# FT urban ingenuity

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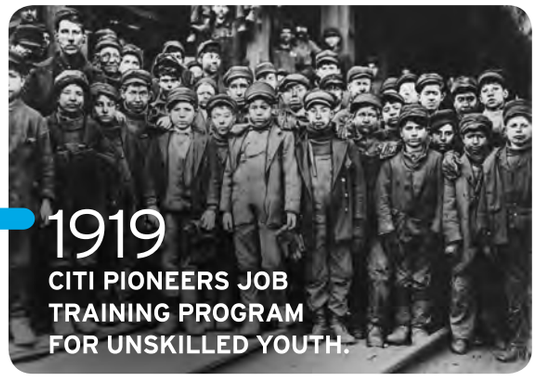


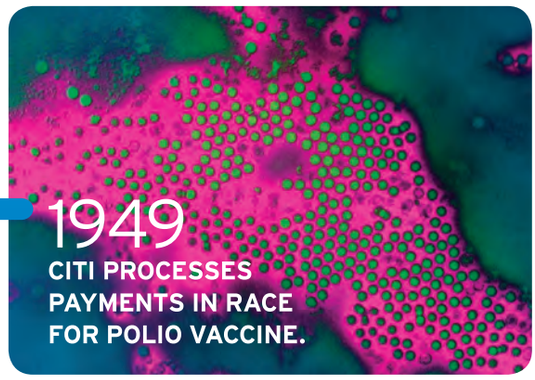


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# Vital services


Mankind's progress through the millennia has been intimately entwined with the development of cities. From the ancient near East cradles of civilisation to the modern megalopolis, the growth of urban living, with its concentrations of population and talent, has spurred creativity, economic growth, civic society and democracy.

In medieval Europe, feudal serfs who fled to the city and its more liberal environs could, at one time, gain their freedom after living there a year and a day, leading to the saying *Stadtluft macht frei* – urban air makes you free. The words still resonate – albeit in a very different context and with a changed meaning: the city can liberate the individual from a past life and offer an exciting new beginning.

Today, urbanisation is proceeding at an explosive pace across the globe, bringing great opportunities for progress as well as great challenges, underlined by the slums that disfigure so many developing world cities. Two hundred years ago a mere 3 per cent of the world's population lived in cities. Four years ago, that figure surpassed 50 per cent, or 3.5bn. The UN forecasts the total will be 5bn by 2030.

All this poses an immense challenge to create city environments that enhance the quality of life rather than undermine it. It is against this background that the Financial Times is publishing a series of three magazines on urban ingenuity, to accompany a global awards scheme run jointly by the FT and Citi, the US financial services giant. The FT/Citi Ingenuity Awards: Urban Ideas in Action programme will recognise individuals or organisations that have found solutions to urban challenges in four areas – energy, infrastructure, education and healthcare. The research partner for the awards is Insead, the international business school.

This is the second FT Urban Ingenuity magazine and covers education and healthcare, the vital human services without which cities cannot thrive. The first magazine, published in July, covered energy and infrastructure, which form the environment that makes city living tolerable. A third magazine will provide the backdrop to the awards, which will be announced in December.

The magazines include profiles of the strongest candidates for the awards and contributions from key opinion formers and experts on how to rise to the challenge of advanced urbanisation. Accompanying videos are on FT.com.

We at the FT, with our global reach and reputation for the exchange of cutting-edge ideas, are delighted to support this important initiative, addressing one of the most challenging issues of our time. ■

Martin Dickson
*Deputy editor, Financial Times*

COVER PHOTO: AFP/GETTY

# URBAN INGENUITY
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PHOTOS: OSWALDO RIVAS; MAX CABELLO; CHARLIE BIBBY; SIMON DE TREY-WHITE






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# Big city blues

Urban centres can attract the best and the brightest, but they can also be alienating places to live for the poor, writes **Sarah Neville**

The metropolis, once a shining symbol of achievement populated by a lucky elite, is fast becoming the principal model of human organisation for the world.

According to the Population Reference Bureau, in 1800 just 3 per cent of the population lived in cities. By 2008, following six decades in which urban growth had accelerated dramatically, one in two of us were city dwellers.

Once, these urban conglomerations represented safety – the "city on a hill", whose geographical advantage allowed its inhabitants to repel marauders. In an industrialised age, it came to embody opportunity, attracting the driven and talented, anxious to make their mark.

Hard times: in China, many urban migrants 'feel afraid and isolated in their new environment'

But "push" as well as "pull" factors have always been pivotal in the development of cities. Along with the best and the brightest, they have also attracted the poor who, no longer able to sustain an agrarian life, have frequently found themselves on the bottom rung of its harsh economic hierarchies.

It is the latter group on which the entrants to the FT/Citi Ingenuity Awards: Urban Ideas in Action have principally focused.

Through the prism of these entries, the shape of the modern city becomes clear. It is a place where newcomers are often seen as burdens rather than welcome infusions of human capital.

But to a small and inspiring group of leaders, the urban

PHOTOS: JONATHAN BROWNING; ADEEL HALIM

underclass is much more than a drain on already hard-pressed resources. It is full of potential and talents that can make the city better for everyone.

The cities that have spawned the innovations submitted for the education and healthcare categories of the awards could not be more different: from the teeming, sometimes dangerous streets of India, to the almost incomparably more prosperous metropolitan terrain of the US. But whatever the economic disparities between them, each has found a way to harness the resilience and compassion of individuals.

In some cases, the initiative fills a yawning gap left by the failure of the state to meet the needs of its citizens. In others, the state has becoming a willing and facilitating partner in the enterprise.

Innovations in this context do not rely on technological advances or one individual's "eureka" moment. Instead, they arise organically, from the pavement up. In at least one instance, this is literally as well as figuratively the case.

In India, the Power of Seeing project helps schoolchildren engage with their neighbourhoods. Each adopts a street, focusing on the mess, poor design and danger in a sliver of the city. The initiative seeks to create an army of young "change agents", connected as never before to the world around them and filled with resolve to tackle what they see.

The twin themes of collective action and empowerment evident in that submission run deeply through all the entries.

In China, the GSK New Citizen Health Care Project integrates migrant populations into city life. These people are disadvantaged in many ways, forced to take dirty and dangerous jobs that others shun and facing significant difficulties in accessing education, health and housing.

In words that sum up the hostility that can underlie the opportunities cities offer, the submission notes that their challenges are those of most urban migrant populations. They "feel afraid and isolated in their new environment".

One of the centres opened under its auspices has even formed the backdrop to a celebration of the most powerful exercise in tackling loneliness that humanity has yet devised, by hosting its first wedding. Cheng Xiaoping, a migrant worker, says she chose to get married there because "the people here are like my own family".

Good neighbours: many urban innovations arise organically in community groups

'The themes of collective action and empowerment run through all the entries'

An undertone of challenge to the authorities is a feature of several submissions. A project in Peru provides schooling for children of low-income families who are undergoing long stays in hospital. The founder, a teacher, lost her own small son to cancer and resolved to improve the lot of other parents and children in similar situations.

Many of the children came to Lima from small towns and rural communities. Their experience has been of a "large, chaotic and hostile city" where they are often "mistreated and discriminated against".

The kindness and respect they encounter through this programme can help to shape their view of the city in which they have come to live. In so doing, the project fills a void left by the Peruvian state.

Amid a far more prosperous society, the College Possible project in the US similarly seeks to tackle a sense of wasted potential. Through strong role models, the project tries to prompt young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to realise that they are as entitled to a higher education as their richer counterparts.

Each entrant is asked what is needed to make its ideas work.

In every case, the answer includes "people". In other words, the solutions to what ails the city can be found not in glittering technology or scientific wizardry, but among its citizens. With vision, compassion and a sense of responsibility to others, they can redefine not only their own lives but the entire urban experience. ■

# Building blocks

## Reconstruction in Haiti following the 2010 earthquake has been a model of how to engage communities

During my visit to Haiti a few months ago, I saw huge change from the desolation I witnessed in the capital four days after the earthquake of January 2010. The streets of Port-au-Prince were alive with sellers of handicrafts, fruits, vegetables and much else on every corner.

The earthquake caused more than 80,000 buildings in Port-au-Prince and the surrounding areas to collapse. Now, 70 per cent of the debris has been cleared, thanks to efforts by the Haitian people, civil society, the international community and local authorities.

Debris has been recycled into non-structural building materials, out of which memorials, stairs and public squares have been created. These initiatives generated temporary work for thousands of people and have provided opportunities for Haitians to set up small businesses and to promote recycling and safe construction standards.

The UN Development Programme (UNDP) and other UN agencies also assisted the government to develop a national strategy for debris management, creating a debris stock exchange to co-ordinate the reuse of rubble for construction.

To encourage the return of displaced families, houses, essential services and infrastructure needed to be restored. Haitian families and communities have been at the forefront of efforts to build more resilient cities. Women, who head more than 40 per cent of Haitian households, have played a vital role.

Community Support Centre for House Self-Repair (known by its French acronym Carmen) has been empowering earthquake-affected communities in Port-au-Prince and the western town of Léogâne to take charge of house repairs, backed by engineering assessments and construction training. This UNDP and Haiti government initiative has registered around 20,000 people, and 5,000 are being trained in disaster-resilient homebuilding techniques. Nearly half the participants are women.

> Women, who head more than 40 per cent of Haitian households, have played a vital role

I was inspired by 48-year-old Gela Richemond, whose house was severely damaged by the earthquake. She joined the house repair initiative so that she could repair her home, earn money and gain new skills – putting her in a position to offer services to others with similar needs.

Richemond is among 1,000 low-income Haitians who have received a $500 grant to buy construction materials through the Carmen project's innovative money transfer scheme via mobile phone. The eyes of this woman, who had never had a bank account before, brightened when she recalled receiving that first text message informing her the deposit had been made in her mobile banking account.

In each neighbourhood, community platforms have been formed where community members themselves decide on the design and layout of their surroundings, and prioritise needs such as the establishment of disaster-resilient infrastructure.

Experience in Haiti, as elsewhere, shows that investing in local solutions and technologies works. The results achieved so far, though, would have been impossible without the unprecedented support and funding following the earthquake.

There is still a critical need for housing solutions as Haitian cities continue to expand. The need is acute in Port-au-Prince, where more than 2.5m people – a quarter of the country's population – live. The UNDP believes there is a need for a comprehensive national strategy that adheres to agreed urban plans and standards. To help solve this problem, the first housing policy in Haitian history is to be launched this year.

