

Impact Report

In this impact report, I have detailed the goals I aimed for, the outcomes achieved, and the key insights gained through my collaboration with the Age Care Foundation (ACF) in Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh, India. These findings/reflections are based on the three goals I included in my initial LiA proposal.

GOAL 1

In creating a campaign for healthy aging, I aimed to provide valuable information to the middle-aged adults. The primary objective was to raise awareness about Age Care Foundation's mission via a 5-part series of informational posters for both English and Telugu speakers. The campaign had distinct phases, each with its intended outcomes. Our envisioned goals included online social media engagement, media collaboration, and community engagement. The online component exceeded expectations, with the infographic bundle gaining traction on WhatsApp groups, signalling positive reception and engagement. However, the planned collaboration with "Yo Vizag Lifestyle and News" magazine didn't materialize as intended. Instead, the informational bundle reached its intended audience through WhatsApp.

Community engagement, particularly with local pharmacies was challenging due to administrative hurdles and limited interest, resulting in the network of partner pharmacies not fully materializing. The most significant challenge was complex administrative procedures that hindered in-person campaign execution, affecting its reach and effectiveness. This experience taught me the importance of flexibility in the face of unexpected obstacles. Relying on existing NGO networks, particularly WhatsApp groups, proved more effective than elaborate multi-media formats. This also emphasized the power of simplicity. In conclusion, while the in-person aspect faced challenges beyond our control, the online platform exceeded expectations in engagement and reach. I also realised the need for careful planning, adaptability, and diversified strategies in future campaigns. The ultimate takeaway is that the 'concept' of healthy aging was shared with more people, albeit in ways different from the initial vision.

GOAL 2

My second goal focused on raising awareness about palliative care among senior citizens and medical and nursing student, the mission was to design practical workshops, presentations, and interactive sessions for informed discussions on advanced care directives and palliative care. Initially, we thought of setting up a pop-up stand at the outpatient clinics for the Living Will/Advanced Care Directives initiative. However, after receiving feedback from the nursing staff who manage the clinics, it became clear that this would disrupt the clinic's flow and decrease turnover time. Dr. NS Raju suggested an alternative approach: conducting an awareness session for Rotary Club Members on advanced care directives using a play with a brief introduction to palliative care embedded within.

The new modified goals were clear:

1. To create interactive workshops for medical and nursing students, fostering collaboration, and introducing the concept of palliative care.
2. To engage the public and raise awareness about advanced care directive through a theatrical performance!

The mission was successful. The interactive workshops for both medical and nursing students were well received, and it was an opportunity for the incredibly talented and experience ACF team to share their learning experiences with students. I also thoroughly enjoyed playing the role of facilitator. The presentation on Advance care directives was made more engaging by incorporating a Telugu Play 'A tale of two friends.' We had to adapt last minute as we have very little time to cast the actors and practice the play, however the performance was quite good given the time constraints. I relied on ACF volunteer team to understand the 'gist' of the play as it was written in advanced form of Telugu that I am unable to speak. We used 'Jugaad innovation' approaches such as using white-board projector with slides depicting the different background scenes such as a hospital room, living room etc and playing the sounds of the hospital through a speaker to further build the scene.

I believe this play was a small but mighty effort in initiating conversation about 'death and dying' and 'planning for death.' The overall ambitious aim was to motivate senior citizens to create living wills however, the core aim was to spark conversation. There were several key takeaways from this experience, firstly I re-realised that storytelling is a powerful medium for communicating a message, secondly bringing diverse groups of people together to direct a play was an opportunity worth embracing! I also learned that sometimes you need to go with the flow and you should not minimize the impact you can create for the cost of perfectionism. In other words, it's better in certain circumstances to show your half-finished work than to not show anything. Furthermore, I also learned that it's important to ask for feedback from different people at all levels of the organisation. In retrospect, I can definitely see the value in discussing my initial ideas with more NGO staff members so that the original plan could have been more suitable to the ground-reality.

GOAL 3

Originally, my goal was to improve compliance among elderly residents in Age Care Foundation's old-age homes. However, juggling this with my work on promoting healthy aging and palliative care became logistically challenging. To maintain my well-being and my commitment to spending weekends with my grandparents, I decided to channel my efforts into creating a 5-minute short film, featuring my mornings in the hospice and the new Palliative and Geriatric Care Centre constructed by Age Care Foundation that will be run on a non-profit basis. This was a therapeutic and creative way to process my experience of seeing people who were in their most vulnerable moments and were dying. Furthermore, this project allowed me to blend my passion for filmmaking and my musical background into a meaningful project. It was also a way to say thank you to the NGO team who taught me so much and welcomed me whole-heartedly. I also utilized my design skills to produce aesthetically pleasing educational materials on nursing in palliative care, which the NGO team appreciated and plan to use for future training sessions.

Future Impact – How will it be sustained?

To ensure sustainability, I will facilitate discussions between Dr. NS Raju, the Managing Trustee of Age Care Foundation, and Professor Iracema Leroi, who is involved in the 'South Asian Dementia Academy' for capacity building as the ACF team gears up to inaugurate the

new centre. I will also connect Dr. Raju with Dr. Craig Gouldthorpe, a Palliative Medicine expert who is my lecturer at Trinity College Dublin, to explore the possibility of conducting a masterclass for the NGO's nursing staff. If my schedule permits, I will continue to assist with designing communication materials for the Age Care Foundation.

