

January 4, 2010

Mr. Barack Obama, President
United States of America
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

I often think about what our great country could do to address the numerous problems the world is facing. I would like to share my thoughts with you. In my recent travels, I've seen first-hand people living without safe drinking water and kids who go hungry for days on end with very little to eat. I also see almost on a daily basis on television, countries that are war torn. Then again, I notice glimmers of hope, where organizations like UNICEF¹, bring about change in the lives of children by providing educational opportunities. What should the founding principles be for a United States built international system that promotes good governance, development, and poverty reduction? I believe there are three elements that should make up the centerpiece of this system. These three elements are education, leading by example, and building partnerships.

Education is vital because it plants the seeds of democracy. Educated people are more likely to be skilled and be prepared for jobs. This in turn will help them earn money

and address the issue of poverty. Having said this, it is important that the United States lead by example. We need to set high ethical standards, reduce corruption, and have greater accountability. The United States cannot do this alone. I believe that to have a sustainable organization, the United States must create partnerships with local governments around the world and build a coalition.

We need people, money and ideas to create and sustain this international system. We start with the youth because they are our future. Starting at the elementary level, the curriculum should promote greater international awareness. At the high school and college levels we must teach ethical leadership and encourage high school students to participate in exchange programs and language immersion programs. Then entering college, we must increase the amount of study abroad opportunities for students. The goal is to increase the comfort level of our students in dealing with people from other countries. After graduation we must provide opportunities for people to work and volunteer in developing countries. In doing so, they will learn a different culture and have opportunities to work collaboratively with our partners overseas.

In terms of ideas, our country has a number of entrepreneurs and people with creative vision. Our government can harness the talent of our people to collaboratively create solutions to the problems facing the world. For example, organizations like Kiva² provide interest free micro loans to people to help them economically. We can set up similar programs in other developing countries and our citizens who go overseas can facilitate this process. Further, in our country we have several people such as organic farmers³ who promote sustainable development. We can encourage transferring these

ideas from these creative people and work alongside our partners overseas. The goal is to create economic growth, while still protecting the natural environment.

To make all of this happen we need money. With the economic crisis we have been facing, this poses a serious challenge. However, there are several opportunities that are available to us. We do not have to look very far. US companies like Cisco⁴, have in place programs where their talented managers spend time abroad, helping run volunteer organizations overseas. The company pays the employees who in turn find the experience educational and rewarding. The result is that the international community benefits from the manager's expertise as well. We can use this as a model to encourage private industry to make these types of efforts part of their contribution to society.

I realize that I'm just scratching the surface but I strongly believe in the creativity and compassion of people in our great country. I believe in human potential. While systems can be put in place to make it easier to make things happen, it is the power of the people in the end that will make the difference.

Thank you for taking the time from your busy schedule to read this message from a concerned high school student.

Sincerely,

Chetana Srinivas

End Notes

1. Sekandi, Anne L. A Second Chance For Children Living On The Streets Of Uganda. UNICEF. Web.
http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/uganda_52304.html
2. [Http://www.kiva.org/about](http://www.kiva.org/about). 2005. Web. 4 Jan. 2010.
3. Masterson, Katheleen. Going Organic Helps A Small Dairy Stay Afloat. NPR, 3 Jan. 2010. Web. 4 Jan. 2010.
<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=122119570>
4. CSR Report 2008. Cisco. Web. 4 Jan. 2010.
<<https://www.cisco.com/web/about/ac227/csr2008/cisco-and-society/index.html>>