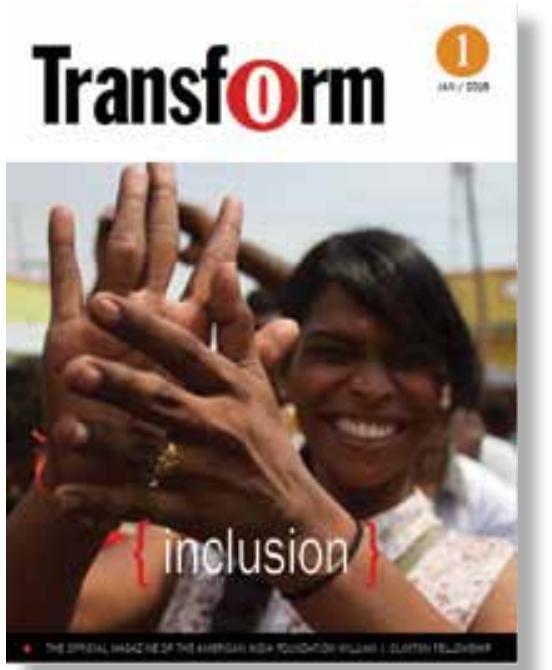


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JAN / 2015

Transform



{ inclusion }



'Transform' aims to serve as a bridge between current fellows and alumni, sparking dialogue, connectivity, and innovation in the Indian development sphere

Serve • Learn • Lead

William J Clinton Fellowship for Service in India
Building a New Generation of Global Leaders

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About the American India Foundation

The American India Foundation is committed to catalyzing social and economic change in India and building a lasting bridge between the United States and India through high-impact interventions in education, livelihoods, public health, and leadership development, with a particular emphasis on empowering girls and women to achieve gender equity. Working closely with local communities, AIF partners with NGOs to develop and test innovative solutions and with governments to create and scale sustainable impact. Founded in the wake of the Gujarat earthquake in 2001, at the initiative of President Bill Clinton following a request from Prime Minister Vajpayee, AIF has impacted the lives of 2.3 million of India's poor and aims to reach 5 million by 2018. Learn more at www.AIF.org.

About the William J. Clinton Fellowship for Service in India

The William J Clinton Fellowship for Service in India builds the next generation of leaders committed to lasting change for under-privileged communities across India, while strengthening the civil sector landscape to be more efficient and effective.

The Fellowship has 331 Alumni and 154 partners.

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Anjali, a Bharatnatyam dancer from Chennai, a participant at the 2014 Kuthandar-Aravan Mela, Koovagam, Tamil Nadu.

Back cover photograph: Olivia Dowling

Members of the 'nyay samiti' (justice committee) of a women's federation supported by the rural livelihoods NGO Utthan in Gujarat.

Contents

TRANSFORM | VOL 1 | ISSUE 1



1

JAN / 2015

{ inclusion }

- **Preface**
By LATA KRISHNAN, Chair, American India Foundation
- **Foreword**
By SRIDAR IYENGAR, Chair, William J. Clinton Fellowship for Service in India
- **Editors' Note**
By Cassie Denbow & Charlie Iannuzzi, Clinton Fellowship Alumni

- **Expert Viewpoint**
- 10 **Unkept Promises: LGBT Rights in India**
By Anjali Gopalan

- 18 **India's Development Quest**
By Chanda Kochhar
- 20 **Inclusion in Urban India**
By Rajendra Joshi

- **Fellowship Focus**
- 9 **Inclusion**
By Coco Vonnegut
- 16 **Resilience in Action**
By Olivia Dowling
- 22 **Migration in the Mountains: Rural Economies and Urbanisation of the Himalayas**
By Behzad J. Larry

- **Fellowscape**
- 14 **When Women Fight Back**
By Ted Samuel
- 25 **Inclusive Media**
By Elijah Q. Monroe
- 31 **Encouraging Voices**
By Zain Alam
- 34 **The Excluded Indian Citizen: Persons With Disabilities**
By Angela Kohama
- 40 **Jobs For Persons With Disabilities: A Review**
By Srijana Angdembey
- 44 **Confronting Complexity**
By Ned Dostaler

Preface

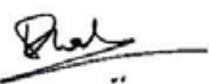
{ A network of 330 Fellows
in partnership with 150
high-impact organizations }

ON BEHALF OF THE AMERICAN INDIA FOUNDATION'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS, it is with great excitement that we announce the inaugural issue of *Transform*, the official magazine of the AIF William J. Clinton Fellowship for Service in India. One of the founding programs of AIF soon after our inception in 2001, the AIF Clinton Fellowship is helping shape the next generation of leaders committed to impactful change while simultaneously strengthening civil society in India. It is one of the most prestigious Fellowships in India, bringing together American and Indian young professionals to serve in partnership with non-governmental organizations and social enterprise in the areas of livelihoods, public health, education, human rights and advocacy, youth development, environmental issues, and many more. Our network of Fellows has grown to 330 strong while forging strong partnerships with more than 150 high-impact organizations across the country.

We believe in the transformative power of the AIF William J. Clinton Fellowship on the lives of our Fellows and the organizations they serve. I could not think of a more suitable title to fully capture this unique, omnidirectional transformative process – as we have bore witness hundreds of times over the past fourteen years – and present the multitude of perspectives and voices which the Fellowship serves to empower and activate.

At the same time, the American India Foundation was born from an effort to make the disaster relief of the 2001 Gujarat earthquake fully inclusive of every person affected in every small corner of Gujarat. It is therefore very fitting that, almost a decade and a half later, AIF has chosen the theme of inclusion for the inaugural issue of *Transform*. Much like America, I believe that India's path towards prosperity will rest on its ability to embrace full participation in the democratic and market processes. It is the unfinished work of the last century, the realization of inalienable civil rights, that must be pushed forward, making sure that every child, woman, and man has available to them that which every human being deserves.

A true democracy requires a multitude of voices. The participation of women, the poor, the youth, and the marginalized is essential in building a society that is better for all of us. I hope to see *Transform* become a channel for those voices in India, and for the authoring Fellows of the American India Foundation to be the just and honest liaisons for India's communities and peoples regardless of their caste, color, gender, abilities, religion, social-status, sexuality, age, or beliefs. I will cherish this first and special issue of *Transform* and I hope to see it blossom, indeed, as a transformational force for good.



LATA KRISHNAN
Chair, American India Foundation

Foreword

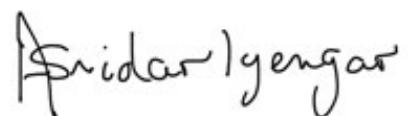
AIF'S WILLIAM J. CLINTON FELLOWSHIP FOR SERVICE IN INDIA has provided transformational life experiences to more than 300 young Americans and Indians in the context of India's development since 2001. Through their work, largely at the grassroots level, in different parts of India, these Fellows have been both witness to and participants in the everyday lives of ordinary Indians at the bottom of the pyramid. Those who have worked at the programmatic level have brought their academic and/or practical experience of working with disadvantaged communities in the US or elsewhere to help their host NGOs better address the problems of India's poor and marginalized communities.

Over the years AIF has attempted to capture the insights of its Fellows in various forms: blogs, reports, case studies, videos. *Transform* is the first attempt by the Fellowship to capture, curate and publish in one single platform the insights of the Fellows on a wealth of issues, challenges and opportunities facing India as it attempts to uplift the largest group of humanity from poverty to a sustainable, dignified and contributing life. The Fellows write not as experts, but as passionate observers, activists and advocates for India's poor. Their insights are personal and poignant based on their active participation in and contribution to the process of development.

Given the partnership model of the Fellowship – and AIF the institution – we are pleased to present the views of some of our esteemed network of partners, friends, and supporters alongside our Fellows. As there is never a panacea to any critical social or economic issue, we believe a multiplicity of perspectives from our stakeholders serves to spur a reflective, thoughtful, and critical dialogue – which we hope will arise from this initiative and resonate with all those interested to know about and participate in India's development.

This first issue of *Transform* is focused on the theme of Inclusion. Development is a must. But often the fruits of development are not fairly shared. The development field – while ostensibly level – is clearly not so; societal structures and mores exclude or curtail the benefits for certain groups based on gender, caste, creed, religion, race, color, physical attributes and so many other reasons which reflect more our prejudices and fears than our hopes and humanity.

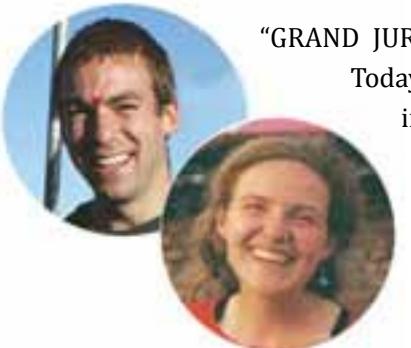
We invite you to not only read this magazine, but comment on it and join the dialogue online at transform.aif.org. We hope that together we can build a thoughtful, passionate and committed community, which at its core believes that to be poor, marginalized and disadvantaged is not the natural state for any person in India or elsewhere.



SRIDAR IYENGAR
Chair, William J. Clinton Fellowship for Service in India

Transform is the first attempt by the Fellowship to capture, curate and publish in one single platform the insights of the Fellows on a wealth of issues, challenges and opportunities facing India as it attempts to uplift the largest group of humanity from poverty to a sustainable, dignified and contributing life.

Editors' note



"GRAND JURY DECLINES TO INDICT NYPD POLICE OFFICER OVER CHOKEHOLD DEATH."

Today's headline reverberating across the US reinforces the necessity of creating inclusive societies. While our network of Fellows and Alumni collectively generated the topic of inclusion as the theme of the inaugural issue of *Transform* well before American newsfeeds became flooded by the inescapable reality of American police brutality towards Black communities, the conversation on inclusion included in these pages is as timely as ever. Whether it's in India or the US, the inclusion of all members of society, economically, socially, and in the eyes of a law, is increasingly becoming an imperative for social progress in the 21st century.

Inside the first issue of *Transform*, you will find reflections, analysis, and experiences by Indian social sector leaders, Fellows and Alumni alike, touching on issues as wide-reaching as the Indian LGBTQ movement, inclusion in the disability sector, the importance of an inclusive historical narrative, and the role of technology in increasing rural communities' inclusion in the global economy. We hope that you'll find these pieces thought provoking, enlightening, and most critically, we hope these pieces will help you to pause and reflect: What can we do in our own lives to ensure we are challenging our own biases towards others? How can we all work towards a more inclusive society? What role do we all play in re-enforcing – or breaking – structures of inequity?

The AIF Clinton Fellowship has been bringing young development leaders from the US and India together to serve in the Indian social sector for nearly 15 years. As alumni ourselves, we can attest to the transformative experience of service – working and learning in India with the support and conversations that accompany the unique bonding amongst Fellows.

We'd like to thank the many people who have given their energy and time to compiling this magazine. From the writers and the leadership of Fellowship Chair Sridar Iyengar and AIF senior leader Drew Foxman, to the publication expertise of Rowena Mascarenhas, the publication of *Transform* was a team effort.

