God; therefore all people should be loved and valued. It is said that women are more likely to use resources for the greater good of a family (Greer & Smith, 2009). If women are likely to appreciate the worth and love another human, then they are to be empowered to use this gift. Reflecting on a Rwanda proverb, Greer

and Smith (2009) say, "Helping a woman helps her entire household" (p.110).

The reassertion of human dignity against such policies, which are based on assumptions of humans as the production machine, woman the equal machine, is crucial for the sustaining of a just and good society (Grigg, 2009, p.9).

Women Empowerment

For our internship course we did training on economic development for eighth through twelfth standard students.

Since it is in India the students would sit on the floor and naturally sit separately- boys on one side and girls on the other. Sometimes it was difficult to sit them on the same mat when there was no other space.

It did not take long to notice that the girls were not comfortable to lead in front of the boys. Some had a natural tendency to want to lead, but they looked confined to be able to speak.

We used many different approaches in order to demonstrate equality as well as empower women to speak in public in front of men.

One specific student had flourished during this time. Her name is Neha. Every class when asked to review she would be excited to speak up, but would often look towards the boys while she discerned if she should answer.

Often we had seen a student position his or her body to speak up, but were unsure and did not say anything. We would then

encourage them to continue what they started to say and then affirm them in what they did say.

By the end of the class we would see that the students became comfortable and even excited about our level of engagement in their learning experience.

Neha became herself in class and became alive. She quickly became a big help in classroom management and giving quick feedback if she or the class was confused. Had she not felt comfortable to speak up in and for the class, it would have made it much more difficult to facilitate the class.

When we interviewed Neha at the end of the course about what she has learned she said, "I learned to help the poor and poor families, donate money, and do hard work." Neha is someone who will develop herself, her family, and her community. She is a world changer.

Conclusion

Living in the slum, feeling the heat, breathing the smog, smelling the trash, and seeing poverty first hand has allowed me to better understand entrepreneurship for the poor. The strength of any development always rests in the kingdom of God, both here and to come. Creativity, productivity, love and human worth are all found in the character of God. Today creativity, productivity, love and human worth are found in the people and communities of God. They are the essence of transformational stories.

References

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