

WiseWorld.org

*An online platform for enhanced collaboration on
international development projects*

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December 9, 2010

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Problem Statement

We are witnessing a rise in international development initiatives across the globe. However, there is a lack of unified ICT enabled platform to connect these individuals and institutions through a formal network. There has been a lack of global people-to-people relationships coming together and working on international development issues. Although local communities in the developing world have local expertise and access to local industry resources, they often lack tools, knowledge, and diversity found in developed world. This diversity is essential in bringing together the wide range of perspectives and experiences that are needed to overcome the development challenges faced by these developing countries. We have also observed that there is a greater focus on international development in the developed world and individuals in these countries want to play their part. However, there is a lack of a clear incentive structure for people in both the developing and developed world, which hinders project sustainability.

We have created a prototype (Appendix A) as a proof of concept to demonstrate how some of these problems can be mitigated. We plan to achieve this goal through a dedicated space to foster a collaborative community to work on international development issues.

Literature Review

“Collaboration in the Large: Using Video Conferencing to Facilitate Large Group Interaction” Diane H. Sonnenwald, Reto Bolliger, Paul Solomon, Noriko Hara, Tom Cox, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, White Paper, January, 2001

This paper discusses the social, organizational and technical aspects of collaboration among groups with a focus on video conferencing technology. An important take-away from this paper is that technology alone cannot make a “poorly managed meeting” better. Some of the “best practices” mentioned in the paper for conducting large group meetings over video conferencing:

1. It is crucial to assign one person as the “Facilitator” when more than two participants are in a live video call. This role can be rotated among team members for different meetings. Becoming a facilitator fosters meeting management and leadership skills.
2. Participant should be made aware of the etiquettes and practices for live video conferences. These include:
 - a. Self-identification – e.g. “This is Nisar from CMU”. If a participant forgets to introduce herself then the facilitator should ensure that the norm is followed
 - b. Microphone awareness – Limit whispering, page turning and other distracting activities
3. The presentations should have large text and avoid sentences to avoid information overload. Make use of graphics to illustrate important points.

“The Motivations to Volunteer : Theoretical and Practical Considerations”, E. Gil Clary, Mark Snyder, Current Directions in Psychological Science, 1999

This article discusses some of the reasons that drive people to engage themselves in social work. It highlights the functional theory which states that there could be numerous reasons behind people’s desire to volunteer, such as those related to motivational and psychological aspects. Using a simple model, called the Volunteer Functions Inventory, the article lists 6 functions served by volunteering, which include strengthening one’s own values, such as humanitarianism, understanding the world, developing psychologically, gaining valuable experience, creating social relationships and protecting oneself from negative feelings. It was interesting to note that the results of a study concluded that gaining valuable experience to use in future career was more important to the young respondents. The article also touches upon the matching hypothesis which states that a person’s decision to volunteer depends on his/her motivation behind volunteering and the type of opportunities available to him.

Project Design: Introducing WiseWorld.org

WiseWorld.org is a collaborative website that will be used by three primary groups of people: (1) students interested in international development, (2) collaborators who have tools, skills, and resources to help with these projects, and (3) activists, professionals, and faculty who can help lend prior knowledge about similar development projects.

- (1) Projects are ideally posted by students in developing countries who determine the needs in their communities and post the projects they feel most vital. Students post projects to which they are willing to lend their time, energy, and passion. The students who post projects ideally spearhead the project and seek collaboration with others who have similar interests and/or necessary skills. Students who post projects would ideally be affiliated with a school chapter/group or local NGO.
- (2) Collaborators would include those with the necessary tools, skills, and resources to help further projects and contribute to their overall success. Examples of such expertise include: project management, fundraising, finance/budgeting, communications/advocacy, crowd sourcing, IT, database management, empirical methods, economic analysis, and the best practices in particular field.
- (3) Activists, professionals, and faculty can lend advice to the project but do not necessarily have to be working on the project alongside the students and other collaborators.

