



2007 State of the Future

11th Annual Edition

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A Global Agenda: Urgent Questions and Necessary Choices

In many areas the world is getting better. Life expectancy is increasing, infant mortality is decreasing, literacy, gross domestic products per capita and the number of global Internet users are increasing, and—despite Darfur and Iraq—there are fewer global conflicts.

But, the picture is not entirely rosy, according to *2007 State of the Future's* track of global progress. CO₂ emissions, terrorism, corruption, global warming, and unemployment are increasing as the percentage of voting populations decreases.

The new report, a slim print volume and a 6000-page companion CD, provides view of the world as it is, and what it might become without a collective worldwide effort to resolve what the report identifies as the top 15 global challenges.

These include the obvious—water, energy, global warming, health, sustainable development, terrorism—and some not always considered global problems, such as organized crime, which on a global basis makes more money than the world's military budgets combined, improving the capacity to decide as the nature of work and institutions change, and the need to accelerate scientific and technological breakthroughs.

Unless the challenges are met, the future could be bleak, marred by lack of water and arable land, mass migrations, turbulent climates, economic chaos, conflagrations and other disasters that could engulf global humanity.

2007 State of the Future offers answers along with questions. Proposed solutions sprinkled throughout the report include an Apollo-like global energy development program led by China and the United States, breakthroughs in water desalination, and the restructuring of educational systems to boost both individual and collective intelligence.

A cross-section of global thinking

Information in the report reflects the thinking of a cross section of leading global players, not a group who wrote a book. “Done on a global basis on behalf of the globe, it offers collective intelligence for the planet,” said Jerome Glenn, director of the Millennium Project, which each year updates and expands the *State of the Future*. “We deliberately seek a diversity of opinions, which means some of the issues raised and recommended actions seem contradictory.”

A planning committee of future-oriented individuals from 29 different countries oversees the overall direction of the project. The 32 Millennium Project “Nodes,” groups of future-oriented people and institutions—from business, government, academia, non-profit organizations, UN and other international agencies—have lead responsibility for a specific region. Their tasks include identifying and studying emerging issues, translating questionnaires, conducting interviews, identifying different participants each year to contribute their expertise and analyses to the project’s studies, and disseminate the results and findings.

“The Nodes are unique,” said Glenn. “Each is an intersection of networks, a new management response to global-local needs. This is probably the first globalized think tank,” he added. “The research has a richness that goes beyond more traditional think tanks.” Each year the *State of the Future* report is written and compiled by a staff of four, with assistance from interns, and operates on a shoestring budget of about \$300,000 each year.

Designed to meet the needs of both decision makers and academics, the combination of a short print volume and expanded CD resolves the age-old contradiction between a small amount of information to help decision makers think through options and the detailed information required by academics to be sure the work is “honorable.”

To suit both audiences, the print document is brief and “sensitive to information overload,” said Glenn, but the detail is there—on the CD—for those who want it. The interactive version available on the website (www.stateofthefuture.org) permits others to add ideas and comments.

The report is laced with facts. For example:

- In 2006 the global economy grew 5.4 percent to \$66 trillion while the population grew by 1.1 percent, increasing the average world per capita income by 4.3 percent;
- 2 percent of people own 50 percent of the world’s wealth while the poorest 50 percent own only 1 percent;
- The income of the richest 225 people in the world equals that of the poorest 2.7 billion, or 40 percent of the global population;
- More than half the world’s 6.6 billion people live in urban areas.
- The prevalence of HIV/AIDS has begun to level off in Africa but it continues to spread rapidly in Eastern Europe and in Central and South Asia.

An abundance of detail

The abundance of detail is deliberate. “When people try to understand a lot of information, they try to simplify it and reduce it to the top two or three issues, but that is not doing the world a favor,” said Glenn. “That’s like saying the brain is more important than the respiratory system. Everything is interconnected and inter-related.”

And while people may argue one issue is more important than another, “the fact is that all are important,” said Glenn. “What we are providing is utility. Most futurists consider single issues, like the World Bank looks at economics and the World Health Organization at health, but we provide a full range of issues and options.”

