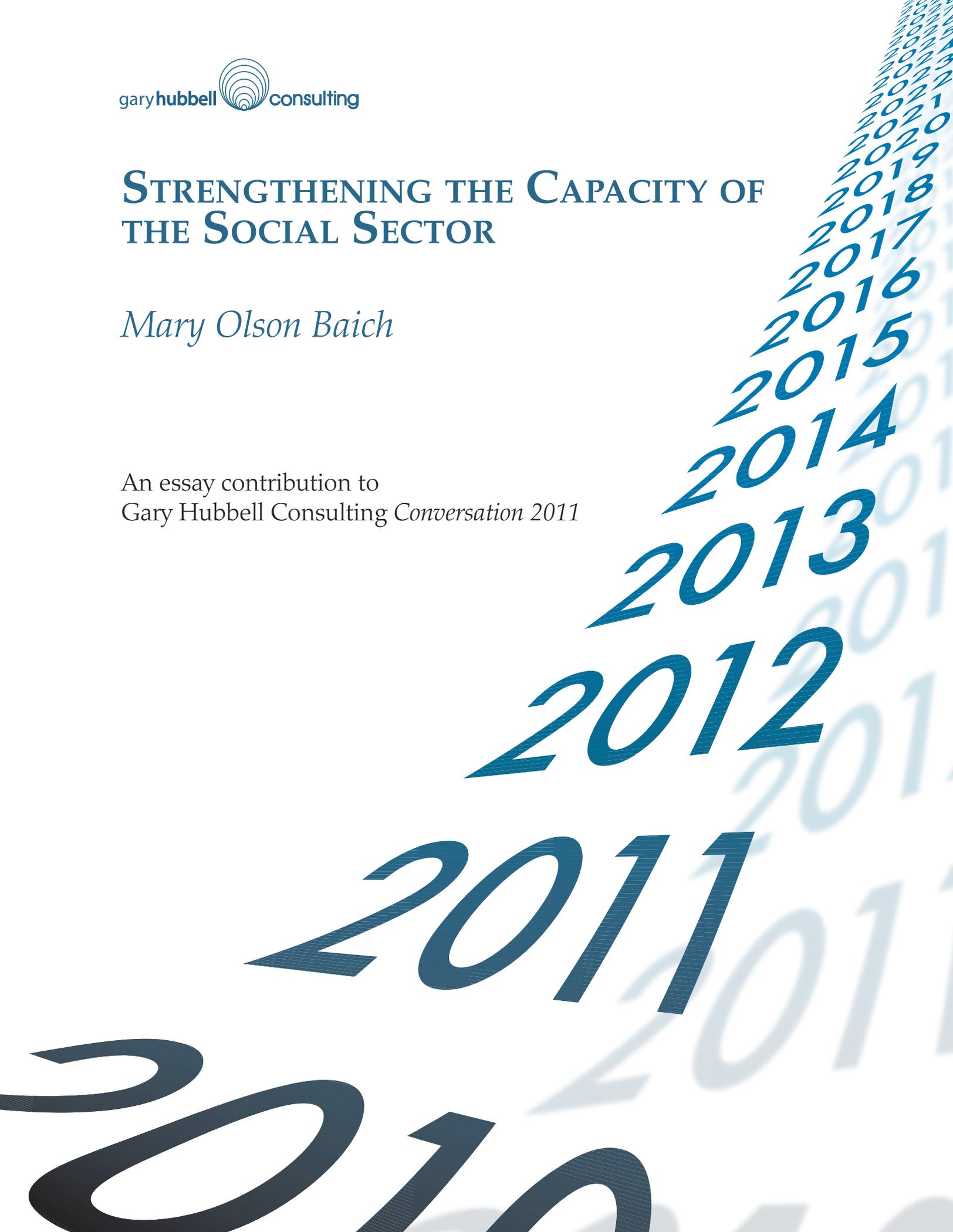


STRENGTHENING THE CAPACITY OF THE SOCIAL SECTOR

Mary Olson Baich

An essay contribution to
Gary Hubbell Consulting *Conversation 2011*



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ABOUT GARY HUBBELL CONSULTING CONVERSATION

Annually, Gary Hubbell Consulting convenes and hosts a small hand-picked group of social sector professionals from throughout North America for three days of intense dialogue and critical thinking. We strive to create a thought-provoking, mind-opening, and stimulating conversation about philanthropy, organizational leadership, and social sector change. This deep exploration of the nature and challenges of the philanthropic environment is intended to engage, inform, and inspire senior leaders to be catalysts for change in their own organizations and communities of influence. With each *GHC Conversation*, we seek to establish the seeds of a continuing and enriching network that nourishes us as individuals and helps each of us change how we converse, inspire, and seek new dimensions of philanthropy.