We envision WiseWorld.org to be relatively organic in terms of project collaboration. However, we want to ensure the credibility of our website. Essentially, we want to have a system of checks and balances in place to monitor the progress of our affiliated projects. In order to maintain accountability, we will ask project leaders to submit progress reports, which will certainly

include detailed finance information. Moreover, WiseWorld.org staff will be authorized to audit projects through random check-ins. This model will allow for the monitoring of affiliated individuals and projects.

WiseWorld.org is unique in that it allows both technical and non-technical people to contribute either directly or indirectly in international development projects all over of the world. Our primary purpose is to connect people to projects by integrating features and ideas from existing websites into one platform: WiseWorld.org. We seek to foster a greater level of collaboration, which is missing from existing online communities of its kind.

Technology Framework

Our website aims to create an engaged global community through an online platform for enhanced collaboration in international development projects. We aspire to integrate features and services currently provided by the following different websites (see screenshots in Appendix B):

Website	Borrowed Features/Ideas
Zunia.org (by Development Gateway)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post projects and stories • Categorize posts by region, sector and tags • Search and share content • Connect with members
OnlineVolunteering.org (UN Volunteers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virtual Volunteering • Matching skills with project needs
Kiva.org	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement among lenders and entrepreneurs • Lending Teams • Competition within and among teams • Simple to follow steps (1, 2, 3...) • Field Partners
TinyChat.com	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group video chat rooms (up to 12 people) • Secure browser based video conferencing (no software installation required)

Our Services

1. For Students, Activists and Professionals

- a. Create member profiles
- b. Volunteer based on skills
- c. Post projects under regions and categories

- d. Search for and join existing projects based on skills and needs
- e. Schedule meetings and video chats
- f. Use project collaboration and tracking tools
 - i. Brainstorming
 - ii. Mind Mapping
 - iii. Project Management
- g. Update project status and submit success stories

2. For Software Developers, Researchers and Content Contributors

- a. Maintain the website and write code for future enhancements (open-source)
- b. Publish resources and guidelines to improve community engagement
- c. Post videos, tutorials and help materials
- d. Empower the community with latest tools and solutions
- e. Write blogs, articles and white papers

3. For Partners (NGOs, Schools, Donors, Governments etc)

- a. Become an Affiliate
- b. Submit projects
- c. Find volunteers for project needs
- d. Network with other organizations with similar needs

4. Other services

- a. GIS Maps, Geo-tagging of posts
- b. Project Audits
- c. Integration with Facebook, twitter and other social media sites

Deployment Strategy

Scenario 1: Building Brand and Networking with Partners

WiseWorld.org can position itself as a unique brand in the international development community, expand its user base and network of partners. Zunia has a growing user base of 50,000. If we partner with Zunia (and other similar websites) such that their users are able to use our services then WiseWorld can leverage their user base.

Pros: Independence, brand equity

Cons: Significant time and marketing effort required to establish a reputation and a large user base

Scenario 2: Acquisition by Zunia (Development Gateway)

Since there is an overlap between the services offered by Zunia and WiseWorld therefore we can decide to merge with Zunia or work on this project as an extension to Development Gateway. This will take their platform to the next level by filling the gaps.

Pros: Benefit from existing and stable platform of Development Gateway, No competition, existing user and partner base

Cons: Loss of independence, existing users may not adopt our new services because Zunia is positioned differently in the market (not as a project collaboration site)

Social Network Platforms

According to our study of vendor packages, we found the following platforms to be suitable for the WiseWorld.org social network development:

1. BoonEx Dolphin – Highly customizable package which offers a huge variety of features.
<http://www.boonex.com/dolphin/>
2. Wall.fm – Collaboration and video-conferencing tools.
<http://wall.fm/>
3. Ning.com – Leader in custom social network communities.
<http://www.ning.com/>

Incentive Structure

For the project's sustainability, it is necessary to provide a relevant and attractive incentive structure for all involved individuals and groups, including students, faculty, institutions, and donors. Innumerable incentives exist for students in both the developing and the developed countries: coming together on a common platform, working with internationally diverse teams, and giving back to the society in terms of social work. However, these incentives alone are not enough to ensure sustainability and hence we have included a list of other incentives that will ensure the sustainability of the project.