Haiti's main cities still face challenges to recover fully and develop sustainably. These can only be solved with the leadership of national authorities, the engagement of the Haitian people and the continued support of Haiti's international partners. ■

*Helen Clark is administrator of the UN Development Programme and a former prime minister of New Zealand*

Blossoming revival: the Carnaval des Fleurs in Port-au-Prince this July

PHOTO: REUTERS

1944 CITI HELPS
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# 1949

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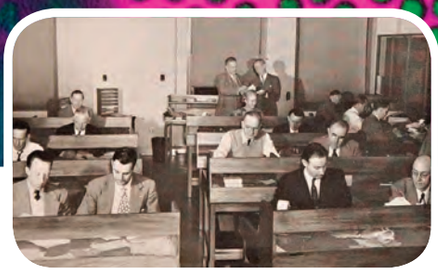

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# Sporting chance

As cities grow more crowded, projects around the world recognise that prevention of poor health is better than cure, writes **Andrew Jack**

A decade ago, a few allotments were the only healthy activity in a stretch of east London dominated by factories, pollution and rubbish. Next month, the London Legacy Development Corporation will start work turning it from a glitzy Olympics hub into a public space with modern sporting infrastructure, cultural attractions, homes, offices and shops.

Peter Tudor, director for venues at what will become the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, says: "We are going to make sure this becomes not an isolated island in east London but a park for east London. We are committed not just to providing sporting facilities but quality of life in an area with obesity and shorter life expectancy."

The result will be the start of one of the UK's most ambitious – and costly – urban renewal projects that will provide public transport, affordable sports facilities and even personal trainers "prescribed" by local doctors to improve the health of residents. Cycling and walking will be encouraged.

With more than half of the world's 7bn people now living in cities, there is an increasing need for fresh policies to meet their specific needs, through projects such as those recognised by the FT/Citi Ingenuity awards.

There has been much talk of an "urban advantage" in health. The argument goes that city dwellers, with greater access than people in rural areas to medical facilities, lead longer, healthier lives. But that is far from universally true in richer countries let alone the developing world.

Yvonne Rydin is director of the Environment Institute at University College London and co-authored the recent Lancet Commission report Shaping Cities for Health. "Everybody agrees urban areas have the potential to improve health and we know how to make cities healthier," she says. "We know what we need to do, but institutions are still not doing it. It's really frustrating."

PHOTO: CHARLIE BIBBY

Leap forward: the London Olympic BMX circuit will become part of a redeveloped VeloPark

While few diseases are specifically urban, many are more prevalent in urban areas and are exacerbated by high population densities. The surge in motorised transport has made cities a disproportionate locus of accidents, while emissions have contributed to a concentration of respiratory diseases.

The primacy of the car has led to less physical activity in urban working life, while the demand for building land has reduced the amount of green space available for leisure.

Cities also host huge inequalities, presenting policymakers with ethical and practical concerns. Large concentrations of poorer residents with ill health require specific policies; their proximity to richer, healthier neighbours can lead to mental problems and crime for all.

"We need to work with patients and the public, and bring services out of hospitals into the places of highest need," says Arpana Verma, director of the Manchester Urban Collaboration on Health at the University of Manchester.

While few diseases are specifically urban, many are more prevalent in urban areas

In much of the developing world, notably in the informal slums and shanty towns that are the fastest-growing urban residential areas, better provision of sanitation, clean water and other basic services would make the greatest difference to health.

In the absence of more systematic, government-led provision in India, the Child Eye Care Charitable Trust in the slums of Mumbai has worked with mothers to address malnourishment and vitamin deficiency in their children, in the process empowering the community to improve hygiene and the quality of the local environment.

Pro Mujer, another project on the shortlist in the health-care category of the awards, initially focused its work in Nicaragua but has now spread to other parts of Latin America. It built on its existing networks that offer financial services to women, providing low-cost medical consultations as well.

In Egypt, Protect Your Child has organised competitions for parents, combined with colouring books and cartoons distributed to children, to spread health education messages such as the importance of hygiene and vaccination.

GlaxoSmithKline's New Citizen Health Care project in Shanghai is providing health education and treatment for migrant workers, one of the most disadvantaged groups in China's rapidly urbanising population.

While all these examples come from poor city areas, there are two similarities with urban health initiatives everywhere: the importance of prevention rather than simply treatment, and the empowerment of local communities and individuals to make a difference.

That is echoed by Hugh Barton, emeritus professor of planning, health and sustainability at the University of the West of England and an advocate of integrated public transport and green spaces to encouraging walking. "The most fundamental thing is to give power to the cities," he says. "Public health specialists now recognise the importance of the built environment, but builders, planners and governments are still not taking into account public health." ■

# HEALTHCARE
## PRO MUJER

Sitting pretty: Pro Mujer has brought Edelma Altamirano freedom from domestic abuse

# Poverty in check

A credit provider's procedures have been financially and physically life-changing for women in Nicaragua, writes **Benedict Mander**
Photographs by **Oswaldo Rivas**

In the shadow of the majestic, gaseous crater of the San Cristóbal volcano, Nicaragua's highest, María Concepción Morán leans back on a plastic chair on the dirt floor of her backyard in the small town of Chichigalpa, calmly recounting the time when her life had sunk to its lowest point.

"My house was made of plastic, cardboard and a few poles – I had nothing," she says in the shade of some lemon trees and her family's latest batch of washing. "I was stressed, I had high blood pressure, I used to cry a lot. Every winter the rains would soak my bed."

That all changed three years ago when she found out about a local microfinance organisation called Pro Mujer (Spanish for "pro woman"), and joined a group of 20 other women, who clubbed together and asked for a loan. She borrowed 3,000 cordobas ($125), paid in fortnightly instalments over six months, to invest in a proper roof and some groceries, which she sold to her neighbours.

But then something else happened. Thanks to an innovative health programme being pioneered by Pro Mujer, which lends to its clients on condition that they take some basic health tests, including a cervical smear every six months, Morán discovered she had cervical cancer.

"If they hadn't insisted I take the test, I wouldn't be telling this story," she says matter-of-factly, explaining that although she knew what the test was, she would never have bothered to have one, as "no one encouraged me to".

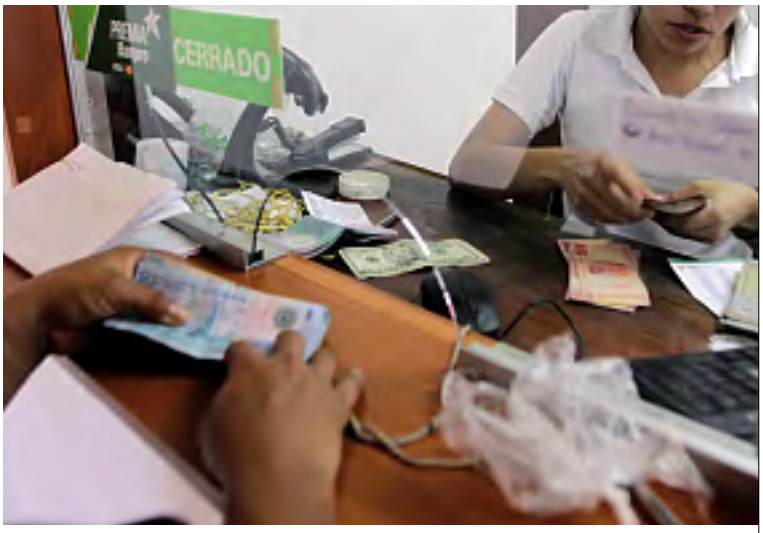
Morán has now borrowed 42,000 cordobas over six months, enabling her to turn her venture into a flourishing local store, selling everything from mobile phone credit to toys, soap, vegetables and fizzy drinks. She has even put aside savings of 15,000 cordobas.

She says: "It's not much good having money if I don't have my health. The important thing is that I do still have that." For that, she thanks Pro Mujer.

'It's not much good having money if I don't have my health'

Morán is just one of around 41,000 women who are clients of Pro Mujer in Nicaragua, the second poorest country in Latin America. After being founded in Bolivia in 1996, Pro Mujer set up operations in 1999 in poor neighbourhoods in Nicaragua, where it has amassed a loan portfolio that stood at $9.7m in December 2011.

But Pro Mujer, which has also set up offices in Argentina, Mexico and Peru, is about more than lending money to mostly poor women in need of funds to set up small businesses. At the core of the organisation's philosophy is also the provision of access to primary health clinics ➤




Community service: Pro Mujer wants to offer more advanced treatments

and training in basic business skills, health education and self-esteem awareness.

"The credit is just a means to an end, which is to promote the development of women," says Gloria Ruiz, who runs Pro Mujer's operations in Nicaragua. "The wonderful thing about Pro Mujer is that it provides an opportunity to give women training so that they can change their attitudes." She adds that the practice of linking loans with health services is unique.

"It is not just about lending and debt collecting," she says. "We didn't come to lend but to use loans as a way to promote education and empowerment. These services are a powerful way to reduce poverty."

In Pro Mujer's clean, air-conditioned offices in León, a city of faded colonial beauty in the north of Nicaragua, women with an air of hope and calm gather to take advantage of the organisation's three key functions: the provision of credit, training and health services.

In the health clinic, Dr Marta García explains with enthusiasm how Pro Mujer has taken great strides in attacking some of the biggest afflictions facing women in the region, such as cancer, diabetes and hypertension.

"We have saved the lives of a lot of people," says García, introducing the softly spoken woman she is attending as Doña María, who makes a living selling beans in the street.

"People don't look after themselves," says María, who adds she is grateful for García insisting she went to hospital to get her gynaecological problems treated properly. "If it wasn't for her, I don't know what would have happened. If I'm ill I can't work."

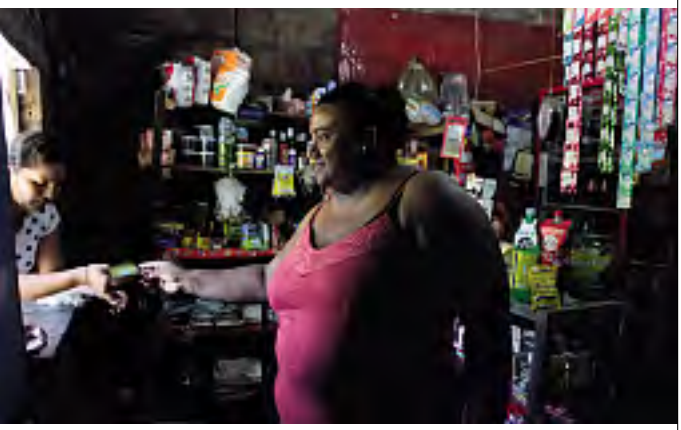
"Prevention is so much cheaper than the cure," says García. Just with regard to cervical cancer, Pro Mujer has carried out more than 30,000 smear tests in Nicaragua, of which almost 3,000 detected malignant or pre-malignant lesions.

García adds that Pro Mujer wants to provide its services to the wider community. As well as basic tests such as body mass index, blood, urine, pulse and weight, Pro Mujer is starting to offer more advanced services, including dental, optical and gynaecological treatment.

Patricia Padilla, who runs a

competing microfinance institution in Nicaragua called ADIM (which translates as the Alternative Association for the Integral Development of Women), is full of praise for Pro Mujer.

