

Leading the Global Partnership Initiative: Insights from Ambassador Elizabeth Frawley Bagley

Over the last decade, the world has witnessed dramatic challenges: from 9/11 to the rise of non-state actors, global pandemics, and a financial crisis that spanned the globe. Facing these challenges, successfully, rests on a new paradigm of engagement—placing proper emphasis on private-public partnerships as integral to 21st century statecraft.

*Ambassador Elizabeth Frawley Bagley, special representative, Global Partnership Initiative, joined us on **The Business of Government Hour** to discuss the expanding role of partnerships in forging U.S. foreign policy goals. Here's a sampling of her insights:*

What is the Global Partnership Initiative and the underlying strategic vision that frames this effort?

— Ambassador Elizabeth Frawley Bagley —

Our office was launched by Secretary Clinton when she spoke at the Global Philanthropy Forum on April 22, 2009. It's the first office that has been established to deal directly with private-public partnerships. She talked about the need for developing relationships and partnerships not only within the State Department and outside, but with other international institutions, noting that the problems we face today will not be solved by governments alone. It will be in partnerships—partnerships with philanthropy, with global business, with civil society, universities, NGOs, faith-based groups, and diaspora communities to find common purpose and create action-oriented partnerships that solve the world's most pressing problems.

We are living in a world deeply influenced by the power of networks, and harnessing the potential for various actors to work together on common concerns—while all using their unique core competencies—can provide an opportunity to achieve our foreign affairs goals. It is really an effort to extend the reach of the State Department and to extend our influence—making our foreign-policy more sustainable on the ground.



What about your unique position in the department? What are your responsibilities and duties as the Special Representative for Global Partnership Initiative?

— Ambassador Elizabeth Frawley Bagley —

Secretary Clinton appointed me as the first Special Representative for Global Partnerships. It is unique because it's new and has never happened before. We're really creating it as we go along, which it has its good points and its bad points. The good points are that we can use a lot of creativity; we are directly under the secretary of state, so that allows us influence within the department and direct access to the secretary, which is very helpful in many things that we want to have done. Secretary Clinton is a huge advocate of this office. That's the good news. The challenge is to make the office known throughout the department and to really change the culture of the department. While I act as the public figure, who advocates for partnerships across the

department and throughout the U.S. government, this initiative is something with which everyone inside and outside of government can participate. We are now up to 10 people on staff, and we have been able to break out portfolios based on each of the secretary's eight major priority areas.

What are some of the key challenges that you face, and how have you addressed these challenges?

— Ambassador Elizabeth Frawley Bagley —

The three top challenges we are facing in terms of the State Department are (1) changing the culture so that the value of partnerships is recognized, (2) making sure our foreign service officers and civil servants are adequately trained, and (3) then getting the incentives right in performance reviews.

In the 1960s, nearly 70 percent of all money flowing from the United States to the developing world was official development assistance. Today, over 80 percent is from private sources. And the Department of State needs to respond better to those trends in order to make it second nature for our problem-solving to incorporate the private sector. If you are a foreign service officer working on water issues in Malawi, your job is no longer just to meet with government officials at the Health Ministry. You also need to be engaging Coke and Pepsi, as well as NGOs like Technoserve, because they are going to have the greatest impact on water issues in your region.

Once our Foreign Service officers start building partnerships in the field, while the leadership in Washington provides them the tools, trainings, and incentives to get it right, then we will have created the change that we need. We need to empower our foreign services to do these partnerships at the

frontlines of foreign affairs through new tools and trainings both in country and at FSI, the Foreign Service Institute. On incentives, we need to incorporate an explicit assessment of staff willingness to initiate or use new systems, approaches, or tools into annual employee performance review and ensure this assessment is integrated into promotion scoring.

Given your wealth of experience, what are the characteristics of an effective leader in an increasingly interconnected and networked world? Do you think that because of that we are looking at a new conception of leadership?

— Ambassador Elizabeth Frawley Bagley —

I think the first characteristic of a leader is [the ability] to listen and understand. Leadership has changed because now you must be able to harness interest, direct it in new ways towards difficult problems, and connect actors with others. You must be able to build trust quickly and effectively while providing a vision that creates common ground among a diverse set of actors. If power is derived from connectivity, then the focus of leadership should be on making connections to solve shared problems. This approach is not only a different leadership style from that which has prevailed in the United States in recent years, but also a fundamentally different concept of leadership.

You must think at the macro level, because every time you bring about a new development in any one of the three D's—development, diplomacy, and defense—the others are also impacted. Managing in a networked world requires an aggressive use of all of the tools and techniques at our disposal, be they as new as using technology to gathering opinions via the Internet or as timeless as building a new partnership through a good conversation while breaking bread over a meal. What we have witnessed with the recent trends of globalization really is creating a complete transformation. I really cannot emphasize enough how much of a paradigm shift in foreign policy this will create over the long term. The previous administration utilized partnerships as a way to leverage resources; this administration views them as central to how diplomacy should be conducted.

Would you define for us the concept of public-private partnerships with the State Department?

— Ambassador Elizabeth Frawley Bagley —

We define a partnership as a collaborative working relationship among, not only governmental, but also non-governmental stakeholders where goals and structuring governance, as well as our roles and responsibilities, are mutually determined



Photo: U.S. Department of State

and decision-making is made among the players. Successful partnerships are characterized by complementary equities, openness and transparency, mutual benefit, shared risks and rewards, and accountability.

Can you outline the specific priority areas of the Global Partnership Initiative?

