


IMPACT
Journalism Day

50 IDEAS TO CHANGE THE WORLD

On Impact Journalism Day today, 40 newspapers across the world are sharing stories on how individuals have come up with creative ideas, innovations and initiatives to solve local and global issues. Find out how they did it, and be inspired.



In Riau, Indonesia, Mothers of Light have brought their villages out of darkness with their solar-powered lamps.

FROM THE STRAITS TIMES

MOTHERS OF LIGHT
Solar-powered lamps shine bright in Indonesia
D2



MAIDS IN BUSINESS
Domestic workers learn to be entrepreneurs
D4

BILLION BRICKS
One man's dream to house India's homeless
D6



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IMPACT
Journalism Day

LIGHTING UP THE WORLD

EMPOWERING THE PEOPLE

ALL PART OF THE DESIGN

BRIDGING GAPS

KEEPING HEALTHY

FEEDING THE MILLIONS

EDUCATION: PATH TO THE FUTURE

SAVING THE EARTH

THE POWER OF TECHNOLOGY

Some help the needy, some move the disabled, while other initiatives give those struggling a leg up.

Enter the Braille-enabled tablet

Bulgarian trio's tactile touchscreen will let blind people read and type

By KARIN TZSCHENTKE
DER STANDARD (AUSTRIA)

IT WAS in the final year of her master's studies at the University of Technology in Sofia that Ms Kristina Tsvetanova was asked by a colleague if she would be able to sign him up for an online course.

At first, she was surprised by

the request. After all, most students today are able to use a computer and the Internet. Then she realised that the young man sitting next to her was blind.

"For the first time, I understood how intensively we come to communicate and work with technologies to which certain groups of people like those who are blind

have only limited access," said the 25-year-old business engineer.

To be sure, there are technological tools such as screen reading and enlargement programs that translate electronic information into audible content. But these tools are expensive and awkward to use. Until now, blind people have had only limited access to portable tablets.

The encounter prompted Ms Tsvetanova to embark on what has proved to be a challenging

project – to develop a tablet for blind people and those with limited vision. The result: the first prototype of the "Blitab" to be presented at the end of the year.

To protect the tablet from being copied, Ms Tsvetanova reveals few technical details about the device that she will build with her boyfriend Slavi Slavev and his younger brother Stanislav, both experts in software and 3-D design.

But this much she will tell: With a newly developed screen

technology, smooth surfaces can be perceived in a tactile manner. Small cylinders emerge on the screen, like buttons or little bubbles, that can be read in Braille. The device includes a Braille conversion software.

Text can be entered in Braille through an integrated Perkins-style keyboard.

Early this year, Ms Tsvetanova and the Slavev brothers moved from their homes in Bulgaria to the Austrian capital of Vienna with nothing but a couple of suit-

cases and their savings. Here, they said, were better circumstances for a start-up.

They first worked as consultants for a large company, and continued to work on their tablet projects in their free time.

One day, they spotted a young man with a cane alighting from a tram at a station, and approached him. Eighteen-year-old Gerhard, had just completed his high school exams and agreed to test a 3-D model to see if the dot patterns of the Braille writing were "readable".

He is now one of the backers of the Blitab project, along with the Austrian Relief Society for the Blind and Persons with Impaired Vision.

After submitting their project in several competitions, they attracted attention and garnered government funding which allowed them to quit their jobs and devote their attention to perfecting the device.

The potential of such a device is promising. According to World Health Organisation statistics from 2013, there are 39.8 million blind people and 285.3 million vision-impaired persons worldwide. Of these, 20 per cent have mastered the dot-writing system developed by Frenchman Louis Braille in 1825.

The young entrepreneurs are counting on completing a marketable prototype by the end of the year. They will then seek investors so as to be able to begin production.

The price of Blitab, according to Ms Tsvetanova, will be "about €2,000 (\$3,260)", and the product will be made available to organisations supporting those who are blind and visually impaired, as well as to libraries for testing purposes.

Ms Tsvetanova is aware that the expectations are rising with every award and report in the media.

"But that is even greater motivation to also succeed," she said.