Gary Hubbell Consulting *Conversation 2011*



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Mary is a leader in the faith and health movement. Currently she is president of Vesper Society, a small, faith based operating foundation located in San Francisco. Vesper Society promotes social justice locally and globally, with a major emphasis on equitable access to health care for populations on the fringe of society. Currently we are involved in six project areas, including those in healthcare, religious pluralism, and the development of youth and trust in a community. Geographically the partners are located in South Africa, Chicago, IL., and one in the San Francisco Bay Area. Vesper seeks to protect human dignity and enhance human potential in all that we do and in whatever geography we work.

Prior to leadership of Vesper Society, Mary initiated, implemented and rooted the community benefit function within Fairview Health Services, a large health care system in Minnesota. When she completed her Master's in Healthcare Administration at the University of Minnesota in 1991 Mary joined the Fairview organization. There she was given the resources and support to develop a highly regarded community health and church relations function for the faith-based health system. She developed a "System Approach to Community Health," which was immediately approved by the Corporate Board. From there she went on to develop out that function in all seven Fairview care systems throughout Minnesota. Two years before she left Fairview, Mary also was Executive Director of the Fairview Foundation.

While Mary was in Minnesota she began a long, established working relationship with others in the faith and health movement. Specifically she has worked with Dr. Gary Gunderson over the past twenty years to further that work. They established the Faith and Health Consortium in Minnesota and went on to found, with others, the African Religious Health Assets Programme, based in Cape Town, South Africa.

Mary spent many years as a registered nurse, with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Pacific Lutheran University. She managed to take about a dozen years off, raising three lovely, capable daughters and spending many hours in community involvement. When she returned to nursing, it was as a staff nurse at the prestigious Stanford University Hospital.

This is Mary's first *GHC Conversation*.

STRENGTHENING THE CAPACITY OF THE SOCIAL SECTOR

By Mary Olson Baich

When presented with the challenge of writing an essay on philanthropy twenty years out, I rather thought it was presumptuous to think anyone could predict that. So I had a bit of soul-searching to do even before beginning this essay. In addition, I never think of myself as being a philanthropist. I am a healthcare administrator. In my current position I connect what I/we see as healthcare needs/opportunities with underserved people and foundations who need to spend money in that way. It seems that it is more of a business transaction than an effort to provide for the well-being of humankind. However, my personal passion leads me to take a position such as this with Vesper Society, paid less than other positions, but I care deeply for people who cannot access the healthcare that they need to live a productive life. That is my personal soft spot. Some can't even find the water they need for daily living, much less healthcare. Then, being a leader in the not-for-profit world, I work for a Board of Directors which is passionate about doing good. Their vision is of a more compassionate world and they work very hard to define what is needed and what they can do for people who are in need.

My next challenge then was to define philanthropy. I went to school in healthcare. We never had to define philanthropy. So I went to the modern dictionary, Wikipedia, and this is what I found:

Philanthropy is defined as the effort or inclination to increase the well-being of humankind. It combines two words, *philos* "loving" in the sense of benefitting, caring for, nourishing, and *anthropos*, "human being" in the sense of humankind, humanity, or human-ness. *Philanthropia*, loving what it is to be human, was thought to be the key to civilization. Early on in America it was connected to Christian ideals,

especially by the preacher Cotton Mather, who in 1710 published a widely read American classic, an *Essay to Do Good*.

The philanthropic spirit and practical necessity of voluntary associations moved west with the frontier throughout the 19th century, thus reinforcing the 'philanthropic and democratic' development of the American character. All of private education and religion in America have been necessarily philanthropic. Every reform movement in the history of the United States, anti-slavery, women's suffrage, environmental conservation, civil rights, feminism, and various peace movements, began as philanthropic voluntary associations. Many were, or were regarded as, counter-cultural and even outrageous when they first arose, but all were private initiatives for public good focusing on quality of life."¹

Purposes of modern philanthropy are much debated. Some equate it with benevolence and some equate it with charity for the poor. Others hold that philanthropy can be any altruistic act that fulfills a social need that is not served, is under-served, or is perceived as such by the market. Some believe it can be a means to build community. It is a known fact that when communities see themselves as being resource rich instead of asset poor, they are in a better position to solve community problems. Some believe it is a tribute to oneself and self-aggrandizement as shown by the prevalence of self-titled foundations.

