
FutureGenerations

Sustainable Futures for Communities



From Famine to a Future.

In Northeast India, famine was common when monsoons cut off roads, and people had to go to the jungle for food. Today, Women's Groups teach mothers to raise kitchen gardens. They raise more than just food, but also income and self-confidence. Story inside. Photo by Manjunath Shankar.

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Newsletter, Autumn 2009

Letter from the President

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Friends:

This issue of the Future Generations Newsletter carries a focus on women—what they can accomplish.

As we have worked with social change programs around the world, it has become clear that beginning with women, where they can show immediate improvements in family life, achieves three things.

- Factions in communities come together through women's networks.
- Impact is quickly experienced, often in a matter of weeks, and after a year major change is seen.
- Action that begins in one area, such as children's health, soon starts other actions in areas such a family income generation, getting the vote out in community governance, and learning how to read and write.

In this newsletter, you will see stories that show the many ways in which Future Generations colleagues and alumni worldwide are using the energies and dedication of women to launch larger social change to: cut child mortality nearly in half, extend work into new geographical areas, enhance food and economic security, and improve conditions in West Virginia's coal-mining communities.

And yes, a very big thank you to those of you who contributed to our recent challenge grant in these hard times—we exceeded the \$600,000 goal by \$45,000. Many thanks!

I hope you enjoy these and other stories. Let me know if you have questions. Also, join us online at www.future.org.

Cordially,



Daniel Taylor
President

Future Generations & Future Generations Graduate School

Future Generations Approach Reduces Under-Five Child Mortality in Afghanistan by 46 Percent

Carl E. Taylor, Senior Health Advisor

In remote Afghan valleys, a women's empowerment project reduced under-five child mortality by 46 percent in two years. From 2005-2006, for each village a Community Health Worker (CHW) was trained using five new interventions of community-based child health care. Unexpectedly the outside funding was diverted, but the CHWs continued the program themselves.

The specially trained CHWs organized Women's Action Groups that covered all village households; their continuing work was supervised by a mullah employed by Future Generations. Two years later, reports came back that women were continuing their volunteer service. To document the impact, in late 2008, Future Generations sent an independent evaluation team from Johns Hopkins to these villages to investigate results.

The challenge was how to document change with no prior baseline survey. Using a new version of Retrospective Pregnancy History Surveys, an approach pioneered by Dr. Stan Becker at Johns Hopkins, it was possible to interview all 870 women in Rostam and Syadara valleys in Bamyan Province who had children during the previous ten years and create a baseline for what the health status had been prior to the intervention.

Careful data analysis, including rechecking of the data three times, showed that child mortality had declined, and, the declines had held during the two-year absence of formal outside assistance, demonstrating a method that allows women themselves to achieve the impact.



Community Health Workers in Bamyan Province participated in women's only workshops, learned basic skills through a review of their own pregnancy histories, and organized women's action groups for health.

This data points toward a more sustainable, low-cost, and culturally-appropriate approach to improving the care of children in their homes. A final report is under development and will be made available on www.future.org.

Now, an adaptation of this approach is being piloted in three districts in Arunachal Pradesh, India (see Program Briefs, India).

Program Briefs

Afghanistan

Local Governance for Local Solutions

Future Generations works in some of Afghanistan's most insecure provinces. The purpose is to strengthen local governance, help communities improve conditions based on their own priorities, and strengthen linkages with national government support systems.



As an implementing partner of the National Solidarity Program (NSP), Future Generations works with 80 communities in Nangarhar and Ghazni provinces to develop and implement community development plans, such as wells and springs, irrigation systems, and roads, to be completed with support from the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development.

A Community Development Council in Khogyani District of Nangarhar Province developed a workplan and organized volunteers for a road reconstruction project being supported with NSP funds.

China

New Pendeba Society Established

Future Generations work to promote community-based conservation in the Tibet Autonomous Region of China took a significant step this past year: the creation of an independent *Pendeba* Society. This independent, local non-profit organization, founded by Tsering Norbu, will build a support network for the 276 *Pendebas* of the Qomolangma National Nature Preserve (QNNP).