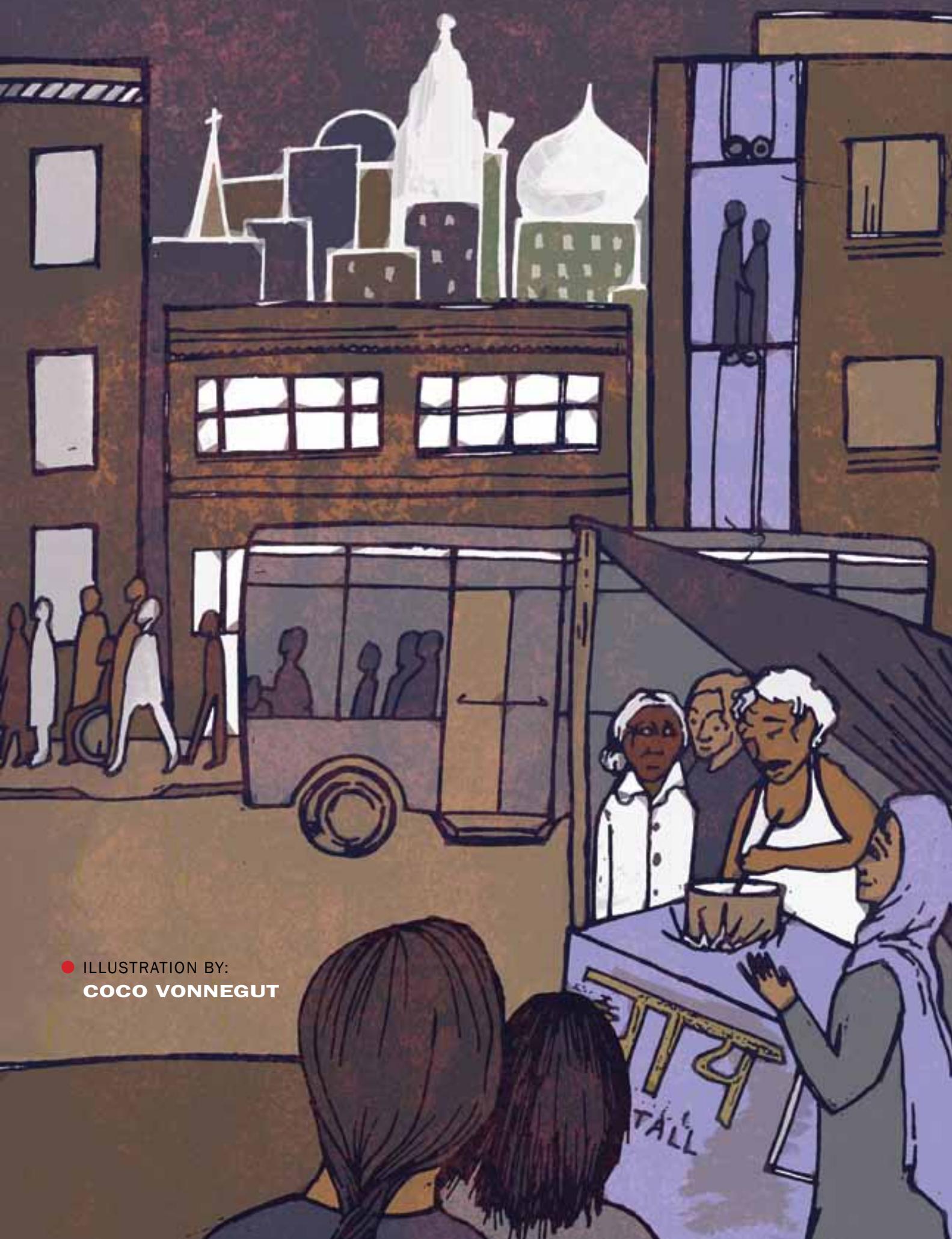
We believe that self-reflection is a critical component of inclusive development; we hope you'll join us on this journey. We hope *Transform* can serve as this first step.

Yours,

CASSIE DENBOW & CHARLIE IANNUZZI
Associate Editors, Clinton Fellowship Alumni

We hope these pieces will help you to pause and reflect:

- **What can we do in our own lives to ensure we are challenging our own biases towards others?**
- **How can we all work towards a more inclusive society?**
- **What role do we all play in re-enforcing – or breaking – structures of inequity?**



● ILLUSTRATION BY:
COCO VONNEGUT

Unkept Promises: LGBT rights in India

BY ANJALI GOPALAN

For her work with marginalized communities affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic, ANJALI GOPALAN, Founder and Executive Director of Naz Foundation, was named by TIME Magazine in 2012 as one of the '100 Most Influential People in the World'. Here, Anjali dissects and analyzes in-depth LGBT issues in India, including possibilities for the future with new national legislation.

India's relationship with its LGBT community is a complex one. The past decade has seen a number of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (including hijra) Indians living openly like never before. Pride marches are now scheduled annually not just in the metropolises of Delhi and Mumbai, but also in smaller, more conservative cities like Madurai. The portrayals of LGBT Indians in television and film, while often still relying excessively on stereotypes, are no longer as negative or as one-dimensional as they once were. As recently as this past October, I was invited to participate in Aamir Khan's *Satyamev Jayate* episode on alternative sexualities and gender identities; it is difficult to recall another show that has put the humanity of LGBT individuals so front and center for mainstream Indian audiences. This issue, which for millions of Indians had previously existed at an abstract level only, has become real. Even if only through television, people can no longer say that they have "never met a gay person", as retired Supreme Court Justice G.S. Singhvi declared just over two years earlier during oral

arguments about the constitutionality of Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), the country's now restored anti-sodomy law.

Yet there have also been setbacks. Human rights in India were dealt a blow with the full reinstatement of Section 377, a law that bans "carnal intercourse against the order of nature" and is used disproportionately to extort, blackmail, and sometimes jail consenting LGBT adults in what are clear violations of their constitutional freedoms. Just one day after the *Satyamev Jayate* episode aired, a young man in Bangalore was arrested for having transgressed this ban, as his wife had submitted recorded video footage of him having consensual affairs with other men. Issues of adultery aside, this case, along with another 377 violation filed in Bangalore months earlier, gives us the clearest evidence yet that police are ready and willing to enforce the ban anew in its broadest scope. Curiously, less than a year earlier, the Supreme Court, in its judgment restoring the ban, stated that it did not believe that such charges against consenting adults were even a

real possibility. Clearly, they were mistaken.

The fight against Section 377 has been one of great patience for all of us. Our organization, the Naz Foundation (India) Trust, originally brought the case against 377 to the Delhi High Court over a decade ago. Throughout countless hearings and statements, Naz's argument was two-pronged: as a human rights issue, Section 377 is in violation of various guarantees of civil liberties made by the Indian Constitution; as a public health issue, Section 377 is injurious to those HIV prevention efforts directed towards at-risk "men who have sex with men" (MSM) populations and, therefore, to the nation's health as a whole.

As a public health worker in New York City during the onset of the HIV epidemic in the 1980s, I knew what social stigmas and legally enforceable bans on "unnatural" sexual acts had the power to do. Indeed, at that time many

states in America still had equivalent, and often more explicit, bans on same-sex intimacy. Such laws have been proven to drive vulnerable populations even further underground, as individuals (not without reason) fear legal persecution as social pariahs. They are less likely to access public health services designed to bolster disease prevention efforts, and they are more likely to fall victim to low self-esteem and depression, which in turn have been correlated with more frequently engaging in sexually risky behaviors. I realized that our Mumbai and Delhi would be no different from New York City if pre-emptive action were not soon taken. It would only be a matter of time, for HIV needs no passport.

Today, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) has estimated that India is home to 2.1 million HIV-positive individuals. This means that, within the Asia-



▲ On February 1, 2014, thousands of people gathered for Queer Azaadi Mumbai, the city's annual pride parade. Participants donned costumes, waved flags, carried signs, and danced through the streets.

▼ Anjali, a young Bharatanatyam dancer, adjusts her jewelry before her performance at a Miss Koovagam pageant. Anjali was one of thousands of hijras who gathered from across the country to attend the annual Kuthandavar-Aravan Mela (also known as the Koovagam Festival), which takes place in the small village of Koovagam, Tamil Nadu.

Pacific region, approximately 4 out of every 10 individuals living with HIV reside in India alone. While the prevalence rate among the overall adult population seems low at 0.3%, the sheer size of India means that it still has an epidemic — the third-largest HIV-positive population in the world, according to current statistics. Treatments exist, but only to lower the virus to undetectable levels, effectively keeping it at bay, but not eliminating it. These treatments last the entirety of the patient's lifetime, and, although the Indian government provides such antiretroviral treatments for free through the National AIDS Control Organisation (NACO), it has faced shortfalls in the past. Even beyond the shortfall issue, antiretroviral drugs still do not reach many outside of major urban centers and designated "high prevalence areas"; it

is estimated that only 36% of HIV-positive individuals in the country receive adequate antiretroviral treatment.

Any meaningful efforts to fight HIV in India must therefore also involve prevention strategies — awareness campaigns, safer sex education, condom distribution — all fantastic ways of stopping the spread of the disease itself. While there was a drop in new HIV infections by 19% last year, much work remains to be done, as India still comprised 38% of all new cases in the Asia-Pacific zone. Given the Supreme Court's regressive judgment at the end of 2013, we fear that the progress India has painstakingly made may now slow, as LGBT individuals are once again driven underground. Even now, the World Bank has calculated that discrimination

against LGBT individuals in the country has cost it upwards of USD \$31 billion a year, a recession-level reduction — and that was just the conservative estimate.

Many have asked how the 377 issue will ultimately play out. Unfortunately for us all, there is no crystal ball that we can consult, even for the basic odds. However, in the aftermath of the Supreme Court's decision, there have been a few certainties. Naz's strategy has always been one of exhausting all legal options before considering other routes. Review petitions filed by it and several others to appeal the judgment were dismissed by the Court in January 2014. In the wake of that decision, Naz and others then chose to file curative petitions — the final appeal option — and in April the Court granted a motion for open hearing arguments over whether to allow a curative review of the case. We are still waiting for a date for these arguments to be scheduled. Given the recent arrests in Bangalore under Section 377, as well as the Court's groundbreaking decision in April that safeguarded gender identity rights for transgender individuals, we are hopeful that the Court will see the shortcomings of its previous thinking about 377 and how it affects LGBT Indians.

Perhaps not surprisingly, Parliament and the Centre have been unwilling to broach the subject, apart from the smattering of sound byte opinions that immediately followed the Supreme Court judgment last year. International and domestic criticism against the reinstatement of the ban has been noteworthy, but not loud enough to move lawmakers to amend the IPC, unlike their actions in 2013 in response to the growing prevalence of rape and other crimes against women in the country. The issuance of a decriminalization ordinance by the Centre appears to be an equally remote possibility, as it has not concerned itself with LGBT rights since the transfer of power to the new government. Incredibly, therefore, no branch



of Indian government seems prepared to make official what large swaths of society already see as a reality: an intimate relationship between two consenting adults, be they of the same sex or different sex, is not a crime.

We have full faith that we will reach a more equal India and the end of 377 one day, and we continue to believe that that day could and should be now. However, any change-effecting movement requires support from all sectors of society — we have seen this with corruption, we have seen it with violence against women, and we hope to see it soon with LGBT rights. The progress we make on fighting HIV depends on it, as does India's identity as a liberal, constitutional democracy. For what meaning does the Constitution truly have if those rights guaranteed to all are, in effect, guaranteed only to some? Indians have made tremendous progress in recognizing the humanity of those LGBT people among us. They are our brothers and sisters, our aunties and uncles, our neighbors, our friends, our teachers, our students, even our autorickshaw-walas. They are the same as us, and we are the same as them. And they...we...deserve better. ●



● PHOTOGRAPHS BY:
ILANA MILLNER

...he ran his pointer finger across his neck, indicating that he would kill her. Amaal pointed out the man. And the women's shouts quickly turned to blows. They surrounded him, hitting his arms, chest, and back with brutal force. He ran away as fast as he could ... If he had a tail, I imagine it would have been placed squarely between his legs.