Philanthropy responds to either the present or the future needs. The charitable response to an impending disaster is an action of philanthropy. Responding to future needs, however, draws on the donor's foresight and wisdom, but seldom recognizes the donor. Use of the word has settled into the categories of philanthropy and charitable giving. Philanthropy applies mainly to wealthy persons, and sometimes a trust created by a wealthy person, usually with a particular cause or objective targeted. Charitable giving typically plays a supporting role in a charitable organization initiated by someone else. Many non-wealthy persons have dedicated substantial portions of their time, effort and wealth to charitable giving. These people are not typically described as philanthropists because individual effort alone is seldom recognized as instigating significant change. These people are thought of as charitable workers.

¹ Wikipedia references retrieved January 9, 2011, from: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philanthropy>

For my essay, I would like to focus on the practice and promise of philanthropy in 2030. As we consider the future of philanthropy, I believe the industry (if you can call it that) will only get stronger. In the next twenty years, I believe we will see the strengthening of the sector. These lean economic times serve to force better business practices, consolidation of resources, and clearer definition of what is needed. In addition, as we have seen global needs for food, healthcare, housing, democracy, safety and education escalating, philanthropists will want to and need to step forward to look for long term solutions. That especially means that we need to focus on access to very basic services that support the leading causes of life for individuals.² At a community level, quality of life is dependent on leadership, participation, a sense of belonging, and an increased quality of life for everyone.

I am convinced that as we move into the next twenty years, we must plan for strengthening of the capacity of the sector by good business practices and the promise that change can and will happen. Ways in which philanthropy will mature include some of the following:

A. The Idea of Presence and Accompaniment as Opposed to Strategic and Planned

Usually, the success of social change is noticed and measured in hindsight. While it is going on, there is a great deal of visionary effort by sometimes a few and sometimes a growing body until it reaches a point of public realization of the change. Think of the social change of Martin Luther King, for example. A visionary leader gathers followers and leaders who work together, sometimes connected and sometimes not, and the movement begins to attract followers. As the scale of the effort increases, the changes begin to be obvious.

So if one steps out 20 years and tries to figure out the social changes that will happen, I would say there will be huge changes in the daily lives, role and freedom of people in developing countries. As the availability of education permeates their borders, the people will gradually gather strength and movement towards change. Much of philanthropy these days is focused on improving living conditions for the poor and under-served. Much money is being spent on the prevention and eradication of physical diseases that shorten the life span of many people. Philanthropy these days also focuses on improving the education status of those in so-called developing countries. Accessibility to a good education is a necessity for learning a trade or developing an occupation that pays a living wage. As that continues to happens, we will see real social

² Term from book of the same name, *Leading Causes of Life*. Gary Gunderson with Larry Pray, Nashville, TN, 2009.

change. As people feel empowered personally by being able to read and write and obtain expertise in fields where they can make money, then the world will change. We will see a great deal of social change. That is happening right now in South Africa, in Central American, in Iran and Iraq, in India and perhaps in South America, although that is not an area I know much about.

The way that we get to social change will change. There will be an increased convening of institutions around philanthropy that is collaborative. As noted by in “10 for the Next 10” article in the Stanford Social Innovation Review blog,³ collaboration as a style of work is being promoted both internally and externally with organizations. Rather than have silos within organizations, there are now interest/work groups. No more are there “HR” meetings and “Admin meetings.” Work groups are focused around subject areas, such as patient admissions, closing times, attracting visitors, etc. The same is true externally.

The change that is desired is preliminarily defined and a collaborative group is formed to address the issues(s). The collaborators come from organizations or institutions which have, for whatever reasons, possibly philanthropic, an interest in the desired social change. The groups will not go through the typical strategic planning process. That is far too slow and cumbersome. Change will occur as the group designs short cycle action activities that happen in real time and quickly. There will be smaller groups that carry out the short cycle action activities and then a larger group of collaborative leaders who monitor and direct the progress. It is similar to “parenting with presence.” Parenting with presence refers to a whole array of literature that suggests time spent with children needs to be of a significant quantity as well as focused quality. Parenting with presence indicates a style of relating that encourages, admires, and provides positive reinforcement to growth activities. The adoption of this approach to work with communities requires a close, supportive, relationship in which the community often takes the lead. The groups need the autonomy to indeed perform the actions needed to grow. Then there is need of a larger group to monitor progress, to help maintain continuity of action, and to provide direction of success, similar to the role of a parent.

