Partnerships for Sustainable Development:
Challenges and opportunities of inter-sectoral partnerships for achieving the Millennium Development Goals

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Dimension: New Solutions
Abstract:

Sustainable development is essential to human security. International nongovernmental and nonprofit organizations, along with local civil society organizations are major forces advocating and working for sustainable development worldwide. In recent years research has shown that the private sector has a crucial role in the economic, political and social development in developing countries. The United Nations Development Programs (UNDP), traditionally collaborating with civil society and local government, has been redirecting its development efforts by actively engaging the private sector in partnerships. This change has largely been influenced by the growing recognition by the development community of the role that the private sector can play in progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In order to meet the challenge of implementing of the MDGs by 2015, we must engage a wide range of actors from all sectors, including the business sector, in partnership with the third sector, intergovernmental organizations and local governments. Inspired by the ongoing collaboration between DePaul University’s Public Services Graduate Program and the Growing Sustainable Business (GSB) initiative at the UNDP, this paper argues that Academia has a unique role in fostering sustainable development, eradicating extreme poverty and achieving the MDGs through the creation of inter-sectoral partnerships. The authors offer insights and recommendations for recognizing and empowering Academia’s active role in fostering global partnerships for sustainable development, global citizenship and social responsibility.
The Threat to Human Security

“It is time to realize that we live together in one world, not two. The effects of inequality and destitution are felt not only by poor people in developing countries, because poverty is not just a matter of equity or social justice—at the end of the day it is an issue of peace. In a world where poverty is persistent, stability is unlikely and long-lasting peace almost impossible.” (Wolfensohn 2002, 12)

Extreme poverty destabilizes global society. Extreme poverty exists where “households cannot meet basic needs for survival.” (Sachs 2005, 20). Those basic needs include food, clean water, medical care, education and sanitation. Extreme poverty is generally accompanied by a lack of opportunity, discrimination and disenfranchisement. Together, these conditions may breed terrorism and threaten global security. Human security depends upon eradicating this extreme form of poverty, and closing the gap between the haves and the have-nots through sustainable development. The Millennium Development Goals (“MDGs”) form a blueprint for the eradication of extreme poverty.

The Millennium Development Goals Provide a Blueprint for a Solution

Indeed the first of the eight MDGs is to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger. The eighth goal is a commitment to alleviate poverty in developing countries through the creation of a global partnership for development. The intervening six goals either deal with the causes of extreme poverty or facilitate sustainable development by eliminating obstacles or providing infrastructure necessary for development. The MDGs have given the United Nations (“UN”) and civil society a common focus; first, to help the bottom one-sixth of humanity out of the trap of poverty and onto the development ladder, and second, to help those on the development ladder ascend it (Sachs 2005, 24).

The challenge of implementing the MDGs by 2015 brings into sharp focus the need to engage a wide range of actors from all sectors, including specifically the business sector, to stimulate the sustainable economic growth and development necessary to meet the MDGs in developing countries

Need for Inter-Sectoral Partnerships

In today's world, the private sector is the dominant engine of growth - the principal creator of value and managerial resources. If the private sector does not deliver economic growth and economic opportunity - equitable and sustainable - around the world, then peace will remain fragile and social justice a distant dream. [...] That is why I call today for a new partnership amongst governments, the private sector and the international community.” (Kofi Annan)

There is widespread recognition that the traditional solutions have not worked. “Doing more of the same, by refining the solutions of the past—developmental aid, subsidies, governmental support, localized NGO-based solutions, exclusive reliance on
deregulation and privatization of public assets—is important and has a role to play, but has not redressed the problem of poverty.” (Prahalad 2006, xv). It follows logically from this, that while each sector of the global community has expertise in its core competencies, the traditional manner in which each sector has operated has not successfully addressed the problem of poverty. A new operational approach is needed—especially for communities just beginning to ascend the development ladder. Prahalad, Sachs and others have proposed partnerships between NGOs, communities that need assistance and the private sector as means of achieving a sustainable solution to poverty (Prahalad 2006, 3).

Research shows that sustainable development works best when it is accomplished through inter-sectoral efforts. Sachs summed it up when he described what he learned from his experiences working in Bolivia: “successful change requires a combination of technocratic knowledge [private sector], bold political leadership [government], and broad social participation [civil society]” (Sachs 2005, 106, material in brackets added). Or, in other words, in order to be successful in eradicating poverty, the different sectors of global society must work together. Sachs’ research shows that Official Development Aid (“ODA”) is necessary to break the poverty trap in which the poorest of the poor are caught.

