

Operationalising Gross National Happiness

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This paper looks at how measuring human progress and well-being in terms of financial transactions, i.e. Gross Domestic Produce (GDP), is flawed. When people are encouraged to shift from providing for their needs themselves, (in traditional rural cultures) to purchasing everything (in modern urban cultures), much is lost.

It shows the consequences of a development process that puts economic interest before human welfare and describes solutions that include implementing a measurement of progress that incorporates a psychological, spiritual and environmental perspective, i.e. Gross Domestic Happiness (GNH).

It argues that we have to fundamentally change direction, from a centralised system controlled by unaccountable bodies such as banks and corporations, to a decentralised system that protects communities, diverse cultures, local democracy and small-scale trade.

Bhutan is a living example of interconnected communities radiating happiness while living within the limits of our fragile planet. The continued erosion of human well-being is inevitable until the flaws in the corporate capitalist system that urbanises people and centralises trade and finance, are exposed, not least within the education system

What is wrong with GDP?

Governments across the globe seem to believe that increasing financial transactions equates with increasingly healthy, contented people i.e. progress. However, I question whether such growth promotes or measures human and environmental well-being.

Using the number of times money is transacted (i.e. GDP) as a measure of progress, jobs done voluntarily - where no money is exchanged - are undervalued and diminished.. For example, Government subsidies encourage mothers to leave home to earn money by paying for childcare, and old age homes. The psychological well-being of both child, mother and elderly relative is compromised. Plus, when measuring GDP, many negatives in our lives are counted as positives. So, if I divorce my husband, have a car crash or have cancer, I will have to pay for a lawyer, a new car, and medication. All are a great boost to GDP. In the same way, damage done to the environment automatically increases GDP as the necessary clean-up operations result in more financial transactions.

Many disparate areas of breakdown are directly related to governments putting the well-being of a flawed consumer culture before their citizens and environment. It is therefore essential and urgent, that we

embrace the King of Bhutan's idea to measure progress in terms of Gross National Happiness. In Buddhism this inevitably puts spiritual and philosophical well-being alongside material well-being and includes our relationship with nature itself.

I have lived in many western cities from Paris, to London, New York and Rome so have experience of living where GDP is high. I have also visited many countries with far lower GDP; e.g. former communist countries like Russia, Mongolia and Poland and rural communities in the Southern Hemisphere - including Ethiopia, Lusoto, Turkey, Kenya, Ladakh, China, India and Pakistan where many people are largely self-reliant, so few or no financial transactions take place.

By considering the seven fundamental needs - food, water, shelter, health, clothes, education, happiness and love, we can see whether cultures with a high or low GDP are better off. Firstly we shall examine lifestyles in the so-called 'first world' and the urban elite in the third world where both have a high GDP.

Seven Fundamental Human Needs in the Northern Hemisphere and Urban Elite in the South

Food

Urban people's lives are dictated by large companies and compliant governments. Together these forces have moulded a centralised system in which people have lost touch with the processes of food production, processing and often even cooking. Many are nervous of the cocktail of chemicals added to their food - the pesticides, preservatives, colouring agents, emulsifiers, antibiotics and hormones. In the intensive production process, artificial fertilizers restrict natural nutrients and minerals from being absorbed. Only the wealthy can afford to buy dietary supplements.

However, the more artificially and intensively produced and processed the food, the more financial transactions have taken place so the higher the profits for corporations and banks. Unprocessed, fresh whole food, produced with human labour, is mostly nature's own work, so only minimally increases GDP. Thanks to subsidies into energy and transportation, intensively produced food has often travelled long distances. Thus the food is artificially cheap. On average the ingredients of a UK Sunday meal have travelled 26,000 miles - that is the equivalent of a journey round the planet! Global transport, with food being a major component, contributes 29% of CO₂ emissions, so is a significant contributor to climate change. Through pricing and advertising, we are persuaded to put quantity over quality, with the resulting health hazards like obesity, heart disease and cancer.

Subsidising farmers to maximise production puts tax payers money directly into the pockets of agri-chemical companies. While

farmers gross income is high, after paying for inputs, their net income is very low, thus forcing small farmers into bankruptcy. European and US subsidised food is distorting global prices and the excess dumped on global markets thereby forcing small farmers in the south off the land.

In 1995 the EU subsidised the destruction of 6,000 acres of apple orchards in the UK, and this policy has been reinstated in 2004. The result is we now rely largely on foreign imports.

In spite of increasing consumer opposition to unfair trade, debt and agri-industry, corporations continue to increase their domination of global markets. A few powerful agri-industries have been invited by compliant governments to develop a first world style centralised agricultural system where food and profits are centralised into the hands of the few at the expense of the many.

