

Why Not Muda-Free Nations ?

Mauritius and Kenya — National Campaigns.

Jayanth Murthy

How about converting an entire economy to lean? That's the challenge of the island-nation of Mauritius, in the Indian Ocean, about 500 miles east of Madagascar, near Réunion, the French island a little over 100 miles distant. About the same size as Maui in the Hawaiian Islands, Mauritius is equally well-known as a tourist destination on the other side of the globe.

But with a population of 1.2 million, there's much more to Mauritius than tourism. It had been a Portuguese colony, a French colony, and a British colony before becoming independent in 1968. Over the centuries, the population became a mix of people of Indian, African, and European descent. Officially the language is English; unofficially it's Creole, spoken by 90 percent

of the population. Before independence, the economy was mostly sugar cane, booming and busting with the world price of sugar. After independence, sugar cane still covers a major part of the cultivated land, but a stable, democratic government has concentrated on diversifying the economy.

Tourism development was an obvious choice, but with the establishment of Export Processing Zones in 1971, manufacturing also flourished. Within 30 years, nearly 90,000 people were employed making anything from furniture to jewelry. However 90 percent of them worked in garment factories. Mauritius secured favored status in the European community for its apparel exports. Their prices were right too.

For 30 years, Mauritius prospered; the economy grew by almost six percent a year. As these benefits spread through the economy, wages rose steadily. People bought items they could never think of owning before.

But — live by the world economy; die by the world economy. By the late 1990s, apparel manufacturers could find cheaper labor elsewhere, and they began to do so. Apparel operations in Mauritius began to shrink. It was time for the economy to

In Brief

The island of Mauritius in the Indian Ocean has launched a campaign to convert the entire island to lean thinking. This is a huge program encompassing the private sector, public sector, and the citizens — the nation's value chain. Although new, the program has attracted the attention of Kenya, and a similar effort has been launched there. Muda-free initiatives appear to have interested international donors also.

enhance productivity and build on its competitiveness. The NPCC (National Productivity & Competitiveness Council) of Mauritius was set up to address this very need.

To meet these challenges, the Kaizen Institute of Africa partnered with the NPCC (Mauritius) and began introducing Kaizen (lean) to the private sector in Mauritius. A major thrust was on helping the textile companies perk up their competitiveness by eliminating waste, or muda. As this began to have an effect, they advanced a proposal to introduce a national campaign titled *Muda Free Mauritius*. The objective was simple but daunting — focus on muda identification and elimination across the nation's value chain — which encompasses the providers (private sector), the consumers (all citizens), and the regulators (the government). The focus on the private sector yielded results, many had partly bitten the kaizen bullet, next was tackling the challenge of getting the government and citizens involved in the Muda-Free Campaign.

The real challenge was training, applying, and sustaining kaizen/lean concepts within all government activities, so as to convert the entire civil service of Mauritius to a lean (muda-free) operation — every activity — customs, licenses, hospitals, police force, all ministries — everything. With about 85,000 civil servants, this was an undertaking on the scale of converting a large corporate operation. With a tight economy, they figured that holding down government spending while improving public service ought to be a big boost. To do this, the *Muda-Free Civil Service* program was introduced for the entire government. The Ministry for Civil Service Affairs and Administrative Reforms spearheaded this part of the campaign, with support from NPCC and Kaizen Institute consultants.

Muda-Free Civil Service

This campaign began in 2001 with the blessing of the president, who bought in completely, and appointed a minister to oversee it (see Figure 1). An oversight committee was formed, consisting of the minis-

ter, senior civil servants, and advisors from NPCC and the Kaizen Institute. A kaizen cell, or "office," was established in each ministry or other state-owned organization, and the process changes began to propagate from this framework. This transition, as usual, was met by various reactions by the civil servants, but at the working level people were won over by stressing improvement in the gemba — on real work in the workplace, with improvement done by those doing the work. Being personally involved, they could see that something real was occurring; it wasn't just a slogan.

The Muda-Free Civil Service is built on a simple yet powerful "3P model." Not to be confused with the 3P associated with product development kaizen, these 3Ps are:



Figure 1. Muda-Free Mauritius was led from the top from the start. This photo was taken early in the campaign. From left to right: J. Poncini, chairman of the National Productivity & Competitiveness Council (NPCC); Maasaki Imai, founder of the Kaizen Institute; Sir Aneerood Jugnauth, president of the Republic of Mauritius; and Jayanth Murthy, director of the Kaizen Institute — Africa (and author of this article).

