



Dedicated to those with courage who see something terrible and want to do something with every inch of their being, this is for you...

A special thank you to all those who have supported me and made this possible: Mr. Pocock who opened my eyes to humanitarian issues through Socials Class, Mr. Ahn for giving us (Science Academy) the space to explore our passions, Dr. Gina Oglivie who provided a lot of insight on the importance of making a sustainable difference, Dr. Brad Bass for his expertise and support, Dr. George Clarke for his encouragement, Courtney Martins who's words brought me to reconsider the definition of changing the world, David Bornstein and his case studies that inspire me great examples of changemakers, Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson who's expertise is unparalleled, the Top 20 Under 20 family, my friends who have believed in me, and my parents who I love greatly—

"We are tempted to reduce life to a simple search for happiness. Happiness however, withers if there is no meaning."- Chris Hedges

"We can't continue to live our lives in a bubble. We can see that there's a war against poor people and people of colour, and that **if we're not working for their liberation, we're part of their oppression."** – Tyrone

Buchers









"FALL IN LOVE WITH THE COMPLEXITY OF PROBLEMS NOT THE SOLVABILITY."







Going to sleep one night, a card fluttered onto my desk. '30,000 children a day die from poverty related causes.' That spark catalyzed my love to help others with the determination to break the poverty cycle. I began striving to create learning environments for underprivileged children because I knew education is the most powerful tool that can break the poverty cycle. Three years ago, I established a club at my school that brought increased awareness for issues like education, hunger, mental illness, and sanitation. In the past years, we have helped in the building of two schools in El Trapiche, Nicaragua (one of the poorest communities in North America)! Sixty four students are now able to go to school in a community where before there was no school. Then in **August 2015**, I went to El Trapiche to learn more about the community I was striving to help. And it changed me, it molded all my inner passions and compassion to become a common purpose.

I saw things, I learned things, and I felt things that I had never thought I could. So taking that experience into account, I wanted to make sure that those who want to make a meaningful difference, like me, knew just what they were getting into, to be able to actually make a **sustainable difference**.

INTRODUCTION

There has been an increasing flock of young people working to create a life of meaning leading to an attraction of solving problems that seem urgent and readily solvable. Solving problems **for** people in third worlds countries instead of **with** the people. There is nothing wrong with the intentions of helping others or making a difference, it does instead raise the questions of whether resources or aid are being allocated properly and if it **actually** makes a difference.

"Fullness of knowledge always and necessarily means some understanding of the depths of our ignorance, and that is always conducive to both humility and reverence."- Robert A. Millikan.

"It's not how much we give, but how much love we put into giving." - Mother Teresa

Main Questions that arise:

- 1. Are the work/aid/resources we are putting into global problems actually doing more harm than good? > Could there be a better allocation of time, energy, resources, and aid to effectively target the 3rd world problems we have or are currently addressing?
- 2. By flocking to global problems which is often glamorized by society, how is neglecting domestic problems affecting all of us?

Throughout the duration of this project, I would like to further investigate:

- Aid effectiveness
- Examples/evidence **not just a few cases** of projects that were focused on solving a problem for the sake of solving it and the outcome; research
- A solution to bringing in more effective aid; proposal
- Neglection of domestic issues

Addressing the Issue:

Research is essential in coming up with a solution. As of now I am not one hundred percent certain, but I would like to come up with a solution that would more effectively allocate first world aid to third world countries. This may result in a proposal of an organization, NGO, or social enterprise that will tailor to solve the problem but can also work out to be a documentary/ book to increase awareness about the ineffectiveness of certain aid solutions.

I will start by focusing on these aspects that are crucial when implementing solutions in 3rd world countries

- 1. How do we maintain sustainability?
- 2.Can we change behaviour? Is it possible for community members to adapt to our ways of life or our systems of projects?
- 3, How do we deal with incompetent or corrupt governments that may lack infrastructure?

IDENTIFYING THE PROBLEM

"The people in poor countries have the same aspirations as those in rich countries — to have the same chances and opportunities, good health care, clean running water in their homes and high-quality schools for their children. The problem is that their aspirations are blocked today — as the aspirations of black people were in apartheid South Africa — by extractive institutions. The poor don't pull themselves out of poverty, because the basic ability to do so is denied them."