For example, recently, through a development charity headed by Jimmy Carter and a Japanese entrepreneur, Ethiopia was sold subsidised fertiliser, "to solve the problem of starvation". Government Agricultural Representatives, persuaded farmers to sell their animals and buy the fertiliser to grow export crops. However, with such a dry climate the two varieties of fertiliser provided were unsuitable so yields failed. Debts and destitution followed with farmers across Ethiopia demonstrating against their government's ignorance, arrogance and greed.

Where trade liberalisation has been imposed on Africa, Asia and Latin America, each continent has exchanged its food security with dependence on food imports. In the name of 'comparative advantage', the IMF and World Bank have advised them to stop growing food and to import cheaper (heavily subsidised) food. However, countries earning next to nothing from the goods they export, have been told to take out loans for the imports. Dependency on imported food and debts give outside bodies the power to dictate domestic policy.

Water

In urban centers across the globe, water is distributed through a centralised system that requires heavy chemical treatment, expensive infrastructure and results in large-scale waste. The wealthy can afford to install expensive purifying filtering systems, or buy bottled water often shipped thousands of miles. With each flush of the toilet, gallons of drinking water are poured down the drain. After a region in the UK experienced water shortages (partly due to climate change), rather than advocating conserving water or local small scale collection, the 'solution' proposed was to flood 4 square miles of countryside.

Presently in the South, governments are privatising water, treating the basis for life as a commodity little different to trading Nike shoes. The urban rich can afford the flush toilets and swimming pools while the poor lose access to water.

Shelter

On average in the UK people are £40,000 in debt thanks to the house buying mortgage system. With compounding interest, after repayment in 20 years, the owner will have paid two and a half, to three times the amount of the original cost. Forty years ago, only the husband needed to go to work to keep his family, today both are forced to work to meet mortgage repayments. Many a mother must take her tiny baby to kindergarten so that she could join her husband at work, to repay their mortgage for a two-bedroom town flat. After working their entire life to repay the mortgage, elderly house owners often have to sell their homes to pay for residential care.

Health

We are increasingly aware that the giant pharmaceutical companies are so concerned with maintaining growth margins that they are rushing new drugs to market that have not been sufficiently tested. For example, it has recently been shown that a wonder drug - HRT - taken by 3 million menopausal women, significantly increased cancer-risk.

Modern medicine seems mainly concerned with masking the effects of our unhealthy lifestyles with painkillers, anti-depressants and behavioural drugs for disruptive children. At present, the medical system ignores both prevention and the root causes of diverse illnesses. The side effects of chemical treatments and conditions in mega-hospitals are making us sicker. Lifestyle illnesses such as stress, depression, heart disease, cancers and obesity are at epidemic levels. Due to the influence of the pharmaceutical industry, the National Health Service, and Research and Development, only allopathic medicines are funded; ignoring the proven success of a diverse range of medicines like Ayurvedic and Chinese.

Education

Presently we are educating children to live in a reductionist world, divided into separate subject boxes. Banks and businesses create growth and profits by manipulating nature to make products to sell. Children's minds must therefore be taught to think as specialists in production, services or intellectual property, in order to find employment to sustain their dependent urban lives. In the classroom children must compete against each other. Children are deemed "clever" or "stupid", depending on how mentally adapted they are to conventional teaching. Some are drugged to calm their bored minds and restless bodies.

Mental creativity is abandoned in the pursuit of cramming vulnerable brains with information to regurgitate in exams. The school may have a high place in the league tables, but it does little to develop the child's ability to understand the world. The formal education curriculum is training children to exploit the planet for maximum profit.

Minds in the third world are being molded into a development paradigm that serves the needs of the illusory job. For example, in Ethiopia, staying with a couple and their young children, a self-important man strutted into the garden. He grandly declared that he was Gabriel's teacher and exclaimed, "Gabriel has a diploma in carpentry and should be in Addis Ababa earning a living". In fact Gabriel had tried and failed to find a job in the capital, Addis and he'd even tried to migrate to Saudi Arabia but was caught and returned to run his family farm.

A boy in Ladakh, said that education had mentally marginalised him from his family of self reliant farmers so, though he didn't want to leave his culture, he would only find a job appropriate to his level of education in Delhi.

