MARIE STOPES INTERNATIONAL

A GLOBAL OUTREACH PROGRAM

ORGANIZATION DATA

Founders
Dr. Tim Black, CBE
Ms. Jean Black

Established
1976
AN INTRODUCTION TO THE ORGANIZATION

Non-government organization Marie Stopes International describes itself as “one of the largest international family planning organisations [sic] in the world” (https://mariestopes.org/what-we-do). Having expanded to partnerships in thirty-seven countries, the organization provides education, medical care, and family planning access to women and men in many parts of Asia and Africa. Named for Dr. Marie Stopes, who opened the United Kingdom’s first family planning clinic in 1921, today’s organization has expanded its attention from the immediate needs of the urban neighborhood to widespread services throughout the globe (https://mariestopes.org/about-us/history). The Blacks developed their organization in part on the philosophy that family planning services “needed to be unlinked from the medical profession,” “a commodity that could be marketed, bought, and sold in the same way as aftershave or lipstick” (www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/opinion/obituaries/article4296083.ece).

Measuring their impact by “couple years of protection (CYPs),” the organization claims to have delivered 29.2 million CYPs in 2014 alone (https://mariestopes.org/our-impact/cyps-and-results), principally in regions of South Asia, Pacific Asia, and Africa.

Visitors to the Marie Stopes International site will discover a wide range of information, including detailed reports of the organization’s impact, a thorough discussion of how the organization works, a host of infographics, and an up-to-date news page describing recent accomplishments (https://mariestopes.org).

THE ORGANIZATION’S IMPACT

Aside from the many persuasive and optimistic presentations offered on its website, Marie Stopes International presents a microsite, “Our Impact” (https://mariestopes.org/our-impact), which invites viewers to see the data of its recent years of operation. This information offers viewers an impression of how effectively the Marie Stopes model works as it adapts to different cultures throughout the world, given empirical
evidence to substantiate its description of its mission. While the organization emphasizes its business model as a proof of its effectiveness, its inclusion of case studies about affected women roots its purpose in its humane mission ([https://mariestopes.org/our-impact/case-studies](https://mariestopes.org/our-impact/case-studies)).

**ISSUES OF CONCERN**

While Marie Stopes International works to establish independent clinics, its own clinics in London have in mid-August 2016 faced sanctions from the Care Quality Commission, leading the National Health Service to redirect affected women to other care providers ([www.bbc.com/news/health-37135380](http://www.bbc.com/news/health-37135380)). One should note that Dr. Black died in 2014, however, and that the transition may be difficult as a result. Further, the franchise-like nature of the organization would lead to some chapters facing different government standards as well as a likelihood that some chapters will require routine refitting in order to offer the best services for clients.

One must also acknowledge that the Black family took Stopes’ original interests and turned them into greater benefit. While some sources tend to celebrate her (the English Heritage website quotes an unnamed commentator who describes Stopes as “the eloquent Dr. Ruth of interwar England” ([www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/blue-plaques/stopes-mmarie-1880-1958](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/blue-plaques/stopes-mmarie-1880-1958))), there have also been discussions about her advancement of feminist causes and their complications due to her interest in eugenics ([www.lesleyahall.net/stopes.htm](http://www.lesleyahall.net/stopes.htm)).

Alan Holmes