— Ambassador Elizabeth Frawley Bagley —

As the Secretary said in her remarks introducing me and our office, our doors are wide open. When I started this job, we were besieged with requests. We are looking for partnerships with non-profits, private businesses, faith-based groups, and everyday citizens. Secretary Clinton has outlined eight strategic priorities that can serve as a basis for building partnerships that advance our foreign policy goals.

First, we are seeking global economic recovery and boosting investment that creates decent jobs. Second, we are working on food and water security as part of a collaborative global effort centered on country-led processes to improve food security. Third, we are engaging diaspora communities by focusing on creative mechanisms through which they can contribute to political, economic, and social growth. Fourth, we are reaching out to Muslims around the world by building partnerships to promote civil society, entrepreneurship and economic development, educational opportunity, scientific advances, and interfaith cooperation. Fifth, we are working on energy security by building partnerships that encourage clean energy investments and foster sustainable systems to address climate change and to lay the foundation for a prosperous clean-energy future. Sixth, we are building partnerships to further the U.S. foreign policy goals on democracy and human rights issues, including women's empowerment, anti-trafficking in persons, protecting minority rights and freedom of the press, and fostering democracy and the rule of law. Seventh, we are building partnerships with public and private actors for nuclear non-proliferation so that we move towards disarmament, reverse the threat of nuclear weapons, and work towards a world that can rely on peaceful nuclear energy.

Finally, we are addressing global health issues, including HIV/AIDS, malaria, TB, and other pandemics, as well as the President's Global Health Initiative and maternal health issues by working with PEPFAR (President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief), Centers for Disease Control (CDC), USAID and U.S. Health and Human Services (HHS).

GPI: Convener, Catalyst, Collaborator



What does it mean within GPI's context for you to be a convener, a catalyst, and a collaborator?

— Ambassador Elizabeth Frawley Bagley —

Secretary Clinton refers to the department's work in partnerships as "the three C's" of convening, catalyzing, and collaborating. This isn't just the vision for the work of our office. We are here to set the example through a few key partnerships while also creating the framework and incentives for the entire department to do a better job of convening, catalyzing, and collaborating. Let me discuss each of these, in terms of our office and the department as a whole. We are convening the right partners by bringing together people from across regions and sectors to work together on finding out more about the challenges you all face while learning how the U.S. government can bolster your efforts. One example of this was TED@State (technology, entertainment, and design), which was held on my first day as Special Representative with talks about sustainable growth, post-conflict reconstruction, new media, and the like. Over 800 people showed up at the State Department—the line was out the door and around the block—in order to witness the first government sponsored TED Talks. We are catalyzing many new initiatives for the multiplier effect that will foster better development and diplomacy, while encouraging U.S. business interests abroad. The goal here is to make sure that we scale up initiatives that are working in specific areas and replicate them in other areas. For instance, our office has worked with David Ferguson at USAID to host Global Pulse 2010—a 3-day, online collaboration event bringing together individual socially engaged participants and organizations from around the world.

We work as collaborators to avoid duplication and maximize our impact by looking for the best practices with our partners. We are working in partnership with NASA to host a forum for water innovators/entrepreneurs that leverages the collective expertise and networks of 40 LAUNCH Council Members—a cross-disciplinary group representing business, policy, engineering, science, communications and sustainability—and 10 international water innovators—each representing a unique and compelling approach in clean-tech, science, policy, activism, and education.

It has been said that the primary objective of GPI is to produce outcomes that have a greater impact. How will you be assessing the performance of GPI partnerships to ensure they are achieving stated outcomes?

← Ambassador Elizabeth Frawley Bagley →

You may have heard the phrase “you measure what matters.” That is one of the key elements of what will make all of our partnerships successful. It not only leads to more accountability and transparency—because you have to justify how the partnership is bringing about greater value than a traditional procurement or grant would to achieve the same end. It also is a necessity because the private sector requires clear, measurable results that they can report back to their shareholders. As the U.S. government, our shareholders are the taxpayers, as well as others who have a stake in the success of our programs: from the local NGO with whom we are working, to the countries that are benefiting from our efforts, to the individual whose life is impacted, to the American who has new job opportunities here at home because new markets are being created abroad. The more that we can measure our results and refine our practices to become more effective, the better off we will be in returning the most value to all of these entities. Through the Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review (QDDR) process, we are co-chairing a subcommittee on partnerships that is going to make sure that we define our metrics clearly and align our foreign policy accordingly. We have learned a number of lessons already from the partnerships that we have begun assessing for best practices. These lessons include principles for partnership: it takes time, commitment, and resources from both sides. Both the public sector and the private sector should

take on risk. Both sectors should use their core competencies in order to achieve mutual goals. All of these are lessons that we can learn a lot from as we develop new partnerships.

When we launch our Partnerships toolkit, we are going to be going even further in depth on what works and what does not, and how innovative partnership delivery models can be tested and tried in new situations where they have not been implemented already.

Turning to the future, what trends do you see over the next few years in the evolution of private-public partnerships?

← Ambassador Elizabeth Frawley Bagley →

I honestly believe that the direction globalization takes in the years to come will largely depend on the decisions made not only by policymakers but also by business people, NGO leaders, philanthropists, and individuals who are empowered now by technology in ways that we have never seen before. With businesses in particular, I think that requires some smart strategies about how governments and corporations can work together towards more successful, sustainable, and equitable business, and thus a better world for all of us. We can only extend our reach by reaching out to other organizations and other stakeholders, such as, corporations, foundations, faith-based communities, diasporas, and NGOs. In doing that, we can all work together for a common goal. ■

To learn more about the Global Partnership Initiative, go to www.state.gov/s/partnerships



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