The Green Long March, 2009

The Green Long March 2009 involved 5,000 students from 50 Chinese universities. As they traveled along seven routes covering 17 provinces, students documented 50 case studies of energy successes. In November 2009, these case studies will be presented as part of a national forum with students from across China. Watch for more details on: www.greenlongmarch.org.

China Green Tech Initiative

In September 2009, Future Generations Vice President, Vic Arrington, will lead a discussion on the role of university and industry partnerships to expand green energy initiatives as part of the China GreenTech Initiative forum in Shanghai, a collaboration of The American Chamber of Commerce in Shanghai, US-China Clean Energy Forum, and Pricewaterhouse Coopers.

India

Extending to Three Previously Unreached Parts of Arunachal Pradesh

For 11 years, Future Generations Arunachal has trained a cadre of local men and women as “trainers of trainers” to extend social development and nature conservation statewide. Now, these trainers are extending a package of best practices (home-based health care, kitchen gardens, microcredit, action group formation, and leadership development) to three new sites with no previous access to formal health care.



The new training utilizes “Women’s Only Workshops” to teach basic health skills in 21 villages. In Yazali site: *A woman talked about how she cried listening to the other women’s stories. One woman said: “You came too late. You should have come a long time ago! Too many have died unnecessarily already!”*

In Koyu site, the women said: *“...we don't have the words to express our good feelings about the workshop.” They spoke about how well and how much they learned. Before, they had fears (of child delivery and of their children getting pneumonia). The learning, they said, was like eating.*

In Mechukha, the women said: *“it was all wonderful.” One woman said, “we learned how to develop oneself, and how to treat illness. I feel like I got a new life.”*

Peru

Strengthening Local Governance and Household Health Practices among Indigenous Communities of the Andes Highlands

With a Child Survival and Health Grant from the U.S Agency for International Development, Future Generations strengthens 28 primary health care facilities in 17 districts in Cusco. In 2009 the organization’s work classified it in a national competition for Best Practice in Public Management. Recognition is through the National Strategy for CRECER (“To Grow”) for the reduction of chronic childhood malnutrition, a multi-agency umbrella program to address high-rates of malnutrition and stunting that affect 9 out of 10 children in some parts of the rural Andes.

Future Generations Peru was recognized for facilitating a three-way partnership among community organizations, government agencies, and municipalities, and for transforming one community-managed health clinic in Pitumarca into a regional extension center that has trained government and health leaders from Cusco and Lima, as well as visitors from Ecuador and Nicaragua.

The Power of Voice through Photos

Shannon Bell, Future Generations Graduate School Alumna, First Class, 2005

*Problems and Concerns in the Pond Fork Area, Boone County
Southern West Virginia Photovoice Project*



“Mountaintop Removal at Marthatown”

Mary Jane Linville

In many areas of Boone County, the entire top half of a mountain is removed to retrieve a very thin seam of coal, like the one pictured here. This mountaintop removal mine has supposedly been closed down and is to begin being reclaimed. From the looks of it, I see no way possible to reclaim this land.

Using photographs, five women's groups in the coal-mining communities of Southern West Virginia are documenting their assets and problems and opening dialogue. This "Photovoice" project was initiated by Future Generations Master's Degree Alumna, Shannon Bell, as part of the field research for her doctoral dissertation in Sociology at the University of Oregon.

Shannon Bell used the participatory action research method of “Photovoice” with 40 women living in five coal-mining communities in Southern West Virginia to study ways of overcoming the challenges to grassroots mobilization in Central Appalachia. Bell recruited women through local churches, gave them cameras, and asked them to “tell the story” of their communities through photos. The five groups met once every three weeks for eight months to discuss their photos, identify concerns, create “photostories,” and develop ideas to address problems they identified.

Photostories have focused on dispelling negative stereotypes about their region, showcasing the beauty of Southern West Virginia’s mountains, creeks, and wildlife. Others have documented their cultural traditions and rich history.

