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Personal to Planetary Transformation

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Our World

We are living in a time of whole system transition on a personal and planetary scale that affects every aspect of life as we know it. Patterns of possibility are emerging that have never before been available to all the earth's people and to the whole planet. Two million organisations are working toward ecological sustainability and social justice, according to Paul Hawken. Millions of individuals are self-organising to make a better world in spite of the negative factors that threaten to destroy us. Technological innovations and collective wisdom have created unprecedented opportunities for change. The revolution in communication technologies and the Internet have made it possible to connect all people in the world for the first time in human history. The new science of consciousness is revolutionizing our attitudes and worldviews, and the interdependence of all life is now an established scientific fact.

Yet, in 2007 three billion people barely manage to eke out an existence. Poverty, malnutrition, lack of employment and inadequate shelter, combined with an ever-widening gap between the rich and the poor, have resulted in human suffering and violence on a massive scale. Almost a billion people live on less than a dollar a day. Each day is a life-and-death struggle for those faced with chronic hunger, illness and environmental hazards in a world that has enough food to feed everyone, the money to tackle disease, and the power to make decisions to create a hazard-free environment. Over 40 countries are scarred by violent conflict. Three million people die of AIDS every year, and 40 million live with the virus. Some 115 million children of primary school age are denied schooling. At least 180 million children are engaged in the worst forms of child labour; there are some 300,000 child soldiers; 1.2 million children are trafficked every year—that is more than 3000 a day; and 2 million children, mostly girls, are exploited in the sex industry.

We have the technology and the resources: so what is missing? Too few see how limited our current responses are for the enormity and complexity of global problems which ultimately affect human well-being. In explaining the causes of our global crises, we generally focus on economic, social and political forces. Governments, corporations, the United Nations (UN), civil society, and other institutions focus on financial and monetary parameters, technological (e.g., medical, educational, informational), political, administrative, military, diplomatic, legal, and economic resources,

measures and approaches. These approaches are necessary, but partial. Not until we see the global problematique as symptoms of a more fundamental, deeper-rooted crisis can we begin to mount a more integral and profound response that is likely to move us forward in a more sustainable way. That crisis is in our individual and shared mind-sets, where psychological and cultural factors and forces reign. That crisis challenges all of us, in the Northern countries and in the Southern countries alike!

New Paradigm Design Sourced in Wisdom

“The world we have made as a result of the level of thinking we have done thus far creates problems that we cannot solve at the same level at which we have created them.... We shall require a substantially new manner of thinking if humankind is to survive.”

Albert Einstein

Evidence indicates that sourcing action from wisdom works. Wisdom is sourcing action from the deepest place within ourselves and generating appropriate action for meeting challenges. For example, extraordinary results were generated by the Leadership for Results Programme on HIV/AIDS of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP.) It reached 130 million people; over five thousand breakthroughs in 40 countries were reported. The corporate world offers examples of innovations sourced from transformational leadership that have successfully addressed the triple bottom line—profit, people and planet. There are a few examples in civil society organisations, such as the Ashoka Foundation, where personal transformation manifests in significant transformation, and where interior deeper-rooted forces are addressed along with systems and technological approaches. However, most of our responses are aimed at solving specific problems rather than whole systems.

We are not yet able to identify, distinguish, design and generate responses that integrate the different domains related to the entangled hierarchies of any given situation. Three major impediments stand in the way. First, most of us do not even recognise the new generative patterns of response and therefore do not act upon them or support them. Second, our spirituality has been a personal matter that is often equated with religious practice. Most of us do not know how to provide the opportunity for ‘secular, sacred, strategic action.’ Third, the large-scale successes of leaders at the top have been based on narrowly focused interventions such as small-pox eradication or wealth creation. This was appropriate. But they have little experience in innovations that foster the expression of individual and collective wisdom in action. Considering the urgency of today’s crises, interdependence and global complexity, we have no option but to learn to do things differently.