When Women Fight Back

BY TED SAMUEL

Violence is not for me. Scenes of real-life fighting and bloodshed make me uncomfortably anxious, sometimes even a little nauseous. Conflict may be an inevitable part of life, but when it leads humans to induce harm, injury, or even death on others, I do not want to be around.

In December 2012, a violent encounter occurred less than ten feet from where I was standing. I couldn't avoid it. I couldn't pretend like nothing was happening. It was, quite literally, in my face. But in this rare instance, the fighting made sense to me. A group of seven women were, to put it mildly, beating the tar out of a middle-aged man. The mêlée, which occurred during a peaceful demonstration, was completely unexpected. Naturally, many of the bystanders, including me, became nervous by this sudden onslaught of blows. But we did not interfere. We understood that these women weren't fighting a battle against one man or one body. They were physically taking on much bigger issues.

It occurred near the bus stand of a small city in a rural district of Tamil Nadu. A few colleagues and I were there on a fact-finding mission, intent on gathering statements

and information regarding the case of Amaal. At the tender age of 16, Amaal had already managed to publicly challenge local systems of patriarchal oppression in a tangible way. She went to school.

The *jamaat* in Amaal's village had prevented girls from studying past the eighth grade. She circumvented this ban by continuing her education in a neighboring town. In retribution for her defiance, male elders spread false rumors throughout the community that viciously attacked the girl's chastity and moral character. But Amaal continued to study. She had reached the eleventh grade, showing no signs of stopping.

One day, a village elder saw Amaal speaking with a male classmate at a neighboring town's bus stand. Enraged at the fact that she would publicly associate herself with a boy, the elder slapped the girl, pulled her hair, and commenced to bring her back to their village. Upon arriving at the village square, members of the *jamaat* took Amaal and her mother – who had been summoned by other community leaders after hearing of her daughter's "transgression" – to an isolated room in a building adjacent to the village's mosque. There, they verbally abused the girl, calling her

It occurred near the bus stand of a small city in a rural district of Tamil Nadu. A few colleagues and I were there on a fact-finding mission, intent on gathering statements and information regarding the case of Amaal. At the tender age of 16, Amaal had already managed to publicly challenge local systems of patriarchal oppression in a tangible way. She went to school.

a prostitute. And then, in a premeditated act of violence, they thrashed her. When her mother tried to intervene, they pushed her to the ground and began to kick her chest. Fortunately, both women were able to leave the scene without life-threatening injuries. But the *jamaat* showed that they would use drastic action to preserve their authority and the status quo.

However, Amaal and her mother were not so easily defeated. They relayed their story to a local women's rights organization, which, in turn, organized a public rally and fast. Amaal, her mother, and the leaders of this organization were intent on letting these *jamaat* members know that their crimes may have gone legally unpunished, but they would not be overlooked by the public.

I attended that fast. In a large, open tent near the bus stand, I joined groups of women and a few men who gathered to chant, sing, and listen to impassioned speakers who demanded women's rights. After meeting some of the event organizers and hearing their statements, I went toward the edge of the tent to take pictures for documentation purposes. While at the periphery of the gathering, I noticed that many men, who were clearly not part of the rally, were watching from a short distance. Most looked curious. Some looked amused. Others irritated. But all of them remained glued to their spots, only turning their heads occasionally to comment on the proceedings.

During one speech, a group of women became visibly agitated. Their rushed whispers grew louder into an aggressive chatter that drowned out the speaker at the microphone. They stood up in the middle of the speech. Like a single organism, this cluster of eight women fluidly navigated a seated crowd and hovered toward the edge of the gathering. Amaal was in the center of the group. Though she looked panicked, she was well protected.

As the women stopped at the crowd's edge, they began to speak rapidly to the girl. I could not clearly hear the conversation, but later came to understand that they sought her confirmation. Apparently, a member of

Amaal's *jamaat* had come to the rally with the intention of threatening the girl. When making eye contact with her from the periphery of the crowd, he ran his pointer finger across his neck, indicating that he would kill her.

This act of sheer arrogance did not go unpunished. Amaal quickly pointed out the man who threatened her. And the women's shouts quickly turned to blows. They surrounded him, hitting his arms, chest, and back with brutal force. One woman punched him in the back of the head repeatedly, forcing him to cower. After several moments of chaos, he was able to break free. He ran away as fast as he could with his back bent and arms covering his head. If he had a tail, I imagine it would have been placed squarely between his legs.

I do not know this man outside the context of this incident. But, if I may venture a guess, I think it may have been the first time in his life that he had ever been afraid of women. And he had every reason to be scared. These women were fierce. The entire incident lasted less than a minute. But it likely impacted Amaal's community for generations.

Despite the sheer intensity of the scene, I still contend that the violence made sense. It did not make me feel nauseous or make me want to hide my face and pretend that nothing was happening. In fact, it was borderline inspiring. But I am not qualified, in the very least, to assess if physical fighting was the best answer. After the incident, police arrested the man who made the threats. But, considering the assault against him, they found it too difficult to press charges. He walked away with a few scrapes and a bruised ego, but no criminal record. Perhaps the bruised ego was enough, but it's too soon to tell.

Amaal has been granted admission to a new school in a completely separate district. She continues to study. Though the communal pressures she faces have died down (at least temporarily), it's difficult to know what other challenges she will face in the future. But uncertainty and the threat of violence have never stopped her before. ●



Serving as a Fellow with a grassroots human rights organization, I was constantly exposed to fascinating individuals from all walks of life. One of the key impressions I took from my time with *Utthan* was the remarkable strength and grace of the women I met. *Utthan* was founded by and for women—and has always focused on addressing the unique challenges women face in rural India, including poor access to clean water and sanitation facilities, personal insecurity, and economic marginalization. The women in these photos are the response to those challenges. They are women of tremendous grit and resilience who refuse to accept things as they are for themselves and their daughters. It was an honor for me to photograph them and provide a window into their lives and activism.

While some of these photos are taken at special events and rallies, I have learned that true change comes from the small actions women take inside their homes and within their community to defy expectations and strict gender roles: the girl who quietly works hard in school when economic and social pressures are against her; the women who allow organizations like *Utthan* to set up proper toilets on their land so women will not have to risk the dangers of going into the field at night to take care of their basic hygiene; the women who seek out solidarity with one another and reach out to women and families facing gender-related discrimination and violence. Their courage and determination truly demonstrate that all our efforts in development will be meaningless or, at best, ineffectual without the full engagement of women. ●

▼ These three women make up the *nyay samiti* (justice committee) of a women's federation supported by the rural livelihoods NGO *Utthan* in Gujarat. The committee handles issues related to domestic violence, dowry harassment, child custody, and property rights, among many others. They are highly aware of the challenges facing women in their communities and have been targeted for their own involvement in the *nyay samiti*, yet their grace under pressure and good humor remains.

Resilience in Action

BY OLIVIA DOWLING

▲ Women at the One Billion Rising march on February 14, 2014 in Ahmedabad. Marches and events are held all over the world as part of the One Billion Rising movement to end all forms of violence against women.

► Young women have limited opportunities to seek higher education and are often tasked with traditional roles of fetching water and caring for the home. Nagdniba Village, Bhavnagar District, Gujarat.



India's Development Quest

BY CHANDA KOCHHAR

CHANDA KOCHHAR, Managing Director and CEO of ICICI Bank Limited, India's largest private sector bank, discusses financial inclusion strategies by the banking sector for low-income groups and other excluded segments to fully harness and catalyze India's economic potential.

Economic growth is the foremost pre-requisite for economic development. Objectives of productive employment and higher standards of living cannot be pursued without raising economic growth to a higher trajectory. Development outcomes however may vary across nations based on the socio-economic, cultural, policy and institutional framework of the country. The Indian economy has shown immense prospects and has seen phases of strong growth and development. However, what India needs today is a growth that is all encompassing and provides opportunities for all 1.2 billion people to grow and prosper.

India's journey towards growth and development so far has been mixed. Economic growth has risen steadily over the years with the compounded annual growth

The capabilities of our demography can be fully utilised when enablers like education, health and sanitation, skill development for sustainable livelihood and financial inclusion are strengthened. These provide inroads for the excluded into the economic mainstream and fulfil the goal of inclusive growth.

in gross domestic product (GDP) increasing from just 3% during the 1970s to close to 6% in the 1990s and over 7% in the 2000s. The economy grew at around 9.0% just prior to the onset of the global financial crisis and subsequent challenges in the domestic business environment. While the rate of growth has moderated to around 5% in recent

years, it does not reflect the true potential in the economy.

The potential for India's growth is tremendous and can be gauged from the two long-term strengths of investment opportunities and favourable demography. Prospects for investments in infrastructure are strong and towards meeting an existing deficit in the economy and not just pump-priming

the economy. Hence these investments are inherently viable. Further, India has a favourable demographic profile, with the average age projected to remain under 30 years for almost the next two decades. Every year about 12 million people are added to the workforce, and dependency ratios are projected to decline for the next three decades. This implies a vast market for goods and services, and a vast pool of workers to support growth.

India's economic potential can however be fully harnessed only when key growth enablers are reinforced. Investments will fructify when factors relating to the ease of doing business in the country are enhanced. The capabilities of our demography can be fully utilised when enablers like education, health and sanitation, skill development for sustainable livelihood and financial inclusion are strengthened. These provide inroads for the excluded into the economic mainstream and fulfil the goal of inclusive growth.

Providing financial services to the low income groups and the excluded segments of society is one such enabler which is being pursued by banks through their annual financial inclusion plan. The progress made so far has been remarkable, though a lot further needs to be done. Banking services are now available in over 380,000 villages out of over 600,000, and penetration of banking services has improved from 40% of households to about 60%. This has been possible through innovative low-cost models facilitated by technology and an enabling regulatory environment. New channels of outreach are being explored including business correspondents, mobile banking and RuPay cards. Further, the Prime Minister's *Jan Dhan Yojana*, which aims to improve access to banking services and insurance, has accelerated the process. However, even financial inclusion efforts may not fully achieve the desired outcomes if other enablers of inclusion are not strengthened. Financial inclusion is just one of the means

towards achieving the goal of inclusion, but cannot singularly suffice for achieving the goal of complete inclusion. It needs to be accompanied with expeditious efforts in other areas as well like health, education and skill development.

Interventions in achieving overall inclusive growth must be through participation of various stakeholders and cannot be the responsibility of the government alone. There are areas where

government intervention will be necessary, especially where adequate funding or support is lacking. However, efforts by the government need to be complemented through private sector participation. There are areas where the private sector can provide a fillip, like supporting curriculum development and providing skill training to meet industry requirements. Additionally there are areas where public and private sector partnership would be most effective. Private sector involvement has the dual benefit of bringing in investments into areas that are resource constrained and also managerial capabilities, thus building in efficiency and a performance-driven focus.

India has immense potential to grow on the back of its favourable demography and opportunities for investments. Efforts in harnessing these strengths have to be made towards establishing strong enablers that can support long-term inclusive growth and development. Our quest should be to create an environment that enables a large segment of the population to derive benefits from India's potential to grow and to succeed. ●

Providing financial services to the low income groups and the excluded segments of society is one such enabler which is being pursued by banks through their annual financial inclusion plan. Banking services are now available in over 380,000 villages out of over 600,000, and penetration of banking services has improved from 40% of households to about 60%.



PRASHANT PANJAR

Inclusion in Urban India

BY RAJENDRA JOSHI

Serial social entrepreneur RAJENDRA JOSHI, Founder and Managing Trustee of SAATH, takes a look at the marginalized and overlooked informal economy workers that provide essential services to India's cities.

