HOW CAN THE REST OF US HELP CREATE A WORLD WITHOUT POVERTY?

Comments Prepared for the Conference on Social Business and Microeconomic Opportunities for Youth
Denver, March 12-14, 2008

By

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Yunus Has Sounded A Call to Action

In 1974 professor Muhammad Yunus planted the first seeds from which would sprout the Grameen Bank. This bold initiative of social entrepreneurship eventually inspired the world microcredit revolution that by the end of 2006 was benefiting over 133 million low-income families! With his latest book, Creating a World Without Poverty, Yunus now inspires us to transform global capitalism itself through the universal promotion of social businesses. He suggests that microcredit and its village-level infrastructure of about six million self-help groups is “the vital foundation” for delivery of health, education, housing, communication, and other services by social businesses that are managed and owned by the poor themselves. Calling upon everyone—practitioners as well as newcomers, rich and poor, old and young, public and private sectors, transnational corporations and nonprofit organizations—Yunus asks us to join him in declaring that severe poverty is unacceptable in a civilized human society, and to re-dedicate ourselves to creating a poverty-free world “as soon as possible.”

So what can each of us do? With whom can we partner? How can we gain a deeper understanding of microcredit or social business? What are the biggest challenges? What still needs to be done? How will we finance rapid scale-up of proven solutions? What opportunities exist for voluntary service, internships or career employment?

Fortunately, newcomers don’t have to start from scratch. Over the last quarter-century an enormous global reservoir of precedents, successful models, tested innovations, non-profit and for-profit institutions, publications, and research findings has been accumulated. The number of microcredit institutions (MCIs) worldwide has been estimated to exceed 7,000. Of these the Microcredit Summit Campaign tracks over 3,300 MCIs, representing nearly every nation on the planet. In addition to the Grameen family of companies, there are also huge microcredit networks like BRAC, ASA, ICICI, NABARD, BRI, WOCCU, CARD, ACCION, FINCA, OI, PRIDE, WWB, WV, and FFH, which collectively serve tens of millions of the world’s poor. Microcredit has also given birth to at least four practitioner sub-movements—(1) Savings-Led Microcredit (promoted by OXFAM, CARE, CRS, etc.); (2) Microfranchising (BYU etc.); (3) Social Entrepreneurship (ASHOKA etc.); (4) the BOP (Bottom of the Pyramid) movement which features “hybrid” partnerships
between transnational corporations, nonprofits, and countless village self-help groups. Beyond microcredit there are “enabling” movements that promote business, citizen, or student involvement in ethical economic development. These include (1) the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) movement, (2) the accounting firms, think-tanks, rating agencies, and consultancies that specialize in measuring the social and environmental impacts of globalization; (3) the World Affairs Councils of America (WACA) that are taking the issues of poverty into elementary and secondary classrooms; and (4) student-led networks such as SID, NetImpact, MWB and most recently ASAP with clubs or chapters in hundreds of universities throughout the U.S. and even overseas. Finally, there are now billions of dollars flowing each year into the global microcredit sector from multi-national agencies, banks, investment funds, foundations, churches, direct investment funds such as KIVA, and fundraising by nonprofit agencies.

So if you want to get more involved in microcredit and global social entrepreneurship, you have a near-infinite number of potential partners to work with, all of them easily accessible via the miracle of the internet.

Given the wealth of human and financial resources now being mobilized on behalf of the world’s poor, I believe that the United Nation’s Millennium Development Goal of cutting global poverty in half by the year 2015 is achievable. Reaching this target will establish a pace of transformation that will insure an end to global poverty by the year 2025, only 17 years from now. However, I also believe that to meet these goals we will have to overcome four specific challenges, which I summarize below.

**CHALLENGE 1: FOCUSING ON SEVERE POVERTY**

In describing global poverty, we of the Microcredit Summit Campaign have always distinguished between “the poor” (those living on per-capita income that is below their nation’s poverty line) and “the poorest” or “severe poverty” (those living on a per-capita income that is less than half the poverty line). Economist Jeffrey Sachs defines severe poverty more powerfully as “poverty that kills”, asserting that “more than 8 million people around the world die each year because they are too poor to stay alive”, and that “one sixth of humanity is not even on the development ladder.”

