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April 4, 2013

Dear Friends,

Last week we sent Part One on identifying Founder Syndrome from the how matters (<http://www.how-matters.org>) blog of former Firelight staffer, Jennifer Lentfer. This week we are sending Part Two, focusing on what leaders, board, and staff can do to reverse the negative effects of founder syndrome.

Last week's newsflash generated many comments from the readers. It is clear that founder syndrome is something many people are experiencing at their organizations. We hope the actions and strategies included in this edition of the Newsflash will be helpful as you work to strengthen your organizations.

As always, we welcome your comments and feedback.

Sincerely,  
The Firelight Team

(Call for Proposals) UN-HABITAT: Urban Youth Fund 2013  
(Call for Proposals) Project Inspire 2013 Grant for Empowerment of Women  
(Resource) Founder's Syndrome: How Organizations Suffer... And Can Recover (Part 2)

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(Call for Proposals) UN-HABITAT: Urban Youth Fund 2013

Applications are invited by UN-HABITAT for the Urban Youth Fund 2013 which aims to support urban youth in developing countries. These grants focus to promote youth empowerment as the solution for better urban governance. This fund promotes the poverty reduction aims of Millennium Development Goals and the Habitat Agenda for better, more sustainable and equitable towns and cities throughout the developing world. It provides grants of up to \$25,000 for new ideas and solutions for job creation, good governance, adequate shelter and secure tenure.

Applicant organizations must be led by young people aged 15-32 years and be based in cities or towns in developing countries to qualify for a grant. Support will be provided primarily for those working to improve slum conditions and to raise opportunities for young people growing up in poverty. Projects encouraging gender equality or

involving partnerships with the government or the private sector are particularly encouraged.

**Eligibility & Criteria:**

- Young men and women aged between 18 and 32 years may apply for the Fund through legally registered, youth-led non-profit, non-government organisations (NGOs). Projects must be implemented within a city or town with more than 10,000 inhabitants.
- Organisations must have been legally registered for at least one year in one of the following regions: Africa; Latin America and the Caribbean; Asia (excluding Japan); Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand). They must be non-profit, non-government (NGOs or CBOs) although UN organisations, government organisations and private enterprises may engage in partnership with youth-led organisations. They must have a valid bank account. They must involve girls and young women at all levels of decision-making.
- A Non-governmental Organization (NGO), Community organizations are eligible to apply.

**How to apply:**

- The application is ONLY available online in the following languages; English, French and Spanish. The application must be made in the same language as the one selected, and must be completed in full. The system will not allow applicant to submit the application unless all fields are completed and all compulsory attachments are submitted.
- Applications submitted in hardcopy or by e-mail will NOT be accepted.
- Please make sure that applicants finish the application and submit all compulsory attachments in the system before the deadline. The deadline is final and not up for discussion.

**Deadline to apply: 15 April, 2013.**

For more information, please visit: <http://www.unhabitatyouthfund.org/Default.aspx>

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**(Call for Proposals) Project Inspire 2013 Grant for Empowerment of Women**

Project Inspire: 5 Minutes to Change the World is a joint initiative by the Singapore Committee for UN Women and MasterCard to provide grants for creating a better world of opportunities for women and girls in Asia Pacific, the Middle East and Africa.

Launched in 2011 in celebration of the 100th anniversary of International Women's Day and the 25th anniversary of MasterCard in Asia/Pacific, Middle East and Africa, Project Inspire presents 18-35 year olds with a 5-minute platform to pitch their inspired idea to the world and win a US\$25,000 grant. The grant must show creativity and sustainable impact in the lives of women and girls across Asia, Pacific, the Middle

East or Africa through access to business and livelihood skills.

To qualify for the US\$25,000 grant, the project must meet all of the following requirements:

- The program must enable disadvantaged women and girls to attain sustained livelihood through business and livelihood skills
- An existing women's empowerment program
- Beneficiaries must be women or girls in Asia/Pacific, Middle East or Africa
- The winner(s) of this competition will have to commence fieldwork by 1 December 2013
- The project is designed to be implemented with a US\$25,000 budget

Entries should be submitted in the form of either a (maximum) 5-minute video OR a (maximum) 2-page A4-sized proposal.

Video entries are to be uploaded on public video-sharing sites such as YouTube or Vimeo. A link to the video must be provided in the submission form.

