Research, Innovation and Creativity Must be Rewarded

by
James D. Wolfensohn
President
The World Bank Group
Washington, D.C., January 10, 2002

Introduction by Kathy Sierra, Vice President for Human Resources: It's been a very two hectic and exciting days for everyone, and I had the pleasure of meeting some of you and thanking you for your contribution and the work that you've done this afternoon. I want to thank you all for your enthusiasm, your creativity, and your generosity of spirit of sharing your innovations with the people that we all want to serve, as well as sharing them with us here at the Bank. We've all learned a lot, and especially the World Bank staff, from the work that you're doing. We're about to start the closing ceremony, and before we announce the winners of the marketplace competition, I would like to invite our President, Mr. Jim Wolfensohn, to say a few words.

James D. Wolfensohn: Thank you very much, Kathy. And let me say hello to all of you. Before I give just a couple of remarks and invite our two co-chairs, Ray Offenheiser, President of Oxfam U.S., and Nemat Shafik, our Vice President [for Private Sector Development and Infrastructure], I would like you to know that we have been joined today by some very distinguished people who are with us at this moment. My colleague, Enrique Iglesias, who is the President of the Inter-American Development Bank, and our true partner in so many things. I'm very happy to welcome you, Enrique. And, also, the great hope of the World Bank and the new administration, John Turner, the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State who is in charge of environment and forests [Assistant Secretary for Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs, OES] and is so keenly involved himself in the whole question of conservation. John, it's a great pleasure to have you and Bud Rock [Anthony "Bud" Rock, Deputy Assistant Secretary for OES] here with us today. We also have in the audience 24 Ambassadors, and I want to welcome particularly the two representatives [the Minster and the Minister Counsellor] from the Embassy of Nigeria and the Ambassadors from South Africa, The Kyrgyz Republic, Brazil, and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Thank you all very much, Your Excellencies, for coming to us.

We are now about to proceed to the prizewinning ceremony, and I know you don't want long speeches. But let me immediately ask the two co-chairs of the judges to address us, Nemat Shafik and Ray Offenheiser. They will both say a few words, I'll come back and say a very few words, and then we will award the prizes. Thank you.
Nemat Shafik, VP for Private Sector Development and Infrastructure: On behalf of the jury, I wanted to congratulate all of our participants. We had an incredibly difficult task, and before turning to Jim and Kathy, who will announce the winners, I wanted to just lay out some possibilities for those who were winners in some sense, but not necessarily financial winners. I think the jury was greatly frustrated by the fact, frankly, that we couldn't award everyone a prize, and at one stage one jury member said: "Why don't you just add up the whole bill and we'll find the money to fund all 207 proposals?" Unfortunately, we couldn't do that. But at 4:00 p.m., in the Preston Auditorium, there will be several representatives of the various grant-making facilities available in the Bank Group, including the Energy Assistance Program, the Micro Finance Program, CGAP [Consultative Group to Assist the Poorest], InfoDev (which finances digital divide work), and the Japanese Social Development Fund (which funds community development). And those representatives will be available for any proposals that did not receive funding to talk you through some alternative possibilities.

In addition to that, we're already working with other grant providers, including the National Science Foundation, who have expressed interest in a number of proposals that have been presented here, and we'll come back to you with possibilities for those proposals. We'd also encourage many to go to the Development Grant Facility website where there is additional information about funding sources.

I think the fact that the jury agonized a lot about this is testimony to the quality of the proposals that were presented and the fact that you really have created a marketplace for ideas and innovation. What we're trying to do now is really find more buyers on this marketplace for the very good product ideas that you've put out there.

So, with that, let me turn to my co-chair, Raymond Offenheiser, the head of Oxfam America, who will say a few words.

Ray Offenheiser, President of Oxfam U.S.: Thank you, Minouche.

I think for me representing Oxfam here in this process for the first time - this is the first time I've been associated with the Development Marketplace - I have to say it's been an extraordinary experience in a variety of different and important ways. I think the very fact that I'm standing here looking at this tremendous assemblage of creativity and innovation is probably the most extraordinary piece of the two days we've spent together.