Some groups have used photostories to share concerns with their legislators. Concerns covered three core themes: mountaintop removal coal mining and the damage it causes to the forests and water; terrible road conditions; and trash and littering. One group took immediate action on the road problems and went to see their legislators for the first time, presenting their photostories. They argued, "If all this coal is coming

View the Southern West Virginia Photovoice Project (over 400 photostories) at: www.WVPhotovoice.org

The Unique Character of the Big Coal River Area, Boone County
Southern West Virginia Photovoice Project



The 'Morel' of the Story
Maria Lambert

Molly-Moochers, also known as morels, are a luxury food in many cities. I've been told they bring a hefty sum of change – kind of like the caviar of the country. They are gathered in the spring, usually on the damp side of the mountains. There are a couple different types – the dark ones are the first to show themselves in the spring, and the white ones follow shortly after. After gathering them, they are washed to rid them of all the bugs and dirt. Next, drain and roll them in a mixture of flour, cornmeal, salt and pepper. They are then dropped into hot grease until golden brown. Cool, and then, boy, what a meal!

from out of here, why are our roads like this? With all of this money coming out of our community, the roads should be paved in gold, but they haven't been paved in 25 years." Since talking with their legislators, the roads have been scheduled for re-paving, and the women still speak regularly with their delegates.

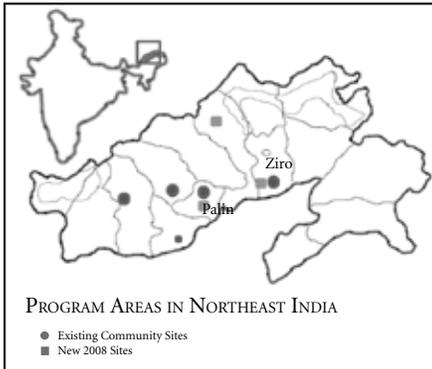
Photostories provide a way for women to fight back, not only to improve local conditions, but to know and build from their strengths. It is easy for people to only focus on the problems, but social change is much more likely to happen if communities build on their successes.

Photostories give women the power to decide how their communities are represented. In the middle of the project, ABC News came out with its documentary *Children of the Mountains*, which presented some of the most desperate places in rural Kentucky and focused on extreme cases of unhealthy behaviors, such as feeding soda to babies. The Photovoice groups were frustrated by this portrayal; as one woman asserted, "Our home is not like this; not even a majority of us are like that." Photovoice has become their opportunity to say, "This is who we are; this is the home we're proud of, and here's how we're going to make it better."

In Spring 2009, each of the five groups held a community exhibit. A regional Photovoice exhibit was held at the Clay Center for the Arts and Sciences in Charleston, West Virginia. These photostories have been reproduced in a book that the women are selling to raise money for their Photovoice groups and projects. For more information, see: www.WVPhotovoice.org.

Kitchen Gardens: Raising Women's Empowerment in Northeast India

Manjunath Shankar, a Future Generations volunteer and Ph.D. candidate,
Johns Hopkins University School of Public Health



Since 1997, Future Generations Arunachal has encouraged the tribal communities of Arunachal Pradesh to find locally appropriate solutions. An example is the practice of kitchen gardening. Traditionally the impact of kitchen gardening has been measured in terms of the income it generates or its nutritional value to families. But a new research project, with support from Center for a Livable Future at Johns Hopkins, documents the impacts of kitchen gardens in raising human capabilities, using the capability approach advocated by Nobel Prize-winning economist Amartya Sen.

In Kurung Kumey District, the women's groups of Palin started a Women's Market to sell their produce and to break down gender barriers. This ignited entrepreneurial skills and facilitated the entry of women into petty shops and other businesses. Women from nearby Rakso village took a leading role and negotiated with the nearby residential school to supply vegetables for the dormitory in lieu of tuition fee waivers for their children.

In the Lower Subansiri District, where the Apatani women have traditionally practiced kitchen gardening for centuries, the initiative helped them raise the economic value of their undertaking. A combination of factors - which the study is still exploring like land access, soil fertility, education, and peer pressure - contributed to Siro village becoming a model for the entire district. Farmers use biogas, dairy, and worm farming. Siro has become a net exporter of vegetables to the district headquarters and neighboring Assam state. They have expanded their markets while following traditional practices with minimal pesticide use. The Government also helped by issuing vendor licenses to tribal women, giving them access to wider markets.

Kitchen gardens helped strengthen unity within women's groups. Families gained more diverse and nutritious meals and access to cash for household expenses. An added benefit increased the status of women. At the community level, dependence on vegetable imports declined.

