



POSITIVE
DEVIANCE
INITIATIVE

The **POSITIVE DEVIANCE** Initiative



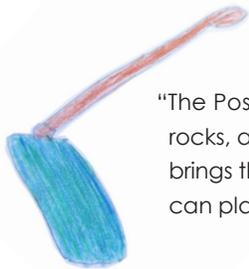
Participants of the Positive Deviance Pilot Project in Northern Uganda *photo: Lucia Durã and Arvind Singhal*

From the inside out

Local Wisdom

Global Impact

POSITIVE DEVIANCE is different from other social change approaches. It respects and leverages local wisdom and assets.



"The Positive Deviance (PD) approach is about digging with a hoe. One has to dig to unearth the soil, rocks, and nutrients. One needs to turn the soil over to see what lies hidden and buried beneath. Digging brings the fertility of the soil to the surface. Once that is done, even though the soil remains the same, one can plant new crops."

-Sketch and quote by PD implementer, Village Kedoyo, Indonesia

THE POSITIVE DEVIANCE APPROACH

Positive Deviance (PD) is based on the observation that in every community there are certain individuals or groups whose uncommon behaviors and strategies enable them to find better solutions to problems than their peers, while having access to the same resources and facing similar or worse challenges.

The PD approach is an asset-based, problem-solving, and community-driven approach that enables the community to discover these successful behaviors and strategies and develop a plan of action to promote their adoption by all concerned.

OUR MISSION

Housed in Tufts University's Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy, the mission of the Positive Deviance Initiative is to amplify and disseminate the use of the PD approach to measurably enhance the lives of vulnerable people around the world.

SERVICES

We document, disseminate, and share experiences on PD-informed projects worldwide. We build partnerships that leverage the use of the PD approach. We provide technical assistance to organizations that want to use the PD approach in sectors such as public health, child protection, and education. We evaluate and share what we learn, through the creation of a community of practice, to continuously expand the use of the PD approach globally.

POSITIVE DEVIANCE IS HIGHLY EFFECTIVE

The PD approach has been used in 41 countries to address a wide range of intractable and complex social problems including childhood malnutrition, school drop-outs, hospital-acquired infections (HAIs), reintegration of child soldiers, neo-natal and maternal health, girls' trafficking, and HIV/AIDS. PD has also been used in the private sector by corporations such as Hewlett-Packard and Merck Sharp & Dohme in Mexico.

POSITIVE DEVIANCE

is an approach that works across a wide range of sectors and in diverse socio-economic and cultural settings.

POSITIVE DEVIANCE is a practice-based approach that enables a community to discover and practice uncommon but successful behaviors and strategies.

IMPACT OF PD-INFORMED PROJECTS

- In Vietnam over 60% of all children under three suffered from mild to severe under-nutrition.

The PD program in Vietnam reached 2.2 million people and led to sustained 65 to 80% reductions in childhood malnutrition in participating communities. The PD approach in nutrition has been implemented in over 30 countries.

- Female genital cutting (FGC) is illegal in Egypt, yet in rural areas, over 90% of girls between the ages of 10 to 18 are circumcised.

Within three years of implementing the PD approach thousands of female circumcisions were averted, creating dozens of FGC-free communities.

- Over two million Americans contract a preventable hospital-acquired infection (HAI) each year. Of these, some 5% (about 100,000) will needlessly die from complications arising from HAIs.

U.S. beta site hospitals that implemented the PD approach to prevent and control Methicillin Resistant *Staphylococcus Aureus* (MRSA), the most common HAI, documented a 74% drop in the infection.

- A commercial sex worker in East Java, Indonesia can earn more in one day selling her body than what her parents may earn in a year.

In communities of East Java, where the PD program was implemented, girls trafficking was reduced by 30 to 80%.



A PD practice for the prevention of HAIs: the use of gloves as contact precaution to transport a patient

Photo: PDI

A guiding principle of PD is that it is easier to ACT one's way into a new way of thinking than it is to think one's way into a new way of acting.



A participant in a Food for the Hungry International/Bolivia PD program to address malnutrition

ATTRIBUTES OF PD APPROACH

The PD approach is a strength-based, problem-solving approach for behavior and social change.

The PD approach differs from traditional “needs-based” or problem-solving approaches in that it does not focus on the identification of needs and the external inputs necessary to meet those needs. Instead, it invites the community to identify and amplify existing solutions to a complex problem from within.

PD is based on the principle that experts already exist within the community. So the role of the implementing organization becomes to facilitate the discovery and amplification of local solutions. PD respects and leverages local wisdom and assets.

PD is based on the idea that it is easier to ACT your way into a new way of thinking than it is to think your way into a new way of acting.

