

Congratulations Abhijeet Banerjee, Esther Duflo and Michael Kremer!

Congratulations to Abhijeet Banerjee, Esther Duflo and Michael Kremer from Seva Mandir for being conferred with the 2019 Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Science. It is a proud and joyful moment for Seva Mandir and the communities of Udaipur region with whom they conducted studies on Health and Education.

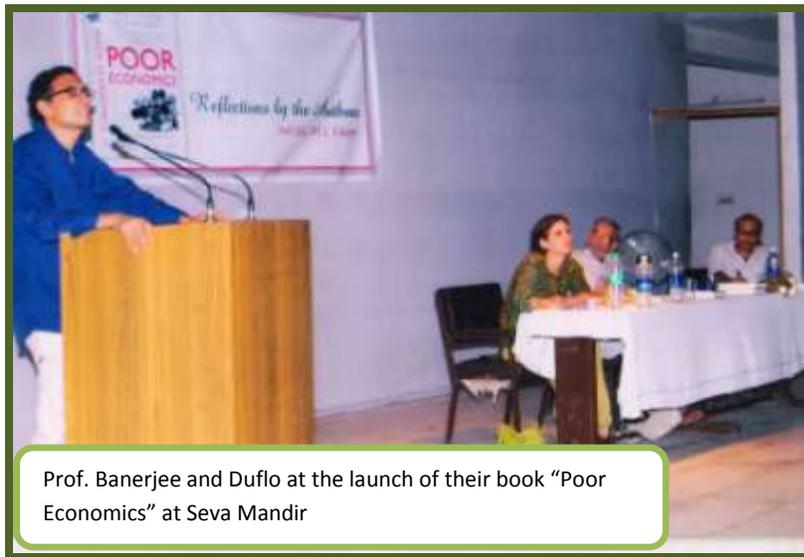


Seva Mandir's research association with the professors began in 1996 and continued till 2009, during which different action-researches were conducted using the Randomized Control Trial (RCT) methodology. The studies designed in the partnership were targeted towards the problems of health and education in the remote rural and tribal communities of the region.

In the article of the Mint on October 15th, 2019, Prof. Abhijeet said that "Seva Mandir then and as now was an organization that suffered from the Groucho Marx problem. No standard that they could realistically meet was high enough for them; there was always room for self-criticism and to aim higher".

It was perhaps this attitude of Seva Mandir that drew the Nobel laureates to Seva Mandir to have a 13-year long partnership. The very first experiment showed in striking ways how two teachers schools proposed to be run by Seva Mandir were no better than their single teacher schools. This counter-intuitive result saved Seva Mandir a lot of money and focused its attention more on what makes for a good school. In another path-breaking study, they showed how the immunization coverage could be increased from less than 3% to 38% through ensuring regularity of immunization camps at a well-

informed place and incentivizing families with lentils and utensils to walk in hills and forests till the campsite to get the vaccine shots.



Prof. Banerjee and Duflo at the launch of their book "Poor Economics" at Seva Mandir

The researches contributed to the global discourse on poverty alleviation. Prof. Banerjee and Prof. Duflo captured the learning from the studies with Seva Mandir and other organizations globally in their book named ***Poor Economics: A Radical Rethinking of the Way to Fight Global Poverty***, which won the 2011 Financial Times and Goldman Sachs Business Book of the Year Award.

For Seva Mandir, the partnership helped to enhance the effectiveness of the programs, not only of those studied but also of future ones, showing the significance of evidence-based planning. We continue to use the outcomes in our programs even today, and the camera monitoring being expanded to other interventions.

Working with top-flight economists from MIT and Harvard was not easy. It was under the leadership of Neelima Khetan, Chief Executive of Seva Mandir from 1999 to 2011, and her team consisting of Hemraj Bhati, General Secretary and Priyanka Singh, In charge of Education and Health programs, and also the successor to Neelima as Chief Executive, that the partnership became a mutually rewarding and global public good.

Priyanka Singh, presently Head of Interglobe Foundation, who worked with the couple on the studies says, "Seva Mandir created space for Profs. Abhijeet Banerjee and Esther Duflo to try out RCTs because we also believe in creating space for the public good of knowledge that is based on carefully collected evidence. Seva Mandir and Jameel Poverty Action Lab's partnership show the importance of institutions to carry on with the evidence and use it to design and sustain programs that can help the poor".



Prof. Duflo with her kids on visit to Seva Mandir field

Seva Mandir is proud to be a part of the journey and the work done by Abhijeet Banerjee, Esther Duflo and Michael Kremer and wishes them luck for good deeds in the future.