**Involvement By the Private Sector**

Once, the analysis shifts to populations slightly higher on the economic pyramid, those in moderate poverty, the emphasis shifts from ODA to sustainable development and increasing involvement of the private sector. The goal is to foster the private sector’s efforts in responsible, sustainable development, i.e., development with positive local economic, social and environmental impact, as distinguished from exploitation of the poor.

“...globalization must mean more than creating bigger markets. The economic sphere cannot be separated from the more complex fabric of social and political life, and sent shooting off on its own trajectory. To survive and thrive, a global economy must have a more solid foundation in shared values and institutional practices—it must advance broader and more inclusive, social purposes” (Annan 2000, 10).

Annan’s vision of a global economy based on shared values assumes NGO engagement with the private sector as a control upon the “trajectory” of globalization either in a reactive mode as a watchdog or in a proactive role as a partner or consultant. Under Annan’s leadership, the UN has assumed a leadership role in the promoting corporate social responsibility through the establishment of the Global Compact. The Global Compact seeks to implement the value-based global economy through shared initiatives of government, civil society, U.N. related entities, NGOs, universities and the private sector. The Compact is a voluntary corporate citizenship initiative that seeks to have companies adopt ten core principles in the areas of human rights, labor, environment and anti-corruption, as a basis for their business strategy and operations. The
goal of the Global Compact is “…to promote responsible corporate citizenship so that business can be part of the solution to the challenges of globalization. In this way, the private sector—in partnership with other social actors—can help realize the Secretary-General’s vision: a more sustainable and inclusive global economy” (About the Global Compact).

**The Global Compact (GC)**

The Global Compact (GC) brings a human face to global capitalism by combining the energies and resources of business, academia, civil society and governments to address major social and environmental problems. The GC is a network composed of the UN Global Compact Office and 6 UN agencies, including the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and “all the relevant social actors: governments who defined the principles on which the initiative is based; companies whose actions it seeks to influence; labor, in whose hands the concrete process of global production takes place; civil society organizations, representing the wide community of stakeholders” (About the Global Compact). Through the power of collective action, the Global Compact is a growing initiative to promote responsible corporate citizenship by engaging the business sector to enter into partnerships with other social actors for the promotion of a more sustainable and inclusive global economy.

The GC aims to advance cooperation and partnerships through adherence to ten fundamental business principles in the areas of human rights, labor rights, environmental rights and anti-corruption. These principles are:

- **Principle 1**: Businesses should support and respect the protection of internationally proclaimed human rights; and
- **Principle 2**: make sure that they are not complicit in human rights abuses.
- **Principle 3**: Businesses should uphold the freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining.
- **Principle 4**: the elimination of all forms of forced and compulsory labor.
- **Principle 5**: the effective abolition of child labor; and
- **Principle 6**: the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.
- **Principle 7**: Businesses should support a precautionary approach to environmental challenges.
- **Principle 8**: undertake initiatives to promote greater environmental responsibility.
- **Principle 9**: encourage the development and diffusion of environmentally friendly technologies.
- **Principle 10**: Businesses should work against all forms of corruption, including extortion and bribery.

The Global Compact networks and radiation of its collaborative efforts are represented in the following illustration. The placement of Academia (and to some extent
NGOs), between the Global Compact Office and the rest of civil society, is reflective of its unique mediating role in the promotion, facilitation and monitoring of the partnerships emerging under the global compact framework.

Academia adds critical dimensions to the Compact’s operations through research and educational resources. Academia can clearly increase knowledge and understanding of corporate citizenship in dialogue with businesses, NGOs, civil society organizations, and government agencies. In addition, academia plays an important role in shaping future business leaders and educating them on the importance of responsible citizenship. The Global Compact’s Academic Network was set up in 2005. The aim of the Network is to create a loose association that can define the role of academic institutions within the Global Compact, as well as establish a more appropriate and systemic framework to make possible the participation of greater numbers of academics and academic institutions. Both the Global Compact Office and various academic institutions realize the important role that educational institutions, in general, and in particular, those schools, centers and institutions dedicated to ethics, business management and administration, can play in achieving the goals of the Global Compact.

