**Crossing borders to volunteer**

The session included three examples of cross-border corporate volunteer programs. Sabina Balmer from B360 education partnerships presented a model where their program facilitates know-how transfer between European experts and African students. European experts teach at institutes of higher education in Africa on a volunteer basis, and African students complete internships in European corporations. Michael Evanson from IBM shared with the conference participants how IBM’s Corporate Service Corps works. The program selects top management prospects and then trains and dispatches these leaders to emerging markets around the world. Participants spend four weeks in groups of 10 to 15 to help solve economic and social problems of their selected communality. And, finally, Diana Molina Grasa from “la Caixa” Foundation talked about “CooperantesCaixa”, a program that provides the bank’s current and retired employees to participate in short-term technical projects with various NGOs around the world that the bank cooperates with.

The discussions that followed the presentations revolved around topics such as the practice of using work hours to get involved in the volunteer assignments versus using their personal vacation time to volunteer, the importance of getting feedback from all the stakeholders involved in creating the cross-border volunteer opportunity, allowing retired company employees to still get involved in the cross-border volunteer programs, the importance of matching the skills of the employees to the volunteer assignment and how to recruit the employees since the volunteer assignments usually require a high level of certain skills.

**Doing more with less: working with intermediaries**

The session gave the opportunity to have multi country examples of how intermediary organizations are helping companies engage their employees in local community projects. Philias explained how, in Switzerland, most NGOs are very locally focused, usually run by volunteers. Philias works with the NGOs to try and translate the company needs when requesting volunteer opportunities for their employees. Ruach Tova from Israel described how, since their organization has an extensive database of volunteer opportunities, they are able to offer companies a large range of options. Liz Hamburg from Taproot Foundation in the US explained how Taproot refocused their commitment on the nonprofits –they make sure that whatever project they are doing have impacts on the nonprofit that is receiving corporate volunteers. And Hannah van Basshuysen from Germany described a model where Audi, in the Bavaria region, chose to focus on a very specific type of organization, namely local volunteer centers, provide them with coaching that brought together expectancies and needs of the two partners, thus resulting in a very friendly, informal relation. In the end, all the participants agreed that it is actually about “doing better with less” and that, no matter how the company chooses to engage their employees, the quality of the project needs to be high.

**Pro bono programs**

As the session moderator put it, this session was intended to scope out “where is the magic in pro-bono?”.