

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION
BUILDING BRIDGES COALITION

THE BROOKINGS INITIATIVE ON INTERNATIONAL
VOLUNTEERING AND SERVICE
SUMMARY

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SPEAKERS:

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Brookings Institution

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MS. ANASTASOFF: So exciting, I had the pleasure of being at one of the working sessions today, and it was so clear, the excitement, the bubbling up of ideas and opportunities from the amazing people in this room here together. I am very excited to be helping to facilitate the summary of those sessions. Thank goodness, I don't actually have to give a summary in three minutes, by the way, everyone. Thank goodness, I don't actually have to give that summary.

My name is Jennifer Anastasoff, and I just want to let you all know that there will be some amazing time for networking at our next meeting at lunch which we will get out very soon to.

I have been working with the Building Bridges Coalition for quite some time. Again, my pleasure here today is to introduce these amazing folks who have been leading the working session tracts.

The one thing that I want to say stuck out from the corporate session for me was with the concept

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that there are a lot of loose ends. A lot of times when you are talking about volunteering, it feels like there are a lot of loose ends. My hope is that in that three minutes right now that each one of these people will have summed up all the loose ends, so when we go to lunch, we will feel very accomplished.

Nelson Mandela, just to bring up an amazing man who was quoted earlier today, said: It is not our darkness that we fear but our light.

I am looking forward to you all shedding light.

Again, I am going to tell you, just so that we all know, three minutes, please, and we have Nancy Barnett in front here who will be timing us to make sure that we stick to that. These are the signals: two minutes, one minute, and half. This one means we are about to go eat.

I would like to bring up as the very first, Steve Rosenthal, to talk a bit about the Building Bridges Coalition that Building Blocks International is proud to be a part of.

MR. ROSENTHAL: Thank you very much,

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Jennifer.

Well, I am very pleased to report back on what was originally billed as the 10:00 a.m. working session of the Building Bridges Coalition which became the 11:00 a.m. working session, but we managed to squeeze in quite an exciting and engaging session. We had representatives from many different organizations throughout our field, from many different sectors, and there was a tremendous spirit of collaboration in the room. I think that is the key highlight for this panel in my opinion.

Of course, as all you know, the Building Bridges Coalition is the prong of the Brookings larger initiative that focuses on scaling-up the number of international volunteers with an additional focus on quality as well as capacity-building. So, naturally, there was a lot of excitement in the room. This is the group that is focusing on scaling-up.

We had some very exciting ideas which I would like to share with you and some key commitments that were made. First of all, there was an affirmation of the importance of quality and best

practices. As I mentioned, this group is committed to not just increasing the scale, increasing the numbers, but also improving the quality and improving the impact of our programs. There was an affirmation of this quality of setting standards and best practices for the field.

Another key commitment was towards collaboration between organizations. One specific idea was brought up which was tremendous in that many organizations have a critical weakness when it comes to what do they do with their volunteers when they return back home. How do we empower our alumni with tools that they can use to continue this experience, to be advocates for positive global change, to stay involved with global issues? An idea was brought up to create an alumni network that spans throughout all of the different organizations to engage all international service alums from this country.

Additionally, we received wonderful suggestions about broadening the involvement of our stakeholders to involve development and relief organizations. We had a wonderful idea about

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involving technology; engaging schools; increasing marketing and awareness in the American public; encouraging working collaboratively between organizations; developing a referral network between organizations so that when people are looking for a volunteer opportunity, this field will be well-equipped to quickly identify what organizations are good fits for specific individuals; and again a focus put on activating alumni to make a difference when they come back home because it is not just about what the volunteers do in-country but their impact when they come home and what they take with them and carry forward throughout their lives is almost immeasurable in terms of the impact. I know a lot of you here, from all the nodding, I can see agree strongly with that point.

So, in summary, it was a wonderful session. I think we achieved our goal, and we are very much looking forward to the next working group session where the group reconvenes and we roll up our sleeves and we continue the exciting work as part of this initiative.

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Thank you very much.

(Applause)

MS. ANASTASOFF: I would just like to say very well done, very brief, pithy, exciting, and it made sense.

David, can you please share a little bit about your working group. Again, following that lead of key deliverables would be exciting to hear.

DAVID: We were part of the Capacity-Building Working Group and had a good conversation about the issues around capacity-building. Our key takeaway was the idea of branding volunteering with a capital V, that volunteering is a profession, that it is not just a passive, nice thing to do, but it is really changing communities, having skills-based individuals, going in, and helping improve the lives of the citizens in the countries where they serve and also the lives of the volunteers themselves. We talked about how we need to remove the barriers for entry into volunteering. So maybe someone cannot give two years to Peace Corps, but how do we engage corporate employees? How do we engage governments?

How do we engage episodic volunteers to be as inclusive as everyone that wants to be involved but has different commitments and levels of ability?