Georg Kell, Executive head of the Global Compact, recognizes that the partnerships with academic institutions is beneficial to form a valuable platform for dialogue and to facilitate multidisciplinary research both at the microeconomic level and at the broader scale of societal change. In particular, the academic sector offers unique opportunities for the accomplishment of the goals of the Global Compact by analyzing and comparing different approaches to poverty eradication, communicating best
practices, disseminating and inspiring new ideas, offering a technical support and lending capacity.

- **Dissemination.** Academic bodies analyze and compare policies and practices, inspire new ideas, foster new values and develop new knowledge. In doing so, they can play an important part in the dissemination of the international values of corporate citizenship that the Global Compact stands for.

- **Technical support.** Academic organizations, especially those that teach management-related subjects, maintain extensive and close links with the business community through a broad range of activities, advancing new solutions to business challenges and trends. These links can be used to facilitate the progress of companies engaged in the Global Compact.

- **Lending capacity.** Academic institutions have educational infrastructure, facilities and know-how that can lend relevant added capacity to companies participating in Global Compact Local Networks, in particular in the field of collective learning activities.

The GC Office is currently revising the conditions for the participation of academic institutions. To date, the emphasis of the Global Compact has been on engaging companies and for-profit partners. The partnership level of other stakeholders is less defined. The GC rests upon the development of new practices in business. In a way, the challenge is to close the gap between “theory” and “action”. A growing body of grounded knowledge that is most commonly known in academia as action research which combines theory and research (Greenwood and Levin 1998), provides a means by which academia can actively work to reduce this gap. “Action research is an iterative process involving researchers and practitioners acting together on a particular cycle of activities, including problem diagnosis, action intervention, and reflective learning” (Avison 1999, 94). Out of this body of research and the shared interest in practical knowledge the GC and academia could find mutual beneficial relations through collaboration.

**The Growing Sustainable Business Initiative**

Similar to the United Nations’s Global Compacts, the United Nations Development Programme’s Growing Sustainable Business initiative (UNDP/GSB) is based on inter-sectoral cooperation and provides possibilities for academic involvement. The mission of the UNDP is to “engage the private sector in support of national development priorities and for achieving the MDGs” (UNDP 01). GSB works with the private sector fostering involvement by government, civil society, NGOs and other UN organizations in sustainable development projects.

Currently, the UNDP/GSB is involved in partnerships for sustainable development in the following areas of cooperation:

1. **Poverty reduction**
2. **Democratic governance**
3. Energy and environment
4. Crisis prevention and recovery
5. HIV/AIDS
6. Information and Communications Technology (ICT)

Specifically, the UNDP engages the private sector in partnerships designed to help achieve the MDGs at the local level to create linkages between “private sector investments and local development priorities through the development of new, cutting edge business models that engage a range of local partners” (UNDP 02). The GSB Delivery Mechanism is composed of three elements:

1. A full time broker in each country to act an intermediary among the various sectors involved in the project. The broker identifies, develops and supports sustainable business development projects.
2. A research platform, funded by the UNDP and the participating company, to perform the necessary socio-economic and feasibility studies to inform the business plan. The information gathered and analyzed through this research would be part of the public record and would be accessible to other civil society actors, since it was partly publicly funded.
3. A technical assistance platform to prepare local stakeholders, in particular local business people, NGOs and government, and other groups that may be involved in the implementation of the project (UNDP 02).

The GSB model provides several advantages to the global society and the entities that enter into sustainable development projects in this initiative. The GSB is designed to reduce risk in challenging and unknown business environments by providing assistance and resources at key points in the process. It also provides a visible vehicle for a company to do well by doing good. Finally, it provides the company with credibility created through a multi-sector stakeholder approach that involves the host government, civil society, the donor community as well as the investment partners. Finally, it promotes the identification of the best practices for integrated inter-sectoral solutions (UNDP 02).

Every Sector Can Contribute to the Achieving the MDGs

Each sector of society has something to contribute to the process of creating sustainable development. Academia can assist in the process by providing some of the research discussed in the second element, and, of course, in analyzing the success or failure of various initiatives. This latter step is critical to the successful replication of effective initiatives. In some cases, NGOs and academia can take on the roles of intermediaries between different sectors bringing them together, bridging cultural divides, facilitating communication and bringing about partnerships among the sectors of society. Specifically, through collaboration the partners can utilize each others’ “skills, distribution networks, management, expertise, technologies, research capacity and market skills” (IBF Report 2005, 10). There must be recognition among the potential partners of the role that each sector plays. For example, it is, first and foremost, the obligation of governments in developing countries to provide good governance. Specifically, to
combat corruption, to govern with transparency and accountability, to enact and enforce laws that protect human rights, recognize private property and the sanctity of contracts, to act in a fiscally responsible manner, to protect the environment and to provide infrastructure to the extent that it can. However, the other sectors may be able to contribute to this process by providing expertise to the government in how to draft laws to facilitate sustainable development or to achieve the MDGs.