"Poverty is instead created by economic institutions that systemically block the incentives and opportunities of poor people to make things better themselves, their neighbours and their country."

A main issue to focus on is the background of poverty or why poverty exists? There are many **misconceptions** of the roots of poverty

• <u>Money is the solution</u>: It's not, if it was we would long be on the road of not just ameliorating lives around the world but eradicating poverty.

Ex: Over the past decade, the amount of aid for developing regions has been substantial. And the world has certainly been tugging forward, with a decrease of people in poverty by 700 million especially in China (627 million). But unfortunately in Africa the Sub-Saharan countries are **poorer now** than in 1960. "Poverty across the continent may be lower-though the number of people living in extreme poverty has grown substantially since 1990."

• The geography of the country: Yes logically countries near the equator have more arid land and are at a disadvantage for agriculture as compared to more temperate countries but from research many hot countries are financially blossoming (Singapore, Malaysia, and Botswana). "It is the consequence of the ownership structure of the land and the incentives that are created for farmers by the governments and institutions under which they live."

Ex: Nogales, Arizona vs Nogales, Mexico which both have the same geographical location but are two separate worlds (with the US- Mexico border). In Arizona, the average citizen earns three times as much as that of it's fellow citizen just across the border. Furthermore, they have access to health care, education, and many opportunities that those in Nogales, Mexico live without.

Ex: South Korea vs North Korea: SK is one of the world's wealthiest nation while it's brother just north of it's border still suffers with extreme poverty and famine.

There are also many tropical diseases that causes many deaths and sufferings especially in African countries but the public health strength of a country comes from the willingness of a country's government to fight disease. The government's lack of initiative to undertake measures to eradicate the diseases has led them to grow rampant.

• <u>The culture of the country:</u> Each culture endorses different values, ethics, and living of life. Even though it is simple to think that a certain religion or background of a country influences the workings of the country undoubtedly but it cannot be the distinguishing factor between the prosperous and developing nations.

Identifying the Problem continued...

Ex. Many believe in the notion that Christian countries or countries of European descent are more financially stable. But that is not the case, take for instance Singapore that is prosperous as many parts of Western Europe with no trace of European descent.

• <u>Ignorance of the governments:</u> This is a small part of a whole as at times, the ignorance of governments of certain developing nations has led to political or economical consequences but, "if ignorance were the problem, well-meaning leaders would quickly learn what types of policies increased their citizens' incomes and welfare, and would gravitate toward these policies."

The cycle of poverty has been investigated extensively but there is no one solid solution. There are however a chain of factors or amalgamation of ingredients that can slowly destroy this vicious cycle.

So who cares? What does this mean? We can see that there are **two major methods to address a social issue: top-> down (enforcing institutional or governmental changes to inflict change in society), or down-> top approach which works with a leader or a group of passionate individuals who work to revolutionize the norm to create change.**

Let's look at the first method: top-> down approach which is thoroughly investigated in the book, <u>Why Nations Fail: the Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty</u>, by Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson.

From fifteen years of research into ancient civilizations, history, and the present day... Institutions greatly dictate a society's growth and potential. Economical, social, and political institutions

With a lot of evidence and support, a government that works for and with the people is more successful and prosperous in the long run. The saying, "Alone we can do so little, but together we can do so much,"- Helen Keller holds very true. When there is freedom and a broad distribution of rights for citizens that are created by political institutions especially governments, people have opportunities to grow their ideas to better advance their communities and the world. Specifically with democratic governments, there is more room to be economically innovative. Take for instance the history of the United States, the spread of political rights guaranteed equal access to financial loans and ensured those with ideas and inventions would benefit, some great examples include: Thomas Edison, Larry Page, Steve Jobs, Bill Gates, etc. These people are successful and have impacted the world because the institutions they were fortunate to be a part of, supported their endeavours and the political system bolstered their inventions or dreams in coming true.

