

The Winston Churchill Memorial Trust Of Australia

Report by Arron Wood

2007 Churchill Fellow

To review successful education for sustainability initiatives that have been replicated at a global level and to conduct an analysis of what does and doesn't work with community engagement for environmental sustainability.

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Signed:

Dated:

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INTRODUCTION

“The basic building block of peace and security for all peoples is economic and social security, anchored in sustainable development. It (sustainability) is a key to all problems. Why? Because it allows us to address all of the great issues – poverty, climate, environment and political stability – as parts of a whole”. UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon.

Through this fellowship I was able to travel to New York, London and Geneva to look at environmental education programs that have been replicated at a global scale. The bulk of study was conducted through a placement at the UN headquarters in New York and further investigation via the UN and World Health Organisation in Geneva.

I would like to thank the United Nations, in particular Carmel Mulvany Chief of the United Nations Works Program, for so graciously hosting me during my fellowship and giving me access to a fantastic array of information and contacts.

I would also like to acknowledge Jody Kennedy coordinator of the Global Run education initiative for being an inspiration in dealing with education on such a large scale.

The fellowship has been an experience I will never forget and one I am unlikely to repeat and for this my sincere thanks goes to the Churchill Trust. I intend to honour the Trust’s investment in my growth by continuing the work I started during fellowship and ensuring this work propels Australia’s reputation as a global leader in environmental education.



A painting of UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon greets visitors just before they cross into international territory

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The fellowship travel was undertaken between the 21st of March and the 27th of April 2008. The aim of the fellowship was to review successful education for sustainability initiatives that have been replicated at a global level and to conduct an analysis of what does and doesn't work with community engagement for environmental sustainability. I was fortunate enough to be hosted by the United Nations in New York and Geneva. During the fellowship I was able to meet with the Chief of the UN Works Program, talk with leading edge global education experts at both the UN and World Health Organisation, take a class at East NY High School, discuss mass media marketing of the environment with MTV and People Magazine, present to the American Education Research Association Conference and forge a strong relationship with the White Plains Education District who manage the highly successful Global Run environmental education initiative.

Highlights

- Standing in the UN General Assembly
- Visiting a tough school in East New York and addressing the class about climate change
- Establishing a strong relationship with Jody Kennedy creator of the environmental education initiative Global Run
- Being given a desk at the UN headquarters and arriving for work each day in international territory
- Arriving in Geneva to witness a beautiful, clean and exciting city acutely aware of sustainability and the environment which is reinforced by one of the worlds most extensive train systems covering every part of the entire country

Recommendations

For Australia to take its place as a leader in global environmental education it is necessary to:

- Strengthen state and federal government environmental targets to drive education and innovation.
- Change perception from environmental issues being a threat to being a huge opportunity in an emerging global industry.
- Connect Australia's environmental program with the United Nations Millennium Development Goals.
- Ensure Australians are directly networked at an international level to keep abreast of rapid change within the environmental sector.
- Continue to ramp up environmental education in the formal Australian school system.

Implementation and Dissemination

- The information gained and network of contacts generated through the fellowship will be showcased at a global environmental education event in Townsville in October utilising video conferencing to hook up 10 countries around the world to discuss climate change.
- Findings will be disseminated through approximately 20 speaking engagements across Australia, a guest spot on ABC Radio National and through my position on the National Council on Education for Sustainability a tier 2 appointment directly advising the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts.

FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMME

21st March – 11th April, New York, USA

- Meeting with MTV Producer of 'Exiled' TV series relating to the UN Millennium Development Goals
- The United Nations placement with the UN Works Program
- White Plains School district looking at the Global Run Initiative and the use of video conferencing to connect schools around the world – as a result of this visit Firestarter is provided with a \$5,000 video conference unit for use in Australian schools.
- American Education Research Association Conference – 15,000 attendees from around the world.
- East New York High School.
- The Ross School.
- Dalton School on Central Park
- AUSSIE – Partners in Professional Development. Private company offering PD in leading edge education servicing schools throughout New York City.
- UNICIF
- Cyber School Bus, Bill Yotive
- People Magazine headquarters to discuss mass media communication of environmental issues.
- Connection with the Global Youth Coordinator for the UN Millennium Campaign,

12th April – 15th April, London, United Kingdom

- Save the Amazon Rainforest Organisation (STARO)
- Closed Loop Recycling

16th April – 27th April, Geneva, Switzerland

- United Nations
- World Health Organisation
- International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives, Local Governments for Sustainability

27th April – 7th May, Italy

- Not part of the fellowship

7th May Return to Melbourne, Australia

WHAT WORKS IN GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION?

