

BROOKINGS



June 2009: The Brookings Institution Declares Atlas Corps A “Best Practice” in International Service!

The Brookings Institution published a Global Views Policy Brief (2009-01) in June 2009 titled, “International Volunteer Service: A Smart Way to Build Bridges. Recommendation on How to Enhance U.S. Volunteer Efforts.” The brief was authored by David Caprara of The Brookings Institution; Kevin Quigly, of the National Peace Corps Association; and Lex Rieffel of The Brookings Institution.

The report states, “**A close examination of this wide universe of international volunteer programs points to several design elements and best practices** that could make a new initiative by the Obama Administration successful.” The report goes on to highlight how, “**the success of programs as different as Atlas Corps, Cross Cultural Solutions, Earthwatch and Partners of the Americas suggest that scaling up successfully will depend on offering a range of service options instead of trying to design a single program that appeals to all potential volunteers and to all host countries.**”

The report continues by focusing on the importance of multilateral forms of international service. “**The idea of transforming the Peace Corps from a bilateral to a multilateral program is not new, but it has several variants.** One is offering Americans service opportunities in multilateral volunteer programs. A second is to integrate the work of Peace Corps volunteers in host countries with the work being done by their own volunteers and by volunteers from other sending countries. **A third is to bring volunteers from other countries to the United States, either as part of a two-way Peace Corps, as a program managed by the CNCS, or as a stand-alone program working in conjunction with NGOs such as Atlas Corps.**”



“As early as 1966, when he was the Associate Director of the Peace Corps, Harris Wofford noted that the original idea of the Peace Corps included “reverse volunteering” through which men and women from developing nations would perform volunteer work in communities throughout the United States. Resistance from the State Department and the U.S. Congress snuffed a couple of attempts by the Peace Corps to start a reverse volunteering component, but **two recent private sector models exist that demonstrate the inherent feasibility of the concept. ... Atlas Corps is arranging for professional-level volunteers from India, Colombia and other developing nations to work in US-based non-profit organizations.**”

Finally the report ended with a series of policy recommendations, including: “**Increase U.S. funding for multilateral service**, through ... NGOs, to support ... the volunteer sector in achieving institutional capacity required to participate in and manage a two-way exchange of volunteers.”

To see the whole report please go to: <http://www.tinyurl.com/atlas-brookings>