Education persuades many that modern hi-tech life is available in the city and once a village has electricity, television shortly follows, portraying a glamorous and exciting city life, to which the young become intrigued and enamoured. Older generations try to stem this overpowering influence to move to town. For example, in Ethiopia the pastoralists refused to send their children to school; they know that the young will never return to the life they love. Some said that they would perhaps have an extra child to send to school only because in times of drought that child could provide an alternative income. Others were refusing to send their children to school because there were no jobs and many had turned to crime, ruining the family name. A mother I met in Turkey, who lived with her family in a beautiful town house said that, though she couldn't be happier, she felt that she must follow her community to the city to give her family better opportunities

Clothes

Clothes are largely concerned with status and the manufacturers are only too keen to make us feel inadequate if we don't wear the latest label. Thanks to the propaganda from advertising, we become addicted to fashion at an early age and will 'shop till we drop' to keep up with the latest advertised fad. In China, pictures of models from the west have resulted in women having their legs surgically lengthened and eyes rounded. In the UK, Africans have their hair straightened and dyed blonde, whilst westerners perm or straighten and chemically dye their hair and tan their own bodies, despite the heightened risk of skin cancer. They are obsessed with the shapes of their bodies, resulting in an explosion of eating disorders, with girls as young as seven (and even men) starving themselves, whilst cosmetic surgery is on the increase. People are supposed to feel inadequate, so the all embracing "cure" is to buy "solutions", e.g. expensive diet fad-food, diet drugs, cosmetic surgery, hair-dyes. People hate the very bodies they are born into.

Happiness and Love

The countries with highest rates of suicides amongst young men are all industrialised countries. The highest cause of deaths of UK men under 30 is no longer road accidents, but suicide; it is our secret and shameful domestic epidemic. Over 70% of people don't enjoy their jobs, and in spite of mechanisation, people have to work ever-longer hours to repay debts. In fear of not finding a job to maintain mortgage repayments, many remain trapped in jobs they detest.

People are enslaved by debt and the result is stress and depression. Massive increases in mental illnesses, not least in young children and adolescents, has massively increased sales of prescribed drugs, like Prozac (that has also been proven to increase suicides), rather than look at life-style changes. When both husband and wife have to go out to work, it puts huge pressure on the family unit, often resulting in divorce, insecurity and psychologically damaged children. In the UK, two out of five marriages end in divorce and one in three people live alone. Many mothers who bring children up in a city are so isolated, bored and under-valued that they often prefer returning to work, even if their entire wage only pays for the childcare. With the homogenisation of male and female roles, there is no longer respect for traditional female roles of looking after the young and the old, the latter often being left to die in homes.

Both capitalism and socialism centralise people, power and money. There may seem to be positives to abandoning community self-sufficiency to become dependent on the all-powerful, all-knowing state or corporation. If we lose our jobs the state will give us welfare benefits so we will not starve to death or be homeless. The state and corporation also pay for healthcare and pensions. However, government money to pay for these social benefits is running out because, in the global competition, TNCs have replaced small local businesses and will only locate in countries with low taxes. Fewer taxes from TNCs means ever higher labour taxes or less money for social benefits such as hospitals, schools and welfare benefits. The very threat of a TNC leaving a nation ensures governments remain compliant with low taxes, rights and environmental protection. Production is about growth margins, not human need. When corporations don't survive the global competition, worker pensions disappear.

Is it worth sacrificing our self-sufficiency, family and community support for a demoralising safety net? If we cannot find work, we are cocooned into a safe, but grindingly meaningless existence where we survive, but feel of no use to society. In areas of massive, long-term unemployment, deprivation and crime, our impoverished 'welfare net' has become an excuse for not solving the real problems of long-term employment.

Seven Fundamentals Human Needs in Traditional Rural Societies in the Southern Hemisphere

Food

Food is usually grown on inherited land, harvested, then prepared within the family and community unit. Food is part of their culture and identity, of which they are proud. If governments invested in rural not urban communities, people could continue to develop within their community units and nature's limits

Water

Water is revered as the source of all life and communities build sophisticated, small-scale irrigation systems. Unwritten laws ensure community water remains pure.

Shelter

Vernacular houses are built from materials gathered in the locality, with the community sharing labour with the minimum of financial exchange. In Ethiopia, a community building a woven wattle and daub house, resemble joyous party rather than a building site. In Ladakh and Bhutan, palaces are built from locally moulded bricks and ornately carved wood. In Turkey, though breeze-block or cement have largely replaced local materials, with interest-free loans borrowed within the family and community, no mortgages are required. Within 3 years, on a basic income, debts are repaid.

Health

A nutritious diet and physical exercise - whether working in the fields or walking to market, sustains good health. Knowledge of traditional medicine is commonplace and doctors are highly skilled. In Ethiopia bone-doctors, through manipulation, mend broken bones, and in Bhutan and India, centuries old Ayurvedic medicine is still dominant and highly respected. In Turkey, farmers use chemical fertiliser to maximise production for market but believe that this poorer quality food makes their urban relatives less healthy.