1. Physical workplace improvement (to make offices user and citizen friendly)
2. Process improvement (eliminate muda — reduce throughput time of processes, reduce waiting time for citizens, and save resources)
3. People involvement (get the public servants to focus on the first 2 Ps)

The primary working objective, and performance measurement, was decreasing the wait time for citizens and other "customers" to receive customer services. But much emphasis was laid on shaping up the physical workplace through 5S implementation. Improvements in the physical workplace were tangible and motivated employees to move on with reforming their work processes too. Physical workplace improvements were symbolic of the impending changes and commitment to it. It was important to take gemba-level reform by its horns, as often times reforms start and end with committees and in board rooms! The program rolled quickly through the civil service using the train-the-trainer method. We kept the methods simple: 5S, flowcharts, visibility systems, fail-safe methods, and of course all driven through five-day kaizen events.

The benefits of improved government service began to be felt throughout the economy. In a few cases people began to notice benefits from shorter leadtimes to receive services. Furthermore, it was understood that reducing muda in processes can help reduce corruption. However this benefit is hard to measure; people don't usually report corruption. It is interesting to note here that corruption thrives when waste in processes (muda) multiplies the opportunities for it. Open up the process visibility and under-the-table dealings are harder to do; a great deal of corruption consists of payments to expedite service through a snail-paced process. But perhaps most important, the change began to transform the attitude of civil servants, instilling in them the thought that they were obligated to serve "customers," not to enjoy a privileged position. They, for once, start-

ed feeling that public sector reform is "doable" and actually happening with their efforts!

Taking it Public

As the Muda-Free Civil Service campaign began showing some results, the idea of a completely Muda-Free Mauritius took hold. Of course very early in the campaign, in order to make citizens aware of muda and its negative impact, a mass media campaign was launched. Television, print, and poster media were used to good effect. Simple messages helped the common man understand and think of muda in everyday life. For example, 30-second television spots asked, "What is muda," a foreign word few people had heard; thus teasing them to begin questioning what it was. After three months, the ads switched to illustrating muda. One featuring a tangled telephone cord, with the caption, "This is muda," which then transitioned to a tangle-free cord and the caption, "Muda-Free." Finally they promoted the theme, "Muda-Free Mauritius." School children were also enrolled as "Muda Busters" and they were asked to explain the concept to others and collect their signatures. Kids could exchange these signature sheets for small gifts! As a result, it was often noticed that the kids were more aware of the concept of muda than anyone else! Of course building mass awareness is time consuming, so this work needs to continue. The general concept of Muda-Free Mauritius is shown in Figure 2. A sample of the benefits obtained is in Figure 3.

The question that our team asked was simple — Why not turn the whole economy "lean," right down to what people do at home? If eliminating muda is so important in an economic workplace, why not eliminate it in all activities of life?

In the fall of 2005, elections in Mauritius swept out the previous political party that endorsed Muda-Free Mauritius. That is the real test of whether Muda-Free Mauritius will survive in a democratic society where each political party has difficulty accepting an initiative started by the other.