The report is not a consensus document, but rather a distillation of input from the more than 2,400 policy makers, academics, futurists, and creative thinkers from all parts of the globe who have contributed to **State of the Future** reports over the past 11 years.

As an agenda for the future, the work explores issues confronting the globe but it also shows solutions, said Glenn, updating information where necessary and adding new topics as research is completed. The Millennium Project conducts research under the auspices of the non-profit World Federation of United Nations Associations.

“This is the most vetted, longest lasting, cumulative integrated futures research project in history,” said Glenn, “It is a mechanism for cumulative learning about future possibilities and what can be done, more like sculpting than writing for it changes all the time.”

New for 2007

The 2007 version adds a futurist look at the possibilities for education and improving collective intelligence by 2030. It also updates the current status of the 15 global challenges and suggests ways these challenges can be met, both globally and in each region.

Another section, the State of the Future Index, SOFI, identifies where global humanity is winning and where it is losing, in effect providing a guide to where resources should be focused to improve prospects for the future.

Winners in 2007 include increases in life expectancy, decreasing infant mortality, increased literacy, fewer global conflicts, and increases in gross domestic products per capita and the number of global Internet users. The loss column cites increases in CO₂ emissions, terrorism, corruption, global warming, and unemployment, and a decrease in percentage of voting populations.

Introduced in 2001, the SOFI and its indicators have been refined each year, and now include a matrix and guidance to help individual countries develop their own SOFIs.

Special Research Projects

Over the years, a number of special research projects have been added. This year's addition, a study requested and supported by the Republic of Korea, explores possibilities for learning and education by 2030. Compiled by more than 200 participants, suggestions include greater use of individualized education, just-in-time knowledge and learning, use of simulations, improved individual nutrition, finding ways to keep adult brains healthier, E-Teaching, and integrated life-long learning systems.

Environmental security is another category. Using the Millennium Project definition of "environmental viability for life support with three sub-elements: preventing or repairing military damage to the environment, preventing or responding to environmentally caused conflicts, and protecting the environment due to its inherent moral value," contributors have identified more than 200 emerging international environmental security issues and suggested ways to address them.

The potential audience is diverse and immense. "**State of the Future** provides a landscape from which people can draw information and ideas to suit and adapt to their unique needs," said Glenn. Public and private policy makers can use the information to improve strategic decision making and global understanding, corporations and business executives can use it for planning, professors and consultants find it useful for teaching and research.

What are the global challenges?

The report defines the 15 global challenges as "transnational in nature and trans-institutional in solution. Any government or institution acting alone cannot address them." Further, it states, "All require collaborative action by governments, international organizations, corporations, universities, NGOs and creative individuals."

Despite the order, none is more or less important than any other, added Glenn. And they are interdependent. Progress toward one will affect others. So will deterioration.

1. How can sustainable development be achieved by all?
2. How can everyone have sufficient clean water without conflict?
3. How can population growth and resources be brought into balance?
4. How can genuine democracy emerge from authoritarian regimes?
5. How can policymaking be made more sensitive to global long term perspectives?
6. How can the global convergence of information and communication technologies work for everyone?
7. How can ethical market economies be encouraged to help reduce the gap between rich and poor?

8. How can the threat of new and reemerging diseases and immune microorganisms be reduced?
9. How can the capacity to decide be improved as the nature of work and institutions change?
10. How can shared values and new security strategies reduce ethnic conflicts, terrorism and the use of weapons of mass destruction?
11. How can the changing status of women help improve the human condition?
12. How can transnational organized crime networks be stopped from becoming more powerful and sophisticated global enterprises?
13. How can growing energy demand be met safely and efficiently?
14. How can scientific and technological breakthroughs be accelerated to improve the human condition?
15. How can ethical considerations become more routinely incorporated into global decisions?

“Contributors spent years arguing and debating the most significant challenges confronting the global future before whittling the list down to 15,” said Glenn. “We started with 280.”

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