The United Nations

Globally the UN is second to none in its reach, breadth and issues covered, but the question needs to be asked about the depth that can be achieved with such a wide charter and stakeholder group. To achieve some focus and better direct scarce resources the United Nations held a Millennium Summit in the year 2000 and what resulted 189 heads of State and Government signed a declaration to work toward eight Millennium Development Goals (MDG's). The goals which Australia would do well to align with are:

1. Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger
2. Achieve Universal Primary Education
3. Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women
4. Reduce Child Mortality
5. Improve Maternal Health
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and Other Diseases
7. Ensure Environmental Safety and Safe Drinking Water
8. Develop a Global Partnership

Under each motherhood MDG is a set of measurable targets. The MDG's were signed off by all nations, but a review in 2002 realised that most countries would not reach the agreed goals in the timeline specified. Under each motherhood MDG is a set of measurable targets. The UN understood that to ensure successful implementation mass public buy in to the MDG's was required.



The successful promotion of the MGD's has been driven by a global millennium campaign aimed at generating ownership at a national level allowing each country to engage with the goals at whichever level they feel comfortable. This has led to many countries across the world setting up national civil

society coalitions which are grassroots driven and enable on ground local and regional action without becoming bogged down in global networking.

Through the fellowship I was fortunate to meet with Amil Husain the Global Youth Coordinator for the UN Millennium Campaign. It was clear that his role could at times be overwhelming and he was refreshingly frank when evaluating success of the campaign at a global level. In respect to global networking the UN education campaigns have been more successful at a pure mobilisation level as opposed to tangible educational outcomes. It is this mobilisation, however, that has been crucial to the establishment of a national civil society coalition in every country.

This has driven the establishment of thousands of local, regional and national bodies aligning themselves with the implementation of the MDG's at a more on ground level. In effect the UN provides an umbrella framework which ensures some degree of consistency in the direction the world is taking and each country then adds its local context, understanding and resources.

The World Health Organisation has been a little more successful with direct implementation and awareness with initiatives such as World Malaria Day. This rings true for many of the UN supported NGO's and the main reason for this is a more specific issue to work with. It is far easier to target malaria or teen pregnancy education than the vast issue base associated with sustainability. In this respect environmental organisations would do well to learn from organisations such as the World Health Organisation in initially narrowing focus to attract interest and once engaged widening the agenda to consider the wider subject of sustainability.

Another recipe for success that the UN has applied well is that of celebrity involvement in UN project and initiatives. The first celebrity involvement occurred back in 1954 and it is now a key component of UN promotion and marketing. Not only does this raise the profile of issues and projects globally it also directly translates to financial support. Recently George Clooney was able to raise \$1 million for a food helicopter in Darfur. The power of celebrity is something any global environmental education program should harness.

International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives

The International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) is a global organisation of Local Governments undertaking actions at a local level. ICLEI is an excellent example of a global organisation playing a facilitation and empowerment role where participants are able to share knowledge, offer technical expertise and tell the good news stories of Local Government's across the world.

The similarity with Firestarter's own youth peer teaching model was clearly evident and this network was a case of people learning best from people just like themselves. ICLEI has been extremely successful in reporting on Local Government achievements, particularly with respect to greenhouse abatement programs and actions. One defining lesson can be learnt from the ICLEI experience of pulling all the savings from individual councils into one big number and that was the importance of empowerment through sharing the journey with like-minded participants.

If the UN is 'think global' then ICLEI members are definitely 'think local', however ICLEI itself takes the network a step further to think global again and share the burden of global change.

Other Successful Programs

There are many successful education programs, but very few that have enjoyed national or international success. New York City is the official headquarters for a host of programs that have been able to make the leap from local or regional application to be relevant at a much broader scale. It became very clear that the reach of the UN was far greater than the motherhood MDG's when meeting representatives from the organisations below. Each organisation is either supported by, took advice from, was initiated in partnership with or received endorsement from the UN in some capacity.