**The Population Pyramid:** I find it helpful to divide the world’s current population of 6.5 billion into fifths, based on levels of per-capita income. Each fifth represents about 1.3 billion people or approximately 260 million families (using 5 persons per family as the standard family size). Starting from the top, the pinnacle quintile consists of those of us living on more than $10 per day—the enormously affluent minority that presently accounts for over 85% of the world’s spending power. The second quintile consists of those living on $5 to $10/day, or what we might call the global upper-middle class. The third quintile consists of those living on $2 to $5/day, or what we might call the global lower-middle class. The fourth quintile consists of those living on $1-$2/day, solidly “poor” to be sure
but representing families who have attained minimal food security, begun to educate their children, and otherwise started the climb out of poverty. The fifth quintile consists of those living on less than $1/day—the severely poor, the poorest of the poor, where poverty kills.\(^{11}\)

**Current Focus:** With each passing year more field research on the client outreach and impact of MCIs is emerging. Overall the findings suggest a fairly consistent and disappointing trend—namely, that in targeting new clients many if not most MCIs are selecting families living just above and just below their nation’s respective poverty line. In other words, the movement is mostly focused on families of the fourth quintile of the global population ($1 to $2/day) instead of the far more vulnerable fifth quintile. **We cannot end global poverty if the world’s 260 million poorest families are being left behind.**

The Microcredit Summit Campaign Report for 2007 estimates that among the 133 million families currently served by microcredit, 93 million or 70% were severely poor when they joined the program. How many of these 93 million are still severely poor? It’s impossible to know from the available data. But for the sake of argument, I believe it is reasonable to assume that perhaps 50 million are still severely poor (which implies that the remaining 83 million clients (133 million minus 50 million) are not-so-poor (fourth quintile) and non-poor (third quintile). Thus, to cut severe poverty (260 million) in half by 2015, i.e. 130 million—and having 50 million current clients who are severely poor—this means we only have to reach 80 million more severely poor families over the next seven years to meet the 2015 target. But poverty never stands still. At current growth rates the global population will increase to 7.2 billion by the year 2015, and to 8 billion by 2025. Assuming that one of every five humans will be born into severe poverty, the ranks of the poorest will have grown to about 1.4 billion (280 million families) by the year 2015, and to 1.6 billion (320 million families) by the year 2025. Taking this increment into account—and after subtracting our current 50 million reached to date—we will now need to reach an additional 90 million severely poor families (to get to the half-way mark of 140 million) by 2015 followed by another 180 million families (to reach 320 million) by 2025.

**A Proposed Solution:**

**Outreach Per Year:** A projection of how this outreach and funding would scale up is shown in Spreadsheet 1 of the Appendix. Line item 1 shows the annual increase in poorest clients per year, building up to 90 million by 2015 and 290 million by 2025 (line item 2), which added to today’s 50 million would give us 320 million clients by 2024, one year ahead of schedule.

**Funding Needed:** Estimating an average loan of $150 per client (family), line item 3 shows additional funding that builds from $300 million/year in 2008 to $3 billion/year by 2013, and maintains that rate until 2025, yielding a 17-year total of **$44 billion dollars**. (line item 4).
Financing Strategy: It is proposed that current MCIs contribute 50% of this funding burden, or $22 billion over 17 years. (line item 6). The remaining 50% would be contributed in counterpart grants raised from three sources. Foundations would contribute 20% or $8.8 billion (line item 7). Corporations would contribute 20% or $8.8 billion (line item 8). And the final 10% or $4.4 billion (line item 9) would be raised by a fund-raising campaign among Citizen-Donors. Matched dollar-for-dollar by outside donors, such a matching-fund commitment will offer a powerful incentive for current MCIs to create an even stronger focus on targeting the very poorest clients. For MCIs to comply with their half, their proposed commitment averages less than $1.2 billion per year, or about 6% of their current capitalization (about $20 billion).

Citizen-Donors? Absolutely! If a single citizen committed to donate $1/day, s/he would create $360/year—enough to provide a self-employment loan of $150 to two of the planet’s poorest families. This $1/day sacrifice would be virtually painless to the donor. Yet if the donor were to maintain his/her commitment for the next seven years (to 2015), s/he would generate $2,520, enough to enable 17 families to receive $150 loans. And if this donor were to continue his/her commitment for another ten years (to 2025), s/he would generate $6,120, enough to provide 41 severely poor families with $150 loans. To reach the $4.4 billion citizen-donor target described above, 12 million one-year donors would be needed. But if each donor were to sustain their $1/day commitment for seven years (to 2015), only 1.7 million donors would be needed. And if each donor were to sustain their commitment for 17 years (to 2025) only 719,000 donors would be needed.

