

Problems without Passports:
Organizations Addressing Global Challenges

International Professional Service Semester
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Executive Summary

A Final Report Presented by Junior Professional Fellows:

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Which is more important: nuclear weapons or education? Which program deserves more funding: tsunami relief or the peace-keeping missions in Darfur? Whose agenda is more potent: the United States' or China's? Whose responsibility is it to de-mine South East Asia? Where does the responsibility lie to combat climate change, stabilize labor migration, stall the spread of infectious diseases, combat the proliferation of small arms and light weapons or find a cure for HIV/AIDS?

During the spring of 2007, twenty-nine Junior Professional Fellows participated in the International Professional Service Semester (IPSS) Program of the Monterey Institute of International Studies. Designed for Fellows to gain significant experience in their respective fields of international policy, the IPSS program began with an intensive preparatory seminar in which participants discussed the issues and obstacles facing the international community today. Culminating in an intensive debriefing, what follows is meant to introduce the wide range of topics these students encountered while working as distinguished professionals around the world.

From the Organization for the Prevention of Chemical Weapons to the World Conservation Union, these dedicated students spent six months devoting their skills and talents towards the promotion of universal issues that have been at the forefront of international cooperation and concern for decades: monitoring of nuclear weapons, clean air and toxic dumping, strategic planning for drugs and crime prevention organizations, wildlife conservation, human trafficking and the promotion of a new human rights agenda.

The questions above are meant to stir discussion and debate. There is no simple answer to any of them or to the hundreds that would logically follow. During the final Capstone Seminar that all IPSS participants must complete, students came to the conclusion that there remain a handful of significant obstacles within the international community that must be addressed in order to tackle these issues. What follows is an analysis of group responses to the diversity of challenges faced within their disciplines. From the title of this paper, the conclusion is almost self-evident – our world is shrinking. We must begin to incorporate the notion that all issues are transnational – they do not belong to one person, one organization, one government or one state. All fields and disciplines are related, and it is the recognition of this fact that will propel international organizations and the world at large to tackle these issues in an effective and sustainable manner.

Promoting a Human Rights Agenda: Negotiating Power, Politics and Money

During their varied IPSS Capstone Seminar experiences, the members of the Human Rights Cluster came to the conclusion that there are a few fundamental ideas that must be promoted in order to tackle larger international issues. After much discussion, it became apparent that a holistic approach to all international issues is essential. The general agreement has been that in order to manage any of these issues, from the extraordinary to the mundane, we must address them all. This means that problems no longer belong to one nation or another, to one individual or another; they are universal. This recognition leads to the simple fact that no one field of study, research, advocacy or action stands alone.

All fields and disciplines are related. The essence of globalization, combined with a holistic view of the world, may help us progress to where we can begin to address these global challenges. In this vein, it is the hope of this group that the brief introductions we offer here will instigate, provoke, agitate and engage. Within the field of human rights, we face policy and advocacy challenges as well as obstacles in the field. The role of member States (parties to treaties, conventions and international bodies) and donor nations in all aspects of this work remains critical. Political agendas will continue to be areas of contention. Yet, in an increasingly integrated society, this is exactly the kind of obstacle we must seek to overcome.

The Way Forward in International Development

The year 2007 is the midpoint in the timeline for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). While the achievement of these eight MDGs is at various stages, there is an understanding in the development community that not enough effective work has been done to reach these goals. However, United Nations (UN) Member States and UN Development Agencies remain committed to this global development agenda through exploring new tools and strategies that will improve program effectiveness and impact. The following three organizations represent different examples of how development agencies are adapting and moving forward in order to be more effective in international development: The United Nations Development Program's 'One UN' Reform, United Nations Population Fund's strategic plan for Regionalization, and the World Bank's changing role in meeting development challenges.