Karin Tzschentke is contributing editor of the Austrian daily paper Der Standard in Vienna.



Farmers making their way back to their village in Bali. Scarcity of poverty and a flourishing tourist industry bothered farmer Daniel Elber so much that he set up a firm and provided jobs for local residents. PHOTO: TAGES-ANZEIGER

A new path out of dire poverty

By HELENE ARNET
TAGES-ANZEIGER (SWITZERLAND)

MR DANIEL Elber was never a typical banker. Although responsible for over 1,200 employees at a major bank in Zurich, he repeatedly took time out – to trek in the Andes, explore Borneo and cross Tibet. But it still came as a surprise to his friends when the 50-year-old decided to start a new life in Bali 10 years ago.

The decision was motivated by a woman. Mr Elber noticed Ms Ketut and her daughter Komang when he was jogging across the mountains from Muntigunung in northern Bali to Lake Batur. He had seen her and other women begging in the streets of Ubud several days earlier. Now, they were trading home again with their meagre collection and a bag of rice.

Mr Elber could not stop thinking about the encounter. He kept wondering why women have to beg although they live in a paradise on earth surrounded by such lush vegetation and a flourishing tourist industry. It just did not make sense.

Mr Elber did some research and found out that the women come from the 36 hamlets that consti-

tute Muntigunung and that there was no means of making a livelihood in this area. He kept wondering what these women could do instead.

That brought another woman into play: Ms Karin Vogt. Specialising in marketing, she had just organised the European launch of a major United States coffee chain and was visiting Mr Elber in Bali. She said: "The idea is simple. Let's change the direction."

Instead of travelling from their villages to the tourist centres, the women would guide people from the tourist centres to their villages. That was the beginning of Muntigunung Trekking.

Since then, 50 women from Muntigunung have become part-time guides. They accompany tourists on day tours to their villages. The tours cost about 80 Swiss francs (\$108), some of which go directly to the former peasant women and their villages. "At first they hardly dared look the tourists in the eye," says Ms Vogt. That has changed over time: In broken English, they now proudly tell tourists about their village.

Mr Elber and his team also started looking for projects that re-

ly on local resources, such as tea from Hibiscus blossoms, roasted cashew nuts, woven baskets and, most recently, hammocks. He secured the cooperation of the Bali Hotel Association, which unites Bali's top hotels, to buy the products and offer them to their guests. The result: 220 jobs.

As Ms Vogt puts it: "Tour guests become part of our project

through first-hand experience of the conditions under which people live in this region."

The trekking has also become the best advertising for the Muntigunung development project. Ms Vogt is convinced the Muntigunung model can be applied in other regions as well. "It is possible to build bridges of this kind wherever people live in great poverty

near affluent tourist centres."

In the meantime, the firm running the trekking operations has handed it over to the local people.

Today, Ms Ketut still takes tourists to her village where small baskets are woven from lontar palm leaves. She takes pride in being able to work for her livelihood and in setting a good example for her daughter, who is in school.

Rolling a 'cafe' all over town for charity

THE temperature has risen above 30 deg C and the sun is shining from a clear blue sky, making Oslo's asphalt jump an exhausting hot spot.

In the centre of town, in a neighbourhood called Grønland, two young men pull a trolley. It is loaded with cold lemonade, coffee

and melon. This rolling cafe is an idealistic project, with all the profits going to charity.

And it began with an idea to create a social meeting place in some of the town's quieter streets from the labour market.

"Oslo... has several nice urban spaces and a number of charming

streets. One of our aims was to add some hustle and bustle, in order to make Oslo an even better place to live," says Mr Lars Petter Berg, 26, one of the driving forces behind the project. "The best we can hope to achieve is to make people pause for a while and take time for a small chat."

The two men roll their cart all over town, from the fashionable neighbourhood of Frogner to the working-class, multi-cultural areas of Toyen.

Customers pay any price they like for a cup of coffee or tea or a glass of juice, and the profit goes to charity. Customers vote for

which charitable purpose will receive support.

Said one woman who stopped for a drink, Ms Farah Khodadadi: "They caught our interest when we heard that all profits go to charitable purposes... So we are more than happy to support them."

