President's Report

Future Generations (CSO)[1] and Future Generations Graduate School
North Mountain Campus—15, 16 May 2009

When I met in Chicago with the Chair of the Peer Review Team two weeks ago, the group that will evaluate Future Generations Graduate School in the last round of our seven-year voyage to Accreditation, as the conversation advanced, she said, "Future Generations is a much more complex organization than I ever realized. You seem to be small, but in reality Future Generations is extremely large. I really do not know what to compare it to. How should I understand how you are organized to be so small and operate at such a large scale?"

Future Generations is indeed large—much larger than either the size of our full-time staff or our budget would indicate. In many ways, Future Generations is an organization that demonstrates what we profess about "going to scale." Size of budget and size of staff are the two yardsticks by which organizational size is usually measured, and in these we are certainly modest. But in scope we are large. Our geographical scope is global and our operational scope encompasses governance, higher education, health, conservation, peace building, women, the process of empowerment, the list goes on. We seek to go to scale in a number of more substantial and sophisticated ways than today—but we do not seek to be more than twice or three times larger in size and budget. Much larger in size organizations do not attempt to tackle the scope that Future Generations engages with.

In our largeness and smallness, Future Generations operates under a different organizational matrix—Future Generations is laterally organized, concerned with enhancing the interconnections among people/governments/civil society. Conventional organizations are vertically structured—they specialize in an area such as health, conservation, gender, or geography. In reaching out horizontally, Future Generations connects sectors. We seldom do the work ourselves, but we frequently bring together partners and help them work more effectively together. That we have been successful up-until-now is evident, but there is a real challenge as to how to be successful into the future.

We need to understand how to make this lateral organization work. The world today needs effective lateral connectivity. Future Generations has a very distinctive market niche for *it is in lateral connectivity that synergies grow between sectors*, and in growing synergies costs come down and impact goes up, *exponentially*. This is, I believe, the key of the Future Generations "business." It is not our conservation-health-peace-graduate school-or even Seed-Scale sub-aspects. What is central to our operations is the institutional attention mode of lateral organization enhancement. The largeness of Future Generations comes because of connectivity into others, partnerships that are real.

What drives lateral connectivity (we argue) is the energy of people. (What drives vertical operations is money, a vast oversimplification of course, and for details read our forthcoming book.) Talking about lateral organizations and partnerships gets a bit hard to understand, talking about how to promote people to use their energies more effectively is only a little less hard to

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[1] We have been calling the nonprofit charitable Future Generations organization, "the NGO," but this is technically incorrect because the Graduate School is also a non-governmental organization. Within NGOs, the charitable sub-category that the original Future Generations is more properly called a Civil Society Organization (CSO), although in our case CSO probably is more aptly explained as Community Stimulating Organization.

understand. But the underlying reality being noted here is that Future Generations is probing into unfolding new territory both in how social change operationally functions and in how organizations are structured.

What has been easier to understand is the happy, build-it-as-we-need-it process that has rambled along over the last 17 years as this institutional journey proceeded through this unfolding operational and organizational territory. It has been even easier to understand dramatic national parks and heart-rending stories of women's empowerment. But there is now a major need to think through very carefully *and take actions* as to what Future Generations is all about. The old accommodation of happy programming and obscure theory cannot be the modality for the future. There are two reasons.

> First, the financial meltdown has profound implications. The past fiscal year has been our best in three years. We end with a positive cash balance. And, we achieve this in the financial climate of a global meltdown. But don't let this success mask what needs to be done. Success came by a financial restructuring that began with Board proactivity and continued with leadership at program levels. Restructuring must continue. The two Boards are only beginning to assert the needed leadership; they must be increasingly proactive in fund raising. Country programs must also be the same. I've written an accompanying strategy paper with suggestions for the country program responsibility. The Chair of the Board Nominating Committee is calling for clarity also in her report as to what Board fiscal expectations are.
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> The second reason why this restructuring is needed is that I am no longer going to be the President. The Boards have, until now, been able hold back from leading in fund raising because the Founder was filling the space. Substantive restructuring needs to begin now to prepare for my departure.

So, some of us are going to have to get out of the way for the organization to go forward—or we are going to have to change and be supportive by creating lateral links among ourselves. Whether Board or staff, we are not an organization where as individuals we can, working alone, do the jobs needed. But we can get those jobs done by formalizing our lateral links to each other. Trustees need to work in partnership with staff in fund raising. Country offices need to work in partnership with each other. This is not something that we can spend months talking about—the accompanying budget is very clear that while we end this fiscal year in the black, the money will run out soon. The need is immediate for serious rolling up of the sleeves and applying our energies.