Clothes

Spinning, dyeing and weaving are jobs cherished by the community. Clothes are long lasting, colourful and elegant, and give the wearer an identity that is individual, but egalitarian. The King of Lusoto tried to encourage local production for local needs, such as school clothes. For this and other attempts to encourage self-sufficiency, his Government threw him out of the country.

Happiness and Love

A recent report in the New Scientist stated that the 10 happiest nations were all from the Third World. Most rural cultures still have a strong identity, supportive communities, believe in reciprocity and adhere to a philosophy rooted in spiritual well-being with little concept of accumulating material wealth. To share daily chores and share the proceeds with those you love must be rewarding. I can only put my authority in the smiles, laughter, stories, songs and conversations I've had with people who are still interconnected within their extended family and community. Human happiness and well-being of the whole is a very Buddhist ideal.

When a friend asked a Ladakhi boy to show her the poor area, the boy replied that no one was poor. Eight years later, she overheard the very same boy, now dressed in a track suit and working as tourist guide, ask his American client to "help the Ladakhi's - we are so poor". With a formal curriculum and corporate media invading self-sufficient communities, the young see themselves as primitive and backward.

Who is Developed?

The paradox of our age - *Dalai Lama*

We have bigger houses but smaller families
More conveniences, but less time
More knowledge but less judgement
More experts but more problems
More medicine, but less healthiness
We've been all the way to the moon and back, but have trouble
crossing the street to meet a new neighbour.

We build more computers to hold more information, to produce
more copies than ever, but have less communication.
We have become long on quantity but short on quality.
These are times of fast foods, but slow digestion.
Tall men but short character
Steep profits but shallow relationships
It is a time when there is much in the window, but nothing in the
room.

Background to the Present Centralised System that Enriches Few at the Expense of Many

To serve the industrial revolution, people in the Northern Hemisphere were pushed off the land to work in factories. While small scale self-sufficient farmers in the South were pushed off their land to be the cheap labour for plantations and mines. People throughout the world have become the producers and consumers for a centralised economy, controlled

by western companies and banks and supported by compliant Governments. With intense propaganda and education, the populace is led to believe that they are on the ladder to wealth, freedom and leisure enjoyed by the affluent few.

Who Really Benefits from Aid?

However, third world people were never supposed to share in the material wealth. The truth behind the term 'aid' is revealed in these unusually frank quotes from various First World leaders.

In 1961 President Kennedy said, "*Foreign aid is a method by which the United States maintains a position of influence and control around the world.*" Seven years later President Nixon added: "the main purpose of aid is not to help other nations but to help ourselves."

Eugene Black, head of the World Bank in the 1950's: "Our foreign aid programs constitute a distinct benefit to American business. The three major benefits are: 1) foreign aid provides a substantial and immediate market for US goods and services 2) foreign aid stimulates the development of new overseas markets for US companies 3) foreign aid orientates national economies towards a free market system in which US firms prosper."

USAID (US Agency for International Development) Washington DC, 1987: "Countries that have received substantial American aid have increased their imports from the US at a 30% faster rate than their purchases from other nations. In 1981 alone, South Korea imported \$2.1billion worth of our agricultural products - more than the value of all US food aid provided to that country between 1955 and 1959.... The record shows that food assistance can produce lucrative trade relationships and can generate new commercial markets."

Senator Hubert Humphrey in 1957: "I have heard that people may become dependent on us for food. To me that is good news - because before people can do anything, they have got to eat. And if you are looking for a ways to get people to lean on you and be dependent on you, in terms of their co-operation with you, it seems to me that food dependence would be terrific."

President Ronald Regan: "Our foreign aid is not only a symbol of American's tradition of generosity and good will, but also a servant of our national interest."

Christopher Patten, Britain's Overseas Development Minister said: "We should not be coy about the extent to which to do what is right can also be to do what is good for Britain." He added: "Most British bilateral aid has to be spent on British goods and services."

Post World War II Global Institutions

As prescribed by the above leaders. Money and resources have been siphoned from the South to the North. Promoted by post world war

institutions like the World Bank, IMF and WTO, resource exploitation, capital flight and cultural genocide has, in the last 20 years, increased dramatically.

Research by Dembe Dembele, an economist from Senegal, shows that even if you measure progress and wealth in wages, the promises given by the Development Institutions of greater prosperity for the South, have not materialised. According to World Bank statistics, pre 1980 there were about 160 million Africans living under the poverty line of \$1 a day. In the early 1980's, the WB and IMF said that they would help solve the debt crisis. Many expected poverty to go down, and economic growth to go up. However, 20 years later, according to the WB, those living on less than \$1 a day in Africa has doubled to 340 million - more than half the population.