Our second point was around practicing the best practices of volunteer management. How are we recruiting our volunteers effectively? How are we preparing them? How are we matching them to the best volunteer opportunities? How are we monitoring, tracking, evaluating the work that they do? How are we helping not only send volunteers and have them prepared but also for the organizations that receive the volunteers, how are they prepared and even more importantly, how is the community prepared to have these volunteers working and helping to improve their lives? And so, we need to make sure that regardless of the number of volunteers we have, are we getting them to where they need to be and are their experiences as effective as possible?

Finally, our third point was around the linkages of all of us who are working in different areas of the volunteer sector and how we have a sectoral responsibility of sharing our best practices

and being in touch with each other. How can we be more coordinated? We may all be working in the same country, but do we all know that we are working in that country? Are we focused on different issues? Do you know about the corporate counsels in the country that you could be connected to? So, making sure that there is clear communication, that we are not working in a vacuum and that in building the capacity, we are leveraging all the different individuals not only in this room but within our broader sector.

(Applause)

MS. FOSTER: Great; I am Lisa Foster from Pfizer representing the Corporate Affinity Group. We had a very good discussion today. I think all of the very illustrious companies around the table and others from the non-profit sector are very engaged in this initiative.

When we first came together, I think several months ago, all of us agreed that this is a wonderful networking opportunity to share best practices among companies that are already involved in strategic international volunteering or who would like to become

involved. As we have gone over the past several months, we have had several different conference calls with the corporate members. There was an expressed interest in having a very specific objective with specific outputs and deliverables for our group.

As a result, today the objective was endorsed. I will read that to you. The objective of the Corporate Affinity Working Group is to encourage increased corporate engagement and improved social and business impact in international strategic volunteering programs.

There will be several direct outputs that will hopefully be delivered in the spring to help us achieve that goal.

Specific near-term activities for this group will be research and development of a White Paper on looking at corporate volunteering, highlighting best practice models and approaches in international corporate strategic volunteerism. There will be deep dives done on eight to ten companies, and specifically we will be looking at some of the ways in which we can make the case for business impact.

I think for a number of corporations we have tremendous expertise and assets and skills that reside within each company, and all of us are looking at ways to deploy those assets most effectively to have social impact on the ground but also to bring business impact to the companies. In a time where with increased globalization as these global corporations operate in different regions around the world, how can we demonstrate to CEOs and other senior leadership at companies that this is the right thing to do but also a very strategic important business thing to do?

Also, FSG social impacts advisors will be conducting this research for us. In addition, there is also other research ongoing through LBG Associates and Linda Gornitsky that is much broader research looking at where international volunteering is one component. So, there are some complementary research initiatives going on, and the results will come out in the spring.

The group also talked about the opportunities in the near term to convene and share lessons learned. So we will be sharing this research.

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Future activities were discussed for the working group. Some of those were developing a comprehensive landscape and database of corporations who are engaging in international volunteering, creating a business case as I just mentioned, developing new measures for strategic volunteers and that has come up a number of times in terms of what are the metrics that we are using to evaluate our success, and also the coordination of across-company site visits. A number of companies do have existing programs. There are others that want to learn from those. There are number of lessons that can be shared, I think, across companies.

Also, in the group, there was a comment to include a resource guide for companies who are interested in starting up volunteer programs. I know that several companies already have toolkits or are developing toolkits to help other companies learn how to do this.

Those were some of the immediate of thoughts. We have very tight and confined timeframes and also project plans, and we hope that when this

group convenes again, we will have some good research to share with you.

Thank you.

(Applause)

MS. SHERRADEN: Hi, I am Margaret Sheridan with the Research Group. We had a lively conversation about research, if that is possible. It certainly was the group to be with.

Several things came out of this group meeting. I think we all agreed around the table to start off that we are asking many questions, but as yet we have not built a systematic body of knowledge, especially with respect to international volunteering and service. So we have a long way to go. The field is wide open. I think that inviting partnerships and clearly the corporate sector is moving ahead on the research, and I think this is what we probably need to do, that is, to get a lot more people involved in the actual research.

But let me point to some of the key questions that we have and some of the ideas that the group had. Bob Graham who had to leave unfortunately

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-- I think if we tune into NPR, he might be on there right now -- started out with just a short description of the research brief they put out yesterday out of the corporation, showing an overall increased trend in volunteering. You will all want to look at that. Then I talked a little bit about the very limited research that we have coming out, looking at some of those CPS numbers, and I will get to that in a second.

One key question that Bill asked is: What are we doubling? I think this been a resounding question ever since we got started, and one of the things that we would like to do is work with the groups who are talking about getting some financial assistance to put more questions into the current population survey, so we actually have some data that are really more useful than what we have right now.

A second question that came up is the importance of exchange of information, a place that people can go to find other research, developing a common taxonomy and research tools that people can use in their own research efforts.

