



Stanford eCorner

Examples of Social Entrepreneurs

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In social entrepreneurship, many issues are blended and need to be addressed together. Ramdas shares two examples of social entrepreneurs very close to her heart. She talks about entrepreneurship being the willingness to work and assume risks at the same time for implementing changes in the society.



Transcript

So, I'm going to give you two examples of social entrepreneurs who are working on what I think are some of the critical issues of our time. One is a woman called Aural Ataneyasova. Aural received an \$8,000 grant from the Global Fund for Women in 1997 to help set-up her center in Qawwal, Pakistan on the borders of the Aral Sea. She was a physician who began to note that there was a strong correlation between reproductive birth defects and problems in reproductive health of women and incredible toxic contamination of the Aral Sea and the soil around the sea. She had never before been given a grant by any kind of formal institution. Uzbekistan which is where Qawwal Pakistan is based was just beginning to emerge from many years of communist-dominated rule and didn't really have any idea of what independent NGO, a non-profit organization, would look like. We loaned Aural an \$8,000 grant. She bought a van with which she expanded her work with rural women all over the area. In 1995, an organization of Mongolian women lawyers had come to the Global Fund for Women asking for a \$4,000 grant to spend a year travelling around the country of Mongolia which was going to have its first open and free democratic elections. Really talking to women in small villages and cities and countries, in cities and towns all over the country, about what an open democratic process was what was a ballot; knowing that your husband didn't have to come in and vote with you; knowing that your brother didn't have to know who you were voting for; yes, you could actually check the box of the party that you really believe would make a difference.

And they had spent a year basically going around the country talking to them about what the process of democratic engagement and participation in an election would be like. And the prime minister was writing to tell me that women had showed up. Seventy-eight percent of all eligible women voters voted that very first election. And they voted overwhelmingly against the communist party and for the first democratic government in Mongolia. Now to me, this is what entrepreneurship is all about. Being willing to do both the work that is involved, but also to take a risk that is involved with doing something completely new to a society, in which you have no experience before, but you want to ensure that there can be as wide participation and involvement as possible.