I think for many years the World Bank was seen as a somewhat monolithic institution that didn't open its doors to the kind of creativity, energy, and innovation that we have seen here in the atrium expressing themselves in very animated terms over the last two days. I think what we see before us today is perhaps a new way the World Bank can relate to citizen groups around the world, bringing these kinds of groups onto the development radar screen and celebrating their creativity and energy.
I salute the World Bank, the World Bank leadership, for making this kind of event possible, honoring these groups, and developing this Development Marketplace concept.

As an external juror, I'd like to say to all the groups that are here today that I think you should be very pleased with the process that went forward here in the Bank to make judgments about the prize selection. I think all the judges and jurors that were part of this process were extraordinarily impressed by all of the groups that they met with, and there were passionate advocates, I think it's fair to say, for literally every project on the floor.

When we began the deliberations this morning about the prize selection, I initially had the optimistic thought that it would end in about an hour, and about three and a half hours later, we were still locked in debate before we finalized the list. More than that, I think there was a real desire and process of discovery that went on in that meeting about the importance of event like this. There was also a real desire to give greater exposure to the kind of new ideas that are being developed, new kinds of partnerships, new sorts of interrelationships that are taking place around the world in oftentimes very remote places and to give them greater exposure so that innovation becomes the centerpiece of what we think about in development rather than something that we discover ex-post-facto. I think that's the beauty of this process.

What happened this morning, as we were going further into the process, was more and more people within the room were standing up saying: "Can't we find some more money? Can't we expand the pool? And can't we further develop this marketplace and actually make it even a more complex and broader arena for transactions?" So it's been, I think, an extraordinary experience for jurors as well as invitees.

Finally, I'd simply like to conclude by saying one or two words more at a personal level. I think one of the great joys of working for organizations like Oxfam is that one gets the opportunity to trod the back roads and spend time in the marketplaces around the world where many of these proposals are born. For me personally, it was very humbling to be here and to hear people telling their stories, talking about what was exciting in their work, and willing to share their creativity with such a large group of new friends.

So, again, I'd like to thank not only the jurors, but each and every one of the 200 participants here today and wish you all well in the project selection process, and finally say, again, thanks to the World Bank. I think this event is an extraordinary signal to the development community not only here in Washington but more broadly that the World Bank is opening its doors and looking for good ideas wherever they could be found.

Thank you all very much.

James D. Wolfensohn: Well, thank you very much, Ray. Just a few brief comments. The first is I would like to thank you personally and invite you to thank also the 300 Bank staff that have been engaged in putting
this together. As I said yesterday, the average age of those that have
been leading this exercise is 26 years old, and so you get worse as you
get older, is all I can say. Cindy Suh and Arshad Sayed and Hasan Tuluy
particularly I would like to thank.

The second thing that I would like to acknowledge is really all of you,
you say that because the panel had such difficulty in allocating the $3
million of prizes, at five minutes to 1:00 p.m. they came to me and said:
"How about making it $4 million?" So we have done that and that is a
tribute to all of you. I think all of you probably went around and have
seen the remarkable range of ideas, from South Africa to Central Asia,
from the Amazon to China. I have to say that the networking that is going
on here and the ability for us to exchange ideas is tremendously exciting
to us, and we hope it's tremendously exciting to all of you.

The Vice Presidents in the organization, as Nemat said, were so excited
by all the proposals that at 4 o'clock today they want to meet with those
that don't get prizes in order to work with them within other programs in
the Bank to see how we can help you. So if you do not get one of the
prizes here, it's not the end of the road. Go down and beat up on my
colleagues in the Preston Auditorium at 4 o'clock, and from the many
programs we have and hopefully the many programs that Enrique Iglesias
has and John Turner has, we'll be able to get you all the money that you
need, and we'll see what we can do to help.

Finally, let me simply say that the judges have done a fantastic job, and
I want you to join me in thanking them for a remarkable effort. Well, I
have four more pages of things to say that have been written for me, but
I don't propose to do it. I think what I should simply do is to thank
you. I'll see many of you at dinner tonight, and let's get on with the
prize-giving because I'm sure that's what interests you the most.