Local, national and international NGOs hold the private sector accountable, and in essence, “enforce” the Global Compact, by monitoring and publicizing the business practices of the multi-national corporations. They, of course, fulfill a similar function vis-à-vis government. In the new model, NGOs that can overcome their traditional suspicion of the private sector can work with the private sector in bringing about sustainable development through specific initiatives. A partnership with an NGO can increase the likelihood of a project’s success. NGOs bring a certain amount of good will to the partnership that private companies do not possess. NGOs are trusted by the communities they serve. They can use this good will in furtherance of the development project by giving companies market access that they might not otherwise achieve. NGOs possess an in depth knowledge of the needs of their service community. They can use this “market intelligence” to ensure that any project with the private sector truly serves the needs of the community and does not result in social, economic or environmental exploitation. Moreover, NGOs can be valuable partners in the execution phase of the project by “marketing” the project through consumer education efforts and assisting in problem solving. Prahalad has noted that “NGOs and other socially concerned groups are by far the lead experimenters in the [Bottom of the pyramid] BOP markets…” (Prahalad 2006, 32). In addition, the NGOs openness to experimentation and organizational style may bring a more creative approach to problem solving.

Private sector involvement can provide opportunity for the poor to ascend the development ladder through jobs and training. Sachs opined that “…the single most important reason why prosperity spread, and why it continues to spread, is the transmission of technologies and the ideas underlying them” (Sachs 2005, 41). The private sector has the expertise in dissemination or marketing of technologies. With proper incentives, the private sector can innovate and market products, services and technologies that measurably improve the lives of the very poor. To be sure, the private sector does not offer a panacea for world poverty and injustice. However, the private sector has made valuable contributions to achieving the MDGs and can continue to do so. The private sector will partner with other sectors when it serves the company’s interests to do so. Research and experience show that the private sector is willing and able to assist in accomplishing the MDGs through creative partnerships that result in a win-win-win outcome for the company, the developing country and the rest of global society. Circling back to the opening premise of this paper, all civil society must come to the realization that eradication of poverty through sustainable development is essential to human security. In the words of Kofi Annan:

*In today’s world, the private sector is the dominant engine of growth—the principal creator of value and managerial resources. If the private sector does
not deliver economic growth and economic opportunity—equitable and sustainable—around the world, then peace will remain fragile and social justice a distant dream.[...]

The challenge for each sector is to analyze its core competencies to determine where it can best contribute to creation of the necessary partnerships to bring about a more equitable world economy. In particular, the challenge facing the universities of the world are: 1) what can they do to facilitate sustainable development through inter-sectoral partnership? And 2) Can the universities provide a mechanism to give voice to the concerns of the poor? The following section attempts to highlights the challenges and opportunities that academic institutions have in raising their social responsibility to building partnerships for sustainable development.

**Academic Social Responsibility**

Academic sector involvement is a vital factor in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Today, multi-sectoral partnerships with active participation of inter-governmental organizations, businesses, civil society organizations and academic institutions is indispensable for international sustainable development. Poverty, globalization, ethics and sustainability are gelling together to create the impetus to form new partnership initiatives linked to the United Nations Global Compact, the Base of the Pyramid model, the Growing Sustainable Business program of the UNDP, the partnerships that major NGOs are forming with businesses to promote sustainable development, and the MDGs being embraced by NGOs, businesses and universities.

Academic institutions, especially universities, could and should be an important lead partner (broker, facilitator) in these partnership initiatives. The capacity for leading, nurturing and sustaining such partnerships could well be the innovative future role of higher education institutions. Effective partnerships for sustainable development need the contribution of academic independent thinking, especially when partners are corporations with strong emphasis on their bottom line or government without strong public service ethics. Academic teaching and research institutions have the responsibility of consciously becoming a key player in these new partnerships in fighting extreme poverty, while promoting sustainable development through fair trade and social justice programs.