And who would manage this 17 year fundraising campaign? I believe it is a perfect assignment for today’s young adults. They are the best-educated generation in history, have endless energy and idealism, hunger for roles in creating a safer and more equitable planet, and are experts at social networking via the Internet. An initiative to mobilize these young adults for a global $1/day campaign was launched in late 2007. It’s called the Alliance of Students Against Poverty (ASAP).

CHALLENGE 2: JOB ASSISTANCE FOR UNEMPLOYED YOUNG ADULTS

Predominantly, micro-loans for self-employment have been directed to female heads-of household—to mothers. The average client, who generates about $2-3 of daily net profit from her business, will use this income to first improve family food security, but her next priority is keeping her children in school because she assumes that more education will allow her children to find better-paid employment. Sadly, this is not often the case.

Educated But Jobless: In most microcredit programs it is difficult to find clients who’s oldest children have not completed primary schooling. Unfortunately, since secondary schooling normally costs 3-4 times more than primary, few of our clients can afford a secondary school education for these children, with the result that eight out of ten children
will drop out of school after completing primary and begin looking for work. This tragic decision is likely to cost those children their single best chance to escape poverty, because very few will find anything better than a minimum-wage job. Of those few children who go on to secondary school (at great sacrifice to their families), eight out of ten will drop out before graduation; and of those who graduate, maybe one in ten will receive some university schooling. The alarming reality is that most of these better-educated young adults, once they leave school, will simply be unable to find a decent job that rewards them for their additional educational investment—i.e., one that pays at least 2-3 times their country’s minimum wage for unskilled workers. Worldwide experience is confirming that many of these better-educated young adults feel betrayed, angry, and easily tempted to leave their communities of origin to join criminal or terrorist groups or become illegal immigrants. How big is this problem? The International Labor Organization (ILO) estimates that 47% of the world’s 186 million unemployed are young adults between 15 and 24 years of age. They represent “the best educated generation in world history, yet most of them are being wasted”\textsuperscript{13} So to the extent this next generation fails, most of the hard work and sacrifice of their parents, as well as the many benefits of the microcredit revolution achieved to date, will be greatly diminished.

The microcredit movement currently reaches about 130 million families. Assuming (conservatively) that three of every four of these families have at least one unemployed young adult, we can estimate there are also about 100 million unemployed young adults. Let us assume (as above) that eight of ten (80 million) have completed elementary school. But of the two of ten that go on to secondary (16 million), one in ten will complete secondary (1.6 million) and of these one in ten (160,000) will go on to college. All aspire to a decent job but few are chosen. What can be done?

**Option 1: Hiring MCI Clients’ Children:** First, let’s start with the 1.6 million young adults who have completed their secondary schooling. With 130 million clients, and an estimated 300 clients per credit officer, the global microcredit movement has created about 430,000 credit officer jobs. If the movement’s outreach grows to 320 million families by 2025 (as described in the previous section), there will be a need to eventually hire over one million additional credit officers. The normal education requirement for credit officers is a complete secondary education. As indicated above, about 1.6 million youths (high school graduates) are sufficiently educated to qualify for credit officer positions. So why should these MCIs not give preference to the best-educated sons and daughters of their own clients when they recruit candidates for new credit officer jobs, or in filling existing credit officer positions as current employees resign? This strategy would establish a strategic precedent. It would make the microcredit movement the world’s largest employer of the best-educated children of poverty. It would also create incentives for clients to remain in the MCI’s program, and for their children to complete secondary schooling. I call it “drinking from our own well”. I think this proposal will pay for itself in reduced turn-over of credit officers hired from middle-class, college-educated students with little tolerance for the hardships of working in poverty settings.
**Numerical Projections:** Starting with the 430,000 current credit officers, Spreadsheet 1 (line item 12) estimates that 5% or 21,500 will turn-over each year and be replaced with children of clients with complete secondary. Additionally, given client growth per year (line item 1), many new credit officer positions will be created (line item 13). On this basis I project in line item 15 that the microcredit movement as a whole has the potential to create for the best-educated children of our clients about **472,000 jobs by 2015 and 1,353,000 jobs by 2025.**