For Students: Valuable Experience

In today's day and age, all universities and companies place a high value on social work. If students get the opportunity to mention this experience in interviews, it will serve as a strong incentive for them. This holds true for students in both developing and the developed countries.

For Students: Competitive Selection Process

If there is an application and selection process to join the project team, making the process more competitive, it will provide a further incentive for people to join the project. In addition, this process will also serve as a filter for people who are not truly motivated about working on a particular project. Upon speaking with people at the Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS) in Pakistan, we have found that a student organization called LUMS Model United Nations (LUMUN) has a special Social Responsibility program, which is dedicated to development projects. In the past, the Social Responsibility program at LUMS has worked on different education projects. Working with such organizations will provide more incentives for the students to work on different projects because it will provide them with an opportunity to be part of organizations, such as LUMUN, which is not easy otherwise.

For Students: Subsidized Tuition Cost/ Work Hours Compensation

For students in the developed country, another incentive to join hands with the students in the developing country to work on development projects could be a subsidy in their tuition cost, which would come from donor money. Most students have a high opportunity cost of partaking in voluntary work because they forgo earnings from a paid job. To tackle this problem, either their tuition can be subsidized or they can be compensated in monetary terms for their time. Similarly, in Pakistan, students who are on financial aid have to complete a certain number of financial aid work hours per semester. However, if they take part in any event or conference run by a student organization, those hours are counted as part of their financial aid work hours. It would be a large incentive for students in the developing country to work on these development projects if they can get their 'work hours' counted towards their financial aid work hours.

For Students: Coursework Completion/Final Year Projects

For students at Carnegie Mellon University (or other students in developed countries), another incentive to work on these collaborative projects could be to formulate these projects as coursework. For instance, CMU hosts many student-led courses, such as golf and yoga. Interested students take these courses and receive 3 credit hours upon completion. In addition to providing incentives to work on the projects, if these projects are designed like these courses, they will also help ensure sustainability of these projects since some students would be working on projects each semester. Yet another incentive particular to the Heinz students would be to work on these projects as their System Synthesis or Capstone projects. This incentive will be most applicable to students at the Heinz College who are interested in international development. They would be able to work on actual development projects by using this website to collaborate with different groups in the developing countries, without having to be physically present.

For Faculty: Research Opportunities

Incentives for faculty members associated with these projects must also be designed to ensure their sustainability. One major incentive for the faculty is to use these projects as research opportunities in their papers. Each year, the faculty has to publish a certain number of papers. For faculty members with an interest in international development, such projects can provide rich opportunities in terms of data, evaluation, and results. This incentive is relevant to the faculty of both developing and developed countries. Moreover, faculty in the developed country can also increase the incentive to students by making such projects part of their courses which pertain to international development. If students are participating in these projects as coursework, they will have a lower opportunity cost in terms of their time since their payment will come in the form of course credit.

For Institutions: Global Footprint and Prestige

To help make this project more sustainable, it is important to highlight the incentives for the institutions which may be involved in different development work using this project. The incentives for institutions in the developed countries lie in the fact that they will be able to establish a stronger global footprint in developing countries, which can benefit them in a number of ways. Moreover, there will be incentives in terms of the research coming from the school, through the faculty involved in such development projects. From the perspective of the institutions in the developing countries, one of the biggest incentives would lie in the prestige that comes with forming associations with international groups, especially those in the developed countries such as the United States. Moreover, with an increase in international development organizations in development countries such as Pakistan, a high value is attached to social work done by different institutions. Collaborating with different groups in the developed country and working with them on development projects will increase the institution's value. In addition, the job prospects of the students from those institutions will also increase for those who want to work in international development, which will provide further incentives to the institutions.

For Donors: Tax Deduction, Transparency and Uniqueness

Lastly, numerous incentives exist for the donors to fund such projects. One of the most obvious incentives is the tax deduction which they will benefit from by funding these projects. Also, WiseWorld.org will have a greater level of transparency compared to other development organizations since all the information about the projects will be on the website and accessible to everyone. The uniqueness of these projects will also act as incentive for the donors, since these projects will comprise of diverse teams in terms of geography and skills.