India is undergoing rapid urbanization. The majority of people migrating to urban areas are rural, from weaker socio-economic segments. They are migrating because labor markets are shifting to urban areas, agriculture economies are shrinking, and they have high aspirations for the opportunities cities can hold. Migrants to urban areas typically do not have formal employment skills and are therefore largely engaged with the informal economy.

The 2011 Indian census indicates the percentage of people living in slums in smaller cities, cities with a population of less than a million, is rising. 62% of people

in small Indian cities are slum dwellers, compared to 38% in million-plus cities including mega metros like Delhi and Mumbai. In absolute numbers, million-plus cities have 52 lakh slum households while 85 lakh reside in the sub-million cities.

Cities and towns in India are unable to cope with the pace of urbanisation. Urban centres are currently unable able to provide feasible options for shelter, basic services, livelihoods, affordable credit, affordable education and health services. Social security is a distant dream. This leads to a high degree of exclusion from the city's mainstream.

The contribution of migrants and the informal economy which sustains them is largely unrecognized and underestimated. The slum population in India was expected to touch 98 million by 2014. At a per capita of USD 1,504, this is almost a USD 147 billion economy.

The contribution of migrants and the informal economy which sustains them is largely unrecognized and underestimated. As per estimates of the Committee set up by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation under the Chairmanship of Dr. Pranob Sen, Principal Adviser, Planning Commission, the slum population in India was expected to touch 98 million by 2014. At a per capita of USD 1,504, this is almost a USD 147 billion economy.

Who are these people in the informal economy? They are the construction workers, rickshaw drivers, vegetable vendors, plumbers, carpenters, domestic maids, garbage collectors, waiters, launderers and micro-entrepreneurs.

These are the people who make our cities function. However, cities do not seem to recognise this very critical contribution. Let me elaborate. A majority of people serving the informal economy live in slums and *chawls*. They do so because that is the only affordable shelter option for them. The city planners and leaders have failed to provide legal affordable housing. To add insult to injury, slums are designated as illegal and do not qualify for the basic services of drainage, sanitation, water and electricity supply. There is a constant fear of eviction. As a result, a significant population of our cities are structurally excluded from the mainstream.

In reality, slums benefit the city. Slum residents have created resilient social and livelihood networks. Slum residents have created a huge housing stock without any access to formal housing finance. Unlike the developed countries, slums are not the dilapidated housing which breed violence, drug abuse and crime.

The bywords today in India are slum-free cities and smart cities. It is as if the two are interdependent. The solution for slum-free is an attempt to build mass housing, which causes huge dislocation and the breaking down of social and livelihood networks — the same mass housing which has miserably failed in big cities of Europe and USA

and has led to dysfunctional neighbourhoods. Vibrant and successful smart cities will be those which are inclusive and provide a better quality of life for all its citizens.

The Plinth of the Pyramid (POP)

Slum residents constitute the typical Plinth of the Pyramid (POP) — I prefer this term because it is empowering and mirrors reality — a market where purchasing power is less, aspirations are high and numbers are large. To transform slums into vibrant neighbourhoods, the key ingredient is business models that provide affordable goods and services. This requires entrepreneurs who are willing to work with local governments, slum communities, NGOs and the corporate sector.

There have been successful attempts made mostly by NGOs with enlightened bureaucrats and planners to enhance the quality of life of people living in slums. In Ahmedabad, SAATH and SEWA, in Mumbai SPARC and YUVA have worked with slum communities and local governments to find creative solutions to mainstream slum residents into cities.

The main elements of successful approaches for inclusion of slum residents are an acceptance that slum residents are vital to the city's functioning. This includes giving tenure to slums, maximum in-situ development and minimum dislocation, and market-based rather than welfare-based development approaches where slum residents are stakeholders in planning and implementation.

To meet the needs of the growing POP market in India's cities requires innovations in health care, education, financial services, livelihoods enhancement, shelter upgradation, legal services and vocational training. Innovation in these sectors can include devising new products and services and creating business models that combine government programs, NGO efforts, CSR initiatives and social venture investments. Inclusion will require targeted human, institutional and financial investments in POP enterprises.

Inclusion of slum residents into the city's mainstream is a win – win for all. Economic activities will increase, the social fabric will be strengthened, cultural creativity will become more diverse, and cities will become safer. The alternative is frightening to contemplate. ●

Migration in the Mountains: Rural economies and urbanization of the Himalayas

BEHZAD J. LARRY



Over the past year I've had the privilege to travel through South Asia's massive mountain ranges — from the Indian Karakoram in the north, bounded by Pakistan to the west and China to the east, down through the Greater Himalaya in Himachal Pradesh, up again to the Garhwal Himalaya in Uttarakhand, and eastwards to the towering ranges of Kanchendzonga and Everest in Sikkim and Nepal. The accompanying photographs illustrate the difficulties faced by many in making a living in places where millions of dollars are generated through tourism each year.

Voygr, a start-up I run with Eli Monroe (Clinton Fellow, Class of 2010-11), works on connecting adventurers with small-scale vendors of adventure: local mountain guides, porters, and rural hosts. Existing middlemen and agents for adventures often take more than 50% of the price paid, leaving small vendors and mountain ecosystems with all the negative impacts of tourism, but very few positives. Our aim is to try to get more tourist dollars to stay within communities that travelers visit, while including the cost of conservation, reforestation, and investments in solar energy into the price of an adventure.

Unlike the plains, the harshness of the Himalaya makes for much lower population densities in rural areas, which leads to a pattern of migration that is less apparent outside the mountains. Though agriculture remains the primary occupation in the countryside, tourism is a major contributor to mountain economies. While Nepal's mountains have long ranked supreme on the bucket lists of adventurers, recently opened areas such as Ladakh in Jammu & Kashmir have rapidly adapted to the requirements of an influx of tourists. Only opened to foreigners in 1974, a recent relaxation of permits and major domestic publicity in movies like '3 Idiots' have rocketed tourist interest in the region, making it an ideal study.

Due to short growing seasons and a long, harsh winter, villagers in Ladakh spend most of their time farming in the spring and summer. I stayed with a Ladakhi family in

the village of Meru, along the Leh-Manali highway by a tributary of the Indus. The 20 or so families that reside in Meru spend the morning working as labor for the Border Roads Organization and return in the afternoons to begin farming. They work communally, with nearby families ploughing, sowing, and tilling their neighbor's land as a team. As I observe the process, one thing is instantly apparent. There are no young men. Everyone in the village is either a grandparent, young mother, or a child. It is peak tourist season and the men are in Leh.

Leh town is the capital of Leh district, the second largest in India after Kachchh. Leh is booming. Situated at an altitude of 11,562 feet on the banks of the fast flowing Indus, Leh has historically been an important stop on the trade route between the Indus Valley and Tibet. In 2001, Leh town's population was only 27,513, while 75% of Leh district resided in rural areas. In 2011, the town had over 40,000 residents and 65% of the district's population now resides in rural areas. However, what is more telling about this boom is the gender ratio. There are only 690 females per 1000 males in Leh. In 2001, there were 823 per 1000. This huge discrepancy and swell of population are caused by migrant labor flooding Leh and towns like it across the Himalaya. Three thousand miles across the

Our aim is to try to get more tourist dollars to stay within communities that travelers visit, while including the cost of conservation, reforestation, and investments in solar energy into the price of an adventure.

◀ A woman leads a plough horse in Meru, Ladakh. Small scale subsistence agriculture is still the dominant occupation in Ladakh. Villagers supplement their income through NREGA employment with the Border Roads Organization and through remittances from family members working in cities.



► Chandra Bahadur Thami, 62. From Dolkhajilla, Nepal. Chandra Bahadur has been a porter since he was 13. He carries 80-100 lb loads of baggage from the Darjeeling train station for tourists going to hotels. He earns around Rs. 200 (\$3.3) per day.

range on the eastern side of the Himalaya, we interviewed porters in Darjeeling and discovered that most were older farmers, men and women, who could no longer make a living in the countryside.

These statistics and stories tell a tale that has a huge impact on our environment and on the lives of millions. A lack of opportunity is pushing poor migrants into urban centers. The cities of South Asia are failing to cope with the infrastructural nightmare that migration at this scale presents. On the other hand, fragile mountain ecosystems are buckling under the increased pressure of tourism. There is no better time to adopt a fairer way of doing business. ●

► A girl cooks over a wood fire in Nepal. A whopping 77% or 311,167,000 gigajoules of Nepal's annual energy need is met by wood. That's equivalent to burning 10 million tons of coal, producing 27.5 million tons of CO₂. In Nepal, use of wood as fuel has gone up by 7% over the last decade, while forest cover has reduced by 24.5% between 1990-2005. Tourism has increased by 45% in the same time.



Inclusive Media

BY ELIJAH Q. MONROE

The democratization of information made available through the internet has opened up new possibilities in the media landscape worldwide, as has the rapid proliferation of media production and social technologies. The editors of Transform discussed the changing landscape in India with alumnae of the Clinton Fellowship, social entrepreneurs who have founded their own media-focused enterprises, to get their views on inclusion in media and what it means for their own work and implications for society.

In our century technology has produced new media that are very effective, very desirable, and here to stay...There is just one place to look for everything; and an all inclusive catalog reveals to the user looking for books that we may have films, records, pictures, or realia on the subject of his interest."

While these words seem unmistakably to describe the Internet and the accessibility of information in the digital age, they are in fact the words of librarian Paul G. Chancellor — written in 1948. Over 65 years ago, Chancellor had already begun to recognize the dawn of technological advancement in media — and its implications for the accessibility and sharing of information.

While his reference of *inclusive* was an early indication of the growth of different kinds of media, this term has evolved to be a key descriptor of the way people produce and access media today. Inclusive media refers not only to the accessibility of media to more and more people, but also captures the entire spectrum of media — the way in which people produce, distribute, disseminate, and consume media.

The increasing availability of video has emerged as the most paramount advancement — both for viewers and creators. For viewers, video makes stories and information readily obtainable for the masses regardless of time, attention, or literacy restrictions. It is also rapidly overcoming barriers of economic status, as 2.7 billion people are online and roughly 80% of the world's households have at least one television set. For producers and creators, the world is being flooded with affordable video production technologies, giving more people and communities than ever before the ability to produce consumable visual media often at the click of a button.

There is much debate about how the growing prevalence of accessible media will change society. While the oligopoly of mainstream media would suggest that media's traditional role as a watchdog and conveyer of the truth is becoming more biased towards the interests of a few powerful corporations, the spread of accessible technology has the potential to create a more pluralistic media landscape in which all people are able to share their stories. While the traditional channels in which those

stories reach the public are still dominated by mainstream media, the deregulated, democratized nature of the Internet and the increasing ease with which video can be shared, has the potential to not only steer us away from biased non-pluralist media, but to also engage citizens in exercises of social and political participation — a process that has immense positive ramifications in itself.

FELLOW: JESSICA MAYBERRY, Class of 2003

PLACEMENT: Self-employed Women's Association (SEWA)

I am the founding director of VIDEO VOLUNTEERS, which is a media and human rights organization based in India. Our mission is to empower communities with a voice. We do that by training marginalized communities to produce content on human rights, entitlement and inclusion issues. We then work with them to use the content to solve the problem that the video addresses and to broadcast it into the mainstream and alternative media. So what this actually means is that we are one of the largest grassroots reporting networks in rural India, which really says something about the state of the mainstream media in India. As mainstream media has been shrinking and consolidating and going more towards urban issues our network of community correspondents has gone from 50, to 100, to 150, and is now consists of some 200 community correspondents in 20 states in India. We believe that media is crucial to community-led development; it is crucial for transparency and accountable government.

