

Zelma Lazarus' talk to IBM International Conference

Singapore , February 6, 2002

I am truly delighted to be in your midst. I am here to talk on a subject with which I am deeply involved. Call it “Corporate Conscience, Social Development, Corporate Citizenship” whatever you want, but what it really means is giving of yourself – your time, your skills and resources for the betterment of those in need. It seems to me that at least three things are important to living a fulfilled life. First – become involved – wherever your interests and your talents lead you. Second – believe in yourself and set your sights high, And remember history has told us over and over again that one person really can make a difference. And Third – have some fun along the way. Rather than curse the inevitable bumps and twists and turns, relax and smile at the infinite delight and wonder along the way. I chose these lines to start with because I thought they would be a reminder to you. I wonder how many of you know who said them... They were written by Jack D. Kuehler, past Vice Chairman of the very organisation that you work for - IBM. And if leadership is meant to represent the values for which a company exists, then it is probably OK that I am here to talk to you about this subject – and it is also interesting to know that not much has changed in the soul and spirit of IBM – Thank you again for inviting me here.

2. Let me tell you what happened at Stanford University a few months ago: students of Business Administration were asked to write their obituaries. Only four of the one hundred and thirty one students defined their lives in terms of business accomplishment; the rest described how they used their business skills to create social change – from starting foundations to teaching and volunteering. This is far removed from the general impression that the individual of today is more demanding, with fewer ideals, no causes and a focus on “what’s in there for me”. The bottom line may be as tough as ever, but the class of today seems to be reaching fulfilment not in terms of material gains, but giving of themselves to support social programmes. With larger amounts of corporate money and a higher degree of professionalism entering the social sector, the social worker is slowly being replaced by a laptop-wielding one. Social work is no longer the domain of the retired senior citizen, it is a way of life and a career for the enlightened young as well.

3. And that is why Impact – a worldwide initiative against avoidable disablement – has become so successful. It is promoted by the United Nations in association with the Governments of each participating country. Impact is probably one of the most ambitious programmes ever conceived, yet despite the vastness of its scope, it has succeeded mainly because it acts as a catalyst which brings together the business houses, the citizens, the professionals and others to work in equal partnership with the Government in mass development programmes. It is not a new parallel programme, but it uses available delivery systems and existing infrastructure, together with the voluntary support of the people, supplementing, not substituting, existing services.

4. Impact has a great partnership with the corporate world who have joint ventures with it and actual involvement in its functioning. With the entry of corporate money, we are beginning to use new technologies that have for long been beyond our reach.

5. As you have seen, our projects are dramatic and easily replicable. Our best known is the Lifeline Express: the world's first hospital on a train – a unique collaboration with the Government, the corporate world and the community in taking a modern hospital to the people in remote areas. Our reach is across the vast Indian sub-continent with 600,000 villages, using the entire Indian Railways - 70,000 km of rail track– the largest in the world. Who would have ever thought that we would have made it this far along the track

6.. The Lifeline Express has over the past ten years restored sight, movement, hearing and corrected clefts to over 300,000 patients– I repeat 300,000 – disabled children and adults in 52 projects covering 16 States in the country, not to mention its six-month mission of mercy at the earthquake site in Gujarat last year, where it was the only hospital in the area, the others had crumbled. The Lifeline Express continues its mission not only in India but now replicated in China with three trains. We also have a Lifeline Express in Central Africa and a river boat hospital in Bangla Desh. This not only creates global awareness but Impact is sharing its skills and experience with other developing countries. In a very practical way, I can say that it is people that come forward and join in to make an incredible impact.