Figure 1 illustrates personal transformation manifesting in planetary transformation, where individual leadership uses appropriate technology and addresses systems transformation. This approach overcomes fragmentation and leads to synthesis. It includes the recognition that (a) the source of all strategies and action is wisdom—personal awareness and transformation; (b) global complex systems generate tangible consequences for people and our planet that must be addressed; (c) the use of technologies must be placed in the context of large-scale systems; and (d) the transformational approach must be sourced from wisdom for sustainable change. A few thoughtful people from governments, business and civil society are now designing programmes that incorporate these principles. They are asking piercing questions: “Why are so many people poor and hungry when we have the technology and resources to prevent this? There are so many ‘good’ people with ‘good’ intentions, yet we don’t seem to make a dent in the world’s problems. Why?”

These questions became so urgent for me that I began to reach out to others for effective responses. For fifteen years, I held hundreds of conversations on every continent with people who formulate policy, design programmes and generate breakthroughs. I designed and implemented two successful large-scale programmes: (1) UNDP’s ongoing Leadership for Results Programme with several organisations in 40 countries; and (2) UNICEF’s earlier maternal mortality reduction programme in six countries in South Asia. What have I learned? We have been trying to solve complex societal problems at a surface level while neglecting the deeper dimensions of the problematique; and it is possible to design and implement programmes differently.

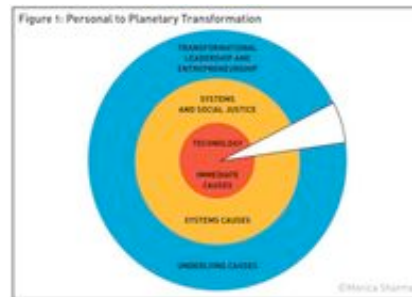
Then I began to design a program based the emergence of a new paradigm: the UN’s current Leadership and Capacity Development Initiative for 60 countries. The basic assumption of the design is founded on the new sciences of psychology, neuroscience, and cosmology as well as successful applications in organisational development. New evidence in the science of consciousness is revealing our potential for deeper and higher states of consciousness that reveal our essential Oneness in an interdependent universe. Our ‘Oneness’ can be the springboard for all action for humanity and the planet. Given the scientific, technological and social tools at hand, in concert with the dramatic

revolution in consciousness research and its applications, we have an opportunity never before available in human history to manifest a new paradigm for our planet and humanity.

Personal to Planetary Transformation is a unique design because it sources all action from the creative and sacred space of wisdom. It addresses immediate, systems and root causes of a problem or condition. For example, in designing our responses to address HIV/AIDS, we made technical solutions available—condoms for safe sex, treatment for those with AIDS, safe blood for transfusions services, clean instruments. We addressed systemic issues by including people living with HIV/AIDS in every planning session. But most importantly, we began our work by looking within toward our attitudes, our worldviews, and the spirit that informs our decisions even in the face of opposition. We asked, How can we provide services and care without stigma and discrimination? Or allocate resources for those in need who do not have a voice? How can we make love in a deeply respectful way, ensuring the safety of our partner? We understood that HIV/AIDS is more than a virus. It is about power relations in the bedroom and boardroom!

It is an art to simplify without being simplistic especially in the midst of complexity. We design our responses to diverse conditions to help people innovate, generate breakthroughs and sustain the specific change that is needed. I have distinguished seven ways in which we act and organise ourselves for the best results, illustrated in Figures 1 and 2. Figure 1 illustrates the first approach, and reflects the emerging paradigm we need for sustainable change. Figure 2 reflects the six other ways we embark on strategic action

Figure One (click to enlarge)



Use approaches for personal transformation manifesting in planetary transformation (outer, middle and inner circles as one seamless whole). The new paradigm must design and generate responses that integrate the different domains that are related to the entangled hierarchies of any given situation and that source from our individual and collective wisdom, addressing immediate, systems and root causes.

Figure Two (click to enlarge)



1. Identify immediate causes and offer specific solutions with available technologies (inner circle). Examples are bed-nets to deal with malaria, immunisation to eradicate polio, roads to connect villages, reduced sources of carbon emission to deal with global warming, clinics to treat illness. However, when strategies are limited primarily to technological solutions for a specific problem, only the specific problem is resolved.