Last year, one out of every four videos that our community correspondents produced managed to solve the problem that the video addressed. This is our impact rate, 1 to 4 — translating to 128 instances in which the community correspondent actually managed to solve the problem. This shows the tremendous power of media to make government accountable in local areas and to motivate people to fight and organize to get the entitlements that they deserve. The community correspondents produce the videos, they work with our mentors, and they show them to government officials and to their communities in order to solve the problems the videos aim to address.

The William J. Clinton Fellowship has, throughout the years, recognized the importance — and transformative potential — of organizations that create more inclusive media in India, and has, indeed, consistently worked to empower Fellows to create projects that put the power to produce and share stories into the hands of more people, particularly India's marginalized.



Video Volunteers believes that communities have a right to speak for themselves rather than be spoken for. 2% of mainstream media in India covers rural issues and yet 65 to 70% live in villages. We train marginalized communities to produce content on human rights, entitlement and inclusion issues. We then work with them to use the content to solve the problem that the video addresses and to broadcast it into the mainstream and alternative media. We are one of the largest grassroots reporting networks in rural India.

Video Volunteers believes that communities have a right to speak for themselves rather than be spoken for. We believe that if we see media in which people are reporting their own news, we will have important new insights regarding solutions and that this will lead to better policy decisions. We simply don't believe that research and academics are the best way to understand the issues of the poor. **The best way to understand the issues of the poor is to bring communities to the decision-making table.** In today's world of inexpensive cameras, video testimonies, and video that can be produced by people who aren't even literate, there are tremendous opportunities at all levels of society from government, to the media, to NGOs, to foundations that should be seized upon to make their work more inclusive and participatory.

Q What are some of India's challenges when it comes to inclusivity in media?

A particular challenge is that the level to which marginalized voices and particularly rural voices are excluded. 2% of mainstream media in India covers rural issues and yet 65 to 70% live in villages. The mainstream media is disenfranchising 70% of the population. In America we created a media to target the American demographics and so we have a media that largely caters to a middle class country. India took that media; you know all the jokes about the 16 windows on Arnab Goswamy. We took that American media and brought it to India where middle class oriented media doesn't meet the needs of the huge numbers of people. We see how much people feel in villages and rural areas that their voices are not heard, and how angry they are that mainstream media never covers their issues. It affects people to watch TV and see this middle-class reality that is not theirs. Sure, it can create healthy aspirations, but it can also create many negative sentiments and frustration. For example, multitudes of people are angry at the way tribal issues are portrayed in the mainstream media and they are angry that so many people in these states are affected by displacement. There are concrete cases in the way we see this anger, and yet the protests that they are part of aren't covered in the mainstream media. An example of this was a massive protest surrounding the establishment of the IIM in Ranchi (Jharkhand), in which the mainstream media produced

headlines along the lines of, "The people at the *gransabha* (public hearing) were extremely positive about the development," completely excluding the thousands of people protesting. That is a very visceral way that people experience very real concrete voicelessness. This is the kind of thing that will not happen when communities, when marginalized people, are active producers of content.

Q If every community in India had the ability to own and produce their own media, how would that help society? How could it be dangerous?

This voicelessness will not happen if communities produce their own content, and it will have grave political and democratic impacts. Of course people are afraid of that. It is only dangerous to the powers that be.

Q What about fundamentalism? Can an extremist be empowered with the ability to produce messages of hate and segregation?

In India, that sort of argument has to be fought front and center and should not be tolerated by anybody in the development sector. What you just said is the reason that community radio was illegal in India until 2008. This argument was used to spread a fear-inciting message that Muslims will be propagating destruction of the state. If it was now, they would be saying the Adivasis would be using it to promote Maoism. That is just a smoke screen that the government uses to incite fear, using communal segregation, and to stomp out free speech. I absolutely don't agree with that.





I really believe that storytelling and sharing is a key part of progressing in society in a positive way, and growing to understand each other.

FELLOW: ADITI V. DESAI, Class of 2006

PLACEMENT: Utthan

I am the owner and producer of Story Bird Media. I create documentary films, multimedia projects, web videos, and I work on collaborations with other filmmakers. My focus as a producer is mostly on environmental and social issues. I have worked on environmental documentaries such as *Skipjacks – A Dying Breed*, and *Farming for the Future*. One of my favorite storytelling experiences was working on a series of webisodes for the World War II Valor in the Pacific National Monument, a project funded by the National Park Service that followed the story of Pearl Harbor survivors, both American and Japanese. The kind of information, artifacts, and personal stories that I had access to was amazing.

In 2005, I was awarded the William J. Clinton Fellowship and I worked with Utthan in Gujarat. During my Fellowship, I created a short documentary, an experience that helped me realize the power of film and how it can be an important contributor to positive social change. I went on to get a Master's in Fine Arts after that, and eventually returned to Gujarat to produce *Entangled*, a film that takes a different look at competitive kite flying and the often overlooked negative environmental impact.

My interest and passion in this is storytelling, and the reason for that is that any time a person shares a story there is an opportunity for the listener to connect with that person, and for there to be mutual understanding and hopefully compassion. Storytelling creates empathy for a person's situation, what they have been through, and what they hope to do in the future. I really believe that storytelling and sharing is a key part of progressing in society in a positive way, and growing to understand each other. Ideally, people would have more access to ways in which they could tell their story.

Q An article from *Development in Practice* states, “citizens’ media is about more than bringing diverse voices into pluralist politics: it contributes to processes of social and cultural construction, redefining norms and power relations that exclude people.” Do you agree? If so, how does your work redefine norms that exclude people?

In a way, by producing citizens' media or producing media that wouldn't be produced otherwise — by the likes of CNN or other big media outlets — you are giving voice to folks who may not have had their voice included before. Not only that, you are creating a society that is more conversant in a variety of issues. When you share people's stories, you are expanding other people's knowledge of that particular community, or that particular person and experience. Thus, the viewer who experiences that media will have a more informed and broader knowledge base from which to form her or his own viewpoint. **By including different types of media, different kinds of stories, and voices from diverse community members, you create a more informed society.** In that regard, you are also hopefully creating more connections between people and encouraging them to change and/or expand their perspectives on certain issues.

I also think news is sometimes misreported and people are misrepresented when diverse voices are excluded from the conversation. It is really important to have more media that is grassroots based, whether it is a video from a smart-phone or a tweet. It is really critical to have those pieces of information, because they are adding to the dialogue and potentially challenging the mainstream perspective.

Q What does a community-based media that is really beneficial to the community look like?

An ideal media model is inclusive and diverse. Media needs to be inclusive of all sorts of voices, whether it is women or children, any voice that doesn't have a platform in mainstream media. Also, the tool for creating that media should be shared. It cannot be just one person in charge of producing all the videos, but the knowledge needs to be housed with multiple people. The pieces that are eventually produced and reported on should involve a multiplicity of people from different backgrounds involved in the creation process. This adds to the story having inputs from different perspectives with different knowledge being shared. Diversity in the people behind the media also helps us make sure there is inclusiveness in the stories being told so that they share the gamut of experiences. We need this diversity within the stories that are told to grow as a society.

I also think it is important for media makers to use multiple forms and tools for producing stories, because some people don't have access to a Twitter account. They might only have access to a print newsletter. It is really important to distribute stories in different ways so access is more inclusive, and so that communities that might not have Internet or TV can still benefit. Print is still very important.

Q In your opinion, what is unique about working in media in India?

I think what has been most unique for me, and perhaps this is specific to Gujarat, was the amount of access people allowed to their lives and stories while filming *Entangled*. When we wanted to go film in a veterinary hospital, people welcomed us with open arms because they wanted to share their story. When I would go to different communities, especially in rural Gujarat, people were genuinely excited to speak to me about their lives and stories. They were very open to sharing. I found that attitude awe-inspiring. **It is not easy to do that type of work or get that kind of response in the US. Institutions and people are much more closed off.** It is not so easy to get such an authentic interview with a person. In India people are so open, making documentary filmmaking there very special.

FELLOW: CHRISTINA MCGILLIVRAY, Class of 2011

PLACEMENT: Breakthrough

I am the founder of MummyDaddy.com, an online platform for video and we are also a boutique production house. A lot of our concentration has really been on the cusp of the trend of how media, more specifically video, is evolving and becoming something that is very important to individuals, brands, social networks, and it is becoming something that you can produce in a much easier, faster, and more accessible way. We're hoping to be a contributor to that evolution.

I guess I have always been into online video. I started coming to India to do online video reporting with a foreign policy organization. After doing that for a couple of years I was fortunate enough to work with Video Volunteers and work with Jessica Mayberry on the fascinating community media projects that they do. It was a great experience. I became a William J. Clinton Fellow after that, during which time I worked with Breakthrough on training community advocates in video reporting, and producing a mobile reporting platform. Since then I worked on a variety of projects in India, but specifically in online video. I have always believed that online video is a strong direction where the media world is going. I've done business and education reporting, and I found myself trying to synthesize the idea of this important and evolution and asking myself how to start something fascinating that can help break down the old-school production mentality. How can we create something new and interesting in India that helps young, talented, video producers work with brands and companies to create interesting video in a way that hasn't been done.

Q How does cost affect the inclusivity of media?

Start-up costs for media and the arts can be highly prohibitive for many people. The existing model of production has been the production-house model and it is extremely expensive because you have large teams with one job delegated to each person. Now, with increasing volume of films, online video has to change that. The prices have to fall. You can't have a 90 second web video cost the same prices as a 30 second television clip. Technology has evolved as such



Young talented professionals and amateurs can now produce great video, with just a DSLR camera, a tripod, an affordable set of mics, and a wonderful sense of creativity. They can create something from start to finish, from concept to execution. We want to enable them, in our small way, to do that.

that it is much more accessible, especially for young people. Young talented professionals and amateurs can now produce great video, with just a DSLR camera, a tripod, an affordable set of mics, and a wonderful sense of creativity. Basically what we are looking at is putting that technology and the ability to connect with clients into the hands of young people in India, and to include them in the network of producers and clients. We want to give more talented people access to brands, foundations, and companies that pay for film work. There is a transition in the online space from the older production house model to the newer more transformative model, which includes and uses more young and brilliant talents through accessible and cheap technology. Remember, online video also has to be faster and more responsive. You need people that can produce as a one woman or man show in a faster way. We are looking to assemble that legion of young producers that can do that kind of film work, and connect them with opportunities. Bringing that

technological revolution and the evolution in how digital media works to a broader base, to many young aspiring filmmakers, putting the tools in their hands and enabling them to access market opportunities is our corner of this process that we are looking after. We really hope that we are contributing to the larger trend of media production being accessible by more and more people. Those high start-up costs are so prohibitive. Even though we are starting small and building from our own small corner of the greater process, we hope to enable creative young people to not think that they have to rise through the ranks of a regular production house, where you start and maybe for three years your talents are wasted holding a boom mic. They can create something start to finish from concept to execution. We want to enable them, in our small way, to do that.

Q Is inclusive media a tool to achieve other outcomes? If so, what do you want to achieve through media?

From the perspective of our organization and what we do, which is primarily focused on a population that is really plugged in online, media is a tool to achieve the greater outcome of not just watching and consuming, but experiencing the world evolve with Internet as a catalyst. So much of how we interact with the world now is online. We have whole personalities that exist online. We have companies that exist online. Video is becoming such an increasingly important way with how we interact with that world which is in many ways becoming debatably as important to some people as what happens offline. Inclusive media technology changes reality for so many people. Media and the way that it is created, shared, and consumed is definitely pushing and enabling other trends — from people having access to more viewpoints to people more people being involved in decision making. The Internet and the videos that accompany it are changing politics and social movements all over the world.