Minimizing Risks and Maximizing the Benefits of Trade and Migration to Poverty

Reduction: Shifting Priorities One Policy at a Time

In an effort to simplify the ever more complicated world in which we live, we create models and reduce intricate systems into simple cause-and-effect relations that make complexity more manageable. Poverty often falls into this category and, though numerous suggestions attempt to explain poverty in simple linear relations, no simple solutions to reduce poverty have been implemented; deep pockets of poverty continue to exist in many regions of the world. Other sectors are often reduced to linear causation in relation to poverty: trade and labour migration are two such examples. While trade is often seen as the cause of persistent poverty and growing inequality, migration is seen as the unfortunate result of poverty. In this perspective, we produce a linear cause-and-effect continuum from trade to poverty to migration.

Conversely, the relationships between poverty and trade and poverty and migration are much more complicated. Trade has indeed been the cause of poverty, but poor regions can also benefit from trade, when the right conditions are put in place. Similarly, migration is commonly seen as the result of poverty, but migration can also cause poverty when strong waves of out-migration reduce the ability of a community to become self-sustainable. Nevertheless, migrants have historically been one of the strongest development forces in reducing poverty in their communities of origin. Unfortunately, in today's world where people are required to take positions that are defined and too often politicized, these issues are reframed to fulfill political agendas. Compartmentalized discourses become public domain and slowly become reality in the eyes of the world. Unfortunately in today's world where people are required to take positions that are too often politicized, these issues are reframed to fulfill political agendas.

Trade's potential for development is promoted without regard for its potential negative effects, while the liberalization of people's movement is stigmatized as a negative phenomenon. Policy makers often ignore the fact that migration is based on the same liberal principles promoted by trade. Advocates and experts in trade and migration incessantly produce evidence of how trade causes poverty when liberalization is not pursued to fulfill the interests of people. However, there is significant evidence that migrants contribute to poverty reduction in a sustainable manner. To change this paradigm, dialog that helps create policies and programs that truly maximize the benefits and minimize the risks of these phenomena must replace traditional unilateral positions.

Complexities of Public Participation in Environmental Management

In the field of environmental policy, it is recognized that global responses are necessary and in the past have been critical in establishing norms and best practices for protection and management of natural resources. What remains unclear, however, is how to ensure and improve implementation on a national level. In other words, how can this top-down, international framework be translated into country-driven or bottom-up methodologies?

A practical component to reconciling this tension is improving public participation in environmental decision-making and management. The rationale behind this approach is that sustainable development is enhanced by expanding the representation base and by incorporating local knowledge, experience and creativity. Transparency and inclusiveness also encourage ownership, commitment and accountability which can ultimately, improve the quality of implementation. (Kapoor, 2001)

The Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, signed by 178 parties in 1992, was one of the first international initiatives to focus on the importance of participatory environmental management under Principle 10 and Principle 22:

Environmental issues are best handled with participation of all concerned citizens, at the relevant level. At the national level, each individual shall have appropriate access to information concerning the environment that is held by public authorities, including information on hazardous materials and activities in their communities, and the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes. States shall facilitate and encourage public awareness and participation by making information widely available. Effective access to judicial and administrative proceedings, including redress and remedy, shall be provided.

Indigenous people and their communities and other local communities have a vital role in environmental management and development because of their knowledge and traditional practices. States should recognize and duly support their identity, culture and interests and enable their effective participation in the achievement of sustainable development.

The right to know, the right to participate and the right of access to justice in environmental matters was further articulated under the Aarhus Convention in 2001. It states that “environmental legislation will only be effective if individuals have a formal right to obtain environmental information, are empowered to participate fully in environmental decision-making and have redress to the courts when necessary.”

The importance of including local communities in the environmental decision making process is relevant in three different fields of environmental management namely wildlife trade, community conserved areas and chemicals management.

Enhanced Security through Integrative Capacity Building

As the international community becomes increasingly interconnected, global institutions are beginning to factor perspectives from the local, national, regional, and international levels into their agendas. It is essential to take into account the role organizations play in building capacity in order to address global security trends and international needs. Programs that target the local level are now influencing the work of multilateral organizations demonstrating the changing dynamics of the global security framework.

Capacity building works to identify weaknesses and bridge gaps in program implementation. As the activities of organizations become increasingly interconnected, capacity building becomes essential in developing effective projects and programs. Capacity building includes a variety of activities.

