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Analysis and Commentary for Service Above Self

Inspiring Women of Action: Celebrating International Women's Day at the World Bank by Quentin Wodon

On March 8, 2016, the World Bank Group Staff Association held an event in Washington DC to celebrate International Women's Day. The first part of the event featured Rotarians Marion Bunch and Deepa Willingham. The session was moderated by Jennifer Jones, a Director on Rotary International's Board. It was streamed online through World Bank Live and it aimed to illustrate the power of women to change the world and improve the life of the less fortunate through innovative and impactful projects in the areas of education and health. This brief summarizes the data on the event's reach through social media and live streaming. It also shares two blog posts written about the work of Marion on family health days and Deepa on girls' education and women's empowerment for those interested in learning more about those projects. A recording of the event will soon be available on the World Bank Live platform [here](#).

The author is a member of the Rotary Club of Capitol Hill in Washington, DC, and a Lead Economist at the World Bank. He writes a blog for Rotarians at <http://rotarianeconomist.com/>.



Marion Bunch



Deepa Willingham



Jennifer Jones

Introduction

On March 8, in celebration of International Women's Day, the World Bank Group Staff Association hosted a session in the Preston Auditorium in Washington, DC, to illustrate the power of women to change the world and improve the lives of the less fortunate through

innovative and impactful projects in the areas of education and health. The main speakers were Marion Bunch and Deepa Willingham.

Marion is the Chief Executive Officer of the Rotarian Action Group Rotarians for Family Health & AIDS Prevention. She has received numerous awards on behalf of her work for

AIDS, and considers herself a mother who represents the face of AIDS because she started her work after losing her son to the disease in 1994. One of her signature programs has been the organization of Family Health Days in several developing countries where families receive free consultations and health care.

Deepa is also a Rotarian and the Founder and Chair of Promise of Assurance to Children Everywhere (PACE). Born and raised in India, Deepa works in the United States, but she regularly returns to India for PACE Universal, an organization she founded to nurture the educational, health, nutritional, social and cultural development of girls in impoverished areas of India and other parts of the world.

The session was chaired by Jennifer Jones, a Director on Rotary International's global board

and the panelists will be introduced by Daniel Sellen, the Chair of the World Bank Group Staff Association. The event was organized by a team led by Eva Ruby de Leon, Christian Bergara, and Clara Montanez.

Marion, Deepa, and Jennifer talked about their service work, but most importantly they shared personal stories about why they started their service work, and what they learned in the process. A recording of the event will soon be available [here](#).

In this brief, the objective is not to summarize the event, but rather to provide data on its reach through social media. The brief also shares the text of two blog posts published by the World Bank that comment on the projects that Marion and Deepa are leading for those interested in learning more about those projects.



Reach of the Event through Social Media

The event was a success in terms of reach. About 250 participants attended the event in person. In addition, 3,341 unique visitors viewed the live stream at the time of the event. In other words, 13 times more people watched the event online at the time of the event versus those attending in person. In the future, we expect more people to watch the recording of the event that will be made available on the event's webpage. These statistics suggest the importance of web streaming such events apart from ensuring a good attendance in person. Several factors led to the success of streaming:

- Rotary and the World Bank promoted the event on Facebook and on Instagram. The total reach from these efforts was estimated at 1.6 million people.

- The event was featured prominently on the World Bank's external webpage for two days, as per the visual below. This probably also contributed to people watching online at the time of the event.
- The event was promoted through twitter as well as blog posts (among others [Rotary Voices](#), the [education](#) and [health](#) World Bank blogs, and the [Rotarian Economist blog](#)).

The online success in terms of viewership demonstrates how social media can substantially increase the reach of such events beyond those able to attend in person.

The two blog posts published at the World Bank about the panelists and their project are provided below.



