



Stanford eCorner

Local vs. International Philanthropy

Kavita Ramdas, *Global Fund for Women*

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Video URL: <http://ecorner.stanford.edu/videos/229/Local-vs-International-Philanthropy>

Global Fund for Women CEO Kavita Ramdas talks about financial contributions for the greater good both locally and internationally - and that here in the US we give a very small percentage of our income to remedy the world's concerns. Ramdas cites the gap that exists between how much people think our government should be giving to global relief - 15-20 percent of our national income - but that less than 1% actually makes its way outside the United States.



Transcript

Although international giving had been steadily increasing in the United States, it is still approximately around 15% of total philanthropic giving, and of that less than 1% actually makes it outside of the United States. So a lot of that giving goes to organizations that do international work but that are based here in the United States. So giving money to the kind of locally based NGOs that we were talking about is much rarer. I think it's been an interesting question in the history of the Global Fund. On the one hand, I would say there is a notion that you get more bang for your buck if you invest resources outside of the United States that a dollar goes a very long way in places like Ethiopia or India or Mongolia so that in some ways that is an attraction for donors who are thinking about giving internationally. On the other hand, I think you do have this sense that while we have so many problems ourselves and why should we be looking to the rest of the world, I think it's also important to remember how this relates to the degree to which the United States is committed to overseas assistance more broadly than just philanthropy. The United States as a country gives the least percentage of its GDP in overseas aid assistance. It's interesting if you ask Americans kind of broadly in sort of a public poll, do you feel we should be supporting developing nations with assistance, they say yes and we do. If you ask them well, what percentage do you think of our budget goes to overseas assistance, they will say anything between 15 to 20%. Now, in fact, what the United States gives as overseas assistance not only has it been steadily falling but it is one-tenth of 1%.

That is the amount of money that this country allocates in international aid assistance so it's a tiny fraction of what both other nations, of course it's a lot of money because this is the wealthiest country in the world and it has a very large budget, it's still a lot of money. But if you think about it in terms of kind of resource allocation, it's a very scary statistic because it indicates some of what we were talking about a little bit earlier which is that of the sense of isolation that the United States struggles with, with the rest of the world. It seems to me that particularly at this moment of time where we are engaging with the world in ways that aren't always perceived as being helpful or constructive, it would be very important to balance that by saying that we are committed to kind of broader development goals and this is how we're trying to do that. So from our perspective, I think the way in which we try to deal with that is to talk about the world as one community and to really talk about the fact that you cannot ignore the context of poverty in Mexico when it leads to the kind of migration that causes the kinds of issues in cities, in many different parts of this country, in low-income communities of migrants and migrant workers. You can't ignore the struggle around sex trafficking and what is happening with women being trafficked across borders domestically but also to end up being used in brothels. So that has been the approach we have taken. It is still definitely a struggle. I don't think there's no easy answer to that and I think we try very hard in audiences like this to kind of talk about this as something that's not an either-or;

you should be giving to your local community and you should also be thinking about the fact that you belong to a larger community which is the community of the world.