

## MONICA SHARMA

**T**HE PAST FIFTY YEARS HAVE SEEN unprecedented global development and, at the same time, have revealed unspeakable human suffering and deprivation of truly epic proportions. This paradox of progress and persistent poverty is a defining feature of the early twenty-first century. The next fifty years will show whether the world can come together as one, resolving the many seemingly intractable problems we now face, or continue to muddle through from one crisis to another, never really solving the interdependent problems of humankind in a definitive and sustained way.

In 2006 a billion-plus people—one in six—live in extreme poverty, on less than a dollar a day, and each day is a life-and-death struggle for them. They do not have the resources to stay alive, let alone thrive, in the face of chronic hunger, illness, and ecological hazards in a world that otherwise has the means to feed everyone, tackle disease, and create a safe environment. The ever-widening gap between the rich and the poor has resulted in human suffering and violence on an unimaginable scale. More than forty countries are scarred by violent conflict. Three million people die of AIDS every year, and 40 million live with the virus. Eleven million children die every year before their fifth birthday. More than 100 million children of primary school age are not in school. At least 1.2 million children are trafficked worldwide—that is more than 3,000 a day, and most are exploited in the sex industry.

In the face of these grim realities, there is now global consensus within the development community on what needs to be done, defined in a series of consultations and summits that culminated in the Millennium Development Goals, an expression of a shared vision of global development. These time-bound specific goals seek to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, achieve universal primary education, promote gender equality,

reduce mortality, combat HIV/AIDS, and ensure environmental sustainability. In our globalized world, the challenges we face are interconnected.

At the same time, these goals are necessary but not sufficient until we see the global *problematique* as a symptom of one fundamental, deeper-rooted crisis—our individual and shared mind-set, where psychological and cultural forces reign. Only then we can begin to mount a more integral and profound response that will move us forward in a sustainable way.

## TAPPING INTO OUR POTENTIAL

My own journey has been shaped by and grounded in the relationships I've had with the many people I've worked with and in the power and resilience of the human spirit I have been privileged to observe so many times in both my professional and personal life.

I remember Shanti, for example, who worked with me in a mother-and-child-care project in Daula, India, in 1980. Daula was an unusual village where bandits had given up their way of life and settled into farming. A year into the project, Shanti said she could not continue, even though she wanted to. "I love what I am doing; I feel I make a difference. But I have given birth to my third daughter (that is my fate), and my in-laws have decided that my husband will marry another woman because they need a son. I will have to leave the house." This was common practice. In response, I took two different types of coins from my purse, one to denote the Y chromosome and the other to denote the X, and explained how the father's sperm determines whether a girl or a boy is conceived. When I returned a month later, Shanti was there, beaming. She had spoken to her mother-in-law, who supported Shanti, and had started an information campaign in her village teaching how a girl or boy child is born. She stayed in her family. Such courage and leadership!

# Conscious Leadership at



*Government representatives and Cambodian monks work with local groups to seek effective responses to the AIDS crisis.*

Then there was Mrs. Goyal in 1985 in a district in Madhya Pradesh, a state in India with tremendous challenges and few resources. “I want to make a real difference with our nutrition program, to see results,” she said. So we designed a program incorporating theory and creative action. I expected around 15 or 20 initiatives, but more than 200 were generated! In yet another case, in a program aimed at reducing maternal mortality in South Asia in 1998, the head of a hospital in Nepal took great risks to streamline budgets and build financial accountability and had great success despite resistance.