Nevertheless, it is true that over half the world doesn't use the Internet. **We recognize, that being an organization with an online focus, we cannot be entirely inclusive. However, some of the best advice I have ever received is to do a really good job looking after your corner. We can't look after all corners. The 2 billion plus that are online, that's our corner. ●**

Encouraging Voices

BY ZAIN ALAM

“What is there to gain with someone like me telling you about 1947?” This is a response I heard all too often when asking Partition witnesses about their stories. They justify their hesitation with a variety of excuses: “I am not good at talking,” they say. “I am uneducated,” and even, “Ask my husband instead—he knows more and can tell you about me too.”

At first, as a story scholar for the 1947 Partition Archive, I was surprised by such answers. Who wouldn’t relish the opportunity to narrate their memories to someone dedicated to preserving them? I reasoned that the excuses were due to fears of unearthing painful Partition-era memories, but with time that theory did not hold up. Those with the most intense stories were often the most enthusiastic in volunteering themselves to be interviewed. Having completed my Fellowship, I am now beginning to understand their hesitation. No one has made them feel that they have something worth saying, that their story is one that people want to listen to. The primary thrust of my work was to encourage Partition witnesses that this is not at all the case. I did not seek right

or wrong answers with regard to Partition, but rather the voices and personal histories of that time, with the hope that future generations can find lessons and meaning.

Social barriers engendered by class, caste, gender, and race have an undeniable impact on the development of communities and empowerment of individuals in India. The first step for those hoping to overcome such barriers is ensuring they feel that they *can* speak up. Just as no one should be compelled to share something they’d wish to keep private, so too should no one feel that their voice and story is not worth anyone’s time, regardless of who they are or where they come from. There is no inclusive development of communities if the thoughts and sentiments of those involved have no outlet—no voice—through which they are included. Institutional barriers to freedom of speech (like state suppression of languages or ideologies) are by definition a threat to inclusion, but far more dangerous are the silences imbibed through the culture and customs that espouse and protect the idea that only some voices matter.

Many of my potential interviewees liked to point out how much literature already exists on 1947, before

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Anyone working for inclusive development should aspire to be a good listener.

proceeding to ask, "What do I have to add to this subject? Why is my story important?"

I invariably would respond: Of course many know the stories of people like Nehru and Jinnah! But what about the farmers with property on both sides of the border in Kashmir? Or Indian Muslim women who were married off to Pakistani men, who were then unable to return to their homeland?

It is important to know each side of the story, I tell them. With nearly fifty billion USD allocated between Pakistan and India's defense budgets this year — much of which will be spent on pointing missiles at one another — it is obvious why we must tell each side of the story as to how we reached this unimaginable point in time.

In societies as diverse as India, including as many perspectives as possible is paramount to achieving resolutions that benefit all. If in every individual there lies the unshakeable belief that their voice cannot be taken away from them, a corollary impulse to criticize will ensure that at a wider level, the greater arc of history bends toward justice. There is great danger — for one's self, one's community, one's country — in the belief that only the "VIPs" of a country, its elite, wealthy, or powerful, have anything worth saying, that only their story is worth remembering, retelling, and studying. For a young country like India, it is important that its youth—across all sections of society—see encouraging examples from their elders. It is important that they see their elders voice their concerns and stories, and realize that everyone plays a valuable part in this dynamic, rising country. To sit back, do nothing, and forget what happened 67 years ago is unacceptable. The history of Partition is still alive and remains crucial for understanding why the subcontinent is the way that it is today.

A 90-year-old man in Delhi summed up the point of my work when he explained to his grandchild why he shared his story of killing Muslims in a bout of vengeance in 1947: Something good will have come of all this if someone learns something from my experience — if my story prevents one person from making the same mistake I did.

Delhi, where I worked for the second half of my Fellowship, is host to individuals from states like Sindh, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir. Even within those communities, lines of identity and perspective continue to fracture — by religion there are Sikhs, Hindus, Muslims; by language there is Punjabi, Urdu, Hindi, Dogri, and Pahari to name a few; within each of those languages there can be diverging dialects. The splits continue endlessly, down to one's neighborhood and family ties, which too can be further subdivided by issues like political loyalty. The core challenges left unresolved with Partition continue to rile the subcontinent almost seven decades later. Despite the devolution of powers in India since independence, center-periphery state relations in India's northeastern region remain such a problem that some areas are often off-limits to foreigners. In Pakistan, where many in 1947 hoped that Islam would become a unifying force for national identity, ethnic tensions regularly destabilize Karachi, the country's financial heart and most populous city, while Sunni-Shi'ite rivalries erupt into violence nationwide. Governments on both sides of the Line of Control in Kashmir are accused of political repression, suppression of freedom of speech, and a range of human rights violations including mass killings, tortures, and arrests. Since its birth, Pakistan has claimed Kashmir on the basis of Islam, while India claims the state on the basis of its accession in 1947 led by then-ruler Maharaja Hari Singh. One is left to wonder: where is the voice of the Kashmiris?

Each permutation of identity comes with a different perspective to the story, some more similar than others, each bringing details of its own. Taking note of these differences can help guide us, pointing us in a direction to better understand and build upon the past. How can



PRASHANT PANJAR

◀ AIF Fellow Zain Alam interviews the Dutta family at their home in Gurgaon, Haryana, to collect stories for the Partition Archive.

we build a better society without securing sound foundations that represent as many of its constituent perspectives as possible?

A 90-year-old man in Delhi summed up the point of my work when he explained to his grandchild why he shared his story of killing Muslims in a bout of vengeance in 1947: Something good will have come of all this if someone learns something from my experience — if my story prevents one person from making the same mistake I did. He understood that, while he may not be alive for much longer, the act of putting his story — however painful, shameful, and traumatic — out into the world may one day aid future generations. This was his grandchild's first time hearing his story of migrating from Pakistan and building a new life for himself in India from nothing. In such moments, both young and old can come to realize the importance of listening and telling. Slowly, the feeling that one can — and should — speak up propagates through families and neighborhoods.

Anyone working for inclusive development,

then, should aspire to be a good listener. No one can undo the damage wrought by centuries of cultural and psychological violence on such underrepresented voices, but the act of listening is a first step that anyone can undertake. An elderly lady originally from Pakistani Punjab had initially been hesitant to give an interview; she had been a housewife her whole life and received little education. She told me that in the past 70 years, no one had ever asked her what she had suffered when migrating to India. Now, someone had come from thousands of miles to hear and preserve her story — how funny God works sometimes! she said. I must have been "a blessing sent from God" for wanting to hear her stories.

It doesn't take someone coming from thousands of miles away to encourage the awakening and inclusion of such voices — anyone, whether in public health or education or women's rights or even business, can do the same, setting off the loud, crackling sparks of storytelling without which the fires of reform and revolution cannot burn. ●

The Excluded Indian Citizen: Persons with Disabilities

BY ANGELA KOHAMA

Examining the inclusiveness of the Indian development sector through the lens of AIF's focus areas of education, livelihoods, public health and social enterprise.

Where do you typically find people with disabilities (PWDs) in Indian society? In many cities, people with physical disabilities are visible begging on the streets. Children with disabilities are taught in special schools, created to teach children with disabilities separately from their peers. As adults, PWDS are employed by schemes, in which they are taught specific skills that are predetermined (typically by someone without a disability) as suitable for PWDs, which then translate into (typically menial) jobs. And often, PWDs are found inside homes, hidden from the rest of society. This marginalization tends to increase in rural areas, where there are less available services for people with disabilities.

While the Indian census registers 26.8 million PWDs currently living in the country, academics and advocates believe a more accurate estimate to be 70-100 million due to stigma and faulty data collection.¹ Using the upper estimates, approximately 17% of the global population living with a disability currently resides in India. Despite these staggering numbers, many PWDs in India are excluded from mainstream society, a result of societal structures — including exclusionary urban and architectural design, a lack of rural infrastructure,

exclusory education systems and workplaces — as well as societally-based prejudices that prevent equal participation. This level of exclusion permeates into the development sector as well.

An inclusive development sector enables anyone to participate and benefit from development projects, regardless of their background or variation in abilities, with the goal of bettering the lives of everyone. Inclusion is important ideologically, financially and economically. Scholars Frederick A. Miller and Judith H. Katz (2002) defined inclusion as "a sense of belonging: feeling respected, valued for who you are; feeling a level of supportive energy and commitment from others so that you can do your best."² In an inclusive space, community or society, each individual participates to the extent that they desire, and they are accepted despite their similarities, differences and/or desire to participate.

Statistical evidence supports the viewpoint that inclusion is beneficial for all. For example, studies show that inclusive education³ systems reduce dropout rates

● PHOTOGRAPHS BY:
PRASHANT PANJAR

A visually impaired student with her braille slate at the National Association for the Blind, New Delhi, 2013.



Inclusion
"a sense of belonging: feeling respected, valued for who you are; feeling a level of supportive energy and commitment from others so that you can do your best"

and grade repetition, and have higher average levels of achievement compared to systems that are not inclusive.⁴ In addition, inclusive projects typically cost very little extra (if any at all) provided that inclusion begins at the planning stage and is fully implemented.

Generally, projects in the Indian development sector are inclusive for some — often women and children — but largely exclude people with disabilities. Exclusion happens on many levels, not only as beneficiaries of programs, but also as potential staff at organizations. Although there are many disability-specific projects that solely target PWDs in India, there is a lack of awareness about inclusive project design, which requires creativity and innovation. The first step towards inclusion is to examine the inclusiveness of the Indian development sector through the lens of AIF's focus areas of education, livelihoods, public health and social enterprise.

Inclusion and Education

The focus of NGO-run education projects have dramatically shifted since the Government

of India (GoI) passed the Right to Education Act (RTE) in 2010. Prior to RTE, many NGOs ran alternative schools for out-of-school children (including drop-outs, child laborers, children with disabilities, and tribal children). However, after RTE mandated that all children age 6-14 are enrolled and retained in school with mandatory standards and registration processes for all schools, many alternative schools that were historically funded and managed by NGOs closed, and organizations focused on enforcing the new law, enrolling children into mainstream schools.

However, this shift from facilitating education to advocating for RTE policy implementation did not affect segregated schools for PWDs because of two policy failures. The first is the definition of disability found under RTE. Policymakers attempted to include students with disabilities under RTE, reserving 25% of seats in public and private schools for disadvantaged sections, including people with disabilities. The GoI, however, failed to define which types of disability were included in this 25%. RTE cites the People

The Right to Education Act cites the People with Disabilities Act (1995) to define disability, which does not include intellectual and mental disabilities (such as cerebral palsy, autism and Down syndrome) in its definition. As a result, under RTE the majority of children with intellectual disabilities are not legally mandated to be mainstreamed and retained.



► Visually impaired students in the computer class at the National Association for the Blind, New Delhi, 2013.

with Disabilities Act (1995) to define disability, which does not include intellectual and mental disabilities (such as cerebral palsy, autism and Down syndrome) in its definition. As a result, under RTE the majority of children with intellectual disabilities are not legally mandated to be mainstreamed and retained.⁵ Simply put, under RTE, the 'Education for All' act, the majority of children with disabilities are not legally included.

The second policy failure is that education for PWDs in India is managed by multiple ministries. To create and implement inclusive education policy for PWDs, education for PWDs should be both funded and managed solely by the Ministry of Education. However, policy and education for people with disabilities in India is also managed by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, which provides funding under the Revised Deendayal Disabled Rehabilitation Scheme for segregated schools and rehabilitation centers for PWDs.⁶ As a result, education NGOs follow government policy and funding, maintaining segregated schools to "rehabilitate" people with disabilities rather than focusing efforts into enrolling students with disabilities into mainstream schools.