Academic social responsibility finds a fertile ground on higher education’s numerous initiatives promoting values leadership, civic engagement, service learning, and action research. DePaul University, like other member institution of Campus Compact, is investing in civic engagement on all levels and in ways that advance academic (value), quality in teaching, research and service. It is difficult to find a college campus that does not advertise its community service initiatives, service-learning courses, or research centers devoted to make a change in society. Nearly all college president members of Campus Compact, have redefined themselves and actively promoted their institution’s commitment to responsible citizenship, community engagement and public service (Langseth and Plater 2004).
Campus Compact, a coalition of more than 950 college and university presidents, is a leader in building civic engagement into campus and academic life. “Campus Compact envisions colleges and universities to be vital agents and architects of a diverse democracy, committed to educating students for responsible citizenship in ways that both deepen their learning and improve the quality of community life. The coalition challenges all of higher education to make civic and community engagement an institutional priority.” (Campus Compact website). Seventy-eight percent of students participate in some sort of service experience before they graduate, and an average 28 percent of the students at Campus Compact institutions participate in service-learning programs (Jacoby 1996).

Numerous studies have highlighted how service-learning and action research programs are mutually beneficial to students, faculty, communities and institutions involved (Howard 2000, Driscoll and Holland 1996, Jacoby 2003, Gray, Ondaatje and Zakaras 1999). By incorporating service-learning into their curriculum, faculty members facilitate a learning dialogue between theory and practice. Service learning encourages civic commitments while providing students with organizational connections and with real world applied research and learning. Service learning programs and initiatives have been instrumental for the creation of partnerships in the reconstruction and urban planning in the aftermath of hurricane Katrina.1 DePaul University’s Public Services Graduate Program, through the leadership of the Chaddick Institute for Metropolitan Development, is actively engaged in Katrina affected areas and offers faculty and graduate students expertise through service-learning and action research projects in study courses focusing on needs assessment, strategic planning and business planning.

Through the implementation of local and global service and partnerships with community based organizations, several universities have benefited by enhancing their academic quality and elevating their visibility (NAFSA 2003a). According to a RAND evaluation of service learning initiatives in higher education, most service-learning initiatives successfully expand service opportunities for students, integrate service into course work and foster mutually beneficial relationships with community organizations. However, many fail to promote sustainability to the program and for the affected community at large (Gray, Ondaatje and Zakaras 1999). The impact and sustainability of service-learning type of programs and initiatives depends in large part on the organizational commitment to make service and civic engagement a central element of academic work and study. “A commitment to service-learning can become the avenue for a larger transformational change agenda by providing a focus and a reason to consider significant changes in campus priorities, faculty roles and rewards, resource utilization and university-community relationships” (Musil 2003). Unfortunately, most innovative programs are limited in a “cycle of poverty” characterized by poor leadership visions, lack of funding and limited institutional viability (Eberst 2003). Such limitations often induce community partnership engagement activities to produce minimal outcomes.

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1 The National Service Learning Clearing House offers a useful and comprehensive list of Hurricane Katrina Relief Service-Learning Resources and Tools at http://www.servicelearning.org/nslc/hurricane_katrina/
DePaul University and Poverty Reduction

During a visit to DePaul University, Ambassador Ahmad Kamal, (Pakistan, retired), Senior Fellow, United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) emphasized that the university’s greatest asset is operating under a clear institutional mission of making changes in the life of the poor. Inspired by the mission of St. Vincent de Paul (1581-1660), a champion in organized service to the poor, Vincentian academic institutions focus their organizational mission and values in socially engaged educational programs. DePaul University (Chicago, IL), St. John’s (New York City), Niagara (Lewiston, NY), Adamson (Manila, Philippines) are among those academic institutions. By aligning their mission with their strategic planning and by orienting their international partnerships toward those projects and initiatives that would benefit disadvantaged populations, Vincentian academic institutions have great potential to unite their internal resources to generate service learning and collaborative international initiatives for promoting sustainable development and the MDGs. Systemic change, poverty reduction and global citizenship are central subjects for these Vincentian institutions and the various branches of the Vincentian family.

In 1997 DePaul University became the first higher education institution in the United States to affiliate with the Department of Public Information office of the United Nations and the first university to begin collaborations with the UN. In 2005, DePaul was invited to collaborate with the Growing Sustainable Business Initiative of the United Nations Development Program (GSB/UNDP) to identify potential business and NGO partnerships for promoting the Millennium Development Goals for the benefit of poorer sectors of the global south.