**Option 2: Job- Search Assistance for Our Clients’ Children:** I propose that every MCI serving more than 10,000 clients hire a Job Search Officer (JSO). His or her duties would include: (1) Coordinating field research to determine the educational attainment levels and unemployment status of their clients’ adult children; (2) Screening these young adults to determine eligibility for credit officer positions; (3) Conducting research on host-country job markets, and providing an updated list of, say, the 50 “hottest” jobs for which young adults might qualify at different levels of education; (4) Coordinating training activities to coach soon-to-be high school graduates in resume preparation and job interviewing skills; and (5) managing an internship program within the MCI to give promising high school students useful job experience (e.g., assisting credit officers, accountants, auditors etc.) during their summer vacations. Let’s say that the monthly salary of the JSO would be $900, and that it would be largely financed by service fees paid by those young adults whose training and/or counseling actually results in a technical (versus unskilled) job that pays at least $10/day. The JSO’s salary would be financed by a combination of (1) up-front service fees (say $3 per training day) and (2) a bonus paid per job secured (say $25). Assume the average participating young adult client pays $30 total—paid in installments after the job is secured. To generate enough income to fully fund his/her own salary of $900 per month, the JSO would have to assist and secure jobs for about 30 clients per month. Many of these jobs might be created by the micro-franchises created by other young adults financed by MFIs themselves (see Challenge 3, below).

**Numerical Projections:** In spreadsheet 1, (Section 2: Jobs for Jobless) I divide total client estimates (line item 2) by 10,000 clients—the estimated outreach per JSO. The number of such officers would grow from 200 JSOs in 2008 to 9,000 JSOs by 2015 and 29,000 JSOs by 2025 (line item 17). Estimating 30 jobs enabled per month per JSO (the break-even point) the employment impact of these officers would be **270,000 jobs by 2015 and 870,000 jobs by 2025** (line item 18).

**Option 3: Education Scholarships ( & Loans)** In terms of numbers, the most serious part of the youth unemployment problem is caused by student drop-outs upon completing primary school. Two possibilities quickly come to mind: (1) education scholarships for primary school graduates to help defray the higher costs of attending high school; and (2) education loans for the same purpose.
Numerical Projections: In spreadsheet 1, Section 2: I first estimate one elementary-school student/graduate for each of the client families shown in line items 1 and 2. To make the scholarship more competitive, I then assume one scholarship for every five families (line item 19). Since the largest single cost increase resulting from the pursuit of secondary schooling is due to transportation, I estimate that the transport cost per child is $1.50/day for RT bus fare. This amounts to $7.50/week, $30/month, and $270 for a 9-month school-year. I then assume that the MCI will only pay half of this cost while the client’s family pays the other. This yields an average education scholarship of $135/year per family (line item 20)—for the first year of secondary only. This should be enough to “bridge” the student into secondary, establishing behaviors (by child and family) to make the necessary sacrifice to sustain their commitment through subsequent years. Part of that commitment would be to “graduate” from subsidy (the scholarship) to a formal educational loan from their host MCI. With these assumptions, in line item 20 we see that the scholarship program would benefit 18 million children by 2015 and 58 million by 2025. Its accumulated cost would reach $2.4 billion by 2015 and $7.8 billion by 2025 (line item 21). Once again the proposed funding mechanism would be a matching grant, half paid by participating MCIs, half by outside corporations, foundations, etc.

CHALLENGE 3: BUSINESS LOANS FOR YOUNG ADULTS

Educating and finding jobs for eligible young adults is still a partial solution to the youth unemployment crisis. The more comprehensive solution involves the creation of self-employment opportunities for young adults, just as we did for their mothers. I am not advocating abandoning our three-decade preference for targeting mothers. Rather, I am advocating an expansion of outreach to their better-educated but unemployed children, with mothers co-signing on any loans received by or benefiting those children. In contrast, if we deny this opportunity to the next generation I fear their massive unemployment will result in escalating levels of civil unrest throughout the developing nations, bringing their solid growth in recent decades to a screeching halt.

