

THE POWER OF HUMANITY

Nothing happens without energy,” John Camillus says.

For people to have a better quality of life, as measured by health outcomes, electric power is a necessity.

Just a few years ago, the Tugar district in a rural, remote region of India lacked a broad range of basic amenities, including direct access to water, electricity, plumbing, and health care.

After several years of hard work in Tugar, the community now has water, electric streetlights, toilets, a solar-panel electricity generator, and a telemedicine clinic.

“It has been quite an effort to get to where we are,” says Camillus, Donald R. Beall Professor of Strategic Management at the Joseph M. Katz Graduate School of Business and a native of southwestern India. “It is a small miracle.”

The effort in Tugar is a bit different from a typical philanthropic project. Camillus came up with the idea that business models that incorporate social benefit as a goal, integrated with the goal of economic value, achieve greater profits and sustainability. “The main proposition is that economic value and social benefit are mutually beneficial and synergistic,” Camillus says about his paradigm.

This idea has grown into a major project, the Business of

Humanity®, which emphasizes a holistic approach to engaging people, interacting with communities, and adding value. Founded in 2011, the project focuses on the idea that businesspeople who invest in humanitarian causes will achieve a higher return on investment, both morally and financially.

While corporations regularly aim to support social causes, they rarely base strategic plans and business models around them. In an effort to grow his theory into a project, Camillus searched for environments where people struggle in their day-to-day lives. The Business of Humanity has helped transform Tugar and, thousands of miles away but closer to home, the Pittsburgh neighborhood of Homewood.

In Homewood, where low-income residents often face high utility bills and struggle to access affordable and healthy food, the Business of Humanity helped create a bioshelter — a solar greenhouse — that uses DC power to offer locally grown produce and help offset utility bills. DC power is a breakthrough, Camillus says, because it provides more efficient and sustainable energy. Cucumbers, lettuce, tomatoes, and herbs grown in the bioshelter are now sold in the Everyday Café in Homewood.

DC power also has made it possible for Tugar to create a telemedicine clinic that opened its doors earlier this year. “That telemedicine clinic is connected



The Business of Humanity paradigm has also become an important component in the curriculum at Katz, allowing students to use the theory in real-world projects.

MBA students can choose to enroll in an elective course, “The Business of Humanity: Strategic Management in the Era of Globalization, Innovation, and Shared Value.” In addition, students in the Executive MBA program have applied the essentials of the Business of Humanity concept in projects that include:

HIGHLANDS HOSPITAL

A health care-based sustainability project in Fayette County, Pennsylvania

PITTSBURGH HIRES VETERANS

Provides free support to U.S. military veterans, current service members, and their spouses who are seeking education, training, and employment opportunities

THE TRADE INSTITUTE OF PITTSBURGH

Aims to improve the lives of men and women who have significant barriers to employment

NEW CENTURY CAREERS

A non-profit that works to improve the profile and skills of the manufacturing workforce in southwestern Pennsylvania

STANDING FIRM

A program that alerts Pittsburgh-area employers to the effects of partner violence in the workplace

STRONG WOMEN, STRONG GIRLS

An organization that offers a curriculum on female role models

to the most advanced network of doctors in India,” Camillus says. Residents can seek care from doctors across India, and the doctors can diagnose and prescribe medicines remotely.

Tugar’s growing agribusiness efforts also rely on DC electric power. The land in Tugar is not arable, so to produce food and other crops, residents must use the most up-to-date technologies. Camillus says they are working to build up Tugar “in a way that is self-sustaining and can actually generate profits.”

As for the future of Tugar, Camillus envisions “residents working as drivers to transport people to the wellness center, the possibility of farmers’ markets, and solar technicians monitoring and troubleshooting the power plant.” Camillus also says that he hopes Tugar residents will one day be able to sell produce and export its crops.

For its next project, the Business of Humanity will be replicating its work in Tugar in the Indian state of Rajasthan. “We’ve learned so much from our first two neighborhood projects,” Camillus says. “We can replicate Tugar and Homewood to do the same for other areas of India for a fraction of the cost of the original investment.”