2. Identify the factors and structures that empower or disempower, and define ways to address systemic causes

(middle circle). We formulate ethical norms, promote democracy, and encourage activists to fight for social justice. We establish rules and systems for financing, intellectual property rights, trade, health care, education, etc. Much of what we have done in these areas heretofore has benefited a few while depriving many.

3. Embark on a journey of self-discovery (outer circle). Over the last two decades, numerous consciousness-based training programmes have been initiated, and books on personal self-awareness have proliferated. They have paved the way for different perspectives and actions. However, self-discovery alone will not transform the planet unless we also respond to larger challenges.

4. Promote social justice with concrete actions (inner and middle circles). In these cases, the 'DNA' or the policy of the organisation sources itself from principles related to human rights or healthy ecosystems. The Earth Charter and Amnesty International are examples.

5. Open our hearts and engage in charity or philanthropy (inner and outer circles). People often give support and resources generously, but do not engage with systems issues. Their actions benefit some people, but do not address systemic causes—for example, providing a clinic without looking at the medical or health system or the pharmaceutical industry.

6. Open our hearts and engage in systems change (outer circle for self-discovery, middle and inner circles for action). Leaders are often deeply spiritual, offer themselves generously, and engage with systems issues. Their actions benefit people, and address systemic causes—for example, Mahatma Gandhi and the freedom movement in India. However, the strategy for change does not provide a platform for everyone to source action from deep within, so over time the actions fall short of the potential for significant sustainable change.

While working in the field, I observed that policy-makers and programme managers have discovered that integrating transformative practices actually strengthens the 'technological' response. Hitherto, professionals engaged in development argued that time-bound results can be achieved only if the interventions are focused and specific. On the contrary, if technology and systems actions are skillfully synthesized with transformational approaches, not merely applied sequentially or separately, we can address the different factors needed for development simultaneously and hence much more effectively.

Emerging new leaders will understand both the visible and hidden sources of action and inaction, and the attitudes that determine them. They will understand factors and forces that create and legitimise structures, and the systems and cultural norms that inhibit or enhance progress. They will enhance their own personal awareness, realising that this is the most critical element of social transformation. They will keep informed of the complex emerging global systems, and have courage to take action that creates a better world for everyone.

Global Architecture for Personal to Planetary Transformation

Today, the most urgent and sustainable response to the world's problems is to expand solutions for problems that are driven solely by technology, to responses that are generated from personally-aware leadership. Evidence shows this is possible in business and in development, and a few large-scale initiatives are now underway.

The Leadership and Capacity Development Initiative of the United Nations is one of these expanded approaches that I am directing. This initiative builds on successes, and works with a worldwide constellation of like-minded organisations and individuals. The purpose is to foster sustainable transformation at every level of society. A pregnant space for emergence enables actions that are sourced from deep within. Key components and systems are in concert and are aligned to the larger purpose. All strategies and actions embody wisdom, courage and compassion. This strategic resonance has the potential to generate a planetary paradigm shift. It has attracted hundreds of leading-edge individuals and organisations, and corporations and governments. We have identified the key players and organisations; and in this constellation we are working as universal partners for large-scale planetary change. The eleven components of our business plan follow.

1. Implement Transformational Leadership Programmes for Change

The Transformational Leadership Development Programmes are currently being implemented in 20 countries and are expanding rapidly. Transformation is the powerful unleashing of human potential to commit, care and effect change for a better life. Using the best science, the programmes are designed to apply at scale some forty distinctions, frameworks and conversations, woven into a unique methodology. Technologies for achieving the Millennium

Development Goals and establishing businesses are integrated with technologies for leadership development and systems transformation. Effective, results-oriented stakeholder partnerships among government, civil society and private sector support country-specific issues related to youth, women and marginalized groups. The theme of the programme is selected locally according to need. For example, last year Cambodia worked in the education sector, providing a platform for how my being, my essence, my stand, is the source of my action. Coaching and education programs are underway in 15 countries. Capacity is being developed in-country to 'coach' transformational approaches with people who have generated breakthroughs and who have a stake in the future of their own country and society.