Most Microcredit Loans Do Not Create Additional Jobs: From its inception, the microcredit revolution has preferentially targeted female heads of household for self-employment loans. This focus on mothers has proven remarkably successful with regard to rapidly organizing the poor, multiplying their income-generation activities, growing family income, improving food security, keeping children in school, and enabling their empowerment. On the other hand, a self-employment loan of $50 to $300—while an excellent way to create a partial or full-time job for the owner-operator—seldom creates a paid job opportunity for anyone else. Based on research conducted on tens of thousands of FINCA clients in 22 countries on four continents, it is evident that nine out of every ten borrowers manage a business in which the client (or members of her family) are the only workers, none of whom earn a fixed wage. In contrast, only one in ten clients create businesses that truly “take off”, adding one paid worker after another as their access to capital grows to $500 and beyond. These clients tend to be better-educated women who
keep records, have experience with hired workers, and have sufficient assets/collateral to justify much larger loans.

Such findings should not come as a surprise. The typical microcredit client is 39-41 years of age, old enough to have adult children who are of employment age and ready to start families of their own. This typical client invests in her children’s education with the expectation that they will find better jobs and eventually be able to take care of her. This typical client is also illiterate or near-illiterate, does not keep business records, has no training in business skills, and her modest business income is so small she is reluctant to share it with a non-family laborer. So she usually plateaus the growth of her business at a level she can personally control herself—indeed, at a level that will be sufficient for her to support herself during her senior years in case her children fail to do so. For their part, the typical client’s far better-educated children most likely will shun the idea of continuing their mother’s near-subsistence business. They are ready to fly, find a decent job, and launch their careers.

A Proposal for Targeting Young Adults: But these expectations crash and burn when young adults discover that their only available employment opportunities are unskilled jobs that actually pay less than what their mother’s earn from self-employment. These young people are literate, numerate, and energetic. If offered the opportunity to start their own businesses—including business skill training and loan capital—they would undoubtedly respond with enthusiasm. Most importantly, they are more likely than their mothers to create ever-growing businesses that generate wage employment for others. To qualify, the eligible young adult would at least have to have completed elementary school, but preference would be given to those who have completed high school. The opportunity would only be offered to the children of mothers who have been with an existing microcredit program for at least five years and who have demonstrated superior loan repayment. If eligible mothers were required to co-sign for their children’s loans, the children would have an added incentive to honor their credit obligations with great discipline. Recent sample polling of FINCA clients in Latin America and Africa demonstrates that clients (mothers) unanimously support co-signing for loans to whom she considers the most mature and responsible of her young adult children.

Estimated Outreach and Costs: Since this is decidedly an initiative that targets the children of clients who have been in a microcredit program for at least five years, I estimate that out of today’s 130 million families assisted only half will have been with a microcredit program long enough to qualify (5 years). Of these 65 million, I assume one in ten (6.5 million) have an adult child who qualifies for a loan. As shown in line items 22 and 23 these 6.5 million youth clients will be brought into the program over an eight-year period (2008-2015). Starting in 2013 an additional 1 million youths/year (the children of more recent clients) would join the program, reaching a total of 20 million youth clients by 2025 (line item 24). I assume that the average loan per client will be increased by $250/year. I also assume that to qualify for each loan increment the youth business owner would be required to hire at least one additional worker. Thus, a first-time youth client
joining the program in 2008 would generate 17 new jobs by 2025; a client joining in 2015 would generate 11 new jobs by 2025, etc. On this basis I estimate the proposed program would generate 35 million jobs by 2015 and 189 million jobs by 2025 (line item 28).

**Financing:** How might this initiative be financed? Let us assume a normal funding package per participating MCI of 1,000 youth-clients. If each client’s loans were to reach $1000 (over four years), the package per MCI would require up to $10 million over a ten year period. Now let us imagine a package where the annual funding requirement—say, $1 million per year—were equally divided between the MCI and an external corporate partner. Since some MCIs have global and/or regional networks, a corporation’s annual investment could be limited to $500,000, then divided among, say, five countries--$100,000 per country--thus spreading risks. Similarly, for a single country the $500,000 investment could be divided among five regions. As shown in line items 28 and 29, I suggest a pace of 125 MCI/corporate partnerships per year, reaching 1,000 partnerships by 2015 and 2,250 partnerships by 2025.