Under IMF Structural Adjustment Policies, rural people have been marginalised from self-sufficient communities and forced to seek a wage, often producing and exporting the same commodities as other countries in IMF Structural Adjustment Programs. Inevitably there have been gluts in the market and a collapse in African commodity prices. These countries now have to sell twice as much as in 1980's to get the same goods coming from developed countries.

As a result, over the last 20 years African debt has increased. When the IMF and WB arrived, foreign debt repayments accounted for 24% of the combined national income of African countries. It now accounts for 71%. In order for Africa to repay its entire debt, African nations would have to spend more than 3/4 of their annual income. In some cases, they would have to spend more than their entire annual income.

As mentioned before, stooge governments have their share of responsibility. However, for all objective observers the IMF and the World Bank have done most of the damage. This is not restricted to Africa, but includes Asia and Latin America, for example the Philippines, the Asian financial crisis of 1998, Brazil and, more recently, Argentina. World Bank and IMF policies are imposed on recipient countries regardless of their level of social and economic development, culture or political system. The domestic economic policies upon which they insist- trade liberalisation, privatisation, limited state intervention, lifting capital controls, deregulation of domestic markets - have resulted in widespread poverty.

Apparently in the WB headquarters it says "we dream of a world free of poverty". However, the truth is that their flawed economic policies have pushed the world into a downward spiral of increasing poverty and oppression. So, if we are to count wealth in WB and IMF terms - i.e. income earned - poverty has doubled. Land, liberty, livelihood and the cultures enjoyed by self-sufficient rural communities have been sacrificed on the altar of increasing markets for corporate and bank profits.

Most of the so-called aid going to Third World countries are, in fact, loans conditional on building the infrastructure that facilitates an export

economy. This is great for Western markets, as it requires high tech expertise to build the roads and airports, the energy infrastructure and information technology. To attract foreign investment, Governments are encouraged to keep wages low, suppress trade unions, and grant the freedom to dump chemical waste into the natural environment. These 'good investment climates' ensure that these countries have the competitive edge over other countries, equally desperate to attract foreign investment. The mere threat of relocating ensures governments keep the company's needs firmly above the needs of employees and environment. The law says that companies must prioritise share value.

For example, indigenous people in the Ecuadorian Amazon want to take Texaco/ Mobil to court for polluting 200 square miles of the Amazon's water, forest and air. The Government of Ecuador, desperate not to deter foreign investment, is keeping the judicial hearing in their country, as opposed to the USA, to ensure the penalty is kept to a minimum.

In spite of UNCTAD's own admission that more resources are going out of Africa than resources going in, they continue to prescribe the same flawed solutions. UNCTAD has recently launched the '20b2b' programme; this is a \$20 billion corporate investment into Africa to bring 2 billion people to 'the market'. This will shift people away from self-sufficiency on the land into jobs for export markets, all good to boost growth in foreign exchange to repay debts to foreign banks, but bad for retaining a vibrant rural economy that sustains community, culture and sustainability.

A recent example of this lunacy is the World Bank, along with DIFID, (the UK development agency), giving \$65 million to the Indian Government to consolidate farms in Andhra Pradesh to grow export crops. This means that the 70%, currently earning their living from the land, must be reduced to 40%; ie 20 million people must leave the land. When 10 potentially marginalised women came to the UK to meet with Claire Short, the former Development Minister, she refused to see them. When I asked her why, she said, " I never meet with people behind client Government's backs, particularly activists."

In spite of many First World manufacturing and service jobs going to the Third World, not least India, there simply aren't enough jobs to absorb growing urban populations created by western development policies. The marginalised from development projects end up in urban slums as virtual slave labour, begging or in crime.

According to a recent UN report, the number of people living their days in slums is almost one billion - one-sixth of the world's population. By 2050, they say there may be 3.5 billion slum-dwellers, out of a total urban population of about six billion. The head of its human settlements programme says, "the persistence of slums should shame the entire world".

The appalling conditions suffered force many to abandon their families to follow their money to the western Hemisphere. There they earn the

foreign exchange to send back to their families who remain trapped in the spiral of poverty molded by western development programmes.

Former Communist Countries

The Third World is not alone in this corporate stranglehold. The centralised economies of former communist countries, are easy prey to the corporate capitalist system. For example, in Poland, thanks to a \$25million loan from the EBRD, (a bank guaranteed by EU tax payers), Smithfield, the biggest pig-rearing factory in the US, is in the process of buying recently modernised, former State pig farms - at discount prices. By flooding the Polish market with mass produced pork, 2 million traditional small-scale farms face bankruptcy. Just when many people are crying out for organic produce, Poland's small-scale, humane and organic methods are being replaced by massive mechanised farming techniques - a system heavily subsidised and promoted by corrupt government officials.