2. Support the New Archetypal Leaders

New archetypal leaders are emerging. Largely unnoticed, they are more like midwives giving birth to other people's ideas than 'stars' of the show. They invest in their own spiritual (not necessarily religious) growth; they proactively inform themselves about the state of the world; they see patterns in addition to events; they have the courage to take on difficult issues; they act from a source of wisdom, compassion and empathy, rather than charity and 'doing good.' They do not reflect the traditional sage, hero or saviour archetypes. They are informed sages, wise in the ways of the world; they are courageous non-violent heroes with a cause; they are compassionate saviours, grateful to be able to serve—like Yoda in Star Wars! We are actively connecting with and supporting such sage-hero-saviours.

3. Source deeper 'Corporate Social Responsibility Plus'

Five corporations are in conversation with us, and more are engaging. They feel the urgency for renewal and increased effectiveness. They provide platforms for developing leadership competencies for their staff and managers; encouraging innovations and breakthrough initiatives through employees or members; developing capacity by using transformational approaches. Through individual insights and generative conversations, people set new pathways to address systems issues beyond the company, encouraging mechanisms that impact our planet positively and challenging those that impact negatively. Community service is not a matter of better 'PR' for companies, but the source of employee engagement; partnership is not a matter of 'technical support' for local civil society organisations, but the opportunity for one's own growth and contribution. Our intention is to deepen corporate engagement for social transformation with more corporate leaders.

4. Empower Grassroots

We are designing programmes with six groups who have global presence and who aspire to touch the lives of three to five hundred million people-- and eventually a billion. Our mutually reinforcing objectives using transformational leadership programmes include strengthening grassroots voices and governance, addressing issues and concerns related to ecosystems, innovative strategies for education, and creating entrepreneurial opportunities.

5. Generate Financing

The purpose of this initiative is to create an understanding of, demand for, and subsequent funding by development partners, donors and financiers, of transformational leadership as an integral and critical component of development and business. We encourage United Nations organisations, international financial institutions, multilateral and bilateral aid organisations, large INGOs and big foundations to embark on transformational leadership development in their own organisations. Specifically, donors, development agencies and financiers could earmark funds for projects that include leadership development, and establish units within their organisations to learn, design and implement transformational development and business. Currently, we are working with three multilateral organisations, a large umbrella INGO, and potentially two bilateral organisations. Concurrently, we seek additional partners. As we find leadership that recognizes and promotes the importance of this approach, the outcome will be massive and sustainable, a paradigm shift from 'charity' to universal partnership. Shifting from promoting technologies as the major solution to current problems, we will build leadership competencies that draw upon the power and wisdom of people and politicians. There will be a new appreciation for humanity in current corporate philanthropy and donor support. In addition, financing will be available for new leadership to manifest social and planetary transformation.

6. Support Champions of Change

Influential people and institutions from civil society and business, development partners, and governments that distinguish the strategic nuances of programmes where personal transformation manifests in planetary and social

transformation, are actively championing this emerging paradigm. They articulate and promote the new paradigm and distinguish it from traditional ways of doing business. We are connecting individuals and institutions worldwide. Together we are actively supporting the numerous innovative risk-takers who change the status quo in order to create a new and positive future.

7. Connect through Information Technology

With our partners in the constellation, we will link together the innovators of change who participate in this global effort to form a worldwide interconnected and collaborative group to share expertise in transformation. They will implement programmes designed to generate measurable results using transformational approaches. We are seeking partnerships with groups who design and implement innovations, using cutting-edge information technology and transformative approaches.

8. Foster Change with Media leadership

We are forming coalitions with media as well as working with individuals so that they can become influential leaders. Media activities in 8 countries we are currently working with aim at scaling up social transformation by creating new icons and metaphors of leadership; voicing unvoiced questions about the root causes of underdevelopment; acknowledging women and men as leaders; shifting the cultural response paradigm from despair to courage, commitment and positive lives. They are writing new stories of wisdom-courage-compassion in action from around the world.