The study adds to the evidence base for local and sustainable production of food and supports the global movement advocating for less industrial and energy intense forms of agriculture. It also raises interesting questions about ethics, globalization, direction of causality and development itself. The research team consists of Manjunath Shankar, Pura Aiya, Mone Gurung and Punyo Nana working under Tage Kanno. Betsy Taylor is a team mentor.

Future Generations Graduate School

Connecting Students through DimDim

Damian Christey, Technology and Communication's Coordinator

It is the final term of the two-year Master's Degree, and students are connecting with each other and faculty member, Dan Wessner, for a webinar (live online seminar) as part of their seminal capstone course, Synthensis and Integration.

In a cyber-cafe in the capital city of Uganda, one of the few places in the country with a reliable internet connection, Joy sits in front of a computer and logs into the course site. As the sun sets, Hermengildo is also logging in from another cafe on the coast of Mozambique. In Bhutan, Tshering Lham has stayed late at her office to use the computer. In Phoenix, Arizona, Wendy Reese is in the waiting room of a family clinic. She opens her laptop, connects to the wireless access point, and clicks her way in to the webinar. In another clinic in La Paz, Bolivia, Dr. German Montevilla joins the session.

Using DimDim, a web conferencing system, Dr. Wessner passes around a virtual microphone, allowing each person to say "hello" to their classmates. He starts his lecture by using the co-browsing feature to send everyone to a YouTube video. The video shows an interview with former Maoist rebels in Nepal, who are now participating in the newly formed democratic government. Dr. Wessner asks the class if they can think of any other cases of former enemies coming together to form a "polyarchy" where political power is shared. Several students respond via text chat with examples from their home countries. The conversation continues

as students discuss how to incorporate the principles of development they have been reading about into their work with communities.

Dr. Wessner concludes the session by turning the presentation over to Lham, who has prepared a PowerPoint on the recent peaceful transition to democracy in her native country of Bhutan. She uploads her presentation using the document sharing feature, and speaks to the class as she clicks through the slides, pausing to answer questions. The presentation ends with applause from around the world.

Online learning is a core component of the Future Generations Master's Program. Combined with site-based residencies and an applied practicum, online learning is transformed into a cohesive experience called "blended learning." Blended learning should not be confused with distance education, where students download lesson plans and upload assignments. The key differences lie in the quality of interactions and the real world results.

Despite its silly name, DimDim offers some serious functionality for interactive online learning. A key advantage is its Open Source license, which allows third party developers to improve the software. One extension allows instructors to integrate web conferencing with their online courses to create "webinars." These web-based seminars enable participants to communicate in real time, using audio, video, text chat, live presentations, and synchronized web browsing.



The effective use of DimDim as well as a commitment by students to interact with their peers has enlivened online learning and facilitated a global support network.

Pendeba Society Supports Community Volunteers of the Everest region in Tibet, China

Tsering Norbu, Pendeba Society Founder and Future Generations Master's Degree Student



As a student in Future Generations Master's Degree Program in Applied Community Change and Conservation, Tsering Norbu led in the creation of a new non-profit organization, obtaining legal status through Lhasa's Civil Affairs Bureau with government support from the Shigatse QNNP Management Bureau. Enthusiasm for the *Pendeba* Society has come from Mr. Gonglou Duiobji, the first Tibetan to have climbed Mt. Everest.

Within the Qomolangma (Everest) National Nature Preserve (QNNP), the *Pendeba* Society will support 276

Tibetan volunteer conservation stewards and community service workers. This new locally registered non-profit organization, the first of its kind to be created in Shigatse Prefecture, will strengthen community and government partnerships to alleviate poverty and protect the environment.

For more than a decade, Future Generations has been training Tibetans in villages across the Qomolangma National Nature Preserve (QNNP) to be conservation stewards and community service workers. Known as *Pendebas*, Tibetan for "workers who benefit the village," these volunteers promote environmental stewardship and improve health and well-being within the 348 isolated villages of the QNNP, which includes two of the poorest counties in all of China. The purpose of the *Pendeba* Program is to ensure that conservation also benefited the local people.

