



2008 Sustainability Report

Introduction

This summary of Synergos' efforts to create a sustainable organization reflects our commitment to transparency and accountability. The structure of this report draws upon frameworks developed by the Global Reporting Initiative and Keystone Accountability. Your feedback on this report is most welcome and can be sent to synergos@synergos.org.

Overview

Synergos' work is directed to reduce poverty, increase equity and promote social justice. We believe that tackling these complex issues requires systemic change, and the participation of all of the key stakeholders who are part of the system. Synergos believes that significant and sustainable systems change occurs when we tap the wisdom of everyone, including business, government, civil society and those most adversely affected by the problem being addressed. Our role is to support and facilitate systemic innovation by drawing out the knowledge and experience of stakeholders, not to prescribe an external solution. Over the years we have cultivated our strategies through valuable experience.

Our organizational strategy focuses on supporting and connecting networks of leaders so they can work together and partner with others to change the systems that keep people in poverty. At the begin-

ning of 2009, we launched Synergos' first online social networking site, which will allow members of our community to share ideas and work together via the Internet. Currently, Synergos offers workshops, trainings, convenings, peer-learning opportunities and free downloadable resources on our website.

Synergos is a nonprofit corporation, registered as a 501(c)(3) in the state of New York. The Synergos Institute Canada is a Canadian federal non-share capital corporation with registered charity status. Synergos Southern Africa is also formally registered as a South African nonprofit development organization. Our project office in Namibia is registered as a trust. Synergos also has an office in Brazil and consultants working on its Arab World Social Innovators Program in Palestine and Egypt.

Governance

Our Board actively participates in the overall strategic planning for the organization, reviews and approves the operating budget, program initiatives and organizational policies. The Board also selects, evaluates and provides counsel to the CEO to further the mission and goals of the organization. The Board also ensures that Synergos adheres to legal standards and ethical norms.

Synergos has a 22-member Board of Directors. The officers include president, chair, treasurer and secretary. Eight Board members are female. Ten of our Board members are from countries outside of the United States, and seven are from countries where Synergos has projects.

Synergos Board members sit for a total of three three-year terms unless they are a sitting committee chair, in which case they may still be re-elected. The chair serves without term limits. Synergos' Board currently meets twice a year. None of the Board members are compensated for their work with Synergos.

The Synergos Board has five standing committees: finance (with investment and audit subcommittees), nominating and governance, development, program and planning and executive. Most committees meet two times a year, with the exception of the program and planning committee, which meets four times a year.

The Synergos Community

The nature of Synergos' work requires the engagement of a diverse set of stakeholders, including civil society organizations, philanthropy, business and government, as well as representatives of poor and marginalized communities. We work to identify and engage all stakeholders (including those who are often disempowered) in changing the systems that maintain poverty. Synergos also works to strengthen local capacity to sustain significant change.

Stakeholders from different parts of society often have a divergence of goals and approaches to problem solving. To overcome this, our projects use social technologies that open lines of communication, create shared experiences and build trusting relationships. Synergos also supports leaders and networks, enhancing their effectiveness as changemakers

addressing poverty and social justice. In addition to peer learning, Synergos helps these individuals, institutions and groups understand development issues and models, connect with their highest purposes, gain bridging leadership skills and understand how to engage in inclusive partnerships that change systems and build local capacity.

Fiscal Responsibility

Synergos is committed to being a fiscally responsible and transparent organization. Charity Navigator, the United States' most-used online evaluator of non-profit organizations, has recognized Synergos with its highest four-star rating for our fiscal management.

Every year, Synergos hires an independent firm to conduct a financial audit. A summary of the financial data resulting from each audit is presented to the public in our annual report. Our donors also hold us accountable for our work, requiring us to submit regular reports, and sometimes engaging us in a formal evaluation process. Synergos also employs a donor tracking system so we can accurately report to donors how we use their funds.

Synergos' investment policy places roughly 25% of our Board-restricted fund in mission-driven investments. It is our intention to increase this percentage over time.

To help ensure long-term financial stability, Synergos is also running the Campaign for the Future. The campaign has the goal of raising \$20 million to support innovation and program development, and has to date raised more than \$15 million of this goal.

Program Impacts

In 2008 Synergos' efforts made a direct contribution to the betterment of the lives of poor and marginalized communities, including community empowerment, improved service delivery, strengthening civil society leaders and institutions, increasing philanthropic resources, and public policy changes.

