

## Volunteering for Impact: Best Practices in International Corporate Volunteering Fact Sheet and Backgrounder

### Project Overview

International corporate volunteering, or ICV, refers to the practice of engaging employees in service projects in countries outside of the company's headquarters country. ICV includes two principal models: *local service*, in which employees based in countries outside headquarters volunteer in their local communities; and *cross-border service*, in which employees travel abroad to volunteer.

With an estimated 40 percent of major corporations supporting these types of employee volunteer efforts around the world, a need was identified to collect the foremost thinking on ICV and share this thinking with public and private-sector organizations to pave the way for new, innovative and high impact programs in years to come.

Commissioned by the Brookings Institution and Pfizer, Inc., FSG Social Impact Advisors compiled *Volunteering for Impact: Best Practices in International Corporate Volunteering* to analyze best practices and reporting on ICV, as well as provide recommendations to guide future program development. An emphasis was placed on encouraging a shift from traditional measurement of the quantity of program activities—such as the number of volunteers and hours of service—to the adoption of more strategic measures built around increasing business or social impacts.

### Methodology

FSG staff conducted phone interviews and targeted surveys with more than 30 experts representing corporate volunteering programs, international volunteering intermediaries, nonprofit advocacy groups and academia. Phone interviews focused on developing an in-depth understanding of best practices and lessons learned from a sample of major corporations involved in ICV. Secondary research included a review of relevant reports, studies and articles from a range of sources on the subject of international volunteering and international corporate philanthropy.

In addition to Pfizer's Global Health Fellows program, which has been widely recognized by experts as a best-in-class model in ICV, programs benchmarked in the study include those developed by **Accenture, BD, Cisco, Ernst & Young, GE, HSBC, IBM, Levi Strauss & Co., Microsoft, PricewaterhouseCoopers, Starbucks, Timberland,** and TNT.

### Sample ICV Program Snapshots

**IBM** - IBM's On Demand Community (ODC) is a sophisticated, multi-country, local service model that empowers its employees with over 140 IBM technology assets and other innovative resources, strategies, programs and tutorials they can access online and share with partner organizations in communities around the world. The program, which tracked the volunteering efforts of more than 80,000 volunteers, whose work represented over 4.4 million hours of service, leverages significant IBM assets and skills, while at the same time showcases IBM's technology solutions in an easily accessible environment. Additionally, IBM this year announced the 2008 launch of the Corporate Service Corps, a three-year program that utilizes the cross-border service model, inviting approximately 600 IBMers from around the world to participate in projects with NGOs in developing and emerging markets.

**Pfizer** – Since 1995, Pfizer's Global Health Fellows program has dispatched more than 120 highly skilled employees for three to six month assignments to transfer knowledge and skills to partner organizations serving in developing countries. Fellows, who include scientists, clinical researchers, financial and data analysts, nurses, doctors and HR managers and others, apply for specific positions at partner organizations focusing on a variety of global health issues. Sample assignments include financial advising for HIV-positive women participating in micro-

lending programs in Honduras and capacity building of dozens of health centers across Rwanda by implementing management systems for health care on all levels.

**Starbucks** – An evolution of a volunteerism program that placed employees in environmental projects globally, Starbucks worked with the Earthwatch Institute to extend their partnership to Starbucks' socially conscious customer base in 2007. This year, 10 employees and 20 customers were selected to participate in a program at a coffee farm at the CoopeTarrazu cooperative in Costa Rica, offering them the opportunity to witness the impact of the company at different levels in the supply chain.

**Timberland** – In addition to the company's Path of Service program which provides all full-time employees with 40 hours of paid time to volunteer in a range of social sectors, Timberland also operates a targeted ICV program in Asia, where the company maintains several business alliances. In a partnership with local NGO Green Network, the program mobilizes employees, customers and business partners as volunteers to plant trees in Northern China and Mongolia, in an effort to plant one million trees in the region prior to the Beijing Olympic Games in 2008.

### **Research Findings**

- Even among best-in-class companies, most organizations that are engaging in ICV are still in learning mode as they seek to improve and refine programs
- The amount of corporate investment in ICV programs ranged from lean programs only covering employee salaries to more resource-intensive efforts that included tailored pre-service training programs, centralized project management, structured partner relationships, product donations, and grant enhancements
- Programs address a range of issues, including economic development, education, the environment, disaster relief and health care
- The most common program beneficiaries were nongovernmental organizations (NGOs); select programs benefited multilateral organizations, government agencies, private businesses or individuals
- Some corporations work directly with individual organizations to plan volunteer assignments, while others partner with a nonprofit intermediary that manages placement logistics
- Program measurement remains elusive, as only a few corporations, such as BD and TNT, have conducted structured evaluations to understand the impact of ICV program investments

### **Recommendations**

1. **Set goals before roles:** Identify the business motivations for volunteering and develop programs to fit goals
2. **Walk before you run:** Determine which of the two operational models to pursue—cross border service or local service—based on the company's level of experience with international programs and its desired presence in a target country
3. **Lead with leverage:** Opportunities to create social impact will be greater if companies leverage employees' workplace skills and knowledge
4. **Align with philanthropic and CSR activities:** Look for opportunities to combine volunteering programs with ongoing philanthropic or CSR work
5. **Partner proactively:** Partnerships can provide access to resources the company may not have
6. **Invest in infrastructure:** Ensure adequate internal resources to manage volunteering programs
7. **Communicate clearly:** Be up-front about the motivations and benefits of the program, and communicate those messages to internal and external stakeholders

To download a complete copy of the report, *Volunteering for Impact: Best Practices in International Corporate Volunteering*, please visit:

- <http://www.brookings.edu/global/volunteer/>
- <http://www.fsg-impact.org/app/content/ideas/item/530>
- [http://www.pfizer.com/responsibility/global\\_health\\_fellows.jsp](http://www.pfizer.com/responsibility/global_health_fellows.jsp)