I realized that courageous people like Shanti, Mrs. Goyal, and the Nepali administrator were

everywhere, but we had no systematic way of unleashing, acknowledging, or supporting this potential in people. I had questions:

- *How do we provide the platform for such leadership actions to emerge at all levels—local, subnational, national, and at an even larger scale?*
- *How do we empower people in our development institutions to connect with the people they serve?*
- *How do we encourage people and institutions to innovate, generate results, and deliver effective and caring services?* ➔

# the Crossroads of Change

In my search for answers, working with the same deep source that exists in everyone, I discovered new ways to provide space for people to generate their answers from within. To share these approaches and methods with others, I designed large-scale programs that simultaneously address both the technology and leadership dimensions of change. I realized that *a new level of leadership worldwide and a new commitment for transformation and sustainable change in development practice are needed to successfully respond to the global challenges facing humanity.*

## A NEW APPROACH TO LEADERSHIP

In 2001 a team of colleagues and organizational development consultants worked with me to conceive and pioneer for the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) the multilevel, multisector program called Leadership for Results (LFR). The core of LFR is the Transformative Leadership Development Program (TLDP), based on the best science and designed to activate and build leadership competencies and capacities inherent in everyone. It applies some forty distinctions, frameworks, and “conversations” into an integrated methodology of transformation (see “Leadership Development Programme Strategy Note,” [www.undp.org](http://www.undp.org)). Transformation to me means the powerful unleashing of human potential to commit to, care about, and change for a better life. Transformation occurs when people give up their automatic way of being and commit themselves to a different future, recognizing that they can influence the flow of events and thus create new futures—individually and collectively.

The program’s focus addressed the HIV/AIDS epidemic, but the methodology can be applied to any development issue. It brought together leaders from government, civil society, and the business sector to generate individual and collective commitment that (1) responds at many levels to the HIV/AIDS epidemic, (2) significantly addresses its underlying causes, and (3) empowers action. The results have been successful far beyond expectations. The leadership program has so far reached some 4.5 million people directly and an estimated

130 million people indirectly in some forty countries (see “Breakthrough Initiatives from Around the World,” [www.undp.org](http://www.undp.org)).

This approach to leadership is first and foremost about accessing one’s intentionality. It is based on taking a stand, making a deep-level commitment, and producing results. (A stand emanates from one’s very being—that deep and unique place from where each of us acts in times of controversy or opposition. It is not a position—the opinion we have for or against an issue.) Such leadership is inclusive and proactive, with ongoing learning and practice. Transformational leaders must have the courage to take risks, overcome obstacles, build partnerships, empower others to take effective action, and be willing to confront the complexity of both problems and solutions, especially their deeper individual and collective psychological dimensions. The prevailing notion that leaders are high-profile figures who make public speeches and attend high-level meetings is being replaced by a new recognition that leadership competencies such as heightened self-awareness are the best tools for organizational effectiveness and that anyone can acquire such skills.

Several years ago in Ethiopia, for example, a woman in a small village declared in public that she would not allow her daughter to go through the painful ritual of female genital mutilation. As a result, the people in her community decided that no girl would undergo this practice ever again. The local imam joined them and stopped this ordeal in his own and surrounding villages. So impressive were the results that the president of Ethiopia took the LFR program to scale—across the entire country!

Using frameworks—mental maps—as programming tools is an essential component of the transformational leadership development program. Mental maps are frames of reference that can help us



explain certain aspects of reality. They suggest ways of perceiving, understanding, and interpreting the world that may be different from our usual conditioning. The way we see things is the basis of the way we think and the way we act. As human beings we have many maps in our heads. Experiencing different maps generates different perspectives of the same situation/reality, different patterns, different attitudes, and different behaviors. Some of the maps used in this program were developed by Rensis Likert and Dennis Emberling (they helped us to see individual and organizational progress through five evolutionary stages), Daniel Goleman (his work on emotional intelligence formed the basis of developing leadership competencies), Ken Wilber (we used the integral framework to map factors fueling the HIV/AIDS epidemic and to see gaps in program responses), and Peter Senge (his systems theory was the basis of our design, identifying and connecting leverage points for large-scale programming and change). Each one outlines



*An Ethiopian woman speaks out against female genital mutilation, opening the floodgates of change.*

the territory differently. The patterns of synergy among these maps, when used skillfully as programming tools, provide valuable insights for action and results. The figure on page 20 illustrates how, in the case of addressing the HIV/AIDS epidemic, these approaches interact within the four-quadrant model developed by Wilber.