"They're not just good, they're extremely good," she says, describing the organisation's social work as "excellent". She adds: "They are very innovative and the extent of their client base is impressive." She admires Pro Mujer's ability to continue growing during the global financial crisis, the only microfinance institution in Nicaragua to do so.



Brisk trade: María Concepción Morán (above) at work following her recovery from cancer

Nevertheless, she is concerned about the sustainability of Pro Mujer's non-financial operations, suggesting that unless it expands its health clinic services, and thus is able to charge more (its clients get up to a 50 per cent discount for some services), paying doctors may become burdensome.

Ruiz says Pro Mujer's non-financial operations are "the key" to breaking the cycle of poverty in which many of its clients are stuck. Nevertheless, she admits Pro Mujer cannot depend on unpredictable donations, emphasizing the importance of making clients aware they must invest in their own personal development, training and health. Ruiz says non-financial products must have a high impact, be easily accessible and self-sustaining. "Any programme that achieves these three elements will last over time," she says.

Pro Mujer has been uniquely successful in tackling another obstacle faced by microfinance institutions in the country – its left-wing government headed by the populist leader Daniel Ortega, says Padilla. It was the only microlender to win approval from a government-backed group called the No Pay movement that was set up in 2009. The movement allowed its members to keep making payments to Pro Mujer – in contrast to other microlenders. Ruiz, an agricultural engineer by training, says this is because one of its leaders was a client of Pro Mujer.

Still, she accepts private microfinance institutions, though many are often accused by politicians of charging interest rates that are too high, are an irritant for Nicaragua's government, which has its own microfinance programme, Zero Usury.

Ruiz says: "They don't want to have competition in this, and Pro Mujer is a very strong competitor." Padilla reckons that "since the No Pay movement, the government has come to the conclusion that we are a necessary evil".

That Pro Mujer's headquarters are in New York, and that in the past it has received grants from organisations disliked by Nicaragua's "anti-imperialist" government such as the United States Agency for International Development, is further cause for complaint.

Even so, "the organisation has strategic alliances with the government, even if it doesn't really like what we're doing", says Ruiz, who explains that Pro Mujer can only detect serious health problems, and that treatment for cancer or similar life-threatening diseases must often be provided by the public sector.

In the face of such adversity, Ruiz, an energetic, constantly busy woman, remains committed to her job: "There's nothing more beautiful than arriving at a community and finding poor women who have lost all hope for the future, and to be able to inject energy into them and tell them, 'Yes you can!'"

> 'I didn't have faith in myself, but Pro Mujer lifted my self-esteem hugely'

Edelma Altamirano was one such woman. She explains from a rocking chair in her sparsely decorated but spotlessly clean living room how she used to be a virtual captive, beaten by her husband. Then a friend at Pro Mujer told her: "You're no fool – you can make it alone."

"I remember it well – it was November 30 nine years ago," says Altamirano. "I borrowed 2,000 cordobas, which for me was a huge amount of money. What am I going to do with all that, I thought?

"I didn't have faith in myself, but Pro Mujer lifted my self-esteem hugely." Not only did she discover after using one of Pro Mujer's smear tests that she had level two cancer – from which she has recovered – but she also had the courage to leave her husband two years ago.

Ruiz says: "We raise [women's] spirits – they only need a helping hand. To see them with flourishing businesses, that even their husbands will leave their jobs to help out with, is truly rewarding." ■

HEALTHCARE

CHILD EYE CARE CHARITABLE TRUST

# Visionary tactics

Before it could treat eye disease in Mumbai a charity had to use other means to gain the community's trust, says **James Crabtree** Photographs by **Adeel Halim**

Standing amid a throng of curious children in Mawle Nagar, a chaotic slum in the north of Mumbai, I am faced with a conundrum.

I have spent the afternoon being guided through a series of projects by Gopa Kothari, a paediatrician with expertise in the prevention of child blindness who has spent three decades working in more than a dozen of the shanty-ridden communities that dot India's financial capital.

Dressed in an elegant yellow sari, she has taken me to visit improbably tiny "micro-skill" classrooms, where young women learn to embroider and produce decorative arts, and to home-based cooking businesses and workshops on the best ways to sterilise water.

But while Kothari's charity's is called the Child Eye Care Charitable Trust, almost nothing we have seen has anything to do with children or eyesight.

"When you enter a community you have to have a dialogue with the leaders of the community, who often feel people come to exploit them," she says, when I ask why her organisation backs such a hodgepodge of ventures. "The entry point has to be their needs, not yours."

What Kothari wants to talk about is xerophthalmia, or dry eye syndrome. The condition causes permanent blindness in tens of thousands of malnourished children across the developing world each year, despite being easily preventable with vitamin A supplements, or even a cup of spinach or a few carrots, three times a week.

Our visit to Mawle Nagar is just one scene in a bold 30-year experiment in which Kothari's organisation has moved from slum to slum, trialling new ways of persuading residents to prevent the condition themselves. It is a journey that has convinced her of one simple message: help people with what they think they need first. "Once you have established a good rapport," she says, "you can talk about what you want to talk about."

> 'Once you have established a good rapport you can talk about what you want to'

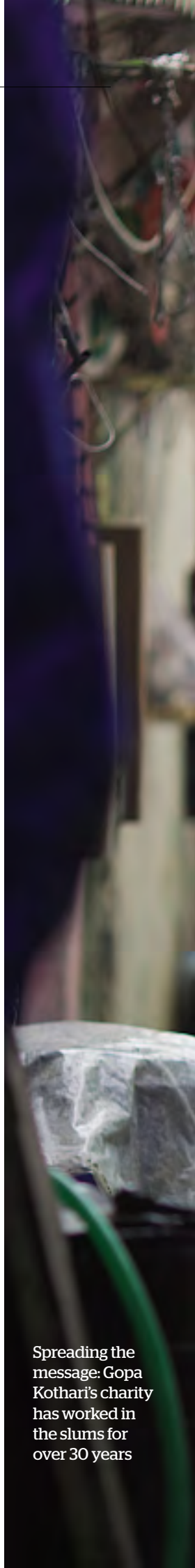
Kothari's experiment began in 1981, as India's political leaders searched for ways to reduce the nation's 40,000 cases of xerophthalmia each year. Progress was slow. Numerous large-scale government health programmes had tried to offer vitamin sachets to slum children, while exhorting their parents to eat more healthily. These efforts worked for a while, but when the health workers left, the blindness rates rose again.

After a summit meeting in New Delhi Kothari was asked to head a pilot project to test different approaches. Its location was to be one of the world's largest and most challenging slums – Dharavi, which today houses around 1m people on 540 acres in mid-town Mumbai, making it one of the world's most densely populated habitations.

The situation she found was grim: 8 per cent of children in the area weighed less than 60 per cent of the average for their age, their undernourishment placing them at severe risk of blindness. Yet many parents needed special convincing: attacks of blindness were often seen as the work of angry gods or evil spirits, she recalls, to be treated by ineffectual faith healers or herbal remedies. The educational materials used by previous projects often proved ineffective too; many featured pictures of African women, which made little sense to mothers in an Indian slum.

Kothari dreamed up posters more suited to local tastes. One featured Ganesh, the pot-bellied Hindu elephant god, holding blindness remedies in each of his seven hands. Another played on patriotism, featuring an image of India's national flag, but with its green and orange stripes replaced by spinach and pulses.

These materials were put to work as part of a broader programme educating parents about health and nutrition, while providing vitamin supplements to their children. Elsewhere, local shopkeepers were encouraged to sell dark-leafed vegetables, while ➤



Spreading the message: Gopa Kothari's charity has worked in the slums for over 30 years

# HEALTHCARE
# CHILD EYE CARE CHARITABLE TRUST

training schemes in crafts such as sewing and basket-making helped to boost incomes. Those who needed specific medical help were taken to a nearby hospital.

The three-year pilot was hugely successful: severe child malnutrition dropped from 8 per cent to 1 per cent, while child blindness fell sharply too. Buoyed by the success, Kothari decided to expand the programme, and it was at this moment that her experiments began in earnest.

"When we first enter an area, we will do a survey and find there are children who are anaemic, mothers who are malnourished, people who need cataract surgery, so you know healthcare and eye-care is required, which is our domain," she explains.

"But if you ask people what they think, they will come out with all sorts of things – except for health. For them, water might be a priority or getting a good hut or increasing their income."

It was in 2003 – more than two decades and a dozen slum projects later – that the trust first looked at setting up its operations in Mawle Nagar, a mostly Muslim area with a population of around 13,000, crammed into a small patch of land about 20 minutes north of Mumbai's international airport.

Early discussions threw up a range of problems, most prominently about limited water supplies and dirt roads; as usual, no one seemed to care much about eye problems. "Luckily for us there was an election coming up," she recalls. After pressure was brought to bear on vote-hungry politicians, the quality of water and roads suddenly improved.

It was only after this that the trust could push its own agenda: talking to mothers about nutrition and organising health camps with doctors to provide treatment. But their most popular contribution, as in many other slums, turned out to be a series of "micro-skill" classes, in which they trained local women as teachers, on condition that they ran classes for others.

Entry points: amid the poverty of Mumbai's slums (above) 'micro skill' classes (right) have proved popular

The trust formally left Mawle Nagar in 2008 – its projects run typically for around four years before being handed over to the community – but these classes were still going strong when I visited, on a damp late monsoon afternoon in August this year.

In one tiny classroom I found about 20 female students learning traditional sewing skills, presided over by Shabina Munna Sheikh, a 21-year-old who became certified as a tailor with the trust's help five years ago.

"I used to sit at home, totally useless," she says, in front of her class. "When I started teaching I felt much more confident and good about earning something for my family. I now make about Rs3,000 [$54] a month."

> The slum is a model that, despite its limited scale, seems to achieve results

A similar, positive effect is clear in a second makeshift classroom, where Rubina Shahnawaz, 20, teaches painting and decorative henna techniques. She giggles at the mention of taking driving lessons. "I always had an interest in art, both in learning and teaching it," she says. "The next class I want to take is driving, precisely because in our community it is not really allowed for girls."

The sometimes oblique link between such classes and eye care also becomes clearer. "The trust made announcements for days before it set up a camp where it offered cheap eye exams, advice and medicines," Shahnawaz says.

"My mother had cataracts but had surgery after a doctor at the camp advised her to do so. Now we all have knowledge about how to take care of our eyes." The students nod politely when asked if they know of Kothari's work on child blindness; one even says, with a knowing smile, that she eats plenty of carrots.

The slum is an example of a model that, despite its limited scale, seems to achieve results. In all the slums in which the trust worked between 1981 and 2011, child blindness rates fell substantially. More importantly, when it handed its work over to the community, rates stayed down.

"Some non-government organisations can end up being quite destructive," says Matias Echanove, an expert on urban planning based in Dharavi. "Their relationship with the local community can be very political and very difficult. But if you work through existing organisations and power structures, without entirely buying into them, you can get round some of this."