Word Count: 1053 words

Reflective Report

My participation in Laidlaw has been a transformative experience, offering me invaluable insights into my potential as a leader. Initially, I started with a simple question: 'Am I cut out for effective leadership roles/ Am I 'good' leadership material?' I knew I could lead well in small groups with people I was familiar with however, I aspired to boost my confidence and proficiency in leading in unfamiliar situations and with people I have never met. In my first summer with Laidlaw, I successfully engaged with new stakeholders, including Parkinson's Association Ireland and Parkinson's UK, convincing them to collaborate on my research project. Later, during the Leadership in Action (LiA) phase, I assumed leadership positions in a variety of projects focused on promoting awareness of healthy aging and palliative care. Through this journey, I have come to realize my capability to lead larger teams of unfamiliar individuals and collaborate to produce useful deliverables.

Moreover, my original question/ motivation guiding my journey through the Laidlaw program has also undergone a noteworthy evolution. From "Am I 'good' leadership material?" It turned into "What kind of leadership style is the right fit for the job at hand?" What became clear is that leadership is a skill everyone can learn much like the process of building muscle! The analogy was inescapable: as with muscle growth, leadership development thrives through continuous exercise. Just as a fitness enthusiast warms up, devises a workout plan, and targets specific muscle groups, leadership effectiveness necessitates the preparation, goal setting, and honing of requisite skills. It's important to seize opportunities to 'warm up' your leadership skills. This can be as simple as speaking up in a lecture, giving short speeches at conferences, or taking on leadership roles in societies. I also believe this needs to be done in a structured manner and it's important to select specific competencies that underpin exceptional leadership and work on them such as

communication, time management and emotional & cultural intelligence. As I conclude my journey with the Laidlaw, I have come to realize that leadership is an ongoing journey of growth and refinement. It's a skill that's not only learnable but also highly dynamic and for many people like myself it's about building confidence and seizing every opportunity to learn and evolve as a leader.

As I progressed through the Laidlaw program I developed my leadership style or rather my awareness of my leadership style which concurrently changed my approach to personal challenges. Initially, I used to view feedback as a reflection of failure, and I had an intense fear of failing. However, my first summer experience was a turning point. It reshaped my perspective on failure, teaching me to embrace it as an integral part of life and discard the heavy burden of shame I had previously associated with it. Instead, I started focusing on the valuable lessons that could be gleaned from setbacks. This shift in mindset spilled over into my personal life, empowering me to approach challenges with greater self-compassion and introspection. Self-compassion helps me remain composed, while the reflective aspect, which involves assessing what went wrong and how to prevent it in the future, equips me with the tools for course correction.

This shift in my approach to 'setbacks and failures' was put to the test during my second summer when I encountered a significant setback. In this instance, I oversaw organizing a palliative care session in a reputable government hospital in Visakhapatnam. The hospital staff had initially appeared enthusiastic about hosting our session, pledging to provide the necessary resources, including the venue and audience. This was a refreshing departure from the bureaucratic red tape and paperwork I had been warned about when seeking permissions.

Over two weeks, I worked closely with the hospital's organizing committee, ensuring venue and equipment readiness. I assured my NGO team that everything was on track. However, just two days prior, I learned I needed additional approvals and support to recruit nursing students, sending me into a frantic scramble. Despite my efforts, I couldn't secure an audience, and it seemed the meticulously planned event might be cancelled.

Overwhelmed with guilt and anticipating reprimand for my oversight, I contacted key Age Care Foundation personnel. Dr. NS Raju responded with compassion, assuring me it wasn't my fault. He swiftly relocated the presentation to another nursing college, where it was enthusiastically received. This experience taught me the value of adapting to unforeseen challenges and the power of resilience as personified by the ACF team who came together last-minute and literally exemplified 'the show must go on.' In hindsight, I recognize the importance of delegation of tasks to people more attuned with the local organisational context and the undeniable strength of a well-coordinated team who can overcome setbacks and navigate the complexities of the social sector, which is often hindered by outdated bureaucracy.

One of the noteworthy challenges I encountered during the leadership development sessions and the summer activities was the need to overcome my own self-doubt and apprehensions. I came to realize that, at times, my own fear of failure and a lingering sense of inadequacy represented the most formidable hurdles in my personal growth. It became evident that I had to learn to be okay with making mistakes and realize that it's all part of the learning process. Once I embraced this mindset, I became more confident venturing into uncharted territories/trying new things!

An example that highlights this shift, is when I experimented with multiple formats such as 'fish-bowl discussion technique' or 'panel discussion with Menti-meter style questions,' for the student-workshops on Palliative care. I was nervous that this novel format might not be well received by my audience who are busy medical students, or my NGO team would think that it was undervaluing the expertise of professionals by allocating more time to student interactions. However, I was pleasantly surprised to see that this was well received by the NGO team and students alike. Another example of this was when Dr Sravani (ACF member and Registrar in Psychiatry) and I spent multiple mornings and afternoons waiting outside the Dean's office trying to convince the medical school administration to give us a slot with student-audience. This experience taught me the importance of stepping out of my comfort zone and taking risks in leadership and persevering.

Lastly, I have honed my personal leadership style, which is rooted in the principles of 'servant leadership.' This approach encourages people to approach me with their ideas and thoughts, and it has also earned me respect for my own ideas. In essence, my Laidlaw experience has instilled in me a strong sense of self-awareness, willingness to actively listen and a commitment to reflection and trying new challenges!

Word Count: 1150

Total Word Count: 2212