EU Development Bank loans are allegedly given to help modernise former communist countries. But how can the small companies compete in this so-called free market when the head of the agricultural department at EBRD confessed, "the most high-tech and capital-rich companies get most of the loans as they can guarantee repayment". Governments take out loans to pay for transport and energy infrastructure to encourage big foreign investors to their shores and impose strict regulations that further undermine small local businesses. Supermarkets came to Poland in the 1970s on condition that all farmers markets were closed. Whilst travelling in Poland, talking to farmers, I heard that this order was, where necessary, violently enforced.

The First World

The First World is also enslaved by global competition. CEO's cannot be holistic and question the external impacts of the manufacturing process, as their company will lose the competitive edge and shareholders will be persuaded to merge with a more ruthless company.

In industrial countries, only 2% earn their livelihoods from the land. High employment in agriculture has been deemed 'inefficient' and the majority of people are now dependent on monotonous, soulless jobs in urban centres. In the absence of love and fulfillment generated by community life and a connection to nature, they are supposed to believe the myth that happiness comes from a higher standard of living namely, material wealth. Yet the statistics prove that countries with the higher material wealth and high GDP have higher levels of depression, stress and suicide.

We Are Ready for the Solutions

Bhutan, with the strength and vision of the King and the fantastic start made by the Gross domestic Happiness Conference, could be a model for the world. Up to 90% of third world populations still live off the land retaining skills and supportive communities needed to sustain self reliance. However, these cultures need urgent protection.

Many in the West recognise that quality of life has been sacrificed for a higher standard of living. They dream of abandoning the rat race and would willingly sacrifice their stressful, high paid city jobs and fast cars to live lives enjoyed by 'backward' societies.

Recently a Russian man put an advert on the radio asking people to contact him if they were tired of living in over crowded cities, working in poorly paid jobs, surrounded by violence, crime and addiction and wanted to join him in rebuilding a village community. 5,000 people contacted him!

Many countries are now dependent on the global economy to buy or service hi-tech western infrastructure. So if disconnection is too sudden, the consequences will be similar to the aftermath of sanctions imposed on Iraq. Their oil had bought them into a centralised system, designed by Western technocrats, bankers and economists. Traditional small-scale transport, healthcare and farming techniques had largely been abandoned. So the population became destitute without trucks, drugs and high tech equipment. Whilst maintaining the sanctions that precipitated the poverty, America then exchanged oil for food. Though western citizens were persuaded that this was an act of compassion, it was the final nail in the coffin for Iraqi farmers, who could have supplied the food had sanctions been lifted. This was a clever ploy to ensure that, in its most basic needs, Iraq remained dependent on imports.

However, disconnect we must. The sooner a country starts to disentangle itself from dependence on payments for exports to pay for its hi-tech aspirations, the better. If we are to abandon this sinking ship we must seek other sympathetic nations with which to disconnect from the global economy. John Bunzel, in his book *Simultaneous Policy*, recommends that countries 'simultaneously' disengage from the stranglehold of competition. Without this, governments will continue to renege on the social and environmental treaties described below, as their economies would be at a competitive disadvantage.

I believe that the solution to dependence on outside nations is local interdependence. However, protecting communities, local economies and democracy is not enough if the present global economic system is not radically changed. This must be achieved though working on both the local (micro) and national and international (macro) level.

Before I begin listing some of the changes, I must also recommend John Joplin and Roy Madron's book, *GAIAN DEMOCRACIES - Redefining*

Globalisation and People Power and Ancient Futures by Helena Norberg-Hodge.

Macro level Solutions

World Social and Environmental Organisation

On the macro level the WTO (World Trade Organisation) must be replaced by a body such as a World Social and Environmental Organisation (WSEO), which is fully democratic, transparent, and accountable, not to corporations, but to citizens of the world. It should demand trade policies that promote and protect local trade as a priority. Regional and national trade, and lastly global trade, would be for excess produce. The WSEO would also ensure that any trading prioritised environmental protection.

I am not saying there should be no global trade, only that we put an end to the absurdly wasteful process of shipping basic foods like wheat and milk thousands of miles when they could be produced locally. In Mongolia, which has 25 million head of cattle, the butter in a hotel in Ulan Bator was served pre-packaged from Denmark. In England, New Zealand butter is cheaper than British. Shortening the distance between producers and consumers would provide an enormous range of benefits, from the creation of jobs to a healthier environment, as well as a more equitable distribution of resources.

World Environment Court

This World Social and Environmental Organisation would need to be backed up by a World Environment Court; and it would have to have teeth that hurt. Michael Meacher, former UK Environment Minister, recommends that such a court must give painful fines to curb the corporate rape of our fragile environment. These fines would directly fund the court itself.