**Microfranchising:** The above strategy would be especially useful in the promotion of “microfranchises” for one or more products or services that the partnering-corporation wishes to sell and that low-income villagers wish to buy. Examples abound: medicines and health products, soaps, soft drinks, water pumps, block-making and roofing materials for houses, solar panels (charging cell phones is a very lucrative business), and many, many others. For additional information on microfranchising the reader is referred to the research conducted by BYU. I often refer to this partnership strategy as a linking-up of “free enterprise from the top-down” (corporations) with “free enterprise from the bottom-up (micro-entrepreneurs). I call it “the golden spike strategy”, a reference to the famous ceremony of 1869 in Promontory Point, Utah, when the world’s first transcontinental railway was completed. It not only linked the Pacific and Atlantic oceans but catalyzed the development of the greatest industrial and agricultural economy in world history.

**CHALLENGE 4: INTERNSHIPS FOR YOUNG ADULTS**

**Forming Tomorrow’s Leaders:** Quoting Muhammad Yunus, “If poverty is to be reduced or eliminated, the next generation must be our focus.” To transform capitalism and end global poverty, outstanding leadership will be required. We do not need everyone to be a leader; maybe just one person of every one hundred is enough to create a “tipping point”. In 20-30 years from now, those one-in-a hundred young adults will be America’s future corporate executives, politicians, senior government officials, NGO leaders, media celebrities, teachers, news commentators, theologians, generals, writers, international bankers, global trade negotiators, legal scholars, and on and on. For them to be future leaders of planetary transformation—demanding the end of severe poverty—their training will be incomplete until they have come face to face with poverty, listened to the heroic stories of the poor, and experienced economic injustice first-hand. Only then will they
return home with a “fire in the belly” that compels them to end the abomination of starving infants in a world rich enough to feed and care for the entire human family.

You don’t acquire this passion in a classroom. You get it by spending time in the miserable ghettos of our own nation’s under-class, or by traveling to a poor country overseas. Few of the next generation will become AmeriCorps or Peace Corps volunteers, but many of these young adults—in the summer before their junior and senior years in college or their next-to-last year of graduate school—would be delighted to serve an internship in a Third World country.

A Proposal for Student Internships: As of 2005 there were 4,140 colleges and universities in the U.S. handling a collective enrollment of 17.5 million students and awarding 2.7 million degrees each year. Suppose about one near-graduating student of every hundred (2,700) were interested in an overseas poverty experience. Suppose further that a program were created to provide up to 3,000 summer internships each year for college or graduate students in their next-to-last year of schooling, to work with a microcredit institution, social business, or a village in a poverty-stricken country? Say the average internship would be for 30 days. This would allow three waves of 1,000 interns—in June, July, and August respectively—to go overseas each year. The cost of each internship would be $3,000—half for international airfare, half for living allowance. In Section 4 of Spreadsheet 2 is projected a program build up from 250 internships in 2008 to 3,000 internships in 2015 and that pace sustained thereafter (line item 31). Such a program would create 11,500 internships by 2015 and 41,500 by 2025 (line item 32). The cost of this program would reach $102 million by 2015 and $192 million by 2025. It could be structured on a matching grant basis so that each student would be responsible for paying one-sixth of the internship cost ($500)—for visas, vaccinations, and local translator costs. This would be matched by his/her college ($500) and the host-country MCI ($500), for a total of $1,500, which in turn would be matched by a philanthropic source, say, the Gates Foundation ($1,500 x 3,000 interns = $4.5 million/year). Each wave of interns (1,000) would be deployed to assignments in, say, 50 countries (20 per country), then distributed among five local MCIs or other programs serving the poor (four per institution).

What Would Interns Do? In turn each host MCI would assign its four interns to their “own” urban neighborhood or rural village. The intern’s first task would be to find a host-country student who knew enough English to serve as their translator (a cost borne by the intern’s $500 contribution). The intern would room and board with a local family, learn enough local words to survive, eat local food, and experience the local lifestyle as fully as possible. With his/her translator, the intern would interview a minimum of ten poverty-stricken families per week, document their living conditions, self-employment activities, and the educational and employment status of their children. Prior to his/her departure the intern would work with other interns and their translators to create a host-country student group with whom they could communicate after returning to the U.S. and thus help support follow-up activities or “projects” supervised by host-country student counterparts. The intern’s final task would be to prepare a report to his host-institution, summarizing his
findings, lessons learned, and suggestions for follow-up. Once home, each intern would be asked to share their overseas experience (stories, photos) with at least 100 other Americans by speaking at a local church, service clubs, sundry classroom venues (elementary, middle school, high school, college), and/or via communications with their social network friends on the internet.