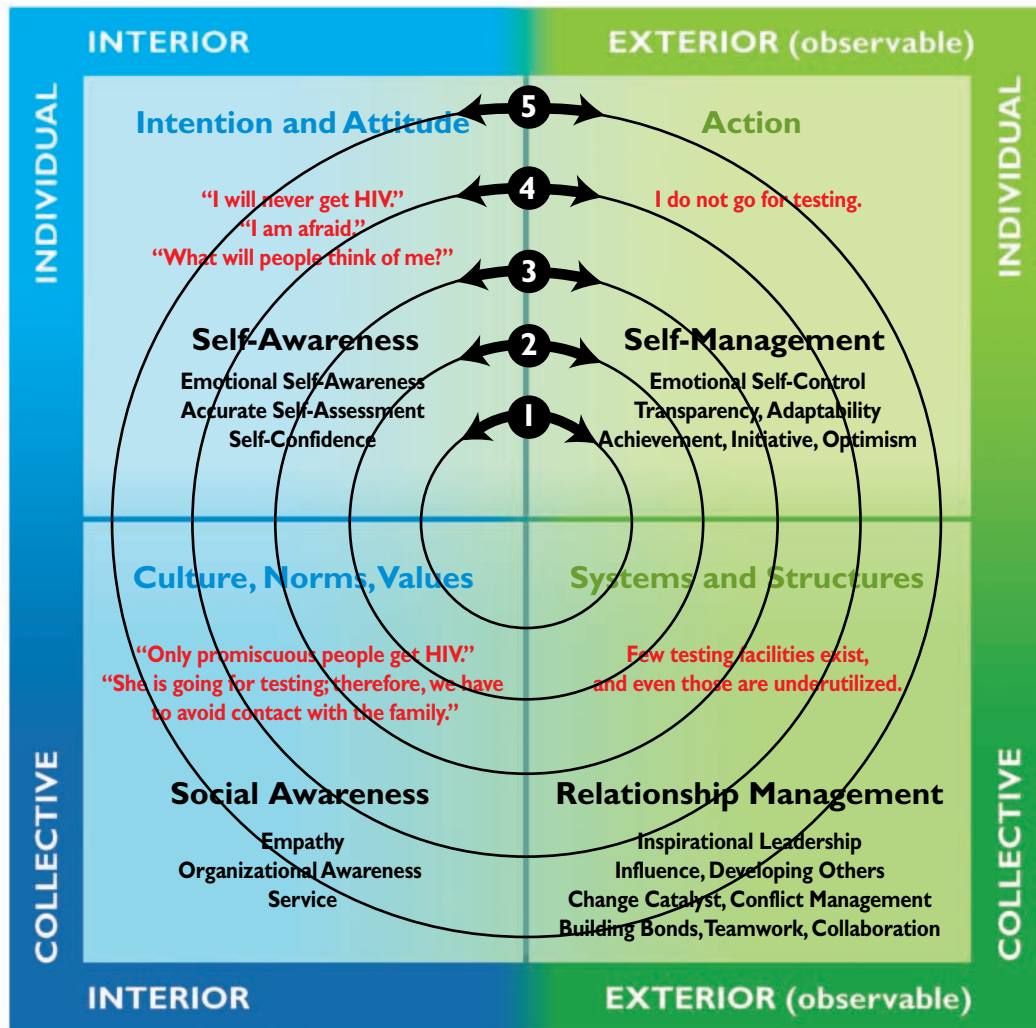
The TLDP emphasizes that the level of learning necessary to develop transformational leaders goes beyond sharing theories, learning new techniques, or gathering information. It is a process that actually works at a level deep enough to discover and shift who people are being, not what they know; it is for individuals who are ready and willing to expand their view of what is possible for themselves, their organization, and their society, and for those willing to be learners and to engage in a process of profound personal growth. The TLDP is for results-oriented individuals with a profound commitment to take a stand. In short, it is a “commitment in action.” The results in confronting the HIV/AIDS epidemic have been remarkable. Here are just a few of hundreds of examples:

***Innovation:*** Twenty thousand people gather for a concert organized by four youth. For the first time, a young man gets up to declare he is HIV positive. Others follow. DJs in the transformative leadership program decide to stop using intravenous drugs, and they stop intravenous drug use in their dance clubs. (Ukraine, 2003)

***Partnerships for Results:*** A woman working at Standard Bank Swaziland decides to start a program for voluntary HIV counseling and testing at the bank—beginning with senior management. The national newspaper publishes a story about the program, along with a photo of the bank’s managing director receiving an HIV test. As a result of the article, other private companies contact Standard Bank to learn more about how they can initiate similar programs. Soon testing becomes the norm. (Swaziland, 2004)

***Media for Transformation:*** A group of individuals create a radio talk show in which movie stars speak about issues related to HIV/AIDS and listeners call in

# Synergistic Patterns in Goleman, Wilber, and Likert-Emberling Frameworks: Transformative Leadership Development Program



- Example: **Testing for HIV/AIDS**
- Wilber: Integral framework for mapping issues and responses
- Goleman: Emotional intelligences for conscious leadership
- Likert-Emberling: Seeing progress in five stages of individual and organizational development (**1.** coercive; **2.** rules/roles; **3.** pragmatic; **4.** principled; **5.** holding multiple perspectives)

*Chart created by Monica Sharma and Nadia Rasheed*

with questions that are answered by the Secretary-General of the National AIDS Authority. The show receives hundreds of calls, signaling a new willingness among people to speak about HIV/AIDS not only in their own homes but also in a public forum. (Cambodia, 2003)

**Parliament in Action:** The parliament discusses HIV/AIDS for the first time and decides to allocate money for innovations generated by different ministries and civil society organizations. Through dozens of initiatives, policies are changed, stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV/AIDS are reduced, testing becomes the norm, and effective results-oriented partnerships are formed. (Papua New Guinea, 2004)

## THE ANSWER LIES WITHIN

In the context of global development, analysis clearly reveals that the underlying causes of underdevelopment and the patterns that perpetuate it—the deep-rooted, almost hidden ones—lie in the domains of personal and social attitudes, perceptions, beliefs, practices, and norms. These, then, should be the areas of principled concern. The important questions that arise from this insight are often not yet clear, or they aren't voiced loudly enough, let alone answered adequately. Just as these questions and issues lie deeply buried within individuals, communities, and institutions, the appropriate answers or creative responses they point toward also lie there—within individuals, communities, and institutions. Hence, the title of one of UNDP's brochures about the TLDP: "The Answer Lies Within."

For development, for peace, for achieving the Millennium Development Goals, we need appropriate technologies and approaches that generate a deep commitment based on people's profound understanding of themselves and the world around them. Sustainability is more likely to occur when people know who they are and who they can become.

Moving from commitment to action, however, raises basic questions:

- *What will it take for each of us to respond to the "big world" problems, see them as a personal challenge, and take a stand in our family, community, or workplace?*
- *How do our actions and decisions prevent or perpetuate severe income disparities and patterns of gender, class, and ethnic inequality in a world where 30 percent of the world's people cannot "make it" right now?*
- *What will it take for each of us to openly discuss power and overcome our fears of confronting decisions that have disempowered people within our homes, society, and globally, in both developed and developing countries?*
- *What can I do to support those women and men who have the courage to challenge negative paradigms and create new possibilities?*
- *What can I do, as a change agent and global citizen, to promote the allocation of adequate resources for developing conscious leaders and to ensure that transformational leadership programs are a part of every national and international development program?*

Nothing short of a new level of leadership worldwide and a commitment for change will suffice to create a better world for our next generation. And now more than ever, the knowledge and resources to transform global development and generate lasting results exist. The choice is ours. 🌍

**MONICA SHARMA**, trained as a medical doctor and epidemiologist, has been working with the United Nations since 1988, designing large-scale programs of child survival and maternal health. Recently, she has been developing transformational leadership programs to help reverse the AIDS pandemic worldwide, with a focus on Africa. Contact her at [monica.sharma@undp.org](mailto:monica.sharma@undp.org).

