

Social Impact: It Really is Very Simple...



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“Recall the face of the poorest and weakest man you have seen, and ask yourself if this step you contemplate is going to be any use to him.”

- Mahatma Gandhi

It seemed like just the other day when we started our new social entrepreneurial venture, with grand visions of transforming rural India and empowering the Below-Poverty-Line segment. As ventures go, we were lucky to be incubated by a US Fortune -500 Telecom company. This ecosystem provided us with the right mix of guidance and credibility as we tackled the fundamental challenges of poverty alleviation in India. The key was to leverage the largest network in India the cellular network.

Lessons Learned

India is not a poor nation. Fundamental change is indeed possible with the right approaches in vision, implementation, and partnerships. Some lessons from the field:

- **Vision:** It helps to have an aggressive goal such as transforming and improving lives in over 638,000 villages in India. Think scalability. Think holistic solutions. Think relevance. The rural countryside is littered with terrific innovations that never made it past pilots in a few villages.
- **Implementation:** Successful execution requires a clear perspective on addressing pain factors, optimal usage of technology, and easy-to-use solutions. The minimum amount of reliable technology necessary to meet the field needs. Imagine the worst conditions, and plan for it.
- **Partnerships:** The primary partnership is with the semi-literate villager without whose buy-in, there is no possibility of success. Engaging with governments, local NGOs, institutions, global organizations, and the private sector are means of creating sustainability for the longer term.

Be prepared for a most rewarding journey, where you end up meeting so many people ready to help you in the cause. The right team, networks and financial sustainability ensure staying the course for the long haul.

Innovation

BeWo Technologies (short for Better World) specializes in last-mile products & services for enterprises and governments serving rural markets.

Solutions include rugged Android tablet based field devices incorporating biometrics, printer, smartcard readers, regional

language capability, payments, and extended battery life. Essential services and software applications meet needs of rural entrepreneurs, e-governance, NGOs, rural banking and financial inclusion.

Broader engagement with UIDAI/Aadhaar and rural market access ensure viable benefits and offerings are more readily available to the underserved rural segment.

Apart from technology, innovations span a fundamental shift in bridging humanitarianism, entrepreneurship, and policy.



BeWo Solutions in Use - 2013

Case Studies

- **Rural Livelihood:** The Rural Entrepreneur Suite changes the way services are delivered in rural India. The rural entrepreneur is able to generate regular income through door-step services (m-Governance, retail, etc.) using BeWo mobile solutions. This enables rural citizens to save time and money in accessing products more conveniently.
- **Mother and Child Tracking:** BeWo's comprehensive solution enables mother & child health monitoring from pregnancy to postnatal care and inoculation. Village health nurses use BeWo Mobile Healthcare Solutions to track patient health, reducing *infant mortality* and *postpartum maternal morbidity*.
- **Rural Development:** BeWo e-Governance and Rural Development applications ensure timely and reliable distribution of welfare payments to beneficiaries through biometrics and more efficient government processes.

Call to Action

In this climate of change where activism reigns, it is up to each one of us to make an impact. This can be achieved through innovation, awareness, and ultimately... action. It really is very simple. Do reach out to us!

About the author: R Sampath is Co-Founder & CEO of BeWo Technologies, an enterprise with a mission to drive change in Below-Poverty-Line markets. He is an active proponent of humanitarian entrepreneurialism that creates a shift in perspective and policy. He also spearheads the IEEE Rural Mobile Technology Initiative. Sampath holds an MBA from the University of Southern California, and a BE from the National Institute of Technology, Trichy, India. info@bewotechno.com :: www.BeWo.in :: www.ieee.org/go/rural