But for Kothari, it is the simplest lesson that resonates most deeply. "Have you got to the underlying causes?" she asks.

"Today you have dealt with one child, but another will come along in a few years. To do this you have to find ways to hand over to the community. It is the only way." ■

*Additional reporting by Kanupriya Kapoor*

# Comic relief

Entertainment for children has been a successful way to raise health awareness among parents, writes **Heba Saleh**

The evil duo Hemo and Nemo pounce on Montasser, an unsuspecting child, as they have on so many other children – often with fatal results.

Hemo and Nemo are two bacteria drawn as squiggly characters in a comic book, and they aim to infect Montasser with pneumonia, the biggest killer of under-fives in Egypt. But the young boy follows his doctor's advice by taking medication, eating healthy food and learning to wash his hands and open windows to let in fresh air – all measures that help him recover and avoid re-infection.

*Montasser Yantasser*, which translates as Victor is Victorious, is the title of the comic colouring book used by Protect Your Child, a health awareness initiative launched by a group of young volunteers to teach parents and children how to avoid deadly disease.

Target audience: children in the Cairo slum of Arab al-Tawaylah

Sitting in his spartan office in a suburb of Cairo, Mohamed Zaazoue, the 25-year-old doctor who is the prime mover behind the initiative, says he wanted to come up with an "innovative and entertaining way" to spread the health awareness message.

"In Egypt there is the idea that health education is only for doctors," he says. "So if you are ill you go to a doctor, he gives you a prescription and that's it. Because people don't learn about health there is a very high mortality and morbidity from preventable diseases. Every year, pneumonia kills 42,000 children in Egypt."

Protect Your Child started in September 2011 but has already reached 10,000 families, says Zaazoue, with 14,000 children vaccinated against pneumonia using vaccines donated by Pfizer, the drug company. The campaign, carried out under the umbrella of the Egyptian Medical Students' Association, focuses on poor areas in Cairo and the countryside. Its volunteers take the message using the colouring books, puppet shows and games to schools, nurseries and hospitals.

"We decided to start with children

because they are a good entry point to approach families," says Zaazoue. His plans for the future include campaigns to educate the public about diseases that affect adults.

Hospital waiting rooms are ideal places to spread the word, he says, because parents with sick children often have to wait several hours to see a doctor. The volunteers usually say they are organising a competition, then they offer health awareness information before presenting parents with an easy quiz on what they have just heard.

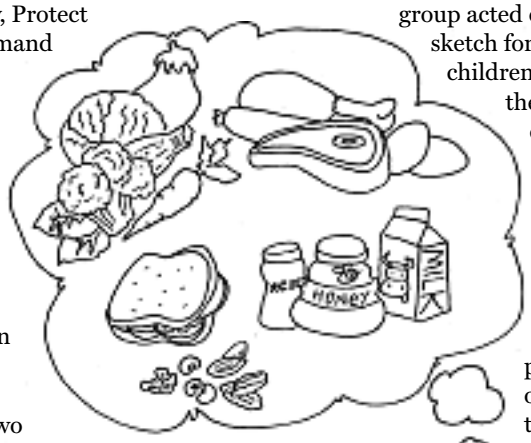
"Everyone is a winner," said Zaazoue. "We even give the information in a leaflet so that they can answer the questions and win the colouring book and other health information leaflets."

With a core group of 30-40 people and some 400 volunteers around the country, Protect Your Child is in demand by nurseries and non-government groups working in poor areas.

Ahmed Farouk, vice-chairman of Misr al Irada, an education non-governmental organisation that works in the Cairo slum of Arab al-Tawaylah, says two visits by Protect Your Child volunteers who vaccinated 550 children had a positive effect on the local population.

"They gave presents, vaccinated children and gave out information," he says. "People now drop by our premises to ask when they are coming again. This is an area where people live below the poverty line. They don't take their children to doctors. When they are sick they go to the chemist for a painkiller."


Life drawing: pictures from the colouring book used by Protect Your Child




In the upper Egyptian province of Assiut, Mahmoud Saad, a medical student, led a group of Protect your Child volunteers at a day of awareness at a local school.

"The girls in our group acted out a sketch for the children, and we read them the story in the comic book and coloured it with them," he says. "We also showed videos and took 500 doses of the vaccine to the children's hospital. As a result of the activities in the school, parents started coming to the hospital to ask for the vaccine."

Despite its short existence, the initiative has already secured backing from the charity Save the Children and a grant from the Sandra Rotman Centre, a health research foundation at the University of Toronto in Canada.

One aim, says Rana Soliman, who co-ordinates the volunteers helping with the initiative, is to persuade the Egyptian health ministry to include the expensive pneumonia vaccine in its free immunisation programme.

"My biggest challenge is to get the ministry to include it within five years," she says. "I also need more people to help so we can reach more places."

According to Zaazoue, the next project is a campaign about iron deficiency anaemia. A new colouring book about Montasser vanquishing anaemia and growing strong enough to score goals in football is in the works. "After that it will be gastro-enteritis," says Zaazoue.

'We decided to start with children because they are a good entry point to approach families'

The project has also allowed its leaders to grow. Soliman says: "I have learnt to work with all sorts of people. They accept what we tell them and ask about so many things, not just about disease. It opens up new ideas for what we can do next." ■

# HEALTHCARE
## GSK NEW CITIZEN

Life on the fringes: Hu Yan and her son Xing Junhao at home in Sanlin town

# Need to know

Migrants to China's biggest cities often have poor knowledge of how to access healthcare services. A community project in Shanghai aims to change that. By **Patti Waldmeir** Photographs by **Jonathan Browning**

Hu Yan lives a short 20-minute drive from Lujiazui, Shanghai's futuristic financial district. She, her husband and their six-month-old son occupy one small dark room, down a stinking alleyway on the banks of a fetid stream. She has no kitchen or sink, uses a chamber pot for sanitation and cooks family meals in a rice cooker.

China may build skyscrapers like any rich country, but Hu's life is a graphic reminder that, at the heart of Chinese prosperity, millions still live in poverty.

Hu, 25, is part of an urban underclass that scrapes by on the fringes – or sometimes in the centre – of China's biggest cities. She is one of 230m migrants who have boosted urbanisation to the point where last year, for the first time, more Chinese lived in cities than in the countryside.

Helping those new migrants integrate into a city where long-term residents often openly despise *waidiren* (people from outside Shanghai) is the mission of the GSK New Citizen Health Care project, funded by GlaxoSmithKline, the drug company, and operated by the Xintu Centre for Community Health Promotion, a local non-governmental organisation (NGO) that specialises in migrant services. The local government in Sanlin town – a crowded urban community of 100,000 migrants that has the feel of a rural village – also supports the project, providing premises for the project's playroom, classrooms and offices, plus some spin-off funding.

Millions of migrants to Shanghai hold office jobs and own homes and cars. Some have even become multimillionaires. But many newer migrants such as Hu, who arrived from Anhui province only last year, struggle to raise a family without indoor plumbing, and with only the most rudimentary knowledge of hygiene, ante-natal care and child development, in communities polluted by industrial waste and environmental toxins.

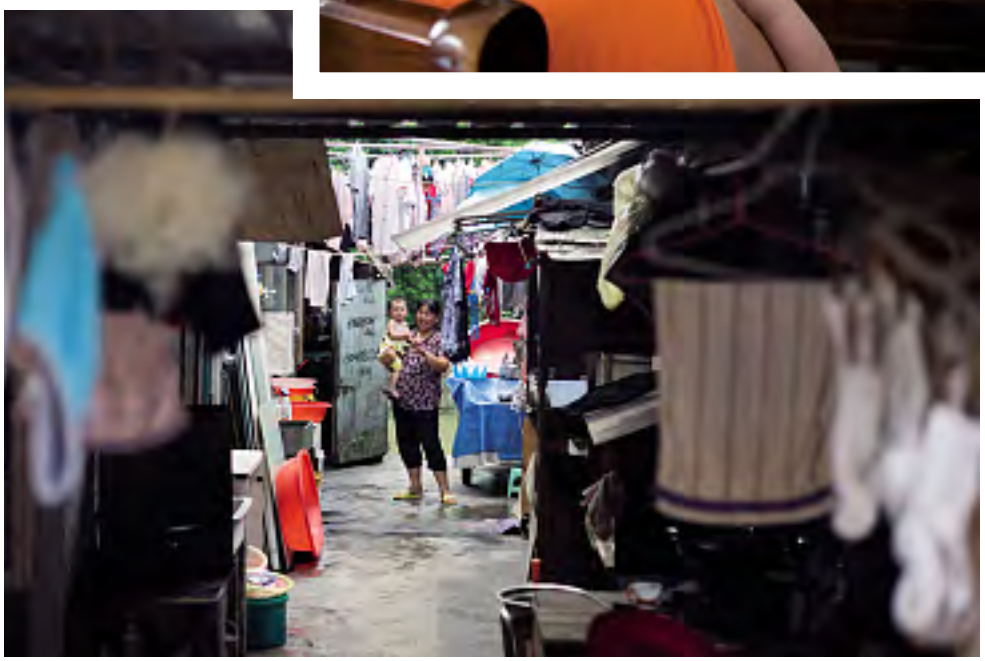
Her community does have a public toilet, about five minutes' walk from her home. She must go there every morning to dump her family's nightsoil – though a sign on one gutter, "Don't dump your chamber pot here", suggests residents are sometimes tempted not to go that far.

The World Health Organisation says China has made rapid progress in upgrading its sanitation facilities, and Shanghai has conducted a campaign to install prefabricated public toilets at many intersections. But many migrants cannot hope to afford a home with an indoor toilet.

Keeping infants healthy, toddlers entertained and marriages strong is hard in such circumstances. That is where the New Citizen project comes in. From its annual budget of ➤

# HEALTHCARE
## GSK NEW CITIZEN

Vital service: the New Citizen project offers respite from cramped domestic life



Rmb 1m ($150,000), it provides an eclectic mix of services, from education on infant care and preventing domestic violence, to lessons on how to shop online, use Skype and celebrate Valentine's day (the last is to help migrants maintain family relationships, rather than a marketing ploy by confectionary companies).

The centre offers English lessons as a way of getting migrants through the door to hear the project's primary message on public health. It helps that the project's New Citizen Life Centre in Sanlin, housed in a government building, is one of the few free air-conditioned venues in town.

Hu has attended sessions at the centre on domestic violence, children's medicines, antenatal health and even cosmetics for pregnant women. It is not hard to see why she is such an avid student. On the day I visit Hu's home, she and baby Xing Junhao – clad only in a bib embroidered with the slogan "Happy

Baby" – are trying to chase away heat of 36C with the help of a struggling ceiling fan. One neighbourhood toddler, her back scarred by heat rash, lounges in the arms of a local granny while another squats to make a bowel movement on a magazine spread on the ground.