Eco-tax Reform

As an instrument for change, we should adopt eco-tax reform, shifting the tax-burden away from income tax and onto destructive practices, such as non-renewable energy, resource depletion, damage to the environment, waste, and pollution. This would promote greater efficiency, reduce pollution, strengthen the economy for cleaner technologies and create new jobs.

The Transferal of Subsidies

Subsidies to transport, energy and R&D should go from supporting export economies towards promoting local production and consumption. Many projectionist policies would become unnecessary once the true costs of industrial export trade (namely subsidies that build transport and energy infrastructure and pay for environmental degradation) are internalised into

the retail price. The playing field would then be levelled to enable small businesses, that don't need subsidies, to survive to serve local needs. Local renewable energy infrastructure would be cheaper if the true costs of nuclear and fossil fuel energy were internalised.

Eliminating Debt and Controlling Money

Every religion has outlawed usury. Yet banks continue to make a colossal amount of profit by issuing money and claiming interest. Large TNC's also benefit because banks pressurise governments to ensure TNC's profit over the rate of interest. This debt-money system is a key driver in price increases and the pressure on modern economies to continually grow.

Economic growth is seen as an absolute imperative and is imposed on governments by the nature of the current money system and the rules of the WTO. To avoid the apocalyptic scenario we see ahead of us, it is essential that the debt based monetary system is radically changed. Governments must take back the issuance of money and base the value of money on a valued commodity so that our economies are based upon a stable exchange medium. Many aspects of economic democracy could be reclaimed if money issuance were in the control of governments so that they were no longer subservient to the profit-motive of banks and TNC's for investment, jobs and funds.

Three US Presidents, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln and Franklin Roosevelt have wanted the control and distribution of money to be in the hands of governments, not private banks. For example, Thomas Jefferson said, *"if the American people ever allow the banks to control the issuance of their currency, first by inflation then deflation, the banks and corporations that will grow up around them will deprive the people of all property till their children will wake up homeless on the continent their fathers occupied."*

Local exchange and trading systems, that still exist between interconnected communities in remote rural areas in the so-called third world, not least Bhutan, must be protected. To help exchange goods and services to a wider area, local currencies could be used, thereby, retaining the integrity of the national economy from the volatile global economy. Ethiopia, for example, not having joined the WTO, retains its strong control of foreign money and goods coming into the country, by having currency auctions. Pegging weak currencies to strong currencies, as in Senegal, takes financial control away from the government's ability to regulate trade in the interests of citizens.

Funding for Elections

To ensure neutrality and equality, all party political funding must come from the public purse not from big businesses. I heard one of Clinton's lawyers say that Clinton was unable to introduce his social welfare policies because, big business, to whom he owed so much, blocked his proposals.

An American shopping Mall developer said that he gave \$2million to both the Republican and Democratic party so, whichever ever won, would grant him his demands.

The Tobin Tax

The above time scale modulated tax must be imposed to regulate and deter short term financial speculation. This money would help fund many of the recommended GDH changes.

Relaxing Regulations for Small Producers

Laws are rightly imposed to protect our health in a global system that promotes mass production. However, small-scale producers, whose local production and marketing systems cannot afford and do not need such regulations, are forced into bankruptcy. Instead, there should be a two-tier system in which laws should be vigilant for the large-scale producers and processors, whereas local communities would regulate the small-scale producers.

Conserving Natural Resources

To minimise our ecological footprint, we must minimise exploitation of our precious natural resources. Amery Lovins, author of *Natural Capital*, says that companies should make products to rent rather than sell. It would thereby be in the interest of the company to make them durable with profits coming from servicing the product.

In addition to these macro changes: No patents on life. As well as making innovation available for the benefit of all mankind, the incentive to develop genetic engineering for simple profit would diminish.

All products should be biodegradable. If not, the producer should offer a financial reward to have their product/container returned. Novel chemicals should be banned until proven safe and there should be no testing on animals.

Advertisements directed at children must be stopped, and free airtime for public awareness information would reveal the hidden costs of purchasing most advertised products.

A global tribunal to ensure fair trading should be given powers to have a far more stringent regulatory environment that could stop all further mergers and de-merge over sized and excessively powerful businesses. Without the advantages of scale enjoyed by vast companies, small, decentralised businesses could survive.

A single company or individual can only own one media outlet.

The wealth of a nation should be measured in terms of Genuine Progress Indicators. Thereby all economic transactions measured must take into account any negative impacts.

With these macro policy and fiscal changes in place, our seven fundamental human needs could be met within a system that puts people and the planet first.

The Seven Fundamental Needs After Fundamental Changes

Food

Today, many popular Non Governmental Organisations (NGO's) in both first, second and third world see national food security as a priority. They want local production for local consumption.