9. Create Transformation through Art

It is in art that our stories, songs, music, dance, paintings reside and our renewal is expressed and created. Using transformational approaches, we have created a space for the emergence of artists to lead 'possibilities and peace.' We have identified artists in several countries who are poised to create a worldwide movement, using transformational art with a shared global vision of world development. Critical to these initiatives is overcoming the present culture of war and violence, and replacing it with the dynamics and directives of the culture of peace based on a sustainable and empowering development paradigm.

10. Identify Global Patterns and Share the Information

Often decisions are made on the basis of incorrect or incomplete information. This has become an increasingly critical problem in the era of 'globalisation'. People need information on global and local patterns and systems, distinguishing between those that empower and those that disempower. Having access to correct and complete information, in a simple way, allows people to make choices. We are seeking partnerships with organisations that are making information on global patterns readily available in a coherent, understandable and actionable way.

11. Measure for Momentum and a Paradigm Shift

Personal transformation manifesting in social and planetary transformation requires appropriate indicators and an evolving system of measurement. The current set of indicators used for most development efforts tells an incomplete story. It often omits stories of innovation, courage, transformation and profound change. We are now partnering with eminent persons to see how national indices of progress can include the wisdom and contribution of people as an asset. We are looking at the vast body of knowledge to distill indicators of empowerment and planetary well-being sourced from wisdom, and then to promote our findings worldwide.

A World That Works for Everyone

The next 50 years will show whether the world as a whole can come together as one, resolving the many seemingly intractable problems we now face. Or will we continue to muddle through, from crisis to crisis, never solving the problems of humankind in a definitive and sustained way? Yesterday, we were engaged in resolving a crisis: HIV/AIDS. Today, we are focusing on global warming. Tomorrow, we may focus on nuclear waste. What remains constant in this changing world is the power of human wisdom.

There are challenges to overcome if personal transformation is to become an inherent part of whole systems change. If you say yes to any of the following questions, please step forward.

- Are you a champion of the emerging paradigm? Are you more like a midwife than a 'star'? Can you distinguish the

strategic nuances of programmes where personal transformation manifests in planetary transformation? Do you promote new leadership?

- Do you have influence and resources to support the unknown risk-takers who are sourcing from a creative and sacred place? Are you supporting courageous activists who promote empowering systems and challenge disempowering ones?
- Risk-takers are innovating and changing the status quo in order to create new possibilities for a positive future. They need you. Will you respond?
- Are you a pioneer who dares to speak up and challenge the reliance on the 'technology-only' paradigm? Are you willing to source all action from creative and sacred wisdom, despite the ridicule by experts?
- Are you a new architect who knows how to design large-scale programmes that source from wisdom? Can you address simultaneously the practical problems embedded in complex world issues?
- Are you a corporate leader who generates innovation sourced from the creative and sacred space of the people you lead and the processes you change? Do you speak out in the world of business and commerce for changing systems and products that do not help humanity and the planet? Do you promote the practices that work for everyone?
- Are you a 'consciousness scholar or teacher' who can stretch beyond your brand identity and serve selflessly from a space of wisdom?
- Are you willing to examine yourself deeply to understand how you are contributing to the global problematique? Do your actions and decisions subtly perpetuate gender, class, and ethnic inequalities resulting in the intolerable situation of 30% of us who cannot 'make it'?

Never before in history have both opportunity and need been so great. Never before has 'grow or die' been more apparent. And never before have the means existed to effect planetary transformation. Indeed, this is the time to pioneer results-oriented designs that can then be applied across the urgent and significant issues of our time. This is the time for mindsets that foster the culture of peace. This is the time for a world that works for everyone.

Note: The opinions expressed in this article are those of the author, and do not necessarily reflect the policies or views of the United Nations.

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(Updated Nov 8, 2007)

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