7. There are thousands of magic stories of unknown people who have helped us on our way- On one project the poor villagers were recovering in makeshift tent wards in winter, with little to combat the cold. The feared village “don” seeing this donated 1000 blankets for all the patients and a ton of rice...In another instance, two

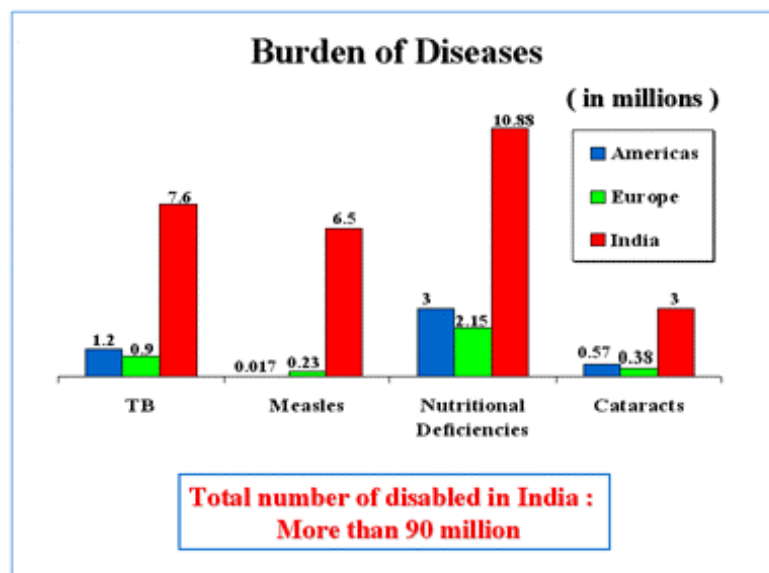
young people, the boy from Canada and the girl from Australia, volunteering on the train, met and got married and on their wedding day they requested their guests to bless them not with gifts and flowers but with contributions to the Lifeline Express

And yet another magic story: It was a remote village in central India. In a winding queue some kilometres long a young tribal couple waited with their three small children to be screened, in the hope that they would be admitted on the train. All three young ones born blind. They were rejected as there seemed little hope for them. But we did not give up. Their case histories were faxed to the World Health Organisation in Geneva and the prompt response informed us that a world-famous eye surgeon was passing through Delhi that very day en route to Japan. He came, he saw, he conquered. All three children can see after his surgery. But that is not all, a roving international journalist carried their story in a leading European magazine and today these three children of desperately poor parents have been funded for their upkeep and education by kind benefactors who read their story. You can now understand why the Lifeline Express is known as the magic train to those who after years of suffering find their mobility, vision, hearing restored or facial deformity corrected.

8. It is a cardinal principle in Impact that we need, not merely money but also donations of time and skills. And in support of this effort, Impact has set up a Time Bank. Prospective volunteers have been asked to devote or keep aside or deposit a certain amount of their time, managerial talent and technical and commercial skills for the Lifeline Express either before the train arrives at a particular destination or while it is stationed there or even after it leaves – to take care of the follow up. For example, a minimum team of 40 surgeons and doctors donate their services daily on our train – in modest terms this can be equal to US\$ 150,000 worth of time and skills for each 45-day project – Impact depends entirely on these skills and other donated resources. And finally, its about fun, the laughter that comes from knowing its not the stock price that matters at the end of the day in life, or how much you have climbed up the ladder or even whether you have the latest hand-held gadgets.

9. We were overwhelmed at the selection of the Lifeline Express for the prestigious United Nations Award for Excellence in Public Service worldwide. The honour belongs not only to Impact – and Voltas, the company that initially supported it - but also to the many, many committed persons, individuals, members of professional agencies, government departments and corporations who have contributed to what has been done.