The *Pendeba* Society, with government approval, creates a legal structure to support *Pendebas*. It will:

- Provide a forum for *Pendebas* to share their learning and work together
- Set up a systematized program of their training and supervision
- Use the power of collective action to arrange financing
- Raise funds to support their community-based work
- Support ecotourism activities, such as more examples of well-managed family hotels run by local people



To obtain a formal certificate of registration (top left) for the *Pendeba* Society, Tsering Norbu (above) spent 60 days meeting with government officials in Lhasa, Nyalam, and Shigatse Cities as part of his applied practicum project for the Future Generations Master's Degree Program.

Thank you! Challenge Grant Exceeded and Kresge Planning Grant to Grow Campus



Board of Trustees and several of Future Generations staff convene at Future Generations North Mountain office and campus at the headwaters of the Potomac River in Franklin, West Virginia.

With contributions from individuals and organizations from around the world, Future Generations exceeded its goal, raising \$645,000 against a \$600,000 challenge grant. The Board of Trustees and staff send our heartfelt appreciation to all who participated during a challenging financial year—a year in which the combined institutions of Future Generations ended in positive financial territory.

Funds from generous donors for our approximately four million dollar combined annual budget support on-the-ground work to strengthen community action in some of the world's most hard-to-reach places, from insecure provinces in Afghanistan to remote villages in the Andes highlands. They also provide critical scholarship support for Future Generations Master's Degree students.

One contribution came from the Kresge Foundation, which provided a \$50,000 planning grant to design and expand Future Generations North Mountain campus in West Virginia. In 2001 Future Generations pioneered zero-energy use construction and installed the state's first small customer wind-generator on a net-metering contract. Today, the Graduate School is setting out to be the state's first LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) platinum level certified institution and to provide a regional model for rural green design, extending our 60 acre campus in a way that is sensitive to the ecology of our location at the headwaters of the Potomac River. The designer for this planning grant initiative is architect Harry Teague of Colorado, an award winning pioneer in environmental design for more than 35 years who is perhaps best well known as the designer of Aspen's Music Tent and Harris Concert Hall. Planning and design are nearing completion. We look forward to sharing more details in the coming months.

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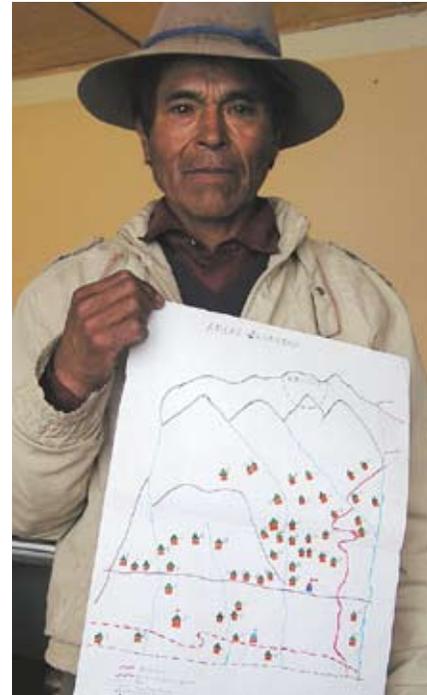
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Communities in Action

Future Generations recognizes the extraordinary achievements of people working toward a more equitable and sustainable future.



Photos top to bottom, left to right:

1. *China* The 2009 Green Long March gave 5,000 students from 50 universities the opportunity to explore and study the complexities of China's environmental challenges as well as solutions emerging at the community level. This year, students traveled along seven routes covering 17 provinces and conducted in-depth case studies of green energy alternatives.

2. *Afghanistan* The National Solidarity Program has established more than 22,000 Community Development Councils (CDCs) across every province in Afghanistan. As an implementing partner, Future Generations works with communities in the insecure Khogyani District in Nangarhar Province. The above photo shows a CDC meeting in progress.

3. *Peru* A Community Health Agent displays his village map. In 2008, Future Generations Peru trained 713 men and women from rural Cusco as Community Health Agents, who each month monitor and do health education in the home for all pregnant women and children under age two, and work with leaders and community members to address local priorities.

4. *India* In three remote districts of Arunachal Pradesh in Northeast India, which have had no prior access to formal primary health care, Future Generations Arunachal organized a series of Women's Only Workshops to train volunteer Village Welfare Workers in skills to improve health and motivate community change.