

The objectives for investing in Health and Human Services

Introduction

At The Boeing Company we believe that the most effective way of meeting the needs of our community's most vulnerable residents is to address the root causes. Most families that are homeless or don't have enough to eat live under such conditions because the heads of households don't earn a livable wage. People may be unemployed or underemployed for a host of reasons: a lack of job skills, a scarcity of jobs, a lack of assets, or illness. When the head of a household earns enough money in the workplace, he or she is then able to provide food, shelter, and clothing for the family.

Job Training

At the heart of Boeing's health and human services investments, are job training and economic development. Job training programs provide people who have little work history with both the soft and hard skills necessary to secure and keep a well-paying job. We are witnessing a growth of social enterprises, NGOs that provide jobs for their employees by selling a marketable product or service and generating income for both the client and the NGO. In Southeast Asia, young women who have escaped from human trafficking find that a job at a social enterprise is a crucial first step in being integrated back into society. Smart job training programs anticipate growth trends in employment. As a result, we see men, women, and youth being trained for "green jobs," including working with solar and wind energy or learning to deconstruct buildings so that the materials may be reused in future construction projects.

Because some neighborhoods have few jobs for their inhabitants, we invest in economic development programs. These are typically large scale projects that attract business to blighted communities. By helping entrepreneurs start and grow small and medium sized businesses, we create jobs, help community members develop assets, spur further economic growth by purchasing goods and services from adjacent businesses, and grow the tax base in the neighborhood.

Personal Savings

Boeing invests in programs that help families develop assets, whether savings in a bank, a house, or even an Individual Development Account that enables a family to save for a child's college education. Across the globe, NGOs are recognizing the importance of helping families develop savings, whether through microfinance institutions in India, Vietnam, or Kenya or through the United Way in the United States. Increasingly, microfinance institutions determine the size of a loan by the size of a client's savings. When a natural disaster hits or a family member gets sick, a small entrepreneur without savings is likely to lose everything. In many countries, the family home is a person's largest asset and serves as collateral for other loans and important financial transactions.

Health and Work

Of course, the biggest impediment to completing job training and education programs that promise a way out of poverty is poor health. The largest reason for participants of these programs to drop out is their illness, the illness of a child, or of another family member. And, there is a strong correlation between poverty and ill health. For this reason, we invest in programs that provide access to health services for this population. Both preventative and treatment can often be accessed at social service agencies, mobile health units, community health centers, and through telemedicine. Other programs tackle disparities in health care. Recognizing that targeted populations are at a greater risk for certain diseases, healthcare providers target those populations with preventative care and early detection. From Canada to Latin America, for example, we see programs that teach young people who are at risk of developing diabetes improve their diet and increase the amount of exercise they get.

System Effectiveness

Finally, we know that despite our efforts to ensure good health and good jobs for all of our fellow citizens, some people will fall through the cracks. While we do not invest in the provision of basic needs, we do invest in programs that help make the delivery system more efficient. Our focus is on the system and not on one or two agencies at a time. This might entail adapting technology that allows larger amounts of food to be distributed faster or convening food pantries that serve the same areas to map out their services more collaboratively in order to avoid duplication of services and save on fuel and travel times. Or, it might entail helping a city's homeless shelters audit and map their services to avoid duplication and ensure that all communities that need such services have access. While we primarily focus on the economic self-sufficiency of individuals, we also focus on the efficiency of delivery systems knowing that an increase in efficiency will lead to an increase in services.