"When I first came to the centre, I was coming for a baby wrap I heard they would give me afterwards," says Hu. "But I found the content of the lectures interesting and useful and then I came a second time." After each lecture, she received a small gift, and on her birthday the centre provided cake and a meal of noodles to celebrate. She adds that contact with other mothers in the centre's cool, toy-filled playroom is a bonus.

Hu is not a legal resident of Shanghai as she does not have the all-important *hukou*, or internal passport, allowing her to claim the benefits of a Shanghai citizen. But the Shanghai government provides basic healthcare to migrants and residents alike, and Hu says she thinks she has access to the same antenatal care as a resident.

Xintu director Guo Xiaomu, herself a migrant, says many incomers are unaware they may use public services such as free gynaecological screening for women. "There are free health services, but migrants often do not know about them," she says, adding that communicating this information to the migrant population is one of the primary goals of the project.

The government of Shanghai's Pudong district (where Sanlin town is) has reproductive health centres that are open to all residents, including migrants, "but they are not very people-centred" and focus more on distribution of drugs, she says.

The New Citizen project, though sponsored by a drug company, does not provide medical care directly or, for that matter, boost sales of GSK drugs, except indirectly through brand building. The centre's role is health education and to help migrants find the state healthcare to which they are entitled.

In a country where corruption scandals have tarnished the reputation of many charities, including the Chinese Red Cross, the New Citizen project, and its local operator Xintu, have so far avoided any hint of wrongdoing. The project's accounts are published and audited annually, and the US consulate in Shanghai recently recognised the project for its work in raising awareness of women's health issues.

> 'There are free health services, but migrants often do not know about them'

"I don't know of any other project quite like it in Shanghai that combines healthcare with education and other services," says Corinne Hua, founder of Stepping Stones China, another local NGO that works with migrants. "I believe Xintu has good internal controls and a high level of transparency and accountability."

Family friendly: antenatal advice is one of the project's key offerings

The New Citizen project, staffed largely by migrants, is unusual in China in that it asks the target population what they need, rather than telling them what they ought to have. So after one recent lecture on foot and mouth disease – conducted in a village lane so narrow the participants had to make way repeatedly for itinerant noodle sellers, recycling carts and rickshaws – staff passed out feedback forms to find out what residents wanted from such lectures.

The 15 toddlers present made their likes and dislikes fairly clear: once the centre's director finished telling their assembled mothers and other carers how to stop the spread of foot and mouth disease by burying faeces and avoiding kissing infected children, a young volunteer turned on his iPad to show a music video on the importance of washing hands before meals. Fifteen tiny faces were glued to the screen, and 15 sets of hands mimicked the handwashing motions modelled by the volunteer.

GSK New Citizen Health Care has opened some satellite centres beyond Sanlin town, and there are plans to expand to Beijing. It is a drop in the ocean of Chinese migrants. But with local governments intent on providing better public services to migrants – because they know social stability could depend on it – GSK and Xintu could lead where government will follow.

China will not become a uniformly rich country overnight, but for Hu and her baby, even this small bit of help makes a difference. ■

*Additional reporting by Yan Zhang*

INTRODUCTION
EDUCATION

# Lesson plan

Educational disparities persist between developed and emerging economies, and city and rural dwellers, finds **Chris Cook**

In education, geography is destiny. Children in developed economies can expect about a dozen years of education. In some parts of the world, however, getting any schooling at all is a struggle.

Within countries, moreover, there are big regional disparities. According to Unesco, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, Ethiopia has a school attendance rate of more than 70 per cent in its cities. But in rural areas, the figure is half that.

Even in rich nations provision is patchy. In England, London children are far ahead of the rest of the country. In the US, inadequacies within inner-city schooling systems are both long term and chronic.

Alongside that issue is one of family resources: children from educated families tend to outperform those from less privileged homes, even if they go to the same school. For cities where rich and poor live close together, this is particularly problematic.

College Possible, a Minnesota-based charity, seeks to raise children's aspirations and to dispel "the stereotype that only wealthy, privileged students are meant to go to college". The scheme uses young recent graduates, who are paid a small stipend, to mentor would-be students.

Dubrovnik's Education Vertical programme also hopes to open up opportunities. According to the mayor, Andro Vlahusic, the scheme "involves the city covering teachers' extra hours to work with children on curricular and extracurricular activities after regular school hours in elementary schools".

Ana Fernández Dodds, whose son died from cancer aged just one year, is seeking to help one specific group in her city: the sick. She has set up Aprendo Contigo to offer schooling in Peru's largest paediatric hospital.

She says patients "no longer see bleak wards filled with beds and patients, but rooms in which they play and learn, thus completely changing the urban micro-environment with better treatment and welfare for all".

But education is a broad concept.

The University of Oregon's Sustainable Cities Initiative deploys the expertise of departments such as architecture and planning to improve local towns and cities, engaging students and staff. In the process, "students learn about real-world problems, and cities get the input of a group of enthusiastic and engaged young people".

The most offbeat nominee in this category, however, is an organisation that encourages city dwellers to feel they have a stake in their own cities.

Navtej Johar, founder of the Power of Seeing, says that he returned to Delhi in 1992 after eight years away, only to find his "nieces and nephews showed no signs of being connected to their immediate environment".

Johar says: "It is thus not just an exercise in sensitisation and civic awareness, but is designed to make the children connect not only with the environment but also with each other, thereby making a network." Children on the scheme have, since 2005, adopted an element of their city and recorded its history.

Rather than just changing the city, this scheme hopes to change the residents – so that they, in turn, force a transformation in the urban environment. ■

Hard work: for many children around the world, getting an education is a struggle

PHOTOS: AFP; GETTY

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# Healing skills

A Peruvian charity is bringing hope to hospitalised children by educating and entertaining them. By **Andres Schipani** Photographs by **Max Cabello**


Helping hand: Aprendo Contigo's volunteers help to teach and amuse sick children

When 12-year-old Jhon put a question to Harvard University professor Paola Uccelli, she was shocked. “Miss, what was the toughest test life has ever put before you?” Jhon asked. As Uccelli, a Peruvian expert on child education, says. “It was the deepest question anyone had ever asked me.”

Lying in his bed in the intensive care unit at the children’s hospital in Lima, Jhon already knows only too well about life’s tough tests. Five years ago, a drunk driver hit him when he chased a football across a road in a shanty neighbourhood in the northern corner of Peru’s capital.

The driver fled, leaving Jhon unconscious on the pavement, with a shattered backbone. He has been left paralysed from the neck down, an umbilical cord linking his trachea to a respirator.

But recently Jhon has developed a penchant for soap bubbles and the Greek god Zeus: interests that allow him to leave aside, for a couple of hours a day, the grim reality of his hospital confinement. “I love bubbles, my aim in life is to make a big, big one,” he says smiling, his head sandwiched between a Sponge-Bob pillow and a Power Rangers cushion. “That, and becoming an expert on Greek mythology.”

Standing next to him, a bubble-making stick in one hand and the other skimming through the pages of a handmade picture book featuring the whole array of Greek gods, stands Marta Cháves. She claims responsibility for Jhon’s smiles and his recently acquired tastes. “As you can see, we are here to play two roles: friend and teacher,” she says. Her green apron is emblazoned with “Aprendo Contigo”, or “Learning with You”. ➤

Since 2000, this Lima-based organisation has provided education and distraction to children forced to spend long periods in hospital. In total, the programme has a team of about 200 volunteers who dedicate an average of four hours a day to children in this situation. They come from different ages, backgrounds and nationalities. "The children's faces light up when they see their green aprons walking into the rooms," says Prof Uccelli, who is familiar with the programme.

The educational assistants on duty gather every morning at 9 o'clock in a room crammed with puppets and children's books to go over the day's lecture notes and games. "What was the language of the Inca empire?" and "Who discovered America?" were two of the day's questions. The questionnaires are followed by prizes, such as a handful of Lego blocks, regardless of whether the answers are correct. According to the assistants, the process stimulates the hospitalised children's appetite for learning and playing.

"One of the most difficult things in education is making a child actually ask questions," explains Cháves. "Jhon does it – he is a clear reflection of most of the children we assist in this hospital. They do not only ask questions, they question life itself."

After working for years with HIV-infected children abandoned by their families, those questions are well known to her. "And that is beyond important. You won't get that in any regular school."

Cháves is the organisation's educational co-ordinator at the children's hospital, its largest operation. Aprendo Contigo also has a strong presence in the capital's cancer institute, INEN, where the programme started, and the Hogar Clínica San Juan de Dios, a centre for orthopaedic and neurological diseases. "We have fun doing what we do, and the children sense that," she says.

Their main goal is to create an environment of "normality" for the patient during hospitalisation or treatment. They offer access to well-crafted lesson plans and learning materials, as well as developing creative skills through various workshops and hobbies. On a daily basis, the programme assists approximately 350 hospitalised children, most of whom come from neglected areas in the capital and poor rural towns scattered over the Andean country.

Lifeline: the programme helps roughly 350 hospitalised children every day

'The children we assist do not only ask questions, they question life itself'

Despite initial reluctance from some of the medical staff, the programme has grown in leaps and bounds. Since its inception 12 years ago, it has helped more than 3,500 in-patients and in excess of 20,000 out-patients. "I never imagined it was going to grow so much," says one of its creators, Ana Fernández Dodds.

Aprendo Contigo was born out of the death of her one-year-old son, Fabrizio, from cancer. At the Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, where he was being treated, she saw children and parents interacting with teachers. "It looked fun. And one day I stopped by and realised it was necessary," explains Fernández Dodds.

"After Fabrizio died, I realised that was something desperately

needed here in Peru, so I put my strength into making it happen."

Each year, the children's hospital in Lima treats 40,000 patients, from infants to adolescents. Nationwide, the number climbs to 150,000, with 30 per cent of them long stays, like Jhon. "Aprendo Contigo is filling a vacuum left by the Peruvian state," explains Virginia Garaycochea, the children's hospital's dean of medicine. "And it is an example that should be replicated all over the country."

However, with funding scarce and a budget of $120,000 a year, that will be difficult. "We sweat blood every year to make it work," says Marisol Labarthe, the programme's fundraiser. She blames that on Peru's almost "non-existent culture" of giving.

Some large private companies and foundations provide contributions of, generally, $300-$500. The organisation offers a corporate volunteering programme that trains local executives, and every year it runs a Christmas campaign with cards and calendars using the drawings done by the children. "The state gives us nothing, not even teachers," Labarthe says. "But the flipside is that this gives us a lot of freedom of action."

That is echoed by some of the volunteers, such as Paulina Contreras, a teacher from the southern city of Arequipa. She decided to switch from the official school system to the less-corseted scheme of Aprendo Contigo. "It is fascinating not to be in a 'formal' education scheme," she says. "I am not tied up to nonsensical rules anymore. Here you can explore options and see what really works."