Two partnerships Synergos initially staffed and led (the U.S.-Mexico Border Philanthropy Partnership and India's Partnership for Child Nutrition) are now independent, self-sustaining and locally-run organizations. New projects are also in full swing, such as the Arab World Social Innovators Program, which just inducted its first class of 22 social entrepreneurs.

We've grown our programs in Southern Africa, offering more services to the Southern African Community Grantmakers Leadership Cooperative Synergos established, and completed a comprehensive assessment of the national healthcare system as part of the African Public Health Leadership and Systems Innovation Initiative in Namibia. Our office in Brazil has also launched a new strategy working with the urban poor to enhance their participation in the economic and social development of their communities. For the full impacts of our programs, please read our 2008 Annual Report.

We've implemented impact evaluation systems for many of our programs. In India, thanks to the Nike Foundation, a full evaluation of the Girls Gaining Ground project is underway with results expected next year. In addition, the Partnership for Child Nutrition has adopted quantitative tools to measure progress. Thanks to support from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, a new intake and monitoring system was developed in 2008 and will allow us to better measure the effect of the participants in

our Global Philanthropists Circle. A framework has also been developed to monitor the Senior Fellows Network, and both our Arab World Social Innovators and Senior Fellows Networks are being asked to evaluate their experiences in our programs and the results for the communities they represent. In Namibia, the African Public Health Leadership and Systems Innovation project is finalizing a monitoring and evaluation framework. We expect to have more qualitative and quantitative information available in the future, which will allow us to determine how successfully we are achieving our programmatic goals.

Much of Synergos' work seeks to create systemic change, the results of which can only be seen over time. A partnership started this year may only make real progress several years from now. Also, given the vast scope of issues relating to poverty and social injustice, it is often difficult to measure how we've ultimately impacted issues versus other factors, which could include the environment, political climate and social developments. As we move forward, we are dedicated to finding better ways to measure the impact of our programs.

Environmental Impacts

Synergos is dedicated to reducing our impact on the environment. We purchase carbon credits to offset the footprint of our international travel and other activities. In 2008 we offset the equivalent of 1,036.8 tons of greenhouse gas emissions. Also, more than 85% of the paper we use is recycled or sustainably produced.

Workplace Policies and Practices

At the end of 2008, Synergos had 40 full-time staff and five part-time staff, and is 33% male and 67% female. The staff grew from 2007, when we had 37

full-time staff and three part-time staff.

Synergos is committed to strengthening staff competencies through a performance management system that helps staff with goal setting and performance evaluation. We are committed to creating a workplace that fosters openness, as well as professional and personal fulfillment. To that end, we have an open-door policy with all senior staff and executives, and offer periodic open forums with our CEO, where the agenda is set by staff. We have increased the amount of in-house trainings, and brown bag luncheons. We also offer staff two days a year for community service, which can be completed individually or with larger staff teams.

A retreat and wilderness experience in upstate New York helped staff members better understand some of the methodologies we use in our work. They spent three days reflecting on their personal sense of purpose and identifying ways to be better collaborators and to create a more healthy and productive workplace culture at Synergos.

Synergos values diversity. Our 2008 staff came from more than a dozen countries and had members who are fluent in Spanish, Portuguese, French, Afrikaans, Arabic, Bahasa Indonesia, Hindi, Marathi, Punjabi, Tagalog, Thai, Yoruba, Oshiwambo, Otjiherero, Urdu and Xhosa, among nearly 30 languages.

As a global organization, it is critical that Synergos be connected globally to all of its offices. Synergos maintains computer technology to do this in all of our offices, and we are exploring ways to use web-based technologies to bring our global staff together. We have just launched our first social networking site, available at network.synergos.org, and will be using webinar software to host virtual meetings

among our staff and networks.

Our Values

Synergos seeks to be a values-driven organization. We try to act consistently with our core values — social justice, collaboration, innovation, integrity and compassion — in our relationships with all our stakeholders and in all of our programs, projects and activities. Our staff and Board are governed by a conflict of interest policy, and we compensate staff on a merit-based system that incorporates an assessment of each employee's modeling of our values.

A staff values committee works to help embed Synergos values into everyday policies and practices. The team holds interactive discussions with staff groups, offers guidance in meetings about new initiatives and holds regular office hours to be accessible to staff members with questions or problems.

Feedback

Synergos welcomes your comments and suggestions about this report and ways it could be improved in future years. Please write to synergos@synergos.org.

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