³ Ten for Ten: Philanthropy from 2010-2020, by Lucy Bernholz, December 20, 2010 at 07:00 am.
<http://www.ssireview.org/opinion>

In this type of management, there is little need for control. The greater need is for experts to ask questions and provide expertise to the work groups as they progress.

B. Vision as it Relates to Action

The concept of vision in philanthropy in today's world is often connected to innovation. It challenges how we can bring an old topic forward in a new way. The visionary ideas related to microfinance are examples of this type of visionary thinking. Heifer International would be one example as would the savings and credit groups that Vesper Society is building in the Eastern Cape of South Africa. The idea of saving is not new, but the process of obtaining credit is outside the boundaries of normal financing today. To think that people in villages could obtain credit where there are no financial institutions is a breakthrough idea today. That idea will not be new in 2030.

What will be new (and which may already be on the horizon) is entirely new ways of doing things because of technology. We are being introduced to a bit of that through the banking industry when we can deposit a check to our bank account by using our cell phone. Whoever knew that telephone lines would no longer be needed? Technology changes are happening before we have a chance to adjust to the changes that the actions make. Thus a vision may not be out there. It may only be actions leading to somewhere, but we don't know where. I think this is the case in DVD's available online and stores no longer needed. Many retail establishments are going under because people order on line. Why mail Christmas cards when you can send them on-line? These I mention only to make the point that a vision such as philanthropy usually requires, may, in fact, emerge after the fact. The actions are leading the way.

C. Support for Growth and Expansion

One of the roles for philanthropy is often to capture an idea that makes sense, is practical and easily replicable, such as being able to provide sanitary water supply to villages not connected to any other source of water. Foundations move in and bring innovative projects to scale. Other examples are in the medical field, such as bringing medications and vaccines to remote parts of the globe. I perceive that twenty years from now there will be fewer foundations than we have today but they will be doing very collaborative work. They will bond together, focus on fewer issues and with very good information adapt to working together. I can see pharmaceutical companies working with FedEx type distributions systems, local transportation like fast rail, and workers, perhaps volunteers, distributing the medications locally. The concept of enhancing the

wellbeing of humankind will not be any one foundation's effort. But each enhancement will be the joint effort of collaborators who work together for the common good.

D. Shifting Frames

This has to do with evaluation. How will we in the philanthropic community identify success? It will no longer be measured by people served, or medications provided, or self reported stories of success. I think the whole conversation in twenty years will be around the policy changes that need to happen. The actions of change will be so diverse that only outcomes can be measured. Outcomes will be evaluated at the country level by how citizens report their level of satisfaction and well-being. Only at the local level will officials know how many people were served, etc. The nations will be held accountable for the self-reported well-being of the citizens. The Millennium Development Goals have not worked as well as they could have for a number of reasons. They are/were top down developed, so that countries did not have a grassroots role in the making of them. That was a mistake. There is no ownership of goals other than from public health officials. If everyone in a country had a cell phone on which to vote, and after some education were asked to select the top ten things they wanted to work for in their country, I believe we would have had different goals. If that had been done, then we could have looked for country areas of alignment and fostered a process of countries working together who had some similar goal(s).

E. Communicating our Gains

In twenty years, communicating will have had the benefit of a wide variety of trial and error techniques. We are blasted these days with a plethora of communicating techniques whether it is on our cell phone, in the transit station, signs on cars, lights in the night sky, or whatever. Getting the message out there is a far cry from communication. Could it be that communication will return to its oral story status? Could it be that the values that drive human experience will be shared person to person in community rather than as headlines which have very little meaning on the internet? We would no longer be saying what can I do for them, but rather let me hear the story of their accomplishment. Will the shift have occurred where we communicate what we have accomplished instead of the disasters of what has happened? In the end, we want to know if our efforts have contributed to the well-being of humankind, and not the recording of disaster.

It is time for philanthropy to move beyond individual person(s) or groups working with another set of individuals. Philanthropies need to work together, spending more time with the object of their attention, community groups, and less time in insular planning and promoting of their own specific causes. The world needs interaction among sectors so that those younger in their fields receive encouragement and mentoring from those more experienced. In addition those more experiences need to find new ways of relating so that their experience becomes a benefit to others. Work will not and should not continue as usual, but a new practice will emerge.