**Long-Term Benefits:** In addition to creating life-changing experiences for 3,000 of America’s young adults each year, the proposed program at no additional cost would get 3,000 host-country students involved in poverty-focused work, thus helping to form the next generation of Third World leaders, while possibly inspiring or sensitizing as many as 300,000 other Americans back home. To use Yunus’ phrase, internships can be a powerful and cost-effective way for “making space for a new set of voices”.

**CONCLUSION**

In this paper I have tried to be audacious. I have urged us to take a “big tent” approach because thousands of institutions are already deployed, have a role to play, and (as I love to say) “we don’t have to compete with each other because there is enough poverty for everyone”. I have tried to inspire us to embrace bigger goals and faster timetables. Let us reject the tyranny of timid targets—proposing modest goals and timetables that we know we can achieve but too small to solve challenges confronting the human race. Let us be bold!

We live in a world of over six billion inhabitants; yet less than one-fifth of these humans (in fact, the top 10%) account for some 90% of global consumption purchases, while the lowest fifth struggle to survive on less than $1/day, thus causing ten million babies to perish each year from chronic malnutrition and hunger-related disease. Surely we are wealthy and compassionate enough to end this holocaust. Let us be bold!

We live in a world where far more children go to school than any previous time in history; yet tens of millions of these young people do not get beyond primary school because their families can not afford an additional $1.50/day for bus fare. And among those who do achieve partial or full secondary schooling, most are unable to find decent jobs that pay better that the wage of an unskilled laborer. Let every MCI offer scholarships, loans for business, and employment for the best-educated children of its own clients. Let us be bold!

We live in a world where millions of well-educated young people from affluent societies —our future leaders—are dissatisfied with their consumption culture and long for a higher purpose in life. Yet only a tiny fraction of them ever serve an overseas internship that can ignite within them the fire in the belly to create a poverty-free world. We should be creating thousands of internships each year. Let us be bold!
ENDNOTES

1. Sam Daley-Harris, Executive Summary, State of the Microcredit Summit Campaign Report for 2007, Washington D.C., www.microcreditsummit.org. I use the term “microcredit institution” (MCI) instead of “microfinance institution” (MFI) to maintain consistent with this broader campaign. In practical terms both terms are widely used, and the distinction between them is semantic.


4. For newcomers, the most commonly-used definitions of the above acronyms (where they exist) as well as their website is presented as follows: BRAC (Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee, <www.gdrc.org>); ASA (<asabd.org>); ICICI (<www.icicibank.com>); NABARD (National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development, <www.nabard.org>); BRI (Bank Rakyat Indonesia, <www.bri.com>); WOCCU, (World Council of Credit Unions, <wocco.org>) CARD (Center for Agriculture and Rural Development, <www.cardbankph.com>); ACCION (<www.accion.org>), FINCA (Foundation for International Community Assistance, <www.villagebanking.org>), OI (Opportunity International, <www.opportunity.org>); PRIDE Africa (<www.prideafrica.com>); WWB (Women’s World Banking, <www.womensworldbanking.org>); WV (World Vision, <www.worldvision.org>); and FFH (Freedom From Hunger <www.freefromhunger.org>.

5. OXFAM (<www.oxfam.org>), CARE (<www.care.org>); and CRS (Catholic Relief Services, <www.crs.org>.)

6. BYU (Brigham Young University, <marriottschool.byu.edu/selfreliance>)

7. Prahalad, op.cit.


11. How we measure the distinction between the not-so-poor and the poorest is a subject of heated debate within the MCI movement. National poverty lines are themselves imperfectly documented. Per-capita income estimates are most often documented using household expenditures as a surrogate measure. Ultimately I believe we need the help of our current clients to tell us who in their street, block, neighborhood, or village is poorer than they are and is being left behind. Often the difference between a poor and a severely poor family is determined by (1) the presence or lack of remittances, (2) two income earners versus one, (3) a two-parent versus a single-parent household, (4) the lack of a chronic ailment or disability versus their presence, (4) a 3-4 person family versus a 7+ person family, (5) a household head with complete primary versus an illiterate, (6) younger household heads versus seniors, (7) a family that is urban or peri-urban versus rural, and (8) lives near a well-trafficked road versus far away.

12. For more information contact <www.asap2025.org> or ptcrompton@asap2025.org>


15. Yunus, p.55.