Many of the programs share one common element and that is a strong web support or they are entirely web-based. **TakingITGlobal** is one example of a UN backed web project that boasts the largest online community of engaged youth in the world. With over 180,000 members from 250 countries it is a hugely successful resource sharing and advocacy model. One of the major lessons learnt from Emily at TakingITGlobal was the importance of regularly updated relevant content delivered in a way that is non prescriptive and can be utilised by members within their own context. They have also taken advantage of emerging networking trends such as Facebook to communicate their message to the youth market.

The **Global Run** initiative is a successful mix of action, global empowerment through video conferencing and authentic outcome-based learning. Jody Kennedy was successful in getting UN endorsement for this project which is an interdisciplinary, international service-learning model that motivates students to explore world issues and become active global citizens. Activities involve raising awareness; taking action; connecting to standards-based learning; and reflecting on and celebrating accomplishments. Global Run appears to be one of the more exciting international models and through the fellowship a connection will be made with Jody's project at our next environmental education conference in Townsville in October.

Envirolution has been established by Australian Tim Polmateer now based in New York who is seeking to mainstream the environment and make it easy for people across the world. This program was only just being launched at the time of this fellowship, but it is an excellent example of how to popularly market the environment. It has taken Envirolution two years of intensive research and development to reach launch stage and this is another organisation that will be worth linking with in the future.

Bill Yotive from Cyber School Bus is based at the UN and was quick to identify **iEARN (International Education and Resource Network)** as a useful resource when targeting the traditional school system. It is the world's largest non-profit global network that enables teachers and youth to use the Internet and other technologies to collaborate on learning and change projects that relate to public good outcomes. The great thing about this resource is it allows collaboration between schools and students which creates the necessary empowerment when addressing a global issue such as climate change. Any global education initiative should make contact with iEARN, both from a networking and educational credibility standpoint. From further investigation it was clear that iEARN carries significant weight in the US school community and abroad.

For an example of an advocacy web based project that actually generates action **Dosomething.org** is highly successful. It has over 500,000 hits per month and again it has the endorsement of the UN and particular the UN Global Youth Coordinator. This organisation has the support of some hugely well connected Directors and includes people such as the creator of Facebook. The success of this program reinforces the need to look to non traditional methods of communication and networking. There is still a perception by members of the older generation that things like Facebook aren't reputable or useful forms of global networking.

In all cases the initial stimulus and networking must be underpinned by integration into the formal education system for ongoing wide scale uptake. The Wallerstein Collaborative For Urban Environmental Education was established in 2000 at New York University and it's main goal is to provide content, support, direction and resources with a view to stimulating teachers to incorporate environmental education in their classroom teaching.

Without this type of localised support for integration, environmental education remains the domain of enthusiastic and committed practioners going above and beyond the call of normal duties to provide this experience for their students.

Even the global charity World Vision is looking towards regional and local delivery of education and awareness raising campaigns through the traditional school system. They are also repositioning themselves to tackle climate change from the perspective of its greatest impact being realised in poor

nations and that poverty itself must be addressed if we are to genuinely address climate change and population pressures.

WHAT DOESN'T WORK IN GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION?

The UN budget aside from peacekeeping is only \$2 billion and to put that in perspective the NYPD cost \$2 billion just to police New York City. This means that UN service delivery must come through the myriad of Non Government Organisations (NGO's) that are in effect the action arm of the UN.

Names such as the UN Children's Fund, World Food Program, UN Development Fund for Women, UN Environment Program, UN High Commission for Refugees and even the World Health Organisation are all delivery arms for the United Nations.

The sheer magnitude of issues and lack of funding mean that the UN itself is understandably rather cumbersome. With reference to the fellowship investigation trying to initiate a global environmental initiative through the UN would not work. To make things happen quickly it would be better to get UN endorsement, but run outside the UN organisation in a type of service delivery model which is exactly how many of the NGO's currently operate.

It is also clear that this arena is becoming more crowded by the day and greenwash is a real concern in losing the confidence of the general public, so much so that the ACCC identified a crack down on those businesses greenwashing. This was hugely apparent in the US where there is even an entire TV channel dedicated to the environment. The major risk to environmental education is a loss of trust in the green movement, a high degree of confusion generating inertia and green overload again leading to disenchantment with the sustainability sector.