Without that, we will be calling a special meeting of both Boards in August or September. Look at the impressive base that you have to work with. I am making the points below in bullets; most of you know the details as to what each describes. If you do not, in most cases a summary is found in the impressive new Annual Report which accompanies this President's Report.

The Base Now In-place:

Future Generations Graduate School

Our Graduate School is months away from navigating from concept (Chris, Peter, Mike all clearly remember the Board Meeting at Wade Davis's) to full accreditation. Along that road first achieving West Virginia authorization then registration, federal IRS approval with the special tax-exempt status higher education receives enrollment and graduation of three classes from 21 countries, and imminently now full national accreditation. We have made this journey in near record time, a year and a half ahead of what was first projected. Kudos to us all! But the structure is not what is most distinctive:

- The definition of student body was re-designed
    - Students represent communities, not being just individuals going to school;
    - Students encapsulate the diversity of humanity, a mini-UN.
- An innovative pedagogy was shaped, Blended Learning;
    - Intense face-to-face instruction at outstanding demonstration sites around the world;
    - Peer-to-peer dialogue and Faculty-to-student mentoring using the cutting edges of the Internet technologies;
    - Supervised Learning from the communities where students work, connecting these once-isolated places and projects with global best practice.
- The field of Social Change & Conservation was defined, (i.e. how to live or Earth more equitably and sustainably)

Also under the Graduate School: Research achievements have also mounted during the last six months. Be mindful that the primary shared feature of Future Generations research circles around the thesis of understanding the role of the Bottom-up in social change and conservation. This is not a firm feature, (for example, Bob Fleming's Himalayan Ecosystem research enters and leaves this arena) but understanding the Bottom-up (or put another way, the role of empowerment) is our central research quest as we seek conceptual understanding in the fields of:

- Social change through the continuing research on Seed-Scale (our next book is slated to come out under Oxford University Press in the fall of 2010);
- Community-based primary health care under the leadership of Henry Perry and Carl Taylor (co-sponsored by Future Generations with the APHA, World Bank, UNICEF) with a range of major publications;
- Engaging People in Peace-building under the leadership of Jason Calder with its now five case studies in Afghanistan, Burundi, Guyana, Nepal, and Somalia;

- Himalayan Ecosystem Case Studies under the leadership of Bob Fleming;
- Community-based Conservation under the leadership of Daniel Taylor and Mike Rechlin.

The CSO—Program Achievements of Significance in 4 Countries:

- Peru
  - Innovative demonstrations in home-based health care where "mothers are the number one providers, homes are the number one care facilities, and behavior changes are the preferred health intervention;"
  - National legislation that has codified the management model;
  - Foundational research advancing continuing health innovations.
- China
  - Two major nature preserves established and one under development in Tibet;
  - Pendeba programs – which advance a community-based care system - and now new Pendeba Society;
  - Green Long March—what has now grown into the largest youth environmental movement in China;
  - Model eco-communities that give tangible evidence of better practice.
- Arunachal/India
  - Primary health demonstration in Arunachal;
  - Expanding the effectiveness of Women's Action Groups also in Arunachal;
  - Community-based conservation initiatives in Arunachal.
- Afghanistan
  - Mosque and home-based education in Afghanistan;
  - Potentially a breakthrough health methodology coming out of Afghanistan pilot project;
  - Promising evidence of community-engagement in governance demonstrated by the release of hostages from Taliban control.

Finally, I return to the challenge of how to explain our scope within the reality of our size. Large scope and small size is not unique to Future Generations. My favorite NGO model for this is Alcoholics Anonymous, a huge organization of lateral connections that also works from shared principles and, like us, emphasizes "changing behaviors" not running programs through distribution of money. The global secretariat of AA has less than thirty people. As Future Generations seeks to get people off the addiction to positive change through running programs through spending money, there are relevant parallels—noting that the educational depth of what we seek gathers probably more complex variables than alcohol addiction.

To visibly and easily explain the scope of Future Generations I have been recently using what I term our "Mission Map." See below. We have a Mission—and each part connects laterally to different partnerships. Some of these are schools of thought, one is a grad school, others are schools of rather uncommon phish organizationally and operationally. The result we plan to grow into our Vision of "Promoting 100 Nodes of Change." See below.