Contreras stresses the importance of building a strong bond with the children, honestly answering every question they pose, listening to what they have to say. "Every sick child has a healthy side. That's the side we focus on," she explains, "I don't care what illnesses they have. We never ask them that. I always start with a joke and that works."

Hospital classroom: for Aprendo Contigo, success is measured in the affection children feel for the volunteers

She recently received a handwritten letter from a 14-year-old girl who is convinced that she left the tuberculosis ward only because of the friendly company provided by Contreras. The letter reads: "I remember the day when that weird person, who was short and chubby, came forward and paid attention to me... since that day my life here changed."

The author is Mical, who had travelled seven hours on a rickety bus from Chimbote when her mother thought she had throat cancer. "I was very weak, and my mother only had 50 Peruvian soles [$19] in her pocket. She had to sleep in the hospital's corridors the first couple of nights," she says.

'Every sick child has a healthy side. That is the side we focus on'

When the doctors realised Mical had tuberculosis, she had to be kept in isolation, but Contreras walked in anyway. "I did not care," she says. " It was my duty to go in there and spend time with her."

The programme's original name was going to be Aprende Conmigo, or "learn with me'" but according to Contreras, the education process works both ways. "We are learning from each other, all of us, that's the beauty of it."

Back in the intensive care unit, while Jhon keeps blowing bubbles, the so-called "Three Princesses" lie in bed, all wearing pink pyjamas, under pink Hello Kitty blankets, and suffering from different spinal muscular atrophies. While Alexa moulds some red Play-Doh, Creysi is trying to thread a necklace of plastic balls, and Analí, the only one really able to talk, is identifying different animals. "That's a zebra, and that's an orang-utan," she tells her volunteer teacher, Zayra.

For Aprendo Contigo the proof that the system works is the children's affection. "I like it when Zayra and Marta are here; it's the best part of my day," nine-year-old Analí says with a shy smile, after kissing Cháves goodbye.

As the teacher leaves the hospital through the corridors adorned with Bambi tiles, she looks like a celebrity: children rush out of their wards to hug her, they call her name from almost every window as she passes by. "Formal education shuns life. They don't use it to the child's advantage," Cháves says. "And we have to give children a chance." ■

EDUCATION
COLLEGE
POSSIBLE

# Access all areas

A mentoring programme in the US is giving students from low-income backgrounds the access to higher education they never thought possible, writes **Hal Weitzman**

Bee Vue is only 26 but has already lived a remarkable life.

Born in a refugee camp in Thailand to ethnic Hmong parents who fled Laos during the Vietnam war, Vue came to the US as a child and grew up on the poor east side of Saint Paul, Minnesota.

Always very bright, he studied hard and won a scholarship to

the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, becoming the first Hmong to be admitted to the university. From there, he went to the University of Michigan for his master's degree and then on to work as a rocket scientist at Aerojet, an aerospace company in Sacramento, California, in the Orion main engine team.

Yet despite his obvious talent and determination, Vue says his story only happened because of College Possible, a non-profit organisation that helps young people from underprivileged backgrounds get into university and find funding to pay tuition and living expenses.

"My parents didn't know the first thing about how to get into college, so they couldn't help me at all with that," says Vue. "They didn't realise what a big deal it was for me to get into MIT until I was featured in the local newspaper."

"Without College Possible, I wouldn't have got into MIT. And once I was admitted, I was only able to actually attend because I got a Bill Gates Millennium Scholarship, and I certainly couldn't have got that without College Possible."

Jim McCorkell, College Possible's founder and chief executive, is rightly proud of such success stories. Yet he says the organisation's real innovation in the world of education is not just to have enabled more young people from poor backgrounds to fulfil their potential, but also to be doing so in a much cheaper and more efficient way than has been done before.

That is because of College Possible's unique structure, which uses members of AmeriCorps, a US national service programme, to advise and mentor high school and college students.

For a non-profit organisation, College Possible is also highly results driven: at its headquarters in Saint Paul, a large board displays up-to-date figures for the proportion of high-school students enrolled in the programme who have been admitted to college.

The results are impressive: 98 per cent of all the pupils College Possible has worked with have earned admission to college, the vast majority of them to universities where they are on four-year degree courses.

It has also grown fast. In 2000, its first year, the programme served 35 pupils at two high schools in the "twin cities" of Minneapolis and Saint Paul – among them Vue. In the last academic year, it worked with nearly 8,700 young people at 28 high schools and 150 colleges. It has expanded to Omaha in Nebraska and Portland in Oregon, and is looking at adding programmes in Philadelphia and New York, with the aim of establishing itself in 10 cities within the next five years.

The organisation was singled out for praise by Barack Obama, the US president, at a White House event in 2009 highlighting innovative programmes that made a difference to their communities. McCorkell also received an alumni achievement award from Harvard Kennedy School this year.

Genial and infectiously enthusiastic, McCorkell says his own life experience fed into the idea. The youngest of five siblings, he grew up in a low-income family in rural Minnesota, a farming area where most children of his socio-economic background did not go to college. His parents had met in high school and left before finishing, his father becoming a house painter and his mother working in a commercial laundry.

His four siblings all went to state colleges after high school, but McCorkell was admitted to Carleton College, a small but expensive liberal arts university south of the twin cities. As a student from a poor background, he secured financial aid and graduated with a level of debt similar to that of his siblings.

National push: College Possible is aiming at a presence in 10 cities within five years

It was a graphic illustration, he says, that going to an expensive college need not mean taking on mountains of debt, because financial assistance is available. In fact, for poor students it can be cheaper to attend a top-end private college with an aid package than to go to a state institution. "But you have to be a pretty sophisticated consumer to understand that," McCorkell says. "A lot of low-income students look at the price tag and think, 'I can't go there – that's for rich kids'."

The organisation changed its name last year from Admission Possible, in part to reflect that its focus had expanded from high schools to supporting students in university and ensuring they continued to receive the financial support they need to study.

> Going to an expensive college need not mean taking on mountains of debt

For McCorkell, College Possible is about trying to give poorer students the advantages of their middle-class peers. "Look at who earns a college degree by the age of 24: of kids from the upper income quartile, 80 per cent are earning a four-year degree. For the bottom quartile, the rate is 8 per cent. That strikes me as very unfair," he says.

"We should have the expectation in this country that everyone should be able to go as far as their talent will take them and not be constrained by their family, economic or racial background." ■

# Staying power

With little besides tourism to sustain itself, the Croatian city sees education as the way to encourage young people to build a future in the city, writes **Jan Cienski**
Photographs by **Stevo Vasiljevic**

# EDUCATION
## DUBROVNIK


Cutting edge: there is now a greater focus on play over rote learning for younger children

When Dubrovnik was an independent maritime republic in the late middle ages, its main rival was Venice, just across the Adriatic. Today the Croatian city is trying to avoid Venice's fate – of turning into a global tourist destination that is increasingly unattractive and expensive for ordinary people to live in.

Dubrovnik's white stone and marble walls and medieval city pull in more than 2m visitors a year, and are a mainstay of the local economy, but the worry is that the 40,000 locals will find the city too pricey and end up living further away, merely commuting into Dubrovnik for seasonal jobs.

That is what has spurred Andro Vlahusic, the city's left-of-centre mayor, to devise a programme he calls "education vertical" aimed at improving Dubrovnik's teaching system from kindergarten to university, with additional help for graduates to find a first job.

> 'We must protect the city. The goal is to attract young people to the city'

"We must protect the city," says 52-year-old Vlahusic, sitting in the same room in the centuries-old city hall that he occupied in 1995 as Dubrovnik's chief of logistics while the final Serb artillery shells rained down on the old town before the Serb forces were repelled. "The goal is to attract young people to the city."

The programme is a mixed bag of projects being pushed by Vlahusic, but the general idea is to make education more affordable for people who are often only seasonally employed in tourism, which provides most of Dubrovnik's jobs.

The first of the new schemes is a kindergarten project that uses a textbook produced by Mensa, the high IQ society. By bringing in an element of learning through play, this breaks with the traditional approach of focusing on rote learning. The city paid to train teachers and organised meetings with parents to promote the idea.

"My husband came back very enthusiastic," says Marja Djurovic, mother of a five-year-old who is taking part in the programme.

So far there have been no metrics to measure the impact of the programme, but Boja Mustac, head of the city's kindergartens, says she thinks the pupils have an edge when they enter elementary school.

At that level, the city is also hiring extra teachers to extend school hours so that children can stay at elementary school for the whole day, as well as allowing the schools to be used during the summer.

"As Dubrovnik is a tourist city, most parents work and schools are empty, so children stay in the streets during the day," says Vlahusic.

In all, the kindergarten and elementary school programmes cost the city about €530,000 a year.

Although high schools are run by the regional government, the city is subsidising extra classes to help prepare students for school matriculation exams, which are crucial for winning places at university. The goal is to formalise after-school instruction by paying teachers out of the city budget and reducing the demand for private lessons. This has also reduced the ➤

# EDUCATION
## DUBROVNIK

corruption that, Vlahusic says, results from teachers hiring themselves out to give private lessons after hours.

The city is also helping students pay for the cost of university by offering scholarships and a loan programme that pays a student up to €20,000, with the city covering the 6.5 per cent interest rate while the student is at college and for one year after graduation.

Antoneta Alamat-Kusijanovic, 26, a fine-arts student at Columbia University in New York, is using the programme, which gives her €550 a month towards living costs in the US.

The key is whether students like her will decide to move back to Dubrovnik after graduation. The increase in the skill and knowledge base of the city would imply that the programme, which costs the city €146,000 a year, is value for money.

Some of the signs are good. In Alamat-Kusijanovic's case, she has no firm intention to live permanently in Dubrovnik, but she hopes to use the city as a base for some future film projects. "This is my safe place that I'll always come back to," she says.

Students who do well in their studies will have some of their debt waived. The mayor is also setting up a Dubrovnik student club in Zagreb, Croatia's capital, where about half of Dubrovnik's graduates attend university. A city employee will keep an eye on the students to make sure they are hitting the books and not partying too much.

Leap forward: the programme aims to benefit students from kindergarten to university and beyond

The mayor estimates 10 per cent of those receiving financial aid will not be able to repay it, even though the programme caps repayment costs at 20 per cent of a graduate's salary.

"It may be stupid when seen through the eyes of the private sector, but this is the public sector," Vlahusic says. "People

are much more important in Dubrovnik than the city's walls."

The mayor and the city council take a personal interest in many cases, something that is relatively easy to do, with only 212 loans issued so far. But this informal, hands-on approach, which avoids some bureaucracy, can cause trouble.

Vlahusic is in the midst of a corruption trial after being charged with giving a €300,000 loan to a fellow city council member without the council's authorisation. Vlahusic denies the charges but does admit to making "some small mistakes".

The final part of Vlahusic's programme aims to help university graduates find work.

Croatia's unemployment rate was 17.3 per cent in June, and the economy is slowing as the ripples of the eurozone crisis spread. The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development predicts the economy will contract by 0.6 per cent this year, before returning to 1.7 per cent growth in 2013, when Croatia joins the EU.