The Muda-Free Model

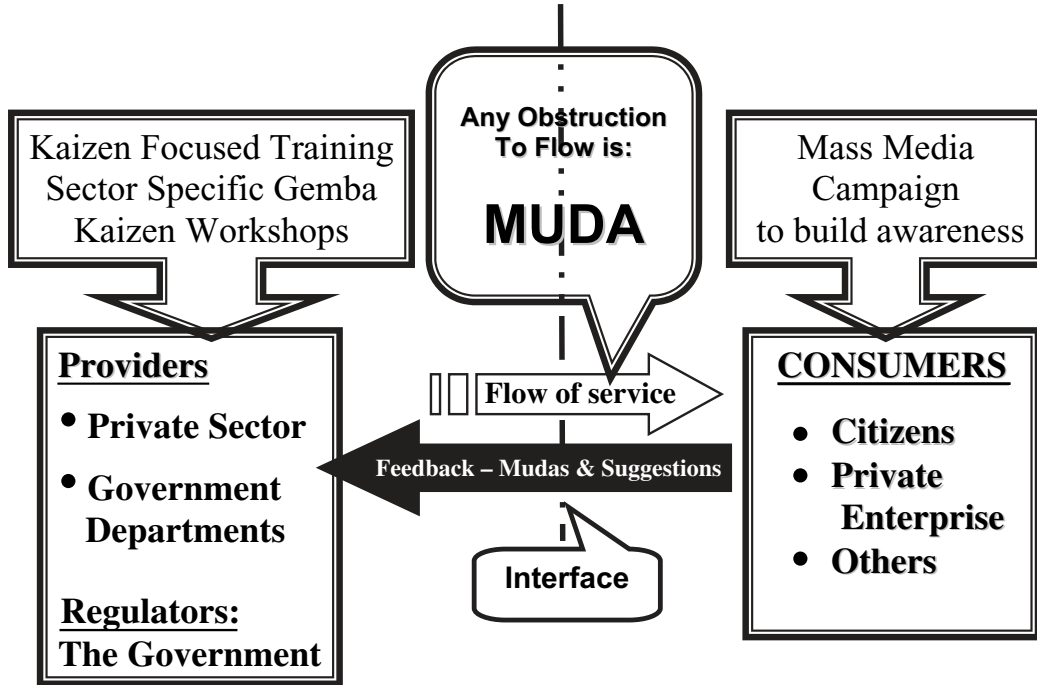


Figure 2.

Examples of Improvements Achieved by Muda-Free Teams

<u>Government Hospital</u> – Pharmacy	Mini pharmacy was redesigned for cardiac patients. This mini pharmacy serves an estimated 400 out of a total of 1200 patients per day. It has provided a remarkable reduction in queuing and waiting time and eliminated walking for patients. It is a “point of use” pharmacy (in contrast with a central one).
<u>Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit</u>	Storage space reduced 35% by creating families of stored items. Items became easily accessible for loading and unloading by both contractors and staff. In the absence of a stores officer, anyone can easily find any items wanted.
<u>Ministry of public infrastructure:</u> Archives Department	Enough space recovered to accommodate a documentation unit
<u>Post Office</u> – Bank Counter	A new information desk helps customers; labels on counters are clear and visible. Cleaner, better organized services waste less time for customers.
<u>Post Office</u> - Embarkation and disembarkation of mail at the sorting office	Loading time of mail bags in vans reduced by 75% (45 min. to 10 min.). Redesign of the mail van parking reservation system eliminated obstruction to smooth flow of vehicles for embarkation /disembarkation of mails; throughput time decreased.

Figure 3.

At the time of writing, the attitude of the new government was still unclear, but the Muda-Free activity has to continue.

Muda-Free Kenya ... The Word Spreads!

During the Muda-Free Mauritius campaign, some senior ministers from the Kenyan government learned about it. Soon the head of the civil service in Kenya sought information on what was taking place, following it with interest. The impact the campaign had on decreasing corruption caught his attention. Again Jayanth and his associates made presentations to the office of the president, so the idea bubbled up to the highest level of the Kenyan government, which became seriously interested. At the beginning of 2005, they decided to launch a similar program in Kenya.

The popularity of this endeavor hinges on it being dedicated to improving the lot of the "Wananchi," which in Kiswahili means the common man. The Muda-Free Kenya program is currently part of a results-based management initiative launched to steer public sector reforms, and is being ably managed directly under the office of the president. In fact a new secretariat has been set up for public sector reforms and development. The charter of this office is to work toward a Muda-Free Kenya — focusing on "Results For Kenyans." The effort is underway, but it is a uphill task! It is still too early to know how Muda-Free Kenya will progress and take shape, but a bold beginning has been made.

Kenya is much bigger than Mauritius, so we could not start at the gemba level with "everything at once." Thus we decided to

begin with pilots in 26 ministries or government entities, but with the intent of developing something that would expand to cover all of Kenyan public service.

The Muda-Free initiative in Mauritius, and now in Kenya, has attracted attention from many observers. In fact the Mauritius case was documented and submitted to a U.N.-sponsored competition for the best reform initiative. Donor agencies seem interested in funding such adventures primarily because they not only reduce waste, but promise to reduce corruption. If money goes to developing people to develop their own capabilities, it is not money "down a rat hole."

Finally, one has to note that reform is a journey and not an event; the efforts of one generation are probably reaped by the next. The road is piled with road blocks ... but then one needs to dig in and prepare for the long haul!

But the obvious question is if Mauritius and Kenya can have ambitions this far-reaching, why can't the rest of us?

Jayanth Murthy, a Fulbright Fellow, has over 13 years of kaizen/lean/process Improvement consulting and coaching experience within Africa, India, and the Middle East, and has done pioneering work related to the concept of building muda-free nations. He is the director of the Kaizen Institute-Africa.