DePaul University was the first academic institution to get involved in the UNDP/GSB initiative. DePaul was invited because of its known commitment to serve and collaborate at various United Nations related projects and for its pragmatic character. In September 2005, faculty, graduate students and a group of experts from the Public Services Graduate Program, DePaul Kellstadt Graduate School of Business, The School of New Learning and World Resources began exploring four potential partnership projects with Chicago based and Midwest companies. Four feasibility studies emerged with some positive responses and collaborative invitations from various business partners.

1. Agribusiness Sector: DePaul University graduate students prepared a feasibility study that offers detailed information on the sector, needs, potential partners, and associated risks, needed to make an informed decision on sustainable agribusiness initiatives. The students contacted potential for-profit business partners including Chiquita Brands International, Sara Lee International, and the WM Wrigley Jr. Company. The study included contact information and strategies for extending the partnership with non-profit organizations such as Rainforest Alliance, La Siembra, and Oxfam International.
2. **Fair Trade Markets and Transportation Sector:** Another group of graduate students prepared a feasibility study concerning a means of facilitating the sales of fair trade handicrafts through partnerships with businesses in the air delivery and freight services. Local crafters in developing countries gain the means to improve their living conditions through partnerships with NGOs that provide oversight and support for their activities. The for-profit industry can cooperate in this chain of activity by offering their knowledge and services to these emergent markets. FedEx, DHL and UPS companies were contacted but only FedEx showed interest in the partnership.

3. **Microfinance Sector:** A third group of students prepared a feasibility study regarding microinsurance products and their availability in the developing world. Microinsurance products designed for the low-income market can complement risk management tools already offered by microfinance institutions (MFIs), such as savings and emergency loans. Three potential Midwest insurance companies were contacted as potential partners with the UNDP/GSB: Thrivent Financial for Lutherans, Nationwide Mutual Insurance Corporation and Aon Corporation.

4. **Pharmaceutical Sector:** A fourth group of students prepared a study that highlighted the best-demonstrated practices in poverty alleviation and global citizenship from each of three pharmaceutical companies: Pfizer, Merck, and Abbott. All three companies have worked towards alleviating the suffering of people, not only in the third world, but also in the United States through a variety of programs.

Several lessons were learned from these projects: 1) in order to succeed, projects of this nature should be done under the umbrella of a sponsoring organization or entity—one semester is not long enough; 2) continuity in personnel through a long-term commitment of faculty or paid graduate assistants is essential; and 3) contact with the private sector is more successful if it is done through high level networking. DePaul’s collaborative experience with the UNDP/GSB highlighted the importance of involving high profile leaders to generate more interest and participation from the for-profit sector. It also stimulated DePaul University faculty and administrators to focus on other initiatives in global poverty reduction in line with the University’s Vincentian mission. An example is the initiatives suggested by the Vincent de Paul Poverty Reduction Project.

The Poverty Reduction Project (2006), a collaborative initiative between Vincentian academic institutions, provides concrete opportunities for joining resources and aligning their missions toward common projects in line with the MDGs and toward poverty alleviation the eradication of extreme poverty (Sachs 2005). The project focuses on the creation of collaborations across students, faculty, departments and schools for the formation of effective partnerships for sustainable development in impoverished countries and marginalized urban populations. Building on the preexisting networks with the worldwide Vincentian family, the Poverty Reduction Project (PRP) aims to make Vincentian academic institutions a platform for action research, service learning and
global engagement for the formation of NGO-Business partnerships for sustainable
development. Through personal and institutional active participation, the concrete
initiatives of this project promote quality education and ethical practices for an
increasingly globalized world while working toward poverty eradication. Through the
implementation of collaborative partnerships to serve the poor and reduce poverty, the
PRP initiatives contribute to prepare students and faculty to be socially responsible
leaders committed to social justice and civic engagement. The PRP partnership model
builds on the successful approaches of the DePaul University’s Institute for East African
Collaboration, whose mission is to facilitate collaborative partnerships with Kenya-based
higher education institutions and local service initiatives of the associated with the
Vincentian family.