Submissions, either video or written, must be made in English.

Each proposal should address the following questions:

- What is your inspirational idea?
- How will your project change the lives of women and girls in the short and long term?
- Tell us how many women and/or girls will benefit directly and indirectly from your project.
- How will you/your team carry out the project?
- Tell us the activities you have planned in order to reach your goal.
- Please include key phases relevant to your project i.e., ground preparation, pilot phase, training period, evaluation etc.
- How will you spend the US\$25,000 grant to carry out the project?
- Please include a detailed budget plan on how the US\$25,000 grant will be utilized, clearly indicating distinctions between programme expenses, operational cost, manpower cost and other spending relevant to your project.
- How will you measure the success of the project?

Submissions should be accompanied by information on the existing program, biographies of the team members and any supporting materials (e.g. website, social media channels, media features, past awards). Please submit all additional information in one document.

**Deadline to Apply: 30 June, 2013.**

For more information,

visit: [http://www.5minutestochangetheworld.org/get\\_involved.acv](http://www.5minutestochangetheworld.org/get_involved.acv)

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(Resource) Founder's Syndrome: How Organizations Suffer...And Can Recover (Part 2)  
*[If you missed Part One on identifying founder syndrome, you can read it at <http://www.how-matters.org/2013/03/24/founders-syndrome-part-i/>]*

The actions for the founder, board members, and staff described below are intended to help an organization or team become more stable and proactive, thereby overcoming founder's syndrome. Even when actions are taken, each team or organization adapts according to its own needs and nature.

Just remember, major changes don't happen overnight and are never done perfectly. Start simple, but start!

### **What can founders do to avoid founder's syndrome?**

First, if you are the founder of a brand new organization or team and you are just starting out, build it right. Build it to sustain for the future. Build it from the beginning as if you *won't* be there to see it through its life.

1. Acknowledge that some day, you will leave the organization or team. The only way to ensure that your legacy is to acknowledge, right now, that you cannot be there forever. Take that to heart and be conscious of it as you plan for your organization's future. You will then be more likely put the needed tools in place.
2. Formalize the vision and values that are at the heart of the organization. Create a working mission statement and strategic plan that will guide both the board's future decisions and those made by the staff. There is nothing to say that these won't change over time. But the core of what is important will remain, and will be another part of your legacy.
3. Find and accept a mentor outside the organization to help you change your style of leadership. Founder's syndrome comes from doing what's natural for you. Changing your leadership approach may seem rather unnatural. Seek and accept help from someone who can help you work out these personal aspects of your eventual separation from the organization.
4. Set direction through joint planning activities. Support the board and staff to carry out strategic planning. Ensure mutual understanding of the organization's goals and strategies.
5. Delegate, delegate, and delegate! This can motivate staff and volunteers to meet the organization's goals. Get their input as to how the tasks can be completed. Give them the decision-making authority to complete the tasks. Celebrate their successes!
6. Conduct regular meetings to hear input from staff and volunteers—and make sure you're not the only person talking. Develop staff-driven procedures for routine, but important tasks.
7. Guide resources to meet goals. Share management challenges with the board or leadership and ask for supportive policies to guide management.

8. If you are thinking about leaving, create a succession plan that proactively deals with all the things you (or the board) is scared might happen when you leave, such as:
  - Ensuring the link to the community,
  - Preserving the public image of the organization,
  - Documenting the institutional memory of the organization that resides inside your head, or
  - Continuing fundraising and external relationships.

As part of your succession plan, train and mentor someone now who could replace you, even temporarily, in the event something happens to you. This doesn't mean you are going anywhere soon. You may not be leaving for the next 10 years! But find someone with whom you can share your institutional knowledge. Train them to share the load now, while you still can.

### **What can the board do?**

Making a change in leadership style is often confusing, lonely, and stressful for the founder. The board can be the founder's greatest help.