"Growth for the rest of the year is likely to be either non-existent or negative, reflecting the overall lack of competitiveness in the economy," the EBRD says.

The city contributes 2,500 kunas ($420) a month – about half the average salary – towards the pay of any university graduate hired for a one-year trial period by a local business.

This initiative has had some impact, especially for recent graduates, who would usually hope for at most a seasonal tourist job. So far the city has signed 70 contracts with companies.

"One of my friends has the same degree as me but is working in a souvenir shop," says Blanka Bradvica, who graduated in marketing from the university in Dubrovnik and now works at Dubrovnik Sati, a travel agency.

"Were it not for the payroll programme, we would never have hired her, but we're now going to keep her on after the subsidy expires," says Mare Batinic, director of the agency.

The programme also helped Anja Markovic, head of Drvo Mladih Bonsai, a non-governmental organisation aimed at encouraging volunteering, by allowing her to hire her first employee.

'People are much more important in Dubrovnik than the city's walls'

"Without this programme, it would be really hard to find year-round work," says Meri Klaic, the new worker recently hired by Markovic, sitting in a café just outside Dubrovnik's city walls.

The city is also setting up an incubator for new businesses, offering 12 companies (with 27 employees between them) free office space and other help.

The programmes are still at a very early stage – many of them are a year old or less – and Vlahusic has only the haziest grasp of their impact on student results, graduation rates or even his ultimate goal of keeping Dubrovnik's population stable.

'Without this [payroll] programme, it would be really hard to find year-round work'

Bright ideas: parents have expressed enthusiasm for the city's investment in school programmes

"Dubrovnik should mean intellectual power – it shouldn't just be a place to come for millions of visiting cruise-ship passengers," he says.

Whether that goal is realistic is debatable. Dubrovnik's main economic engine is tourism, with government work second. There is almost no investment outside the tourist industry, and even some projects in that sector are running into trouble – as seen by the six years of delays for a $1.1bn golf course and luxury housing project in the hills overlooking the city and a nearby villa development.

The projects have run into thickets of red tape for trying to build in areas that may be visible from the old town (the same areas that the Serb artillery used in the early 1990s to bombard the city below).

"It has been a very unpleasant surprise to have to wait six years, but we are hopeful we will eventually get permission," says Ivan Kusalic, head of Razvoj Golf, the golf course developer.

Improving access to education is just one of the factors that could make people stay in Dubrovnik. Those locals who do not own their own houses also face the prospect of seasonal eviction, as landlords kick out Croats and revamp flats to rent to better-paying foreigners during the summer tourist season.

But for many locals, even if working abroad were easier, the attractions of living within sight of the deep blue Adriatic and the shimmering white walls of the old town make them want to stay.

"I know that Croatia is joining the EU next year," says Klaic. "But I have no interest in ever leaving." ■

# Street talking

India's capital suffers from a cultural suspicion of public space, but young people are seizing the initiative to improve their environment, writes **Amy Kazmin**
Photographs by **Simon de Trey-White**

When India's British colonial rulers laid the foundation stone of New Delhi in 1911, they set out to build an impressive, planned city as the embodiment of the power of the British Empire.

A century on, and 65 years after its independence, India has aspirations to be a global superpower. But aside from the capital's leafy and well-planned colonial heart – now an enclave for politicians, top bureaucrats and other elites – the chaos of New Delhi reflects decades of poor planning, corruption and neglected infrastructure.

Uncovered manholes claim small children's lives every year. Kerbs are so high that pedestrians can hardly step up from the roads. Pavements, where they exist, are broken and covered with litter or abandoned building materials. Drains are clogged with rubbish, which means streets flood in heavy rain, causing traffic jams and creating breeding areas for mosquitoes.

For the most part, New Delhi's residents are so inured, they hardly even notice the hazards, let alone contemplate the contempt their continued presence shows show for the city's people.

"There is no identification or connection with the outside," says Navtej Singh Johar, a prominent classical dancer. He returned to New Delhi in the mid-1990s after years teaching and performing abroad, and was shocked by the urban chaos he found. "We've put blinders on. We've stopped seeing reality."

Despite his dismay, Johar was convinced India's capital, and its other cities, could be improved if citizens took ownership of the public space and demanded better performance from government agencies. Yet to mobilise ➤

**Not minding the gap: New Delhi's residents have become inured to neglected infrastructure**

# EDUCATION
# POWER OF SEEING

citizens, he realized he would need to overcome their apathy, which he says is reinforced by a traditional Indian cultural suspicion of public space, where people of different classes and backgrounds can freely mix.

"There is absolutely no respect, and no identification with anything that is not yours," Johar says. "It's a cultural thing – 'the outside is polluted'.

"Traditionally, the Indian woman's role is to keep doing purification rituals to ward off contaminants from inside the house, while the outside is something to be afraid of – you don't mix with that stuff."

That was the backdrop for Johar's initiative, the Power of Seeing – an effort to connect schoolchildren with their urban environment and inspire them to improve the city, rather than assume someone else would come along and take care of the problems.

"I realised if things had to change, it was the children who had to change," he says. "Adults were too jaded and exhausted."

New Delhi's problems can easily overwhelm veteran urban planners, let alone teenagers. But in the handful of private schools where he has been welcomed by progressive principals and allowed to work, Johar has urged children to look at the poor state of their neighbourhoods and recognise their own role as residents of the city.

The project's core approach is to ask participating students to choose one element in their neighbourhood – an uncovered manhole, a clogged drain, a broken pavement, or another hazard – observe it and document what happens to it, for a period that could run into months.

Hazard warning: the city's broken streets have angered Nabisha Khalid

'There is absolutely no respect, and no identification with anything that is not yours'

In parallel with the students' observations, Johar and volunteers conduct workshops, sessions with non-governmental organisations and tours to raise students' consciousness about the city, how it functions and the state of its urban design and basic services.

At the conclusion of each project, Johar encourages students to send their accounts of problems to local government agencies along with a demand that the manholes are covered, pavements are fixed and other problems are rectified.

He envisions using social networking to help students from different schools join forces to advocate for a more livable city and even dreams of pressing the government to incorporate urban awareness and design issues into the national curriculum.

"My agenda is to have an army of looking, seeing, aware children, joining hands across the city," he says.

'The government is not doing anything. We need to put pressure on it'

In reality, the Power of Seeing is still operating on a tiny scale. It is an all-volunteer effort, dependent on the energies and limited time of Johar, his partner, Sunil Mehra, an art critic and former editor of the Indian edition of the men's magazine Maxim, and a handful of their like-minded friends.

Gaining access to schools has been challenging. Indian students are overloaded and are focused on preparing for exams to gain admission to an elite university. Parents tend to be less than enthusiastic about projects that may distract children.

"Parents really object when we take them on tours of rubbish dumps and sewage works," says Johar. "They are ugly sights."

Schools, too, are sometimes uncomfortable with a programme that implicitly criticises the Municipal Corporation of Delhi, the government agency responsible for the city's basic infrastructure. "School principals are a little reluctant to take on the MCD," he says.

Even when schools do open their doors, it is not always for a prolonged period, or for repeat visits to carry out the project precisely as its founders have mapped it. "Schools have their own agenda," says Mehra.

But in schools where Johar and his fellow volunteers have worked, children have been deeply touched. Take the students at Fr. Agnel, a private school in affluent south Delhi. Last year, the Power of Seeing team spent weeks at the school, holding workshops in journalism, film-making, dance and music, all focusing on issues of the urban environment.

Among the participants, some were taken on excursions to the Yamuna, New Delhi's ostensibly sacred but deeply polluted river, and a handful even went to rubbish dumps to interview the workers who sort the city's refuse by hand in search of material to recycle.

Sore sights: broken pavements (above) and roadside tips (below)

For many of these students, the project has changed the way they conduct themselves and their response to their environment. "Before, when I was going for a trip, I used to throw the wrappers of the chips packets outside the car," says Hemank Sharma, 12. "Now, I put them in a polythene bag."

Nabisha Khalid, 17, spent weeks photographing manholes, broken pavements, live wires and broken roads near her house. She was angry at what she saw, particularly when she found a step leading to a house that was almost impossible for children or the elderly to navigate.

She harangued the property owner and persuaded him to build two steps to make it easier to enter. "It was an abuse to people," she says. "Nobody would be able to walk there. They should understand – they had small kids at their home, and it was dangerous for them."

Anubha Sharma, 17, lives in an area of housing for government officials, as her parents are civil servants. Inspired by the Power of Seeing, she protested to the authorities about an uncovered manhole. After she had complained three times a week for nearly a year, workers filled the hole with mud and surrounded it with stones – still hazardous but slightly less risky than it was.

"The government is not doing anything," she says. "We need to put pressure on it."

The children's efforts – and the results – may seem insignificant in the grand scheme of New Delhi's woes. But a longer-term impact is likely to come from the children's growing awareness. Mehra suggests the project is mainly about planting seeds that will come to fruition in the future.

Suman Kumar, principal of Bluebells School International, where the Power of Seeing volunteers have worked in the past, believes the initiative is inspiring impressionable children who, she says, "have a responsibility as citizens of tomorrow".

Kumar adds: "School is not just about history, geography and civics. Kids should be connected to society. It may not be a revolutionary process, but the children's voices, and their awareness of what kind of city they would like to live in, are important." ■

# Class act

Oregon towns in need of regeneration have tapped the talent and enthusiasm of local students, writes **April Dembosky**

# EDUCATION
## SUSTAINABLE CITIES INITIATIVE

Sustainable future: Springfield is looking to turn the Booth-Kelly mill into flexible spaces

PHOTO: JEN PECENKA

The red smokestacks that form the backdrop to downtown Springfield, Oregon, are symbols of a bygone era, a bygone economy. Some locals say the chimneys of the town's last paper mill inspired the visual signature of the fictionalised Springfield in the opening credits of *The Simpsons*, the television cartoon show – representing not just the culture of Every City, US, but the economic and environmental ills that have come to plague one-industry towns.

Springfield, Oregon, once thrived on lumber production. But jobs have been pruned after environmental battles and policy changes sharply curbed the cutting of the state's pine and Douglas fir trees.

It is a history that Courtney Griesel, the city's economic development analyst, wants to preserve and correct. As she oversees the redevelopment of the abandoned, polluted Booth-Kelly mill, she is looking for a design that is environmentally and economically sustainable. She wants a space that celebrates the city's timber heritage but also looks several economic cycles into the future.

> The city wants a space that looks several economic cycles into the future

"My fear is we will create the same problem for the next generation," she says. "I don't want to make every decision in the moment. We want to encourage people to build flexible spaces."

For help with her vision, Griesel turned to students at the University of Oregon in neighbouring Eugene. Dozens of students in city planning, architecture, public policy, economics and other departments used Springfield as a real-life testing ground for theories learned in class.