A second sort of substantive issue is the

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importance of inclusion and how we measure what the issues are for people who would like to volunteer and present volunteer programs may not actually meet their needs, what some of those barriers, and that is something I know has come up in the general discussions.

The next is the importance of and we are developing right now a survey for a global assessment of service and not just what is happening within the United States but what is happening internationally with international volunteer service. Then the really great need for impact research, this is where I would like to invite everybody to get involved in defining what we mean by that, what kinds of questions we have, and actually doing the research. Policymakers really need to know what impact international volunteering service in order to make a claim that they can then ask for increased program dollars.

To conclude, I would say the research agenda is more than just carrying out research, and it involves everybody in this room and beyond. We need people who can gain access to research sites. We need

support for research -- often much more difficult than program dollars to come up with -- interpreting finding and asking the next set of questions. So this is a partnership, and we are at the research table, inviting all of you to join in on that effort.

Thank you.

(Applause)

MR. PASTOR: I am Robert Pastor from American University, and I moderated the Campus Engagement Discussion with representatives of nine universities, most of them in this area but also from St. Louis, Washington University, and Miami-Dade as well. We represent, in effect, the large body of potential volunteers, and we are very cognizant of that.

We have dozens of ideas and dozens of commitments, which I will reorganize them just into four specific commitments that we have made. First is we reviewed a matrix or, rather, an inventory that each of our universities will take back and try to fill out to indicate what we are doing right now because it is not widely known what each of our

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universities are doing with regard to both internships and volunteering, whether it occurs in study abroad or in the summer. So we need to know as a starting point what we are doing if we are going to know how we are going to expand.

Secondly, we pledged ourselves to work together to convene a conference. David Caprara has asked whether American University would be willing to convene this conference in March or April, and he has pledged to bring Presidents Bush and Clinton to the conference. So I think that may bring a number of college presidents and others as well. In order to organize for the conference, each of our universities are going to go back and organize themselves internally to designate a leader of the staff, a leader of the students, a leader of the senior leadership of the university.

Thirdly, with regard to the pledge, specifically, we felt that the specific pledge in the Brookings Initiative doesn't really apply to universities. So we want to modify that in several ways:

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First is we want to pledge to expand existing volunteering and internships according to a list of about six or seven different categories. The exact numbers will depend on each university.

Secondly, we want to adapt these numbers to take into account the uniqueness of each university. For example, the University of the District of Columbia has one-fifth of its students international. If you could teach them about volunteerism, they might have a more profound effect than sending Americans abroad.

Thirdly, we want students to be the centerpiece of this in organizing it.

Fourthly, we want the experience not only to be an enlarged experience with more students and more volunteers but a higher qualitative experience which means that there are four key dimensions of improving the quality of the experience. First is the experience needs to be fully integrated in the local setting. Secondly, there needs to be an educational component to any volunteer experience abroad.

Thirdly, there needs to be two dimensions of value-

added; one is how do you contribute to the local community with which you are working and, secondly, how the volunteers' sense of autonomy and experience improves his or her own sense of themselves. Fourthly, the volunteer initiative has to proceed with a very different perspective than has been the case recently. We need to, in short, approach these countries with a greater degree of humility than we have been used to.

Also, in the pledge, we need to think about resources. We need to think about reducing impediments to volunteerism abroad and increasing incentives to volunteerism abroad.

Finally, connections; the critical question is how do the universities connect better to each of the initiatives that have been described -- corporate volunteer increases to non-governmental to intergovernmental organizations such as U.N. volunteers. We need to find a better way to network internally within our universities, externally to other universities. One idea was that each of our nine universities could connect through our athletic

conferences and externally beyond that to non-governmental organizations, corporate organizations, U.S. Government organizations, and intergovernmental organizations to provide the opportunities for the students as well.

Thank you.

(Applause)

MS. ANASTASOFF: Steve, David, Lisa, Margaret, and Robert, you have a lot of work to do. I say that in jest because at the very beginning, I mentioned the light. I challenge. Each of these people up here has taken their time and taken a commitment and a pledge themselves, personally, to lead either a group or an initiative themselves or a sub-initiative.

I challenge all of us including myself today and throughout the rest of the day to look within ourselves and see where we as experts can support each of these different initiatives, thinking beyond December 5th.

With that challenge, I want to call up Kristie Latulippe to tell us how we might eat today,

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and here she comes. Thank you very much.

MS. LATULIPPE: I would like to welcome you all to our next segment. There are two concurrent luncheons that are taking place today. One is the Private Sector Engagement Lunch, and that is located right across the hall in Falk Auditorium. There are five reserved tables for our corporate partners, but many are welcome to join in the available tables. The other lunch is upstairs in the Stein Room. This luncheon will gather International Volunteers, Student Engagement Partners, and anyone else that is interested in joining, for an International Volunteer Engagement discussion. Again, this is located just upstairs in the Stein Room.

Thank you very much.

(Applause)

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