Systems of governments -> Gives people a voice -> Free people -> Distribution of equal power -> Stronger, more powerful nations

With authoritarian regimes, totalitarian governments, or dictators there is the exploitation of the people which block societal growth: stunted economic incentives and initiatives of the great mass of the population. As well, often times than not there is corruption when power is concentrated in the hands of only a few and this is where the cycle begins: extreme power with individuals -> concentration of wealth in the wealthy -> wealth+ power = ability to control and oppress people to become even more powerful + wealthy.

"It's mostly not about ignorance or culture... poor countries are poor because those who have power make choices that create poverty. "- Acemoglu

FINDING A SOLUTION



"True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar; it comes to see that an edifice which produces beggars needs restructuring," —Martin Luther King Jr.

How do we bring people to believe in themselves and their ability to shape the world? To respect their own ideas and trust their own inner voice.

As I did more research, I realized that there wasn't some foolproof solution or strategy that I could come up with that would be a solution in itself. Instead I started seeing trends in successful long term implemented initiatives. This brings us to the second method to implement change: starting with an individual and working upwards.

Key ingredients to making a <u>"real" difference</u>: impacting a group of people for an extended period of time that positively contributes to the development for the rest of their lives (down -> top approach).

- A leader: "It was an emotional response to seeing problems and just reacting and saying, 'I can do something, I can help. People cannot just be left to die like dogs.' Something **needs** to be done." Veronica Khosa
 - 1. Know exactly what they want and why!
 - 2.Indomitable will: will not accept defeat to continue fighting for what they believe is right when obstacles arise. "The time of disintegration does not change back automatically to a condition of peace and prosperity; effort must be put forth in order to end it. This shows the creative attitude that man must take if the world is to be put in order." —Book of Changes
 - 3. Swims against the flow (customs, culture, societal standards of the time)
 - 4. Creative: propels the innovation that society needs to tackle its toughest problems
 - 5. Sees a problem, envisions a solution and takes initiative to act on that vision
 - 6.Sustaining: continual improvement, strengthening, and broadening that vision -> new norm
 - 7.Understands, is connected, or has been affected so deeply that they feel it is a NEED to do what they need to do (this usually comes from an inside perspective of their city or country because they have lived their whole life there-> recognition of fundamental problems with government + specific culture/society

Finding a Solution continued...

- 8.Places others in front of their own needs (won't ever work if there is a focus on achieving fame, glory, etc) -> various personal sacrifices must be made
 - -Willing to make sacrifices: social work = huge psychological + physical risk, there is a roller coast of emotions (burn out, heartbreak, defeat, resurrection, etc)
 - "One cannot focus on an objective and focus on oneself at the same time. People of ambition [fall] into two groups: those who [want] to 'do something' and those who wanted to 'be some one.' J.M.
- 9. Has a dominant motivation of achievement as compared to power or affiliation. Satisfaction came for the conformity of society to his/her will
 - "Pure motivation to push an idea steadily for so long with so little fanfare."
- -"If ideas are to take root and spread, therefore, they need **champions-** obsessive people who have the skill, motivation, energy, and bullheadedness to do whatever is necessary to move them forward: to persuade, inspire, seduce, cajole, enlighten, touch hearts, alleviate fears, shift perceptions, articulate meanings, and artfully maneuver them through systems." David Bornstein
- 10. Willing to adapt; Society inevitable changes, people change, and more issues will arise as the project is further investigated. If something's not going right, it's the leader's hard decision to derail and go back through a different direction.
- 11. Willingness to be humble and own up to mistakes and fix them!
- -"Learning to let go.' Everything will not be exactly the way you want it. You have to let people take charge.

 The best thing is not to have a picture of what you want, but to have basic principles."- Jeroo Billimoria
- 12. Ethical fiber: not corrupt. Trustworthiness of integrity is an essential aspect because if people don't trust, they do not follow. How do you get people to trust you?
- 13. Constantly building and repiecing their ideas to get them to work or and to be able to answer possible "how-to" questions
- 14.Not giving any ---,these are people who don't care who/what gets in the way of making something happen, they will knock those obstacles down. Not taking no for an answer. Will do anything to make things happen ie. not settling
- 15. Giving others the opportunity to speak or to work at times when their background, set of experiences, or education achievements doesn't prepare them to do the best work in a given area
- 16.Innate passion that cannot be taught; they have found an intersection where their deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet. They are satiated, their work feeds them.
 - "You're not doing anyone any favours if you don't follow your dreams. Hell, you're probably not even doing a very good job if you're that miserable."