Examples of such components include:

- Developing infrastructure;
- Providing a forum for dialogue;
- Constructing and strengthening skill sets;
- Supporting organizations in their initiatives;
- Delivering technical assistance;
- Knowledge-sharing

Communication and coordination are key to engaging issues of human security. Partnership facilitates more robust initiatives and strengthens ties between institutions working in related fields. Furthermore, regional capacity development and integration are necessary to further state cooperation and harmonize national legislations. States make use of the role of organizations to confront inadequacies in national

security frameworks and develop their capabilities to address security issues. Within the context of community groups, institutions work to strengthen local project implementation and sustainable security programs in the field. Though each level tends to address security issues from a targeted perspective, and security problems and concerns transcend borders, the need to integrate projects among various actors becomes essential. This further demonstrates the importance of building capacity through integrative security initiatives aiming to address challenges such as organized crime, armed groups, and weapons proliferation.

Political Will in Non-Proliferation: A Relic of the Past?

With the fall of the Berlin wall, the international community shared a renewed hope to finally end the nuclear arms race and to once again find a catalyst to aggressively pursue the nuclear disarmament agenda. But the end of the cold war did not reward this optimism. As Secretary-General of the United Nations Ban Ki-Moon recently pointed out, the absence of meaningful outcomes in certain areas, the failure of the 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the deadlock in the Conference on Disarmament on its priorities, and the need for new impetus for the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty underscores the need for determined leadership at the highest level to revitalize the disarmament agenda. At the same time, the recent Iranian nuclear crisis, the discovery of an international nuclear black-market headed by Pakistani scientist A Q Khan, and the October 2006 nuclear explosion by North Korea also highlight the need for international action to strengthen the nuclear nonproliferation regime. Added to these concerns and lack of progress in the weapon of mass destruction field is the growing concern of terrorist or non-state actors acquiring weapons of mass destruction materials and/or capabilities. All these events can be attributed to a lack of political will on the WMD disarmament and nonproliferation front. For these reasons, among others, this general lack of political will with regard to nonproliferation and the need for international political leadership should remain the focal point of this field.

Concluding Reflections

It is impossible to fully prioritize all issues of international concern facing the world today. In fact, when we start to pit one issue against another or emphasize one area as being more important than another, the potential for successful and sustainable action is drastically diminished. It was attitudes and ideas such as these that were captured by the work of the 29 IPSS Fellows who worked around the world as junior-level professionals during the spring of 2007. Their extraordinary experiences with

varied international and non-governmental organizations allowed these students a unique perspective from which to gauge the major challenges impeding global progress today.

Do organizations truly have the support of their members and stakeholders to pursue progressive and rigorous agendas? Where is the political will to tackle the extremely complex issues such as intellectual property rights and the spread of Weapons of Mass Destruction? How do you engage a public that is largely concerned providing food and water to their families?

The six-month experiences of this distinguished group illustrate why “problems without passports” cannot be handled in isolation; our world is rapidly shrinking and issues are inherently intertwined. As daunting as certain issues may be when confronted by the entire international community, working on them in a vacuum is ineffective. If a problem graduates to the level of international concern, then by definition it cannot be handled within a single nation’s borders, by one government alone or by any one organization.

The complexities of the international community, non-governmental organizations, multilateral organizations, governments, legal systems, etc. combine to form a critical yet highly scrutinized system. The institutions where the various international Fellows worked have the potential to set high standards in all arenas of international cooperation. It is only with the cooperation of states, governments, intergovernmental agencies, and individuals that will effect lasting change. The reciprocal nature of interconnected disciplines reflects a sort of butterfly effect where one action can trigger hundreds of others. Keeping this in mind is crucial to overcoming the barriers discussed in this extensive report.

These 29 professionals worked within a delicate framework of the international system, in fact creating the force for change in the world; the force to promote human rights, sustain development, preserve the environment, benefit from trade and migration, and ensure security for all people. If we do not begin to see the world in a mutually supporting nature and recognize the intrinsic interconnectedness of all fields and disciplines, we risk jeopardizing both decades of work in the past as well as in the years to come.