The US has an entire channel dedicated to environmental shows

Another issue to be aware of arose from presenting at the American Education Research Association Conference which clearly demonstrated a disconnect between the academic community and the practitioner level. Research and sound theory underpin many of the successful programs that were

investigated however, it was the presence of real world thinking that enabled successful implementation of this theory.

East New York High School was a clear example where the practical application was well short of the theory. Many of these teachers were simply surviving in what was an extremely tough school. A clear lesson learnt is that the reality of many people coming from regions of disadvantage make global application of a single initiative unlikely.

It is also necessary to bridge the gap between research and practice much more effectively for the world to move forward on environmental education.

CONCLUSIONS

It is extremely difficult to design or define a single initiative capable of global replication, but it is possible to provide methodologies or tools which are non prescriptive in nature that allow room for local interpretation and ownership.

Lessons learnt are as follows:

- Implementation of a single global education initiative is unlikely due to different languages, cultures, religious views, level of disadvantage and base understanding of environmental issues.
- Any model replicated on a large scale must be non prescriptive, capable of adaptation to local and regional needs, able to engage in varied social constructs, integrated into the formal school curriculum, accompanied by popular mass media marketing and lend itself to a train the trainer style of implementation.
- Any global initiative must have relevant, regularly updated content and should take advantage of emerging networking trends such as Facebook.
- Many successful global initiatives engage a high profile patron or spokesperson. The UN has traditionally engaged high profile celebrities to good effect.

We need to think global and act local, an old saying that rings true for environmental education. We do, however, need to add more to that old saying making it 'think global, act local and think global again'. This really means that Australia needs to examine global trends, become a hothouse for local innovation and then educate the global community to realise its potential as a leader in environmental education.

Australia must harness all sectors of society to bring about environmental change. We need clear leadership from government, advocacy and action from our citizens, global awareness and a business community ready to invest strongly to establish a sustainable future; despite the short term pain.

Australia must also foster its local talent as this fellowship revealed that Australia is one of the world leaders in environmental education and this is echoed in the statement provided by the UN in support of this fellowship.

“The proposed project is an imperative for furthering the already successful environmental education initiatives that Arron and his team have established in Australia. The United Nations has been very successful in delivering global education programs and it is for this reason that Arron and return Australia will benefit greatly from this project. We are at crisis point with regard to our natural environment and Arron has recognised that innovative environmental education is the key to bringing about a cultural change in how we perceive and use our planet's resources. We also look forward to the knowledge exchange that Arron will facilitate when he conducts his research project as we understand how successful his programs are in Australia. The United Nations really hopes to support workable solutions to environmental education and Arron's Kid's Teaching Kid's Program is one of these”.

Carmel Mulvany, Chief, United Nations Works Program

RECOMMENDATIONS

For Australia to take its place as a leader in global environmental education it is necessary to:

- Strengthen state and federal government environmental targets to drive education and innovation.
- Change perception from environmental issues being a threat to being a huge opportunity in an emerging global industry.
- Connect Australia's environmental program with the United Nations Millennium Development Goals.
- Ensure Australians are directly networked at an international level to keep abreast of rapid change within the environmental sector.
- Continue to ramp up environmental education in the formal Australian school system.

Implementation and Dissemination

Through reworking of current environmental initiatives that I currently deliver and through my advice and expertise provided through board and committee positions that I hold. I also conduct approximately 25-30 speaking engagements per year where I will incorporate a reflection on the findings of this project. Australia needs leading edge expertise to address our environmental crisis. Successful models already exist, we just need to bring them home. I also mentor young people through the river health program I run and I will impart the knowledge gained during this project.

Dissemination has already included an interview with Alex Sloan on Canberra ABC, a guest spot on Network Ten's morning show 9am, a keynote address to the Melbourne FutureLab which is a generation Y conference and a speakers spot at the business leaders forum in Canberra.

Implementation actions resulting from this project include:

- Running a global environmental education event discussing climate change in Townsville in October this year involving 8 countries via video conference and working with fellowship contact Jody Kennedy.
- Developing a proposal for a kids teaching kids environmental education event to be hosted by White Plains, New York in 2009.
- Participating in a Video Conference with the UN for World Environment Day to be held in the week leading up to World Environment Day. This will occur on May 28th.