• A vision

1.Remembering the mission always and who you're targeting. Don't work for anyone but the person you're wanting to help.

Changing the status quo because there was the identification of a problem:

- 1. Changing attitudes, expectations, and behaviours
 - -For people to feel empathy, they first need to understand. Need to help people find that spark within them to fight for what they believe in is right. Why should people be concerned with your cause?

- -At the same time, know that your area of development isn't for everyone.
- -Have an accurate picture of those you have the capacity to reach instead of trying to reach everyone (start small)
- -"I realized it was more difficult to create a meaningful impact or a large scale impact. But you have to start small because everyone is so difference. Even with a given place, it's hard to come up with applicable solutions any more than a very specific subset of people."- Alex Yang
- 2.Long term source of energy to make sure the change is well rooted
- 3. Purpose: to break out of negative patterns of the past and initiate a new order of things
- 4. Identifying gaps and filling them in
- 5.An idea= a product of "how-tos" Ex. How do you get people motivated? How will you overcome obstacles? ... etc
- 6.Expansion: making sure that the vision doesn't stop or halt (long term continuation, goals for the future that will undoubtedly change)
- Just sufficient kick start funds (financial support)
 - -Entrepreneurial quality to the project
 - -Fundraising
 - "It's all a numbers game. If you don't want it enough to be uncomfortable and ask for the funding, then you shouldn't be [doing what you're going to do]."- Emily Abt
- People who believe in the vision/cause who dedicate their lives to help the leader and make it possible -Create the connection of purpose so that the volunteers/workers feel appreciated
 - -Ex. "Do these people need me?" I realized I wasn't getting much satisfaction from my life. -'Neelam, you're not meant for this.' A teacher referred me to Childline. I came to an open house here and I saw these kids enjoying themselves. I saw the volunteers. I was taken away by it."
 - -"If you really believe in something, you just have to do it and do it."- Erzsébet Szekeres
 - -"Nobody is more important than any other person... But sometimes a person has success because that person continues fighting."- Vera Cordeiro

Further steps to implement sustainable projects:

- 1.Turning the city/community -> team, spread across different cities (expansion) -> nationalizing project becomes possible
- 2.To know the history of past similar projects implemented: If an idea has been tried before why did it fail? If it was successful, how can we further improve it?
- 3. Support of legislation: it is essential for the gov't to also support the cause/mission or no long term change will be implemented

Problems that will need to be tackled:

- 1.Breaking out of familiarity; taking risks: "The hardest thing for people to accept is that their conceptualization of their role needs to be changed."- Szekeres -> no acceptance for the new vision
- 2. Money filtered through government systems can fall into the hands of corruption.
 - -Money going through big organizations don't directly help those in need Ex. The Giving USA Foundation found that dollars donated to groups working directly those with poverty dropped from 24 to 8 percent (1955 to 2004). A lot of philanthropists/ celebrities are increasingly flocking to organizations that will recognize them for their contributions
- 3. "Truly being poor is expensive, and having had good healthcare my whole life, never having to go into debt, not having to take financial care of my family, and a million other things make it easy for me to live cheaply." Tyrone Boucher

A SUMMARY

It's not something that's going to be easy, it's going to take a lot of giving and effort. It could take years, decades, even longer before society gives in and crumbles it's walls of unrighteousness to start building walls of hope and love for humanity.— Cecilia

As I started to wrap up my research, I would like to share attributes that have made implemented endeavours successful:

Fundamental Aspects of Organizations:

Institutionalize listening Pay attention to the exceptional Design real solutions for real people Focus on human qualities

Why do we do this? Ex. You work for the forest or the river. But what does it mean to work for the forest? Bozek founder of Gaja Club (protect the Vistula river in Poland) takes volunteers on 24hr silent nature walks. It's important to recognize the beauty or necessity of the cause. Need to remain true to your cause, always understand the purpose. It might be necessary to immerse into whatever it is that is being done.