WORLD BANK LIVE

Inspiring Women of Action

Join Rotary, Oppenheimer, and the World Bank in a live webcast to celebrate International Women's Day. The session will illustrate the power of women to change the world and improve the lives of the less fortunate through innovative projects in the areas of education and health. Watch live Tuesday at 2 p.m. ET/19:00 GMT. Follow #WomenInspire. [Read More »](#)

[Jim Yong Kim: Zika's impact on women](#) | [Blog: Three women who inspire me](#) | [More Blogs](#)

[Girls' Clubs Empower Young Women](#) | [More International Women's Day Stories](#)

Family Health Days – An Inspiration for International Women’s Day. *Text of post published on the World Bank’s [Investing in Health Blog](#).*

On March 8, in celebration of International Women’s Day, Marion Bunch, Chief Executive Officer, Rotarians for Family Health & AIDS Prevention and founder of family health days, will participate in a World Bank event about inspiring women who made a difference in the world through innovative programs in the areas of education and health.

In my volunteer work with Rotary International over the years, I’ve been inspired by the impact that family health days make in developing countries, as well as by Marion’s leadership in women’s health. Many of my fellow development practitioners may not have had the chance to see family health days in action. So, what are family health days? Do they make sense from a policy point of view? This post addresses these questions.

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What are family health days?

Imagine hundreds of thousands of families and individuals getting free health care for a few days. Family health days make this feasible¹. Individuals and families can be tested for

HIV/AIDS as well as receive counselling. Testing and/or screening for tuberculosis, diabetes, high blood pressure, and other conditions such as cervical and breast cancer is provided. Children receive immunizations as well as Vitamin A supplements. Some sites also include dental clinic and hygiene education as well as eye examinations. Health counseling is provided.

The program was launched in 2011 and is now active in a half dozen countries in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, most of which hold 2-3 family health days per year. The program is led by Rotary in partnership with the Coca-Cola Africa Foundation, the U.S. government – including the Centers for Disease Control, USAID and the health service delivery expertise of their Implementing partners – and Ministries of Health, which provide services and supplies at the sites. Media partners promote the days in each of the countries. Thousands of volunteers in each country, including many Rotarians, help in various ways.

Do family or child health days make sense from a policy point of view?

A search of the literature around family or child health days reveals that, for purposes such as screening for illnesses and child immunization, holding such days appears to make a lot of sense. The programs appear to be highly beneficial and cost-effective if implemented well.

For example, [Fiedler and Chuko](#) looked at the reach and cost of child health days in Ethiopia in 2008. They found that the program reached more than 10 million children at an average cost of half a dollar per child (one dollar when including measles). This made the program cost-effective, with potential additional benefits to be reaped

¹ Family Health Days, a program that supports all family members, are planned out 12 months in advance, at the national level, by RFHA (Rotarians for Family Health & AIDS Prevention) working with the Ministries of Health in each country, as well as the CDC and USAID. This program becomes part of the Country Operational Plan (COP), and all health interventions are taken into consideration while

planning the dates as well as planning the various services to be offered. The national plan is then communicated down line through each organization to the local district level for training and implementation. A system for linkage to care as well as a monitoring and evaluation system are in place to prove results as well as impact in multiple ways.

through economies of scope in increasing coverage at delivery sites.

Palmer and others note in a [2010 article](#) that child health days are becoming increasingly popular, implemented in more than 50 countries at the time of the study. They conclude that the days are helping countries achieve high and equitable coverage of essential health and nutrition services. Child health days were also recognized as beneficial in a 2013 [World Health Organization report](#) on essential nutrition actions for improving maternal, newborn, infant, and young child health and nutrition.

Improvements could be made, however. In a [2012 review](#) of experiences integrating the delivery of maternal and child health services with childhood immunization programs, Wallace, Ryman, and Dietz emphasize the importance of proper planning and awareness when implementing these interventions, among other actions to reduce the risks of logistical difficulties, time-intensive interventions ill-suited for campaign delivery, concerns about harming existing services, and overlap of target age groups with other service delivery mechanisms. The review also revealed gaps in information about costs and impacts.

On costs, a 2014 [paper](#) by Fiedler and Semakula suggests that part of the reason why costs may appear so low in some countries (US\$0.22 per child in their analysis for Uganda) is because of underpayment for Ministry of Health staff and volunteer allowances. Still, the authors find that child health days are successful in saving lives, making them highly cost-effective.