STEEPED IN MONITORING & EVALUATION

Whether it is mothers weighing their children, or hospitals swabbing their patients for MRSA, PD is bathed in data.

The PD encourages local communities to develop their own, culturally appropriate indicators of progress and create their own scoreboards.



Photo: PDI

A community discussion about effective PD practices underway in Indonesia

For instance, a PD implementer in Uganda noted: “A year or two ago you wouldn’t see whole ground nuts on the road. Also you would not have seen birds in the camp site eating food scraps. These are a sign of abundance.”

POSITIVE DEVIANCE CAN WORK AT SCALE

The scalability of a PD program begins from day one. Once the community self-discovers the existing

solutions, they can work immediately to amplify them, and with the support of local organizations and government leaders, sustain them. PD can be scaled both horizontally and vertically through time. The PD childhood nutrition program in Vietnam was scaled-up with great success to over 250 communities, reaching a population of 2.2 million people. PD also scales through spillover effects.

POSITIVE DEVIANCE

practices, behaviors, and strategies, though small, can be shared easily with neighbors and friends, enabling community-led ripples of change.

POSITIVE DEVIANCE is an approach that is uniquely successful in situations where other approaches to behavior change have failed.



"PD is like a flashlight. It helps to shine light and illuminate what hides behind the darkness. It helps us discover what already exists. For example, it helps us discover our existing strengths we had not realized or utilized."

-Sketch and quote by PD implementer, East Java, Indonesia

In Indonesia, curiosity about the use of PD for curbing of girls' trafficking prompted villages near the piloted sites to implement similar practices, programs, and techniques. Further, in piloted sites, the village leadership has applied the PD approach to solve other local problems, including education of young girls and job-training for youth.

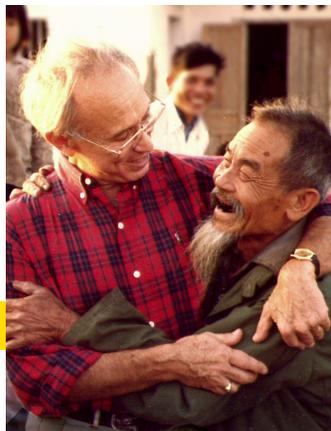
In many of the hospitals that have applied the PD approach to address MRSA infections, PD is now being implemented for issues as complex as medication reconciliation, end-of-life conversations, and diabetes control.

THE PEOPLE BEHIND POSITIVE DEVIANCE

The concept of PD initially gained recognition in the work of Tufts University nutrition professor Marian Zeitlin in the 1980s, when she began focusing on why some children in poor communities were better nourished than others.

Zeitlin's work privileged an assets-based approach, identifying what's going right in a community in order to amplify it, as opposed to focusing on what's going wrong in a community and fixing it.

Jerry Sternin (1938-2008) and his wife Monique Sternin, who co-founded the Positive Deviance Initiative, institutionalized PD as an approach to social and behavioral change by demonstrating how it could be operationalized in a community-setting, beginning with the childhood malnutrition project in Vietnam in the early 1990s. Over the past two decades, the Sternins continued to refine and develop the PD approach with other PD champion partners in multiple sectors, collaborating with various agencies, organizations, and individuals to address such complex and intractable social issues as childhood malnutrition and anemia, poor school retention rates, the spread of hospital-acquired infections, the tradition of female genital cutting, the trafficking of girls, and HIV/AIDS among commercial sex workers.



Jerry Sternin



Monique Sternin

photos: PDI



A Positive Deviance meeting underway with the Afar elders in Ethiopia with Jerry Sternin listening (far right)

photos: PDI

PDI GLOBAL PARTNERSHIPS

The PD approach has been used by numerous organizations operating in both private and public sectors, including:

Africare

Ard el Atfal (AEA)

CARE

Calcutta Kids Trust, India

California Teachers Association (CTA)

Catholic Relief Services

Center de Ressources pour l'Emergence Sociale

Participative (CRESP), Senegal

Children's Nutrition Program (CNP), Haiti

Concern Worldwide

Danish Prison and Probation Services (DPPS)

Family Health International (FHI)

Food for the Hungry

Helen Keller International

Hewlett Packard

Indonesian Ministry of Health

International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI)

Johns Hopkins University's Center for Communication Programs

Merck & Co., Inc.

Mercy Corps

New Jersey Board of Education

Peace Corps

Plan International

Plexus Institute

Save the Children

Redd Barna

Shibpur People's Care Organization (SPCO), India

Srikandi Waria Organization, Indonesia

U.S. Lawyers Abroad Committee

VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System (VAPHS)

UNICEF

USAID

World Vision

World Bank

Zambian Ministry of Health



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