

## SESSION III : Priorities of International Philanthropy

# **Overseas Development and International Cooperation**

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Today I would like to try to answer the question: are there useful international activities a corporate philanthropy can appropriately undertake? Many would argue that international efforts are too complicated; that the results are too difficult to assess; that it is better to concentrate on needs closer to home and leave the international area to governments and large foundations.

I would like to argue the contrary. Our experience suggests that there is a broad spectrum of international needs that private foundations of varying size and capabilities can effectively pursue; that the potential returns fully justify the risks; and that the problems of program management need be no greater than those for domestic activities. Let me briefly refer to five possible areas of activity.

The first broad area may be called **international studies**. In the United States foundations have helped to stimulate and reinforce government efforts to develop area study programs. Support has been provided for major university area studies centers, basic collections of reference materials, field research and language training, and such programs could not continue to function at their current levels without private support for all aspects of their operation.

A second broad area of international activity can be described as **research, analysis, and dialogue** on international

relations issues. A need is seen in a growing number of countries for non-governmental, critical analysis of such issues as defense policy or international economic reform (in which the commercial sector obviously has a major stake). The U.S. has a plethora of independent policy institutes performing this function and recently institutes addressing international issues have been established around the Pacific Rim in countries such as Korea, Malaysia, Thailand, and Singapore. The existence of such institutions along the Pacific Rim has created promising opportunities for collaborative programs such as the Asian Dialogue Project, which has been responsible for an extraordinary improvement in the quality of communication among the participants.

A third and closely related type of international activity is **public education** on international affairs. In the United States there are institutions which help meet this need by organizing seminars for corporate executives, briefing the media, lecture series, guided tours, art exhibits, and film shows.

A fourth type of international activity, **international exchanges**, can serve to transfer "modern technologies" from one society to another, to improve political relations between two countries, or simply to improve our understanding of the modern world, and thus, our ability to live in it. Each of these purposes is valid and important. Combined they provide a compelling rationale for encouraging a fourth area, more international exchanges with broader participation.

The four areas that I have just mentioned are relatively clear-cut. They do not pose any special management problems, and can be supported through grants to organizations in your own countries. But what about **overseas development**, the fifth and final area that I would like to discuss?

Overseas development is an area that seems particularly difficult for organizations with limited experience and staff capacity. I would like to suggest, however, that there are several ways in which organizations which do not have resident staff abroad or even full-time staff in their headquarters devoted to international programs can effectively contribute to overseas development work. One method, for example, is to support voluntary organizations that do have the experience and capacity to work at grassroots levels in those other societies. Another method is to support international organizations that serve developing country needs such as the International Rice

Research Institute in Los Banos, Philippines. A third way to effectively participate in international development work is to pool resources with those of other organizations in some form of community trust that can thereby afford to provide professional program management, for example, the Asian Community Trust.

Finally, you can cooperate with the other funding organizations that do have expertise on the ground. They can help identify worthwhile projects, introduce reliable local organizations, and sometimes even help with project monitoring and evaluation.

I have tried to suggest a rich array of possibilities for constructive involvement and how these opportunities can be matched with the interests and capabilities of private grant givers whatever their size or staff capacity. We in the Ford Foundation both in New York and in our offices abroad would be pleased to cooperate with you and help in any way we can. I assume that similar needs and opportunities exist in this country, and that private givers can play a comparable role.