



BSR Conference 2008 | Sustainability: Leadership Required Whose Business is Alleviating Poverty?

Breakout Session Summary

Thursday, November 7, 2008 | 10:30 a.m.-noon

Speakers

- **Dennis Flemming**, Community Engagement Advisor, Chevron Nigeria Limited
- **Surita Sandosham**, Director, Partnership for Child Nutrition, Synergos Institute
- **Lindsay Tucker**, Vice President, International Community Relations, Citi
- **Al Gallegos**, Director, Global Strategy, the Solae Company (moderator)

Highlights

- We need to understand the holistic causes and impacts of poverty to shape alleviation efforts.
- The key to great community development projects is to create partnerships based on mutual trust and empathy and select great people to see them through.
- We need to find where business overlaps with moral incentives for engagement.

Memorable Quotes

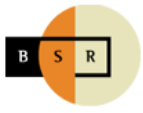
- “Poverty is about much more than just income levels. ... You need to look at the social and environmental aspects alongside the economic ones.” —Dennis Flemming, Chevron Nigeria Limited
- “We learned that you need a diverse partnership to be able to understand [a given poverty problem].” —Surita Sandosham, Synergos Institute
- “We believe that there are global benefits around building a robust microfinance sector around the world.” —Lindsay Tucker, Citi

Overview

Gallegos opened the session by introducing Solae—a partnership organization created by DuPont and Bunge Limited to address global malnutrition by bringing affordable soy products to the market.

Flemming then traced the evolution of Chevron’s poverty alleviation efforts from Papua New Guinea, to Angola, to Nigeria. He emphasized that in order to create meaningful solutions, we need a holistic understanding of poverty. He described how Chevron’s engagement strategies have grown from basic income generation, to nationwide economic





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growth, and finally to socioeconomic development and sustainable livelihoods. Chevron learned several lessons from this strategic evolution:

1. Poverty is about more than just income levels.
2. People, not models, make projects work. Great people will make any project succeed.
3. Build real partnerships that go beyond a financial agreement—don't treat partners like contractors.
4. Capacity building makes projects sustainable over time.

Sandosham next shared Synergos' involvement with agriculture giant Unilever. The company wanted to reach the US\$4 million market at the base of the pyramid while also addressing a key development issue: childhood nutrition in India. Unilever brought Synergos in to help forge a multi-stakeholder partnership between the Indian government, NGOs, and corporations. Synergos bolstered the partnership through an understanding of common challenges by having all the partners live in the target rural communities. Building trust among the diverse group of partners was a major challenge, particularly among the corporations and NGOs. In the end, the partnership learned that successful multi-stakeholder poverty alleviation initiatives require aligned priorities between senior level corporate leadership and supply chain management, moral and business incentives, and long-term commitments.

Tucker then discussed the juxtaposition of Citi's philanthropic and for-profit microfinance activities in more than 50 countries. Citi's philanthropic efforts seek to expand access to financial services, raise financial awareness, and build governance systems around microfinance. Citi's global philanthropic activities created new business opportunities and inspired the design of new products and services—for example, the introduction of biometric ATMs in India. Overall, Citi recognized the need for philanthropic microfinance efforts, in addition to its focus on microfinance as a core business strategy.

Answering a question from the audience about strategic philanthropy, Flemming emphasized that the context was crucial to community engagement efforts: You must first respond to the needs and expectations of the community you are operating in, and sometimes this must be prioritized over company strategy.

Another audience member asked if the current economic climate will impact corporate poverty alleviation efforts. The panelists agreed that the financial crisis would not reduce their investment or concern, but that they would likely prioritize strategic, cost-effective opportunities and pursue additional multi-sector partnership opportunities.

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This summary is also available on www.bsr.org/bsrconferences/2008/session-summaries.cfm.