Vijayaraghavan and others in a [case study](#) for Somalia also find child health days to be cost-effective in addressing leading causes of child mortality in a conflict settings. They rate child health days as one of health sector's best buys in sub-Saharan Africa.

So, what can be learned from family or child health days? The first lesson is that we can expand access to health care for children and families, and we should invest in the expansion of these programs. The second and perhaps more

important lesson is that beyond the important role of the state, which we often emphasize in development work, committed individuals such as Marion can truly make a difference in the life of those in need.

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Girls need more than just an education- they need job opportunities too. *Text of post published on the World Bank's [Education for Global Development Blog](#).*

If you want to provide more opportunities to girls, you shouldn't only provide them with an education – you also need to change perceptions of gender roles so that, when they grow up, girls can (among other things) fully contribute to the household's livelihood. To achieve this, combining education with interventions for entrepreneurship and employment is the right way to go. This message emerges not only from impact evaluations, but also from experiences on the ground and case studies of non-governmental organizations.

On March 8, 2016, in celebration of [International Women's Day](#), Marion Bunch and Deepa Willingham (a Rotarian and the founder of a program called Promise of Assurance to Children Everywhere or PACE), will participate in a World Bank event about inspiring women who made a difference in the world through innovative programs in the areas of education and health.

PACE is educating girls ages three to twenty-three in a village in West Bengal, India. The school started and remains small, with a total of about 350 girls enrolled since 2003. But retention rates are at 90 percent and almost 100 girls have now completed primary school. The school currently admits 25 students each year, well below the demand as the school receives 100 applications each year. Admission is need-based in order to give priority to the most disadvantaged families.

What I find especially interesting is the fact that, based on community feedback, PACE has started to help women in the village find decent work

through various initiatives. To help expand employment opportunities in the village, PACE is providing literacy and vocational training courses for women, many of whom go on to craft jewelry products sold locally and in the US thanks to a micro-loan.

Additional income generating activities include planting 10,000 fruit bearing trees and providing cycle-vans. Recently, an organic garden was initiated on the school's grounds as a training facility for local farmers. PACE has also been actively upgrading water and sanitation facilities by installing 35 tube wells and 400 sanitation units. Without safe water at home, deworming children in the school did not work as well.

Deepa explained to me that when the project started, family incomes in the village were extremely low. There are signs that this has changed for the families that have benefited from the NGO's programs, with many families making three to four times more than what they used to bring in (according to the families' applications for their children to enroll in the school).

The attitudes of fathers towards their daughters have changed, as measured for example by their presence during the school's cultural activities. Also, in the past many newborn girls in the village did not get birth certificates. This is changing simply because an official birth certificate is required for admission in the school.

Is the project cost effective? The cost for the package of services provided to girls is \$375 and paid mostly through grants and other resources raised by the NGO. This package of services includes not only schooling (following a board approved curriculum), two meals per day, school supplies and uniforms, access to health care as needed, and after school enrichment programs in music, art, theater, yoga and life-skills training.

How does this compare to public schools? This is not an easy question to answer, because of complex funding by federal, state, and municipal governments for basic services as well as complementary programs (such as school meals for example). Estimates from various studies can

be found through a rapid search on the web. It seems that overall PACE's programs may be more costly than a typical public school, and also more costly than the programs implemented by low cost private schools. But the range of services provided by PACE is clearly broader, and quality is likely to be (much) higher.

As for PACE's services for women, their cost is estimated at \$175 per year. This includes the cost of the adult literacy program for reading, writing in Bengali, and accounting, as well as the vocational training program for jewelry making and tailoring.

On the occasion of International Women's Day, at least two important lessons emerge from PACE. The first lesson is that we can learn from the experience of NGOs like PACE on how to combine multiple interventions – in education, but also in vocational training and basic health, in order to make a larger impact in the life of girls by changing attitudes towards gender roles. The second, and most important lesson is that beyond the important role of the state that we often emphasize in development work, committed individuals such as Deepa can truly make a difference in the life of girls and women.