Social Entrepreneurs: individuals with innovate solutions that strive to solve social issues (top->down + down ->top approach)

Activists: individuals who campaign for social change (usually from down -> top approach)

Characteristics of Successful Social Entrepreneurs:

- Willingness to self correct
- Willingness to share credit
- Willingness to break free of established structures (change established NGO's, government, etc)
- Willingness to cross disciplinary boundaries
- Willingness to work quietly "...this quiet, steady, unremitting pressure is an important force for change in this world." David Bornstein

Characteristics of Activists:

- Breathtakingly ordinary: courageous and flawed
- Smart and powerful
 - "it was what was right in front of them, the suffering that intersected with their own privileged life right at the moment when they were looking for meaning"
- the people who they strive to help are their family, they are their own brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers, children, community members etc
- a deep knowing that is invisible but informs the work they do day in and day out found their true calling
 - "Each of us arrives here with a nature, which means both limits and potentials. We can learn as much about our nature by running into our limits as by experiencing our potential."- Parker Palmer
 - "I was doing what I thought I was supposed to be doing, but I wasn't effective." (on realizing what they thought they wanted, but brave enough to leave what they **wanted** to do what they were **meant** to do)
- effectively hold both levels of the personal self and the political system accountable, they can study the unique texture of bark on a single tree while still seeing the entire landscape of forest
- hope that their time on this earth they can do a small piece of goodness so that it can have some type of collective compact: plain and simple
- impressive capacity to explain and convey their passion
- not afraid to make people in power feel uncomfortable
- courage to continually critique themselves

TOOL KIT

These are great tips from, <u>Just Do It: The Generation of Activists</u>, by Courtney Martins which I have extended upon!

1. ACKNOWLEDGE SUFFERING: we must face the truth of suffering head-on, eyes wide, hearts open. Activism is an exercise in putting a fraction of that same energy into the honoring of pain outside of ourselves. It is about listening deeply, investing time in really understanding another person's experience of the world, not turning away from the inconvenient truths of contemporary suffering.

Of course, ultimately, the suffering in others that we are most affected by is somehow related to our own-consciously or not.

"One can only face in others what one can face in oneself. On this confrontation depends the measure of our wisdom and compassion. This energy is all that one finds in the rubble of vanished civilizations, and the only hope for ours." – James Baldwin

2.HUMANIZE PEOPLE

Part of creating a more just world, is recognizing that every person has so much to offer and a world in themselves. "If we did all the things we are capable of, then we would literally astound ourselves."-Thomas Edison Like Edison claims, we all have unlocked potential individually, and exponential untapped energy within humanity as a whole. Every being on this earth is important and fundamental to society.

"We need to recognize this and cultivate our capacity to honor this with everyone we meet-despite all the forces that push us to move faster, pay less attention, get less involved. We all make the world a much better place just simply by sitting and listening, being fully present and open to being amazed by people's capacity to overcome pain, confront cruelty with ingenuity and kindness, become more honest, more accountable, more wise."-Martin

"There's a whole generation of us here, putting one foot in front of the other and doing our damned best to live meaningful lives in honor of our own gifts and in pursuit of justice."

Simply acknowledge each other's presence and our abilities can be astonishingly impactful in another's life.

"His behavior instantly switched... he went from Oscar the Grouch to Big Bird, all because he felt that people noticed him, that he belonged."- Dena Simmons

3.UNDERSTAND BACKWARD, BUT LIVE FORWARD

Learn from the good failures of the past to be able to know how to move forward. "Mistakes are meant to be maken, but not the same one twice." -Phelp's Coach It's important to understand the past but not to dwell in the past.

4.DREAM UNREASONABLY, BUT PROCEED STRATEGICALLY

Everyone has struggles in one way or another. The danger in our big dreams, is the inevitable disappointment. Resilience is the fuel of an activist.

"... an enlightened duality that allows them to retain their native sense of idealism while still fighting in a way that doesn't lead them to despair. Their big dreams are secured to the real world by a thousand daily anchors of small actions."

5. BEGIN WITH SELF-AWARENESS AND CONTINUE IN COMMUNITY

Our gifts and the world's needs are so diverse that we can pursue our own intersections while trusting that others will flourish where we would have floundered.