1. Understand and take full responsibility for the role of board member. Insist on focused board training to review the roles and responsibilities of a governing board. Undertake a yearly self-evaluation of the board to ensure it is operating effectively.
2. Once a year, conduct a key exercise: pretend the founder suddenly left the organization. Who will/can quickly step in? Are you sure? What activities are the staff really doing to carry out programs? In the case of non-profits, what grants does the organization have to perform against and report on when? What is the cash flow situation? What stakeholders must be contacted? Where are the files/records?
3. Strategic planning is one of the best ways to engage the board and take stock of the organization. Conduct regular and realistic strategic planning with the board and staff. Focus on the top three or four issues facing the organization or team. Although most organizations scope plans to the coming three years, focus careful planning on the next 12 months. Establish clear goals, strategies, objectives, and timelines.
4. Develop a highly participatory finance committee. Too often, boards can be reluctant to face the founder by getting involved in finances. However, troubles with a director's performance are often revealed in financial problems. If a director struggles or leaves, finances are usually the first to become major problems. Therefore, closely review regular cash flow, income and balance statements.
5. Don't be part of the problem! Don't take on the traits of the crisis-driven founder and staff, or worse yet, just ignore the issue. Meet consistently and make decisions based on mission, planning, and affordability, not on urgency. Avoid the notion of any quick fixes, such as hiring a deputy director with "people skills." This doesn't address the problem and may make things even

worse.

6. Help board members and staff to keep up their hopes through regular communication. Remind each other that the recurring problems are the result of the organization's success and that current changes are to best serve the needs of its customers. Note that staff members' morale will improve as they perceive stability, security, and progress.
7. Support the founder with ongoing encouragement and affirmation. The founder will change to the extent that he or she feels safe, understands the reasons for change, and accepts help along the way.
8. Carefully and consistently monitor implementation plans and deviations from those plans. Don't hold the founder to always doing what's in the plan or budget, but do hold him or her to always explaining deviations and how they can be afforded.
9. Implement regular performance plans and review for the founder. Include his or her input. Evaluate the founder according to meeting strategic objectives and to his or her job description.
10. Consider policies to carefully solicit feedback from staff to board. Establish a grievance procedure where staff can approach board about concerns if they can prove they have tried to work with the founder or director to resolve these issues.

### **What can staff do?**

Founder's syndrome can be quite stressful for staff. They can lose motivation amidst the continued confusion and anxiety in the workplace. If they've been in the organization long enough, they, too, can become part of the problem.

Staff can also play a major role in helping the organization to recover from founder's syndrome. However, staff may be in somewhat of a high-risk situation because the founder (who often values loyalty at least as much as effectiveness) may perceive staff actions as hurting the organization or team, rather than helping it.

1. If you are trying to help the founder, organization or team to recover or improve, use the organization's structure. That is, communicate your concerns (and better yet suggestions) with colleagues, whether that is the founder or not. Give them a chance to address your concerns. Promptly go to the board only if symptoms of the problem result in discrimination or harassment of you.
2. Don't personalize your descriptions of concerns by blaming them on someone. Always accept your own responsibility in the health of the organization or team. If you communicate concerns, be respectful and tactful.
3. Monitor whether the organization or team is recovering or not. Has the organization made substantial changes and the symptoms have decreased? Or, do you see the same symptoms over and over again? Have you given enough time to address concerns?

### **What can everyone do?**

Eventually, most founders realize they must change the way they operate. Many go on

to develop their leadership skills. To do this, they realize that change will come from within themselves, and they need all the support they can get.

If you find yourself in a situation characterized by founder's syndrome, here's some advice to ensure you get the support you need:

- Understand that the problems are not all your fault—you're doing the best you can.
- Be willing to ask for and accept help.
- Communicate often and honestly. (Be prepared that this is sometimes difficult for crisis-driven, "heroic" leaders.)
- Engage in stress management.
- Be patient with yourself, your leader, your board, and staff.
- Regularly take time to reflect and learn, particularly about your value in service to others.

This resource came from the How Matters blog of former Firelight staffer Jennifer Lentfer. She adapted it from <http://managementhelp.org/misc/founders.htm>.

To read more and to follow Jennifer's blog, please visit: <http://www.how-matters.org>

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As part of the Firelight Foundation's Capacity Building Program, Firelight provides "Newsflashes" to share relevant resources and information with our active grantee-partners via weekly emails and via post on a monthly basis. We hope that by facilitating access to information for grassroots, community-focused organizations, programming for children and families, as well as organizational development, is enhanced. Past editions of the Firelight Newsflash can be found on our website: <http://www.firelightfoundation.org/newsflash.php>.

We welcome your comments, feedback and ideas for upcoming Newsflashes at [newsletter@firelightfoundation.org](mailto:newsletter@firelightfoundation.org).

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