Another customer, Madsen, agreed: "This initiative is different, in a positive way. I don't like street vendors but this is great. How wonderful that someone will bother to spend his time helping others. Most of us are disturbingly obsessed with ourselves."

Aftenposten (NORWAY)



The Id'ees Group is active in the French industrial and service sectors, providing fresh qualifications for thousands of people. PHOTO: LE MONDE

This firm cheers when its workers move on

THE winds of change have swept into the long-abandoned Kodak plant at the Chalon-sur-Saône industrial park in Burgundy, France. In 2011, Id'ees Services set up 7,000 sq m of workshops there – not to revive the film photography of the past but to turn cardboard into pallets, and cellulose wadding – and most importantly of all, into jobs.

Specialising in recycling and social integration through work, Id'ees Services is the most recent

subsidiary of the Id'ees Group founded in the 1980s.

For 30 years, the group has been combining recycling with social integration for people excluded from the labour market.

From making cartons, plastic container caps and honey candy or providing park maintenance, house moving, catering and event management, the Id'ees Group is active in the industrial and service sectors, providing fresh qualifications for thousands of people.

Most of the employees are sent there by local social welfare bodies or state job centres. In contrast with normal businesses, this integration company counts it a success when its employees move on. Id'ees' success lies in its departure rate of 62 to 64 per cent.

"Since we got started," says CEO Pierre Choux, "45,000 people have left for permanent jobs."

ANNE BOUDET/LE MONDE (FRANCE)



Mr Roberto Agosta, co-founder of SwissLeg, with one of the company's prosthetic limbs, which can be made on site in about three hours. PHOTO: SWISSLEG

Prosthetic limbs made fast and on the cheap

IT TOOK an accidental meeting in Switzerland of three brilliant minds – a Jordanian orthopaedic technician, a scholar from Brazil, and a Swiss – to give birth to a start-up producing quality prosthetic legs at a low cost.

Called the SwissLeg, it is made on site – in the patient's home. Similar to plastering a broken limb, the cast of the missing leg is created and a robust artificial limb is made from a mix of polymers. Once heated, this material be-

comes flexible and can be easily moulded and, when cooled, it is highly resistant to deformation.

"In general, after about three hours, the patient is able to walk," says Mr Roberto Agosta, the co-founder and chief operations officer of SwissLeg.

To date, about 1,000 people have received one or two SwissLeg limbs, mainly in war zones – Syria, North and South Sudan and Ethiopia.

According to Mr Agosta, there are about 32 million amputees in the world. Of these, 80 per cent live in developing countries and only 5 per cent have access to adequate prostheses.

Mr Paulo Goncalves, CEO of SwissLeg, adds: "Walking is a fundamental right that no man, woman or child should be forced to give up."

GERARDO CHABARDONIA/LA REGIONE TICINO (SWITZERLAND)



Mr Raul Arturo Flores puts a harness in the car, a column in the steering wheel, then installs devices which function as "legs". PHOTO: EL HERALDO

Disabled mechanic helps others move

DESTINED to be confined to a wheelchair after a car accident in 2007 left his lower limbs immobilised, Honduran mechanic Raul Arturo Flores decided to take a different road.

He decided to continue with his trade, but offered a new service to his customers: Modifying cars for people who cannot walk.

In his small workshop in the neighbourhood of Pueblo Nuevo in Tegucigalpa, Mr Flores gives an opportunity of mobility to those

who are unable to walk.

The modification work takes a day. He places a harness in the car, a column in the steering wheel, then installs devices that he manufactures which function as the "legs".

"The device can be used with only one hand. It brakes and accelerates, and it does not give me any problems," he says.

He has done about 30 modifications so far.

"People tell me that I have to register the patent, but that is not what I am interested in," he says. "What I want is to help people."

"Since I was in this wheelchair, I have had the strength, I am working. I will always need assistance because my legs do not function, but my heart and mind function and every day I will continue to move on, because life continues and it is beautiful."

SAMAI TORRES/EL HERALDO (Honduras)