TOOL KIT

We need to understand, believe, and love ourselves before we can extend those towards others. Once we have found who we are or who we're going to be, it is then we can pursue our passions. Humans are social creatures and thrive in communities. It is important to remain connected to a community as they are a place of recharging. "Activists are healed, inspired, propelled, motivated, challenged by their communities. They are what allow activists to sustain such difficult work for such a long time and through a common purpose and reciprocal recognition. "-Martins

"Without one another, we risk bitterness. With one another, we have the opportunity to stay vulnerable, stay determined, stay the course."

6.CULTIVATE IMPATIENCE AND ENDURANCE

"Patience has its limits. Take it too far, and it's cowardice. We must be fearless in both our analysis and our action. WE must accept that we will fail and try anyway, try to fail always more exquisitely, more honestly, more effectively."- George Jackson

"We must wake up in the morning naively believing in the power of our own dreams and the potential of our own gifts, and go to bed exhausted and determined to do it all over again- with a different tactic and a bit more support."- C. M

It's easy to get frustrated because things won't work out. We fail undoubtedly, but enduring and persevering will get us there. Be like the ocean, as no matter how many times it's sent away, it doesn't stop kissing the shore.

Nothing is too small. No matter how trivial something is, it can always make a difference. "It could make a difference, who knows? Let us not go down without a fight."- Javed Abidi.

It's knowing that you did absolutely everything, you fought till you had nothing to left before you can accept there is nothing else you can do.

"You will not give up. You owe it to the world, your nation. We each have the opportunity to live our lives consciously in spite of all the soporific influences, to act even when we know how complex the prospect of doing so truly is. Our charge is not to "save the world" but to live in it despite how flawed and fierce, loving and humble it is. Unfortunately, we might be born in era where we are positioned to fail. The bureaucracy we face, the scale of our challenges, the intractable nature of so many of our most unjust international institutions and systems- all these add up to colossal potential for disappointment. However, despite how many things that stand in our way, we must strive to make the world better anyway. We must struggle to make our friendships, our families, our neighbourhoods, our cities, and our nation more dignified, knowing that it might not work and struggling anyway. We must dedicate ourselves each and every morning to being the most kind, thoughtful, courageous human beings who have ever walked the earth, and know that it still won't be enough. We must do it anyway. "Courtney Martins

"WHEN WE USE OUR INTELLIGENCE AND KNOWLEDGE TO SERVE PEOPLE HUMANITY HAS HOPE WE ARE THE FUTURE."

"People are often unreasonable, illogical and self centered, Forgive them anyway.

If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives, Be kind anyway.

If you are successful, you will win some false friends and some true enemies, Succeed anyway.

If you are honest and frank, people may cheat you, Be honest and frank anyway.

What you spend years building, someone could destroy overnight, Build anyway.

If you find serenity and happiness, they may be jealous, Be happy anyway.

The good you do today, people will often forget tomorrow, Do good anyway.

Give the world the best you have, and it may never be enough, Give the world the best you've got anyway.

You see, in the final analysis, it is between you and your God, It was never between you and them anyway." –Mother Teresa



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



She's passionate about art, empowerment, and service! Either reading intensely or animatedly engaging with peers at her school through her various clubs, through all that she does she remains genuine to her true self. Connecting to various experiences including almost dying seven times, her obstacles in life are met with anger and frustration at first but

develops into opportunities for growth. Through her personal experiences, she is able to empathize and be a compassionate as well as concerned global/local citizen.

Recently named as Canada's Top 20 Under 20 for 2015, Cecilia has dedicated herself to various causes through organizations like Free the Children and Rotary International. She also is an avid volunteer at her local senior centre and church. And volunteered on the local youth committee at her library while actively working on YWCA's Youth Advisory Board. She thoroughly supports her school as the school newspaper's Editor in Chief, Student Body President, and running the school's branch of FTC. In the community, she helps direct the city

program she started: Art2Heart in order to build confidence in youth through the arts.

Her outstanding leadership has led her to receive her city's SASSY (Service Above Self Surrey Youth) Youth Leader Award 2015. And her steadfast service: Surrey Good Deed Award 2014.

For more information visit:

ajourney2success.com

Thanks for coming along on this journey with me and I hope that you will find this resource insightful <3

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