As an instrument for change, subsidies that promote export trade must go and pollution taxes would reveal the true cost of agri-business food criss-crossing the globe, thus making local production cheaper. Protecting local markets from cheap imports would also prevent heavily subsidised commodities from the North undermining local food markets. Were the true costs of transportation included in the price, and value placed on fresh, nutritious food and food security, UK crops would be cheaper than imports, fewer UK farmers would be going out of business, and the Southern countries would be free to use their land and labour and skills to feed themselves.

It is therefore essential that we support farmers in both the North and the South. For example, while we in the UK tucked into Zambia's Brussel sprouts last Christmas, the Zambians were starving and our farmers in the UK were going bankrupt with one farmer a week committing suicide. By buying at local markets, consumers avoid the big middlemen like supermarkets. A local food economy keeps money in the rural economy, providing much-desired rural jobs and ensuring both farmer and consumer get a fair price. Selling directly from farmer to consumer would revitalise small farmers who, by diversifying their production, could more easily grow without chemicals.

It is a myth that there is not enough land to sustain a vibrant rural population. We should grow food for ourselves and be far healthier if we ate less meat. During the Second World War, meat was scarce and people grew fruit, vegetables and grain in every field and garden, thereby gaining health that we haven't since obtained.

Conventional economists may say these proposals will create upheaval. This may be in part true, but nothing compared to the environmental and social breakdown created by the present system.

Water

Small-scale local water management and irrigation should replace large reservoirs and dams in the North and South.

Shelter

Individuals should be able to afford to buy their home, once we abandon the debt-based economy

No one should be expected to abandon their roots, family and community to find work so, as in Italy, businesses should go to the village.

In planning, there should be no division between work place and home. People should not have to commute long distances to get to work and the work place should not be a hideous, polluting, industrial sight. Planning laws should allow a sensitive combination of residential and workplace development, where attractive small-scale labour intensive industrial units can be built, which add to, rather than blight, a community.

Buildings higher than a tree must be prohibited and city size should be limited to what is sustainable for food to be grown in the hinterland, whilst sewage and other waste should be recycled as useful compost. In Calcutta, sewage is pumped thorough a series of canals with reed beds that purify the water and sustain fish life, which is then fed back to the people through the vibrant Calcutta markets.

Health

With the help of macro policies mentioned above, Governments would be free from the strangle hold of growth so pharmaceutical companies would loose their leverage to obtain 'good investment climates'. Without patents on life, medicines would be developed for their tried and tested success, not simply on the profits they create. Wisdom passed through generations of testing could triumph over the patents and profits. Health funding should go to the myriad of proven, alternative medicines and research into the root causes of illness, rather than simply curing symptoms, and building more and more hi-tech hospitals.

The former cricketer, now statesman, Imran Khan opened a giant high tech cancer hospital in Pakistan. It costs so much money to run that it is almost impossible to sustain. When he realised that 80% of the patients came from areas with intensive agriculture, he diverted some of the money and enthusiasm towards low-tech alternative research into prevention, diet and a myriad of complimentary remedies.

Education

The skills developed over centuries to live rich, rural lives must be urgently protected, cherished and passed on. Appropriate schools should be local and small scale and emphasise the value of local traditions, culture, mythology, language, religion, philosophy and crafts, e.g. maintaining crucial knowledge about the tradition of exchanging seeds adapted to local needs of soil and climate conditions.

An awareness of the material world is essential, not least to show its flaws and intrinsic exploitation. Economics should be taught to show how a

debt-based money enriches a few at the expense of the majority. With appropriately monitored programming, the propaganda machine will be limited in its ability to manipulate the truth. Children must be taught about the dire consequences of a clever mind devoid of wisdom.

Clothes

If a country is less reliant on cash-crop exports to purchase their basic needs from abroad, then resources and time could instead be directed into strengthening new and old skills like making cloths, carpets, homes, pots and pans, and renewable energy from local skills and materials. With a dynamic culture, people will not be looking outside to form their identity through shallow fashions.

Happiness and Love

By protecting local trade, and directing work and money to promote small-scale businesses, people can live close to their roots, extended family and supportive community. Work is a pleasure if it is to provide for and look after loved ones. For example, an exquisite skirt or beautiful carpet is made for the producer and their community to enjoy. Going to a market to sell something you are proud of and exchanging it for something you need, is a joy not a chore.

While painting his fishing boat on the beach, a fisherman was approached by a friendly American tourist who told him that he could improve his life. If he worked harder he could buy another boat and sell more fish. The fisherman asked what he would do with his wealth. The American said that he could buy a fleet of fishing boats and become even richer. The fisherman asked what he would do with these vast profits. The American said that he could afford to come to a beautiful beach, relax and enjoy the sunset—a life that the fisherman already enjoys.