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Forward Perspectives

Pro-Poor Foresight

By [Clem Bezold](#), IAF Founder & Chairman of the Board

This week, with the Rockefeller Foundation and leading foresight practitioners from around the globe, we are releasing our report, *Foresight for Smart Globalization: Accelerating & Enhancing Pro-Poor Development Opportunities*. This report advocates “pro-poor foresight” which challenges the futures/foresight community to build into foresight analysis consideration of the impacts of policies on the poor as well as the opportunities for eliminating poverty. In the report we argue that:

Foresight, as generally applied within government, industry, and the non-governmental sector, rarely includes an explicit focus on poverty. While foresight exercises typically take into account the impact of long-term political, economic, social, and technological trends, the differential implications of these factors for the lives of the poor tend not to be addressed. The poor, however, will be disproportionately affected by the myriad and intractable problems of the 21st century, including climate change disasters, weak governance systems, financial crises, security threats, and societal disruptions.

We believe that the application of pro-poor foresight for envisioning the future of human development is crucial for ensuring long-term prosperity and sustainability. It is also the right thing to do. This realization was the guiding and motivating force behind the workshop organized by IAF, with support from the Rockefeller Foundation and held last March at the Rockefeller Foundation Bellagio Center in Italy. A diverse group of experts and foresight practitioners took part, and included members from developing and developed countries, the public and private sector.

The workshop considered energy and energy poverty as one of three key areas for pro-poor foresight. Nearly 4,000 people die every day around the world, mostly women and young children, from diseases related to using wood or other bio fuels in poorly ventilated homes. There is an urgent need to get them liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) fuel for cooking, and electricity. Yet in many areas electric power distribution

bypasses poor neighborhoods.

We were fortunate enough to have leading futurists from the U.K. and other countries share their experience in using foresight. The UK is a leader among developed countries in having nationwide foresight and growing foresight in several of its agencies. Singapore has, since its founding as a nation in 1965, employed foresight, enabling it to confront issues, such as affordable housing, early. In other countries, particularly where a corrupt government does not want analysis of challenges or change, foresight can be hazardous to your health.

By the end of the workshop, the dialogue had produced several key findings that illuminated the value of foresight in the developing world, including:

- Providing an important set of silo-busting tools to address a systematic view of the increased complexity of our globalized world.
- Providing decision-makers from both developed and developing countries with a valuable “safe space” to rehearse and test decisions that address deep uncertainties.
- Providing a valuable way to connect the “grassroots to the grasstops” by communicating with the public around an important issue and to solicit feedback and opinions.
- Foresight is most critical in addressing the problems of weak and impoverished nations.

The report does not give a blueprint on how to do “pro-poor foresight,” but instead argues that it ought to be done. We in the foresight field will need to enhance our techniques and the approach of governments and other users of foresight to fulfill the potential that foresight holds for the 21st Century.

The report also includes illustrations by Joe Ravetz, graphics facilitator and professor at the University of Manchester. These were created both during and after the meeting to capture the concepts generated from the workshop.

The full meeting report has been released by IAF and the Rockefeller Foundation. You can download your copy [here](#) on the IAF website. You can learn more about the project at www.altfutures.com/pro_poor_foresight. Also you can visit Geci Karuri-Sebina and Tanja Hichert’s website, www.foresightfordevelopment.org to see pro-poor foresight related activities and networking opportunities which grew out of the workshop in March.

We hope you find the report useful. We welcome your reactions and encourage you to use this report, the concepts in it, and the images it includes, to enhance foresight. Please send me any comments on the report at cbezold@altfutures.com.

Trends & Insights

Institutional Change in Healthcare

IAF has been a leader in the field of Health Futures since its inception in 1979. IAF Futurists have written extensively on the slowly unfolding health crisis and the importance of health reform. IAF President and Senior Futurist Jonathan Peck invites people to consider how the public concern over “death panels” fits with this quote from his 2004 article, *Institutional Change In Health Care: Opportunities in the Coming Crisis*:

For boomers facing death in their last decades of life, the shift in concern may be away from selfish spending on medical futility. Boomers could take apart the institutional edifice created by and for the GI generation. They may downsize Medicare so that it no longer supports the expensive denial of death threatening to bankrupt young families struggling to educate their young.... Without this generational wisdom, boomers would saddle future generations with a staggering debt. With the latest addition of the Medicare drug benefit, the projected federal debt would equate to an unfunded liability of over \$27 trillion. This would be equivalent to a very expensive funeral that a wise generation of boomers will not ask of its children and grandchildren.

Electronic copies of the article are available online [here](#) from Emerald Publishing.

Future of Law Enforcement

The future of law enforcement will emerge in part from law enforcement itself and in part from changing circumstances in the external environment. A recent paper published by IAF proposes a range of factors that would need to be considered in any project to understand the expectable, desperate, and aspirational futures for law enforcement in the United States. IAF works extensively with government agencies to explore how their areas of responsibility may change in the future. You can download the paper [here](#) at the IAF website. For more information, contact Eric Meade at emeade@altfutures.com.

News & Events

Upcoming October 20th Disparities Foresight Briefing on Capitol Hill

The DRA Project will be hosting its 4th Disparities Foresight Briefing in conjunction with the Congressional Black Caucus Health Braintrust. Opening remarks will be given by Congresswoman Donna Christensen on behalf of the CBC Health Braintrust.

IAF has assembled an influential line-up of speakers for the up-coming briefing, including Larry Cohen, Executive Director of the Prevention Institute; Brian Smedley, Vice President and Director of the Health Policy Institute at the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies; and Adolph Falcon, Vice President of Science and Policy at the National Alliance for Hispanic Health. The panel will be moderated by Clem Bezold, Director of the DRA Project and IAF Chairman.

Unfair and avoidable differences in health and safety in the US will continue to grow with the recession. Although health care reform is needed, it is not enough. Access to health care accounts for only 10% to 25% of the variance in health. The most powerful factors shaping an individual's health include social, economic, and physical community conditions – the social determinants of health. These social determinants are affected by many policy areas, particularly labor/jobs, housing, transportation, agriculture and food. The negative impacts, which are often the side effects of these policies, are usually worse in low-income communities and communities of color. Too often policy and funding decisions are made without considering their impacts on health and equity.

This Disparities Foresight Briefing will consider:

- The experience of assessing health and equity impacts
- Specific community examples of dealing with the health impacts through:
 - Food justice efforts
 - Violence prevention and safety promotion
 - Community measurement of toxic environmental conditions
- Additionally, the briefing will look at how Federal Agencies and Congress:
 - Can increase their awareness of the health and equity impacts of policies and spending
 - Build accountability for health impacts into all policies

It looks to be a great and informative event. If you would like to join us, please RSVP at http://www.altfutures.com/foresight_dra_reg.asp or call Project Manger Kati Wilkins at (703) 684-5880. Seating is limited. We hope to see you there!

Expert Panel for CDC Releases Recommendations

A large and growing body of literature documents the health impact of inequities in environmental, social, political, and economic conditions, conditions referred to as social determinants of health (SDOH). In May

2008, IAF worked with the National Association of Chronic Disease Directors (NACDD) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to develop and facilitate a National Expert Panel on Social Determinants of Health Equity. The panel developed recommendations on accelerating public health efforts to achieve health equity. The results of this landmark meeting have been released by the CDC. You can read the report [here](#) on the website of Unnatural Causes, one of the many organizations represented at the National Expert Panel on Social Determinants of Health Equity.

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