The combination of these two policy gaps has resulted in segregated schools run by NGOs and funded by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment. This practice, perpetuated by this funding, will continue until the GoI consolidates education of people with disabilities under the Ministry of Education and works to include PWDs in mainstream classrooms. NGOs can continue to run programs for PWDs, but should shift their programs to focus on supporting schools that practice inclusion, acting as resource centers to provide technical support for the students with disabilities attending mainstream schools. Until this policy shift occurs, education NGOs in the development sector will continue to perpetuate a system of segregation for people with disabilities in India.

Inclusion and Livelihoods

The opportunity to earn income in India varies widely between economic classes, castes and backgrounds. However, for PWDs, the opportunity to earn income is especially limited. A popular method of employment of PWDs in India consists of combined vocational training and job placements. Employment projects tend to target people with physical disabilities, specifically people who are blind and/or deaf. There are limited schemes for people who have developmental disabilities or mental disabilities, such as autism or Down syndrome.

For example, the People with Disabilities Act provides a 3% reservation for people with disabilities in posts "identified as suitable." The creation of these posts is based on the problematic idea that certain people with disabilities are more suited for one job versus the other based on their perceived differences in ability. These posts are limited to people who are blind, who have hearing impairments, loco-motor disabilities and/or cerebral palsy. In addition to these limitations, the 3% allocation for PWDs has never been filled; and those employed by the government are typically in lower level jobs rather than management.

NGOs provide similar schemes for people with disabilities in India, usually offering limited skills training courses to PWDs, such as computer courses for people who are blind and/or deaf. Again, the jobs made available through these courses are designed by people without disabilities, who limit PWDs to certain professions based on their perceived ability level, operating under the assumption that PWDs do not have the personal agency to pursue their interests or the ability level to achieve their job aspirations. Inclusion in the livelihoods space must evolve to focus on mainstreaming PWDs in the job market, providing PWDs identical education and

There are hundreds of projects that teach about HIV/AIDS to communities across India. However, social workers don't target schools or centers for PWDs. This lack of inclusion and education may be a prime contributing factor to the vulnerability of PWDs to sexual assault, rape, and sexually transmitted diseases in these communities.

training, and removing prejudice from the workplace and hiring processes. Although there is limited government funding for this purpose, there are some good models in operation, such as the 500 annual scholarships from the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment to people with disabilities who want to pursue higher education or technical training courses. This scheme is one of the few that supports PWDs to pursue their passions. Replicating this model, in conjunction with inclusive infrastructure in the workplace, would allow PWDs the social mobility and freedom of choice to pursue a profession they desire.

Inclusion and Public Health

Many individuals' conception of disability is a health issue that needs rehabilitation and medical attention rather than a social issue within a society whose structure is designed to exclude PWDs. As a result, many public health projects are created to focus on and 'fix' people with disabilities and make them more like 'normal' individuals. Otherwise, PWDs are typically excluded from health projects altogether. While disability-focused projects can be beneficial, treatment and/or rehabilitation should always be the choice of the person with a disability, and not something forced or pushed by a medical professional. The ultimate goal of medical practitioners should directly align with the desires of the person with a disability to better his or her life.

Disability specific public health projects in India are often health clinics or schemes for rehabilitation of PWDs. In India, there is government funding for rehabilitation but not for medical schemes; the two can be difficult to differentiate. An example of a disability-specific public health project that positions PWDs as decision makers is Aravind Eye Hospitals. This model, which is also a social enterprise, provides eye surgeries on a sliding pay scale, allowing individuals of all backgrounds and income levels to receive treatment, with the goal of fully ending

preventable blindness across India. Importantly, patients must come to the hospital to request treatment; treatment is never forced upon individuals by the hospital.

Including PWDs in health projects that are not disability specific, or designed only for PWDs, is not a mainstream practice in the Indian public health sector. For example, there are hundreds of projects that teach about HIV/AIDS to communities across India. While consulting for some of these projects in Maharashtra, I observed social workers saturating the community with information, going into homes, schools, teaching youth on the street and adults in community meetings about HIV/AIDS, how it is spread, stigma and how to prevent contracting it. However, social workers didn't target schools or centers for people with disabilities. This lack of inclusion and thus education may be a prime contributing factor to the vulnerability of PWDs to sexual assault, rape, and sexually transmitted diseases in these communities."

Indeed, approximately one-third of the world's girls and women with disabilities experience sexual and gender based violence globally.⁸ It is imperative that all public health projects, whether they are focused on prevention or treatment, provide equal access to information and services to PWDs.

Inclusion and Social Enterprise

A social enterprise is a for-profit business that is "socially conscious." This means that the business either has to market their products strategically, so people believe in spending more on a product because of the social value, or find a business model to cut costs in other areas. Social enterprises in India that work with PWDs operate to achieve different outcomes. Some social enterprises are created, or decide, to employ people with disabilities. Others provide disability-specific services or products.

An example of an innovative, disability-centered Indian

social enterprise is Invention Labs, which created the Avaaz App for people on the autism spectrum and other people who are nonverbal. This app allows nonverbal individuals to communicate without using spoken language through a series of pictures that people on the autism spectrum can rearrange to create a message. This communication technique, while traditionally used with physical flashcards, is revolutionary when combined with technology because of the extensive variety of words and messages available in one small, lightweight device, resulting in increased communication speeds.

There are also many livelihoods projects that specifically create employment for people with disabilities. While these employment schemes can be positive, they often prescribe jobs for people with disabilities based on assumed skill sets. For example, people who are blind are given computer training to be receptionists or massage training to be masseurs. As explained above, people with disabilities have very little agency, if any, when given skills training and are rarely encouraged to pursue a career of their choice.

Steps towards Inclusion

Across the development sector, projects and programs are unintentionally designed to exclude PWDs, especially people with developmental or intellectual disabilities. This is due to a combination of factors ranging from a lack of technical expertise in the development sector about disability and inclusion, to an underlying fear of failure due to the wide range of disabilities to include. With at



least 26.8 million people with disabilities, and possibly millions more, in India, this is simply a population that is too large to be excluded or ignored.

There are straightforward ways to start transforming development projects to be inclusive; for example, employing someone with a disability, or an expert in inclusive program design, with a background in disability advocacy or an NGO that works with PWDs. Research 'Universal Design' principles and apply them in your work. Change the physical infrastructure of your offices and the buildings where you conduct field work to ensure maximum accessibility for PWDs. Learn more about individual disabilities, which will help you understand how to accommodate each disability.

But the first step towards inclusion is a paradigm shift. To run inclusive projects, you have to want inclusion. You have to believe that PWDs deserve to benefit from development programs. And importantly, you have to accept your potential future failures when attempting to design inclusive programs and be willing to stretch the limits of your creativity in order to accommodate PWDs.

One can hope that 10, 20 or 30 years in the future, when reflecting on where you find people with disabilities in Indian society, the answer will be: everywhere I am. ●

ENDNOTES

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◀ Visually impaired students work in the kitchen at the National Association for the Blind, New Delhi.

26.8
million
people with disabilities
(2011 India
Census)

100,000

persons with disabilities
currently employed

Jobs for Persons with Disability: A Review

BY SRIJANA ANGDEMBEY

● Persons with Disabilities: The Context

According to the World Report on Disability, persons with disabilities (PWDs) constitute the world's largest minority group, representing 15% of the population, or an estimated one billion people. At least 785 million of them are of working age.¹ Despite major efforts in recent years to address the rights of persons with disabilities, PWDs are disproportionately disadvantaged in the labor market and have higher unemployment rates than those who are non-disabled. Increasing employment opportunities for persons with disabilities is not just the right thing to do, but also a smart move for the economy. Economic benefits can be seen in the form of reduction in social expenditure and an increase in tax receipts. For markets across the world facing labor shortages, tapping the potential of PWDs presents an opportunity to help fill those needs.

In India, out of the 70 million people with disabilities, only about 100,000 are currently employed.² This level of labor market marginalization compounds inequality through poverty and social exclusion. Moreover, 50% of PWDs are below the age of 30, adding to the pool of PWDs in the working age. In about seven years, the average Indian will be 29 years old.³ With 64 % of its population of working age, India will have an unprecedented edge that economists believe could add a significant 2% to the GDP growth rate.⁴

For every nation, this phase of demographic transition

is a once in a lifetime opportunity. Job creation and skill development is therefore of high government priority and a part of the Indian national agenda. The government has set an ambitious goal of 'skilling' 500 million people in the country by 2022 in order to create a pool of skilled workers to harness its demographic dividend.⁵ To be sustainable in today's global and hyper-competitive marketplace, India cannot afford to overlook people with disabilities as talented human resources. The International Labor Organisation (ILO) and the World Bank estimate the cost of excluding persons with disabilities from participating in the economy to be between 3-7% of GDP in some countries.⁶ For India to fully reap the benefits of its demographic dividend, it must focus on skilling and employment of all people, including persons with disabilities.

● Building Inclusion: Challenges and opportunity for success

Efforts to include PWDs in the mainstream economy are fraught with complexities that are often intertwined with societal, cultural, political and economic intricacies. One of the biggest challenges is collecting accurate data. For example, India's 2011 Census figures on disabilities state that there are 26.8 million persons with disabilities in India. However, various assessments by international and non-governmental organisations (United Nations, WHO,

World Bank and National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People) suggest that the more accurate number is around 70 million. The undercounting in the 2011 census is of major concern and directly affects any intervention to provide the right services and support for PWDs.

A recommendation for more accurate information gathering is to utilize the municipality to work with the village *Sarpanch* (elected head of a village) to collect better data. Better quality data on persons with disabilities, especially disaggregated data that explains the different disabilities and impairments as well as the level of severity, is imperative for effective planning and design of Inclusion policies, programs and interventions.

● Public Sector Jobs: Reservations under 1995 PWD Act

In 1995, the landmark Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) (PWD) Act was passed. The Act provides for education, rehabilitation, employment, non-discrimination and social security for persons with disabilities. Section 33 of the 1995 PWD Act provides for reservation of not less than 3% of vacancies in identified posts, by appropriate governments, for persons with disability, of which 1% each is to be reserved for persons suffering from:

- Blindness or Low Vision, i.e., Visual Impairment (VI)
- Hearing impairment (HI)
- Locomotor disability or cerebral palsy

However, the 1995 PWD Act does not

While the 1995 PWD Act made it mandatory for all government and public sector companies to reserve 3% of jobs for persons with disabilities, the reserved are extremely under-utilized, falling short by 66% of the mandated reservation.

mandate that the private sector provide such quotas nor does it require anti-discrimination practices by the private sector. The Act encourages local and state level governments to formulate economic incentives or 'schemes' to encourage private and public sector organizations to increase employment of persons with disabilities to no less than 5% of their total workforce.

While the 1995 PWD Act made it mandatory for all government and public sector companies to reserve 3% of jobs for persons with disabilities, the reserved are extremely under-utilized, falling short by 66% of the mandated reservation.⁷

Until November of 2010, only 1,017 vacancies out of 7,628 backlog vacancies had been filled by the government.⁸ The two main reasons for low representations of PWDs in public sector jobs are (1) inadequate job identification process, with only a little more than 11% of posts defined for persons with disability. Reservation only applies to vacancies in jobs which are identified as being suitable to each type of disability. Agencies without appropriate

jobs are exempted from reservation; and (2) limited coverage of disability categories. Only three categories of disability are covered within the 3% reservation, locomotor (1%), visual (1%) and hearing (1%). Mental, intellectual or sensory impairments are not included.⁹

70
million
people with disabilities
(UN, WHO, World Bank)

50%
persons with
disabilities are under
the age of
30



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▲ Students study graphic arts in AIF's ABLE training for hearing impaired at Noida Deaf Society, Uttar Pradesh, India, 2013.