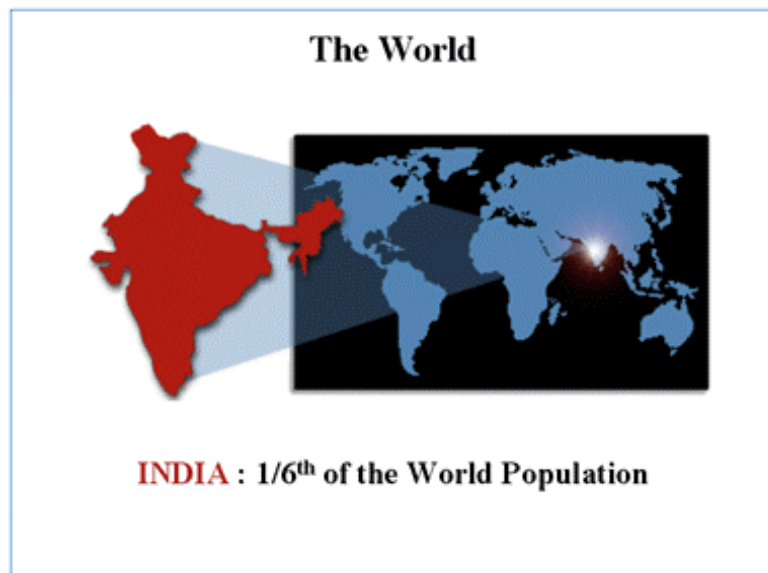
10. We are now focussing on a replicable pilot project for India with its vast population equal to a quarter of the developing countries - to dramatically reduce disability in three districts covering three million people. The graph shows the burden of diseases in India as compared to Europe and the Americas – all easily preventable. The need is for organised, managerially effective, financially low-cost and focussed efforts . Bill Gates has recognised this need in his address to the World Economic Forum less than a week ago when he said “We are committed to bring innovations in health to the global community”– and Impact is attempting to show the way through this pilot project for replication throughout India.



11. In closing I would like to share with you some interesting figures: India remains critically divided into two worlds – one in which literacy has stagnated for several years at 45% and infant mortality at 95 deaths per thousand (compared with 5 in the U.S.), and the other in which young men and women buy cars, wear designer clothes and are in the forefront of Information Technology. To reconcile these two worlds and provide health care and education to the poor is a gigantic task that remains to be addressed. The hope of most of us Indians is that while eliminating the many unfortunate aspects of our public and social life, we can retain our family bonds, the

respect of tradition and our basic value systems. Not only we who live in India, but the entire world has a stake in what is happening in our country today where every 6th person in the world lives. Yet, with help from our well-wishers, Impact is showing the way to bridging the gap between the two worlds – not by seeking pity but by advocating self help and community participation. The key element is the involvement of the private sector, catalysed by Impact to work in partnership with the Government. And business houses lending their managerial talents, technical expertise and financial resources for mass programmes for the prevention of disablement.

THE RESULTS SHOW SUCCESS – MORE THAN WE EVER IMAGINED...



12. In the words of our founder, Sir John Wilson “ Looking back at the past year, with its tragedies, its conflicts and brutality, there is plenty to be pessimistic about, but we also see ahead of us miraculous advances in the science of healing and communications and the growing sense of solidarity in our vulnerable, fragile, wonderful, lonely, planetary home.”

13 With all this, let us formulate a practical agenda to promote advance and reverse decline; to change the pattern of avoidable disability across the world. These are not unrealistic aspirations. As the Lifeline Express has shown in a minute way, **TOGETHER WE CAN ACHIEVE MIRACLES.**



14. And now some clips on the Lifeline Express – for you to absorb the strength of participation as is shown here in a simple but unique project which has brought hope to millions of disabled people; to realise the Power of One; the power to make a difference at your individual level, at your team level and upwards. – **THE MAGIC TRAIN OF INDIA.**

15. Finally, I would like to leave you with some words that I find very meaningful. They have been included in the booklet that has been distributed to you

WHAT IS SUCCESS

To laugh often and much

To win the respect of intelligent people

To earn the approval of honest critics

And endure the betrayal of false friends.

To appreciate beauty

To find the best in others

To give of one's self

To leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child,

A garden patch, or a redeemed social condition'

To know even one life has breathed easier because you lived.

This is to have succeeded.

I wish every person in this room success of this kind.

Its YOU that can make a difference..