Social Innovation Essay

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The first company I found is located in the Netherlands and is called *Buurtzorg Nederland*. It’s a nonprofit Dutch home care organization that has received lots of international attention due to it’s affordable, high quality care through the deployment of “self-governing nurse teams.” The *Buurtzorg* nurses provide many support services in addition to their medical services, which is what makes them unique. It’s also what makes them a lot cheaper than other organizations. In the Netherlands, insurers pay for home care on an hourly basis, and Buurtzorg’s teams of nurses have used fewer hours to meet patients’ needs than other organizations, therefore achieving maximum savings for the citizens. Some of the organizations goals included creating self-governing teams of nurses to provide both medical and supportive home care services, becoming a sustainable, holistic model of community care, maintaining or regaining patients’ independence, training patients and families in self-care, and creating networks of neighborhood resources. They’ve been successful in many of these goals. They are most certainly sustainable, the evidence being their impressive records in the past couple years. They have also effectively introduced other countries to the “holistic model of community care.” This organization has become so popular in the Netherlands that its spread internationally. Early efforts are under way in several countries, including Japan, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States. They all want to adapt the Buurtzorg approach! Additionally, many other Dutch home-care organizations have begun adopting aspects of the Buurtzorg model in order to save money. Starting with just one team of nurses in Almelo in 2007, *Buurtzorg Nederland* has now grown into a national organization that employed 700 teams of 8,000 nurses in the year 2015. It’s a perfect example of how a small idea can change the world!

The second company I found is called *Médecins Sans Frontières* and was founded in 1971 in Paris, France. It’s a non-profit, self-governed organization known worldwide as MSF. Some of the basic things MSF is committed to doing includes bringing quality medical care to people caught in crisis, regardless of race, religion or political affiliation, bearing witness and speaking out, not taking sides in armed conflicts, speaking out publicly in an effort to bring a forgotten crisis to public attention, alerting the public to abuses occurring beyond the headlines, criticizing the inadequacies of the aid system, and challenging the diversion of humanitarian aid for political interests. This is just to name a few. The association itself is made up mainly of doctors and health sector workers and is also open to all other professions which might help in achieving its aims. All members undertake to respect their professional code of ethics and maintain complete independence from all political, economic or religious powers. This is a key factor in their whole organization. It’s very clear that no favoritism is to be given to a specific race, religion, or economic class. I thought this was a great example of social innovation in the specific platform of wealthy vs poor. In this organization, it doesn’t matter how much money you make, you will be helped either way. In fact, you could even be helped before a wealthy person, it’s all random! This is what makes this organization unique and innovative. Since it originally opened in 1971, MSF has opened offices in 28 countries. Today, MSF employs more than 35,000 people across the world. Since its founding, MSF has treated over a hundred million patients – with 9,792,200 outpatient consultations being carried out in 2016 alone. I’d say this represents success.

The third company I found is WaterAid, an organization from Australia founded in 2004. This company is devoted to providing clean water to every individual in every country. Obviously, this is a big mission and they don’t anticipate meeting this intense goal until at least the year 2030. WaterAid works in over 30 countries, but they have members specifically in Australia, Canada, India, Sweden, the UK, the USA and Japan. These members work explicitly in hygiene, sanitation, and water availability. As for success, in 2015-16 WaterAid reached 1.9 million people with clean water and over 3 million people with sanitation, since 1981 WaterAid has reached 24 million people with clean water. Since 2004, WaterAid has reached 24 million people with improved sanitation. These statistics prove how influential this company has been. They try to target poor communities first because these are the areas that need the most help. Their mission statement is to transform the lives of the poorest and most marginalized people by improving access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene.

Each one of these companies has made an impact in the world and none of them are form the United States. Sometimes I think Americans have this false pretense that we are the only ones who make an impact on the world. This could not be more wrong. While researching for this essay, I found examples of socially innovative organizations that are from the Netherlands, France, and Australia. I had no idea the impact these companies could have on the United States and the world in general. It’s extremely impressive and inspiring.

Bibliography

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