Furthermore, there is no enforcement of the stipulated reservation by the Commissioner of Disability — which creates little urgency for non-complying departments to address the issue. In all ministries, departments and public sector units at the Center and State level, there are reserved posts for PWDs that remain unfilled for several years. The missing component necessary to drive results is a system of accountability and a procedure for handling non-compliance.

● Education Counts

Low literacy rates among PWDs is also a significant barrier to entering the workforce. A 2004 study by National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled Peoples (NCPED) showed that only 0.1% of students with disabilities are in mainstream educational institutions at the university level and only 0.51% at the primary/secondary school level.¹⁰ Part of the reason is rooted in the inadequacy of the Indian education system, which does not prepare PWDs for professional careers. For example, if a student has a hearing impairment, he/she is completely exempt from taking science and math

classes in secondary school in India because the Indian Sign language (ISL) has yet to develop signs to cover those subjects.

Furthermore, very few PWDs are able to pass the recruitment tests, since the recruitment method itself is often archaic and impractical. For instance, in order for a person to apply for a high level job, clerical or non-clerical, a candidate must pass a typing test on a typewriter.¹¹ Very few training centers in India still teach students how to use a typewriter. In order to provide PWDs an opportunity to join mainstream jobs and contribute to society, these impractical rules must be changed.

● Role of the Private Sector

Many companies are beginning to realize the benefits of including persons with disabilities and are even creating a niche by focusing business models on the unique abilities of persons with disabilities. Companies such as Auticon in Germany, a quality assurance and software testing company, has created a business around the strengths of individuals with Asperger syndrome to recognize patterns with precision and focus. In speaking with various

organizations working with persons with disabilities, it became clear that PWDs perform exceptionally well when given a job that suits them.

Much needs to be done by both the public and private sector to provide positive action measures to increase employment of persons with disabilities. For example, the private sector can provide apprenticeships for persons with disabilities and support measures promoting entry of PWDs into the labor market. A Brazilian company, Serasa Experian, is seen as a landmark example. Serasa was required by a government mandated employment quota to have 5% of its workforce include persons with disabilities. To meet this requirement, Serasa Experian began operating the Employability Programme for People with Disabilities, which is a 4-month training program. Serasa then employs successful trainees. This program has become very effective and grown into the national Brazilian Business and Disability Network, which better addresses issues around employment of people with disabilities. The mission of this program is to gather and mobilize companies in Brazil to promote the inclusion of persons with disabilities in mainstream employment markets.¹²

● What is Ahead?

There is a new *Rights of Persons with Disabilities Bill* currently in the Rajya Sabha (upper house of Indian Parliament), which seeks to increase reservation for persons with disabilities in public sector jobs from the existing 3% to 5% and reserve seats for them in higher education institutions. The new bill, if passed, will extend the quota by 2%, covering two additional categories—mental disabilities and people with multiple disabilities. This new Bill may be a step in the right direction, but the challenge ahead is operationalizing the policy framework so that the law delivers its intended outcomes. Current schemes and reservations for persons with disabilities are already underutilized. Prior to extending a scheme, there should be regular assessments to see if the scheme has served its purposes and to gauge its contributions to the social and economic development of persons with disabilities. Creating a system of accountability and a procedure to handle non-compliance should be a first step. Only then will the well intentioned policies bring intended results.

The government and society must understand that empowering PWDs to live as independent and contributing members of society has both social and economic benefits.

● In Conclusion

To increase participation of persons with disabilities in the workforce, we need disability to be an integral part of all national policies including skill development, education, health care and employment, to name a few. The government and society must understand that empowering PWDs to live as independent and contributing members of society has both social and economic benefits. People with disabilities have a wealth of untapped skills, talents, interests, and experiences that can add tremendous diversity, resourcefulness, and creative energy to any organization/economy. ●

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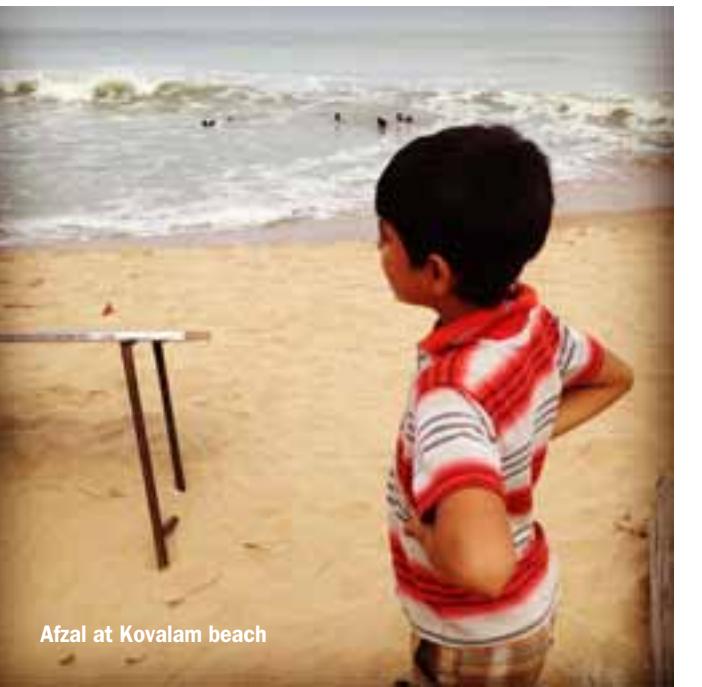
Confronting Complexity

BY NED DOSTALER

Why mental health care in India demands an inclusive and interdisciplinary approach

On my first day working with The Banyan, a non-governmental organization that works with persons with mental health concerns living in poverty, I was sitting in the research office on the second floor when Afzal walked into the room holding the hand of one of the patients. I wondered why he, a 12-year-old boy, was accompanying this woman around the building. He stood there in silence as the woman spoke to me. I didn't understand anything she said. To my surprise, Afzal started translating her words into English. The woman, whom I later learned was Usha, wanted to know who I was and why I was there. Good question, I thought to myself — why am I here? I told them that I was a new member of the research team. She wanted to know where I was from. "America," I said. Usha nodded, in what seemed to be a signal of her approval, as Afzal shifted his gaze back and forth between Usha and I, smiling apprehensively. Just before they walked off, I asked Afzal why he was escorting Usha. His smile grew as he looked up at her, asserting, "She is my mom."

This reversal of roles — a young boy serving as a caregiver for his mother — was surprising to me. I was intrigued and wanted to learn more. I asked the staff at The Banyan about their story and slowly started to piece it all together. Usha is thought to have been born with a mild intellectual disability. At the age of 16, she was married. Shortly after, in 2001, she gave birth to Afzal.



This essay has been in my mind since the day I first met Afzal, as his story really captures what The Banyan is about — an unconditional and holistic effort to support those who are suffering from homelessness and mental illness. What a romantic story, I thought. And in many ways it is.

It was during this period that she started experiencing symptoms of manic-depressive disorder. As a result, she was chained and beaten by her husband. When Afzal was about three months old, his father took Usha to her hometown, Ajmer, Rajasthan, to leave Afzal and Usha with Usha's family. However, Usha's husband could not find her family so he left her chained up at a *dargah* (Islamic hospice) in Ajmer.

At some point in 2002, Usha was found in Chennai. No one knows how she got there. She was brought to The Banyan's transit care center, Adaikalam, for care and treatment. After spending about a month at Adaikalam she was re-integrated with her mother, Mishti, in Ajmer. The Banyan shipped medication to her home. However, even though she was receiving treatment, Usha's family found her difficult to manage and often chained her up. The Banyan heard nothing from Usha or her family for 7 years. Usha and her family had moved to Kolkata, West

Bengal and, as such, stopped receiving the medication that The Banyan was sending. Then, in 2011, in an act of desperation, Mishti brought Usha back to The Banyan as her condition was getting worse. About 9 months later, Mishti brought Afzal to Chennai to stay with his mother.

Since their arrival, Mishti, Afzal, and Usha have been absorbed into The Banyan family. Mishti currently works as a housekeeper, gardener, and cook at the Community Living Project. Usha stays in the Kovalam Health Center's inpatient unit or, when her condition gets worse, at the more intensive transit care center. Afzal lives at the Kovalam Health Center and is financially supported by The Banyan. He goes to the local school and often sleeps at home with Ram, the coordinator of the Health Center. This is what it takes to care for the marginalized and mentally ill in India — an inclusive and comprehensive approach with an emphasis on integrating family into the caregiving. There are many other stories like Afzal and Usha's at The Banyan, stories of integration and formation of community. I met a volunteer social worker at one of The Banyan's urban clinics that has decided to spend most of his time volunteering after The Banyan took care of his wife. Many of the individuals who work at the Health Center in Kovalam are former patients.

Every day I worked at The Banyan, I tried to spend some time with Afzal. One day he introduced me to all of the dogs that reside at the Health Center, including the most recent addition: five adorable puppies. Another day we went to a surf competition at the local beach. Whenever we spent time together, I yearned to learn about what it is like to have a mother who suffers from a severe mental illness. Sometimes I would probe a little, asking questions like, "When is the last time you spoke to your mother?", but I was too afraid to ask questions directly related to his mother's illness and how it affects him. So I asked more general questions. What do you want to be when you grow up? Where do you sleep? What city do you like the best? What language do you feel most comfortable speaking? Slowly I've gotten to know Afzal.

As I interact with Afzal, I keep looking for signs of hardships he has faced growing up. But I don't find them. I'm in awe of his resilience. I think he has learned to mask his suffering, but, also, what The Banyan has done for him cannot be discounted. He has a community, a family at The Banyan. Instead of living on the streets, a certain destiny had it not been for The Banyan, he is going to school,

eating three meals a day, and dreaming of a bright future.

This essay has been in my mind since the day I first met Afzal, as his story really captures what The Banyan is about — an unconditional and holistic effort to support those who are suffering from homelessness and mental illness. What a romantic story, I thought. And in many ways it is. It is a story of triumph and success in the face of remarkable challenge. And the story keeps building. A few months ago, there was the talent show at the Health Center. Of course, Afzal performed. Everyone watched Afzal as he danced with the grace of Bollywood's Prabhu Deva and a pelvic thrust that could only be matched by the legend Mithun Chakraborty. I saw Vandana, one of the founders of The Banyan, smile with joy and imagined the sense of pleasure she must have felt in that very moment.

Then it all blew up. Out of nowhere, Usha picked up one of the puppies and threw it against the wall. She then proceeded to physically attack members of The Banyan staff and chase after Afzal. He responded as if nothing happened. Her outburst can superficially be understood as a cry for attention after watching Afzal become the star of the show. After this incident they took Usha back to the transit care center, so she could receive 24-hour care and support. This was a not a failure on the part of The Banyan. This was a humble reminder that treating mental illness is hard, and an ongoing struggle.

This story exemplifies two main features central to treating mental illness in India (and anywhere around the world, really). First, treating mental health requires long-term commitment and an inclusive effort. Mental illnesses are often chronic and even if symptoms do go into remission, there is always a need to stay diligent about the potential for relapse. Treating mental illness takes an unconditional commitment; and that is what The Banyan offers. Secondly, caring for those with a mental illness is always more than just treating mental illness. As we can see in the case of Usha and Afzal, mental health is inextricably linked to poverty, domestic violence, pernicious gender norms, and many other issues. For this reason, it is necessary to link research with service, unraveling the complex links between all of these intersecting issues.

Offering good mental health care services — everywhere across the globe, but especially in India — takes a concerted, interdisciplinary effort. The Banyan offers a progressive model for this, and we can only hope that others take notice. ●

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