

# The Social Marketing Legacy of Phil Harvey

From 1992 to 2001, I did some of the most important - and fun - work of my life: I managed social marketing programs for the nonprofit PSI in Zambia, Bangladesh and Paraguay. Social marketing is a technique that uses the tools of social marketing to achieve a social outcome - in PSI's case, that outcome is improved health. The programs I worked on were HIV prevention, family planning and child health but social marketing can also be applied to other disciplines as well. It has almost surely saved millions of lives and improved countless others.

I owe that singular experience to Phil Harvey, who founded PSI in 1970 to promote family planning through the mechanism of social marketing. In 1989, he founded DKT International, another social marketing organization more tightly focused on reproductive health mainly in very large countries (in order to have cost-effective impact at greater scale). Harvey has also served, and continues to serve, for many years on the board of directors of Marie Stopes International, another organization that uses social marketing.

Phil Harvey is introduced as "a visionary, pioneer and titan in the world of social marketing" in this new video interview. Harvey describes his early work in India, the roots of social marketing, his creation of two social marketing organizations, his legal battle with the State of New York over reproductive health issues (that went all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court) and the impact of social marketing.

"We demonstrated to the world - indeed, the entire world - that this method of social marketing, this method of providing birth control through commercial networks and infrastructure is effective, it goes to scale, it's very cost effective," says Harvey in the interview. "Social marketing of contraceptives is now going on in 60 or 70 countries. The total of contraceptive social marketing beneficiaries is over 70 million couples. It's a major contribution and I would

be delighted to be remembered for having at least demonstrated that that approach is effective."

He recounts a moment of epiphany he experienced with a desperately poor woman "with a ragged sari" during a famine in India in the 1960s and how this experience led to his interest in social marketing. This encounter brought him to the conviction that "however we were going to help people, by God, we were going to do it in such a way as not to create this disparity between the giver and the recipient, or to generate "gratitude," a word he pronounces with great scorn.

"Social marketing is particularly well designed for this because when you're selling a subsidized product through a commercial distribution system, the customer is an equal. They give a little bit of money; the storekeeper gives them a product. The deal is done. Nobody is superior to anyone else. Nobody needs to be grateful to anybody else. It works just fine."

He speaks with pride of the success of social marketing and family planning over the last four decades.

"As a personal and moral issue, family planning is a big winner. The ability of parents to control the number and timing of pregnancies and births is an enormously liberating phenomenon. We saw 40 or 50 years ago, a world in which most women were virtual slaves to their fertility, to their repeated pregnancies. Making it possible for women to become free of that burden, to decide when to have children and how many children to have, is an enormous advance in human rights."

"And it multiplies with its impact on family economics. Time after time, we hear from parents that 'Now I have enough money to educate my children.' Education becomes possible when you have three kids instead of seven, so the impact of giving people the right to control their own fertility is very significant. Anyone who opposes it is a fool, and probably an evil fool."