

Hans Rosling: What shall we do about this, Ola? Do we have any ideas?
(Applause)

Ola Rosling: Yes, I have an idea, but first, I'm so sorry that you were beaten by the chimps. Fortunately, I will be able to comfort you by showing why it was not your fault, actually. Then, I will equip you with some tricks for beating the chimps in the future. That's basically what I will do.

But first, let's look at why are we so ignorant, and it all starts in this place. It's Hudiksvall. It's a city in northern Sweden. It's a neighbourhood where I grew up, and it's a neighbourhood with a large problem. Actually, it has exactly the same problem which existed in all the neighbourhoods where you grew up as well. It was not representative. Okay? It gave me a very biased view of how life is on this planet. So this is the first piece of the ignorance puzzle. We have a personal bias.

We have all different experiences from communities and people we meet, and on top of this, we start school, and we add the next problem. Well, I like schools, but teachers tend to teach outdated worldviews, because they learned something when they went to school, and now they describe this world to the students without any bad intentions, and those books, of course, that are printed are outdated in a world that changes. And there is really no practice to keep the teaching material up to date. So that's what we are focusing on. So we have these outdated facts added on top of our personal bias.

What happens next is news, okay? An excellent journalist knows how to pick the story that will make headlines, and people will read it because it's sensational. Unusual events are more interesting, no? And they are exaggerated, and especially things we're afraid of. A shark attack on a Swedish person will get headlines for weeks in Sweden.

So these three skewed sources of information were really hard to get away from. They kind of bombard us and equip our mind with a lot of strange ideas, and on top of it we put the very thing that makes us humans, our human intuition. It was good in evolution. It helped us generalize and jump to conclusions very, very fast. It helped us exaggerate what we were afraid of, and we seek causality where there is none, and we then get an illusion of confidence where we believe

that we are the best car drivers, above the average. Everybody answered that question, "Yeah, I drive cars better."

Okay, this was good evolutionarily, but now when it comes to the worldview, it is the exact reason why it's upside down. The trends that are increasing are instead falling, and the other way around, and in this case, the chimps use our intuition against us, and it becomes our weakness instead of our strength. It was supposed to be our strength, wasn't it?

So how do we solve such problems? First, we need to measure it, and then we need to cure it. So by measuring it we can understand what is the pattern of ignorance. We started the pilot last year, and now we're pretty sure that we will encounter a lot of ignorance across the whole world, and the idea is really to scale it up to all domains or dimensions of global development, such as climate, endangered species, human rights, gender equality, energy, finance. All different sectors have facts, and there are organizations trying to spread awareness about these facts. So I've started actually contacting some of them, like WWF and Amnesty International and UNICEF, and asking them, what are your favorite facts which you think the public doesn't know?

Okay, I gather those facts. Imagine a long list with, say, 250 facts. And then we poll the public and see where they score worst. So we get a shorter list with the terrible results, like some few examples from Hans, and we have no problem finding these kinds of terrible results. Okay, this little shortlist, what are we going to do with it? Well, we turn it into a knowledge certificate, a global knowledge certificate, which you can use, if you're a large organization, a school, a university, or maybe a news agency, to certify yourself as globally knowledgeable. Basically meaning, we don't hire people who score like chimpanzees. Of course you shouldn't. So maybe 10 years from now, if this project succeeds, you will be sitting in an interview having to fill out this crazy global knowledge.

So now we come to the practical tricks. How are you going to succeed? There is, of course, one way, which is to sit down late nights and learn all the facts by heart by reading all these reports. That will never happen, actually. Not even Hans thinks that's going to happen. People don't have that time. People like shortcuts, and here are the shortcuts. We need to turn our intuition into

strength again. We need to be able to generalize. So now I'm going to show you some tricks where the misconceptions are turned around into rules of thumb.

Let's start with the first misconception. This is very widespread. Everything is getting worse. You heard it. You thought it yourself. The other way to think is, most things improve. So you're sitting with a question in front of you and you're unsure. You should guess "improve." Okay? Don't go for the worse. That will help you score better on our tests. (Applause) That was the first one.

There are rich and poor and the gap is increasing. It's a terrible inequality. Yeah, it's an unequal world, but when you look at the data, it's one hump. Okay? If you feel unsure, go for "the most people are in the middle." That's going to help you get the answer right.

Now, the next preconceived idea is first countries and people need to be very, very rich to get the social development like girls in school and be ready for natural disasters. No, no, no. That's wrong. Look: that huge hump in the middle already have girls in school. So if you are unsure, go for the "the majority already have this," like electricity and girls in school, these kinds of things. They're only rules of thumb, so of course they don't apply to everything, but this is how you can generalize.

Let's look at the last one. If something, yes, this is a good one, sharks are dangerous. No — well, yes, but they are not so important in the global statistics, that is what I'm saying. I actually, I'm very afraid of sharks. So as soon as I see a question about things I'm afraid of, which might be earthquakes, other religions, maybe I'm afraid of terrorists or sharks, anything that makes me feel, assume you're going to exaggerate the problem. That's a rule of thumb. Of course there are dangerous things that are also great. Sharks kill very, very few. That's how you should think.

With these four rules of thumb, you could probably answer better than the chimps, because the chimps cannot do this. They cannot generalize these kinds of rules. And hopefully we can turn your world around and we're going to beat the chimps. Okay? (Applause) That's a systematic approach.

Now the question, is this important? Yeah, it's important to understand poverty, extreme poverty and how to fight it, and how to bring girls in school. When we realize that actually it's succeeding, we can understand it. But is it important for everyone else who cares about the rich end of this scale? I would say yes, extremely important, for the same reason. If you have a fact-based worldview of today, you might have a chance to understand what's coming next in the future.

We're going back to these two humps in 1975. That's when I was born, and I selected the West. That's the current EU countries and North America. Let's now see how the rest and the West compares in terms of how rich you are. These are the people who can afford to fly abroad with an airplane for a vacation. In 1975, only 30 percent of them lived outside EU and North America. But this has changed, okay? So first, let's look at the change up till today, 2014. Today it's 50/50. The Western domination is over, as of today. That's nice. So what's going to happen next? Do you see the big hump? Did you see how it moved? I did a little experiment. I went to the IMF, International Monetary Fund, website. They have a forecast for the next five years of GDP per capita. So I can use that to go five years into the future, assuming the income inequality of each country is the same. I did that, but I went even further. I used those five years for the next 20 years with the same speed, just as an experiment what might actually happen. Let's move into the future. In 2020, it's 57 percent in the rest. In 2025, 63 percent. 2030, 68. And in 2035, the West is outnumbered in the rich consumer market. These are just projections of GDP per capita into the future. Seventy-three percent of the rich consumers are going to live outside North America and Europe. So yes, I think it's a good idea for a company to use this certificate to make sure to make fact-based decisions in the future.

Thank you very much. (Applause)

Bruno Giussani: Hans and Ola Rosling!