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SYNERGISTIC EMERGENCE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Global Conversations

November/December 2005

Conversations with the Field - Afghanistan

Below is an email dialogue with one of PNE's partners, Hunter Lovins:

Dear Audrey, "Chetoesti?" "Houbasti?"

Wanted to give you an update on the use of your money to enhance the lives of 700 orphans. I am in Kabul, that magical and hellish city. That place is both a haven and a hell. The wonderful woman (Soraya Hakim) who runs it (and 27 other orphanages) is at once a dynamo and a very competent civil servant, an almost unheard of combination in this land. She left a comfortable life in the states to take this job that pays \$36 a month. Can you imagine?! The children and the workers worship her. And what she is making possible on NO money is astounding!

The politics around the whole deal are very strange, and I have been navigating them, I hope. Asian Development Bank paid to get the showers renovated, but then drew the line and would not pay the additional \$800 to get a well dug so that there could be water to run through the solar heaters. I just got off the phone with the head guy at the ADB renewable energy project and told him that he damn well better step up and dig that freaking well. He said that they will start it next week. He finally owned up to the fact that he would be having a bit more money coming in a couple weeks. I shamed him into it by saying that I was writing an article about the place and wanted to say that the ADB solar rig was complete. All of this has been leveraged because of the money you gave. Had I come in empty handed, none of this would have been possible. It will serve as the Director's emergency fund for the bits that everyone has forgotten. But I am so pleased that we were able to get the dern Bank to step up and finish the job it is getting credit for.

Afghanistan is wonderful. This is simply an amazing place. I love it here. I am continuing lessons from the Afghans on how to be happy in a whole new way, to not seek or need to be in control, to let things be as they will, to trust in that while also holding to the intensity of purpose and not allowing the situation to crush my determination. To take time for relationship, each and every one, even in a casual greeting.

It is ghastly hot here, though, like going into the pits of Mordor, grey with smoke, car exhaust and more dust. Even the lovely gardens inside the walls are coated and wilting. Worse is the bureaucracy of the aid community and those educated Afghans that would naturally gravitate to corruption and sloth. God, it can be frustrating. What makes it all worthwhile is the lovely Afghan

spirit that endures and can still smile like dawn breaking over the Rocky Mountains, and **give me that gift of being so present in the simple act of saying good morning.**

Our plan is to get a group of people who have been working on local issues together and see if we can put together a plan to implement our Green Afghanistan program. I'll keep you apprised,

Much Love, Your itinerant cowgirl,

Hunter

Dear Hunter:

Don't stop! Keep going!

Your email sharing so authentically and poignantly about all that you see in Kabul touches the heart and evokes the humanity in all who read it. Did you actually say that the bureaucracy in Afghanistan was worse than the "Mordor" conditions of the diesel coated squalor of daily Afghan life? DID YOU ACTUALLY SAY THAT!!! WOW! And yet there you are like the cowgirl warrior we all know, love and support...**standing in the face of such adversity, generating possibilities where there were none before** for 700 orphans and the country as a whole.

It is said that 'adversity yields genius' ... while I question your genius status, I see that being with such adversity has strengthened a resolve and spirit in you that you were unquestionably born with. Hunter, that **spirit** that works through you so strongly uplifts, inspires and gets kindled in more people than you can ever GROK!

That is why **you must keep going**...regardless of the actual results that you produce. Because your real contribution lives in WHO YOU ARE BEING. You're touching lives with the Afghan people as well as the world abroad.

Frustration is a good sign! It means you still give a shit! It is apathy, cynicism, and resignation that are the real threats...not the local bureaucracy.

I loved hearing from you. I am always here for you.

Love, Your Rocky Mountain Friend!

Audrey

Hunter Lovins is President of Natural Capitalism Solutions (www.natcapsolutions.org). NCS' mission is to educate senior decision-makers in business, government and civil society about the principles of sustainability. NCS shows how to restore and further enhance the natural and human capital while increasing prosperity and quality of life.



Hunter Lovins and Audrey James, 2005