Outcomes

Short-term:

Immediate outcomes of this project were:

- Confirmed the need for our service through literature survey
- Compared our platform to existing services
- Created a prototype for the website which can be used by a subsequent project to implement the complete system
- Tested our platform through a live video conferencing with a potential user
- Created an incentive structure for our technical system to be viable in the social system and organizational dynamics

Long-term:

We believe that if our proposed platform is fully implemented then it is expected to yield the following long term outcomes:

- Fostering a collaborative online community for international development
- Building lasting professional and personal relationships
- Increased cross-cultural understanding and partnerships to bridge the digital divide
- Increased innovation through out-of-the-box solutions
- New economic and commercial activities for participants
- Assembling a database of case studies along the way
- WiseWorld.org becoming a leading brand name in the international development community

Conclusion: Looking into the Future

We see WiseWorld.org as a platform to connect these people, passion, and skills, all for the purpose of international development. After our discussions with students and NGOs in developing countries (Pakistan), and students from developed countries (members of International Development Group at Heinz), we have found that individuals, NGOs, and educational institutes on both sides are committed to international development. We have proposed an online platform to harness that energy to create productive projects and outcomes/results by linking people to projects. We have provided a technology framework and a demo prototype as a proof of concept. Our literature survey and comparison with existing services confirms the need for such an engaged community. Lastly, to ensure the sustainability of our project, we have proposed a comprehensive set of incentive structures for students and faculty members.

Bibliography

“Collaboration in the Large: Using Video Conferencing to Facilitate Large Group Interaction”
Diane H. Sonnenwald, Reto Bolliger, Paul Solomon, Noriko Hara, Tom Cox, University of
North Carolina at Chapel Hill, White Paper, January, 2001

“The Motivations to Volunteer : Theoretical and Practical Considerations”, E. Gil Clary, Mark
Snyder, Current Directions in Psychological Science, 1999

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Zunia.org

<http://www.zunia.org/>

TinyChat.com

<http://www.tinychat.com/>

UN Volunteers

<http://www.onlinevolunteering.org>

Kiva.org

<http://www.kiva.org>

Development Gateway

<http://www.developmentgateway.org/>

One World

<http://us.oneworld.net/>

Net Impact

<http://www.netimpact.org/>

DG Market

<http://www.dgmarket.com/>

Global Development Network

<http://gdnet.org>

Stanford Social Innovation Conversations

<http://sic.conversationsnetwork.org/series/internationalDevelopment.html>

APPENDIX A [PROTOTYPE]



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Belize

People	
Population	0.3 mln
Population growth	2%
Life expectancy	76 years
Net migration	-1,000
Economy	
GDP	\$1.28 bln

Oxfam and WFP announce R4 partnership for resilient livelihoods in a changing climate 0



[oxfam.org](#) – On December 4, Oxfam and the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) announced that they are seeking \$28 million from public and private investors for their ground-breaking five-year partnership to help poor rural people protect their crops and livelihoods from the impact of climate change. The innovative new R4 partnership is based around the idea of managing 4 risks - community risk reduction, productive risk taking, risk transfer and risk reserves. R4 will address the communities most [more...](#)

Added by Zunia on December 06, 2010

A Gendered Analysis of Time Poverty: The Importance of Infrastructure 0



[gprg.org](#) – This paper uses a combination of nationally representative individual level time use data combined with household and community data to further our understanding of time use, and how infrastructure impacts on gender disaggregated time poverty. With a common, and growing, perception in the empirical literature being that Sub Saharan African females are typically disadvantaged in market based activities because of the large time burden of having to undertake both formal [more...](#)

Added by Zunia on December 06, 2010

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- [In Your Email Signature](#)
- [In Your Online Social Networks](#)

2. Create Friendly Competition

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- [Between Lending Teams](#)
- [Between Members Within Lending Teams](#)

3. Join The Speakers Bureau

Engage in Kiva's global community.

- [Become a Speaker](#)

4. Host an Event

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- [Get Focused](#)
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- [Checklist \(Download PDF\)](#)
- [Event Ideas](#)
- [Choice of Venue](#)

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