Students produced drawings and analyses for a revamped Booth-Kelly mill, and drafted designs for new roads, a school and a library. They gave presentations to the city council and answered questions from the public.

"What the students present is conceptual. It is the start of a conversation," says Bob Choquette, the director of the Sustainable Cities Initiative, the university programme that organises the student effort. "An architectural firm will give you one design. Here, you can engage 15 students and you get a variety of ideas to choose from."

For this service, Springfield paid the university $229,000 – a hefty sum for a cash-strapped city, but Griesel says the city spends the same amount on a single contract with a professional consultant. While some ideas were not politically or economically feasible, and just a few were brilliant, most contained nuggets of insight the city will piece together as it finalises its plans.

That was the original goal of Marc Schlossberg, professor of planning and public policy at the University of Oregon, who helped create the programme three years ago. He saw too many final papers at the end of the semester with great ideas that no one else would ever see.

"What a waste all these great ideas are being put on paper and kept inside these walls," he says, motioning to his office's book-lined walls. "If people in the community could have access to these ideas, it could reorientate how they see their problems."

Schlossberg and a group of other professors struck a deal to experiment with the city of ➤

# EDUCATION
# SUSTAINABLE CITIES INITIATIVE

'Students are incredibly desperate to make change happen now'

Gresham, outside Portland, and incorporate applied projects into their curriculum. The student work was so well received that, the following year, several cities competed for the opportunity to work with students. Salem, the state capital, won and agreed to pay $350,000. Springfield signed up the following year.

Now, dozens of universities are calling Schlossberg wanting to replicate the programme. As debates continue about the cost of higher education, universities must defend their relevance.

'We can't be happy in our ivory tower. The community is asking what we are contributing'

"We see this as a way of updating higher education for the modern era," says Schlossberg. "We can't be happy in our ivory tower any more. The community is asking what we are contributing. Students are incredibly desperate to make change happen now. They want to learn by doing."

The programme has created some tension with professional groups, which fear their city contracts are being usurped by students. The Salem chapter of the American Institute of Architects objected to the student collaboration at first. City officials tried to appease the consultants by playing down the contributions as "just student work". At the same time, they called it "on a par with professionals" to justify spending tax dollars to the city council and the community. At the end of the year, the professional architects won a contract to design a new police station using drafts from the students.

Slices of history: the Booth-Kelly mill in its heyday and a proposed new look

That project would not have happened without the students, says Linda Norris, Salem's city manager. "The city had been cutting staff since 2008," she says. "I was concerned about how we were going to achieve a number of goals we had set with the limited resources we had."

The students propelled them forward more than three years, she says, helping design new energy-efficient street lights, bicycle lanes, park signage and new uses for the wastewater treatment plant that saved the city $400,000.

The students recognised that the plant had capacity for processing much more waste than was then passing through. Since the local fruit canneries had lost business to food producers in South America, they produced much less waste water. The students suggested the city solicit waste from businesses in nearby regions and charge to process it.

"The students got us away from thinking we were just here to do one thing," says Greg Eyerly, the city's wastewater treatment manager. His team is now working on technology to transform sewage into fuel for the city's police vehicle fleet. "We want to take it from the toilet tank to the gas tank."

The university has yet to decide which city it will focus on in the next academic year. It will soon run out of cities in the state that can afford the annual fee, so it is considering focusing on implementing some of the proposals it proposed in the first three cities, such as the Booth-Kelly mill site in Springfield.

But if one local business owner had his way, the students would help him develop an economic plan to exploit the city's rumoured Simpsons connection – a title vied for by Springfields in 11 other states.

Jack Koehler, the owner of Sweety's candy and frozen yoghurt shop, wants to turn his street into a six-block "Simpsonsville", a tourist strip that takes a decorative cue from the yellow paint of his store and the life-sized plastic figures of the Simpson family he has set up outside.

"I want to cartoon this area up," he says. "Let's capitalise." ■

PHOTO: COURTNEY SKOOG

# Learning to Save, Saving to Learn:

## An Innovative Approach to College Access in the U.S.

*By Bob Annibale, Global Director Citi Microfinance and Community Development and Andrea Levere, President CFED*

A child with a savings account is six times more likely to attend college. Over the course of a lifetime, people with college degrees earn 75 percent more than those with just high-school diplomas – nearly one million dollars more in total. Yet for many low- and moderate-income [LMI] families, achieving those degrees means confronting overwhelming financial obstacles. When applying for college, why should a student be forced to make the choice: take on significant debt or drop out?

Encouraging savings is one strategy to support college access and completion. Even after loans, scholarships and other aid, out-of-pocket costs for higher education are often unbearable. The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau now reports more than $1 trillion in outstanding student loan debt. It is proven that given the opportunity, low-income households will not only save, but will also use those savings to invest in long-term assets that create pathways to financial security – including education. Research and practice show that even a few thousand dollars in a savings account can give youths a foundation to begin paying for their education, and also instill sound financial behaviors that will serve them throughout their lifetime. The financial and educational sectors have an obligation to make this possible for all, by teaching children to save and providing incentives and tools that make college saving easy and attainable. Government must also lead the way in promoting access to college by addressing the academic, social and financial challenges facing students from low-income families to make the goal of college completion a reality.

Today, there are dedicated public-private collaborations that are making significant contributions to this effort by developing innovative programs that provide greater opportunity for college success. The City and County of San Francisco, for example, has created the Kindergarten to College program, which is accomplishing universal college savings for its kindergarten students entering San Francisco's public schools. Kindergarten to College is a pioneering program that municipalities and others across the country are eager to replicate. San Francisco public officials partnered with the school district, Citi, The Corporation for Enterprise Development (CFED), philanthropists and local community groups to design and support the country's first universal, automatic and publicly funded college savings account program. More than 3,000 accounts are now open and this fall, every child entering kindergarten in the San Francisco Unified School District will automatically start their academic career with a college savings account in his or her own name.

Instilling the value of saving in a child as early as kindergarten will better prepare them for the financial responsibilities that accompany college completion. College savings programs, along with supportive public policies and the know-how and incentives to implement them wisely, can create a brighter future for the next generation that includes better jobs and a stronger economy.

*The city of San Francisco created the Kindergarten to College program.*

COMMENT
MICHAEL
BLOOMBERG

# Innovation hotbeds

## Rapid urbanisation and a lack of global leadership mean city halls must take the lead in improving quality of life

To achieve big results, sometimes you have to start small. Every industry experiments with new ideas that have the potential to improve performance. Ideas that work are scaled up; those that do not are dropped. But for too long, this approach was largely absent from the public sector. That is now changing, as a burst of innovation takes place in city halls around the world.

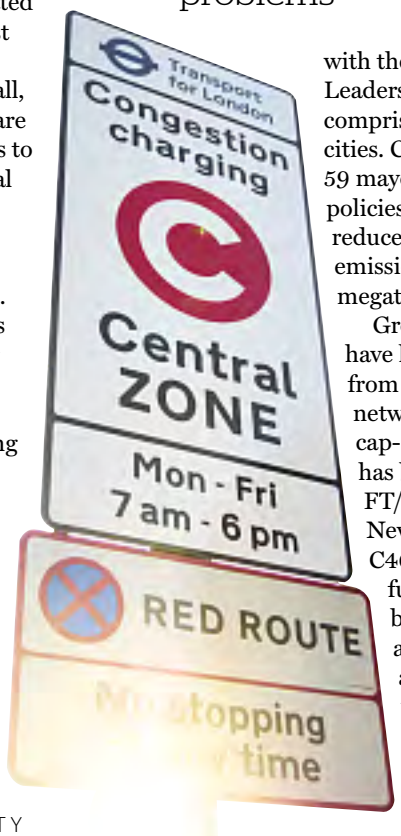
Take Tulsa, Oklahoma. There, in the 45th largest city in the US, mayor Dewey Bartlett has implemented innovative incentives for municipal employees to find ways to save the city money. If it works, it could be replicated in even the world's largest conurbations.

In cities large and small, municipal governments are generating new strategies to address local and national challenges, whether it is congestion charging in London or Singapore, or a budget contest in Tulsa. Increasingly, these efforts are filling the void left by national governments and international bodies unable or unwilling to solve serious systemic problems.

Some of that failure is understandable. When you are cutting social services or pensions, it is difficult to justify spending on experiments that may or may not yield results. But this risk-averse approach leaves government fighting the most persistent problems – from low education achievement levels to poverty – with the same old tools.

The real impediment to innovative experimentation has less to do with money, though, than with campaigns and elections. An example is climate change. The US federal government has failed to implement a comprehensive strategy that would reduce the nation's contribution to global warming. And the international treaty process has had difficulties even agreeing to the setting of carbon reduction targets.

> Cities are filling the void left by governments unwilling to solve systemic problems




Contrast that with the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group, which comprises the world's largest cities. Collectively, the cities' 59 mayors have implemented policies and programmes to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by almost 250 megatonnes a year by 2020.

Groundbreaking initiatives have had concrete results, from Bogota's rapid transit bus network to Tokyo's municipal cap-and-trade system (which has been shortlisted for the FT/Citi Ingenuity awards). New research estimates the C40 has the potential to further reduce emissions by more than 1bn tonnes a year by 2030 – an achievement equivalent to making both Canada and Mexico entirely carbon-neutral.

Cities are meeting other challenges head on – because they have to. I have said before that mayors are the world's great pragmatists. We don't have the luxury of simply talking about progress – we have to deliver.

Of course, we are not immune to budgetary constraints. Still, the lack of global leadership has left city governments with no choice but to innovate.

That is why Bloomberg Philanthropies has issued the Mayors Challenge, a competition to inspire US cities to generate innovative ideas that solve major challenges and improve city life, and that ultimately can be shared with other cities.

The Challenge gives cities with as few as 30,000 residents the opportunity to see their innovation become a reality. We are providing technical assistance, an opportunity to collaborate with other top city innovators and, of course, funding to address a wide variety of issues, from government accountability to socioeconomic challenges.

In total, 394 cities have entered the Challenge, and 58 per cent of them have fewer than 100,000 residents. The response has been more than encouraging, and the ideas generated and supported by the Challenge cannot come soon enough.

A 2009 report by McKinsey, the management consultants, estimated that China's cities alone will add 350m new residents by 2025. Accommodating the needs of that mass of humanity will be a serious environmental, social and political challenge. We need solutions, and we need them now. ■

*Michael Bloomberg is mayor of New York City and chairman of the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group*

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# 2011

## CITI HELPS KIDS LEARN TO SAVE, THEN SAVE TO LEARN.



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For many families, enrolling a child in college means overcoming financial obstacles. That's why Citi collaborated with schools, community groups and the City and County of San Francisco to create the Kindergarten to College program. This fall, every child entering kindergarten in the San Francisco Unified School District will have a college savings account in his or her name. This lays the foundation to begin paying for their education and gives them the financial skills they need to build a stronger future.

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