Recommendations

Public-private sector collaboration is essential for realizing the sustainable
development targets indicated by the MDGs. The contribution and collaboration of NGOs
and academic sector is equally important. A close and open collaboration between
governments, businesses and civil society is the key for ending extreme poverty and
alleviating poverty. The research, teaching and service identity of universities are great
assets for the United Nations’ Global Compacts and similar partnerships initiatives for
sustainable development. The experience at DePaul University teaches us various lessons
and suggests various recommendations:

1) Creating the conditions: Educating students for generative citizenship cannot be
accomplished without recalibrating the curriculum, its pedagogies, and the boundaries of
faculty work. Grant opportunities, fellowships, course reduction, and the creation of
centers that serve as catalysts for the university’s efforts for sustainable development or
related subjects are important tools that every university should consider.

2) Study abroad is not enough! Many academic institutions direct their efforts for
global citizenship education through study abroad programs for intercultural awareness
and international service (ibid.). Ultimately, study abroad programs, when applied to
various disciplines and when prepared with appropriate collaborative methods could
become an important force in fostering sustainable development in developing countries
(Tavanti, Winkler and Gunderson 2004). The key to successful study abroad programs is
the integrated engagement of students when they return. This engagement needs to be
strategically planned and linked to national and local civic engagement initiatives. Study
abroad programs are clearly important but not enough for fostering global education and
(international) civic engagement (Jenkings Skelly 2004).

3) Return of investment: Corporations who invest in social responsibility do not do so
based on their good hearts. They know that investing in values and community
engagement pays. Universities can benefit greatly by promoting their image and
enhancing how they practice their mission as socially responsible institutions. The value
of the services provided by academia directly (through the creation of dialogues,
partnership, and concrete service initiatives) and indirectly (through the education of
value-oriented professionals) could be very high. University administrators and trustees in particular have the important task of taking calculated risks toward benefiting the local and global community through appropriate investments on the university’s social responsibility.

4) Welcoming partners, opening minds and encouraging hearts: Arrange broad-based debates and dialogues on the issue of what goals make sense in the country context through workshops, seminars, conferences organized for this purpose and engage academia and research institutions to create the space for such dialogues. Make sure that relevant government ministries, civil society organizations, the private sector as well as in-country external donors take part in it. These constituencies are likely to be attracted to such workshops, seminars and conferences because of the respectability and the objectivity of the organizers.

5) Pro-poor initiatives: Universities cannot transform themselves into service agencies. Their primary role must remain education. Yet, their mission and responsibility as higher education institutions must be directed toward the creation of teaching, research and service initiatives to improve the lot of today’s world poor. Through institutionalized partnerships with NGOs, universities can engage in formulating various elements of pro-poor policies in more operational terms. The process can build on the outcomes achieved in various initiatives undertaken by UNDP on policy issues in the country context, academia, think tanks and research organizations may take the lead.

6) Global poverty is about national security too: Increasing the awareness for our globalized societies, and the work for poverty reduction is ultimately an essential direction for the United States and world security. In the words of President George W. Bush, “America’s leadership and national security rest on our commitment to educate and prepare our youth for active engagement in the international community.” (NAFSA 2003b). The worldwide work on poverty reduction should be more attentively framed as a concrete prevention of violence and conflict.

7) Academic catch-up: The academic world is waking up to the partnership revolution that is happening in light to the MDGs, sustainable development, poverty reduction and bottom of the pyramid model. Only a few academic institutions are actively engaged in collaborative projects with the United Nations. Many college and university administrators and presidents recognize the importance of taking part of this dialogue. Now is the appropriate time for investing in partnership initiatives in line with these new hopeful trends in sustainable development praxis.

8) Reinforce the role of NGOs: Both academia and business partnership initiatives, particularly through the Global Compact, the UNDP/GSB and the bottom of the pyramid approach, would greatly benefit by forming partnerships with NGOs. Large NGOs are already engaged in partnerships with the business sector to sponsor their humanitarian and development projects. The role of NGO cannot just be relegated to cosmetic appreciation and the partnerships need to be extended beyond large international NGOs.
However, NGOs and community based organizations, as well, need to be open to enter in partnership with UN agencies and business organizations.

9) Inter-sectoral consortiums: Academic institutions can play a vital role in the promotion and coordination of dialogue between business leaders, NGOs representatives, academics and administrators, government inter-governmental representatives. Within regions and countries, such consortiums could represent an essential resource for dialogue and collaborative actions for poverty reduction, sustainable development and the achievement of the MDGs. The mandate for these consortiums can be extended for interacting with each other across borders and around the globe. They could certainly work as facilitator for the Global Compact and UNDP/GSB initiatives in building concrete partnerships for sustainable development.
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