

NEIGHBORS

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Dear Neighbors,

June 30th marked the end of my first year at the helm of World Neighbors. The year has been filled with wonderful events and terrible ones, too. The most difficult events, of course, were the multiple earthquakes in Nepal that hit so close to our staff and communities.

Though World Neighbors focus is on long-term solutions to hunger, poverty, disease, and the environment, we are accustomed to working in areas hit by natural disasters. Our response in Nepal deals with immediate short-term, medium and long-term priorities that the people themselves help determine.

For example, in the short-term, World Neighbors concentrated on such areas as health, shelter, water, and food. We remain active in rural Nepali communities while the first responders have left. Multi-pronged, participative efforts will continue as part of the collaborative process of creating independent sustainable communities.

Over the course of this first year, I have had the privilege of traveling to eight of our 13 countries to meet our staff and partners. In each village that I visited—whether in Asia, Latin America, Haiti, or Africa—the impact of World Neighbors is evident. I witnessed improved agricultural practices, water filtration for clean drinking water, installation of toilets and sanitation, smokeless stoves, women leaders, new businesses, and many other innovations throughout the world. Most importantly, the sense of confidence and hope about the future was palpable in every community I visited.

On my recent trip to Kenya, I had the opportunity to be interviewed on CNBC in Nairobi about our programs in the Lake Victoria region. The interviewer asked me if we extend credit to the farmers that we work with. This question encapsulates why World Neighbors is so different from the many other NGOs working in the field of development. I told him, no, we do not extend credit—we don't hand out anything—we help the farmers to save their own funds so they can provide credit to each other. Dr. John Peters understood 65 years ago that extending credit would never be sustainable. We continue to honor Dr. Peters' legacy by working with communities around the world to change this mentality.

We hope you enjoy reading about the programs in Nepal, Kenya, Guatemala, and Haiti in this issue. Each article shows the transformative power of people of all different backgrounds working together towards a common objective. We are so fortunate to be working with our unrelenting village partners, our small, yet incredibly capable staff, and you—our deeply committed supporters. Without your generosity, this work would not be possible.

Thank you for helping us to continue to grow and teach all neighboring communities these life-changing programs.

With enormous gratitude,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kate Schecter". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Kate Schecter, Ph.D.
President and CEO

After Brief Moment in the Spotlight, Kenya's Challenges Continue

By Kate Schecter

Though the first-ever U.S. presidential visit was positive in its focus primarily on urban entrepreneurs, the communities of rural Kenya face the same challenges they have for years—hunger, poverty, and isolation from the rest of the world.

In July I traveled to Nairobi and rural Kenya. I happened to arrive one week before President Obama's historic visit. The country was filled with excitement and some apprehension. Every village was filled with rumors: Would Obama really come despite the recent and continuing terrorist attacks in the North? The answer seemed to come when his "beasts"—large black armored cars—landed a week before he did.

More than 70% of Kenya's population lives in rural areas. The economy is highly dependent on agriculture and the rural communities who farm. Agriculture accounts for a relatively large share of Kenya's GDP (32% on average) and 65% of its export earnings. While smallholder farming accounts for 75% of total agricultural output and 70% of marketed agricultural production, the sub-sector is characterized by low yields per land unit.

Poverty in Kenya is essentially a rural phenomenon, with over 45% of rural households living below the poverty level. Over the last two decades, rural poverty has deepened, as agricultural production stagnated and the rural population increased by more than 2% per year.

World Neighbors has had a presence in Kenya since 1961 and is currently implementing three programs in Busia and Kisumu Counties of western Kenya. These projects involve 22 villages and nearly 2,000 households.

One project I witnessed is an innovative method to catch and use rainwater to form fishponds. Each fishpond can hold as many as 1,000 catfish and tilapia. In one farmer field school, they are using a solar-powered pump to channel water from the fishpond to tubes that are providing drip irrigation

for the various vegetables they are growing. These vegetables include a form of kale that produces edible leaves for eight months. In addition, farmers are using greenhouses to grow tomatoes year round.

The result is a new source of protein and surplus to sell at market all year. Profits are combined in a village-level savings and credit program that enables further investment to expand output and incomes.

We also work with HIV-positive residents in these villages. With antiretroviral therapy, people have gone from bedridden to active and productive



farmers. This treatment has also provided a door to additional health care and health education, including reproductive health.

Witnessing these innovations and the tangible changes they have brought to peoples' lives was immensely gratifying. So was my meeting with the local governor, who expressed interest in scaling up the projects to benefit more villages and households. This was tangible evidence that Kenyan officials understand that if their country is ever going to attain sustainable growth that brings prosperity and stability to their country, the focus needs to reach rural areas as well.

Responding to Twin 7+ Magnitude Earthquakes in Nepal

Srijana Karki Thapa with Jim Morley

In the U.S., we had just concluded the World Neighbors Spring board meeting in Oklahoma City the night before at a lovely home dinner with board members and friends. The next morning, Saturday, April 25, we awoke to the news of the massive 7.8 earthquake that had just hit Nepal.

Immediately, we tried to get in contact with our team in Nepal and our Regional Director, Srijana Karki Thapa. We were repeatedly unsuccessful. Communications and electricity were severed. A few days later, our CEO, Kate Schechter, made contact with Srijana and was relieved to hear that she, her family, and all our team had survived. Srijana and her family in Kathmandu were forced to live outdoors for several days. There was lots of devastation in the capital city, as shown on TV broadcasts around the world. Little noticed by the rest of the world was the extent of the devastation in remote, rural communities.

Looking back, Srijana shares:

When your earth, what you rely on for your security, is not safe and its movement under your feet unstable, this is very difficult. In Kathmandu, having to live outdoors for four days, the difficult conditions and concern for your children's safety and calming them—this is very difficult. Then, during lunch on the top floor of our offices, as the shaking begins again, we, the staff, think it is just another aftershock.

Instead, it is the next major earthquake and it continues even after we run downstairs and out of the building. People are scared. They experience headaches. They have trouble focusing on their work. Kids are petrified. Then I traveled to the field and the devastation was so apparent that no one needed to speak. It was so bad—so much worse than I had experienced in Kathmandu—that I personally felt grateful for how good I had it. By going to the field and witnessing

the devastation firsthand, it taught me to be more humble, to be stronger with a greater inner balance, and that my personal concerns would recede into the background as I, together with my team, focus thoughts and energies on helping others in far greater need.

Srijana and her team, with assistance from other nongovernmental organizations with whom we work, quickly began organizing initial trips to the field. Dealing with landslides and other impediments, our staff ascertained both the degree of devastation and the immediate needs of the communities. Back in Kathmandu, supplies were gathered quickly. In the U.S., people around the country were responding to many organizations working in Nepal. Donors responded generously to requests by World Neighbors for financial assistance, for which we and the communities where we work are most grateful.

World Neighbors purchased and assembled various relief materials, responding to the needs of the households primarily in the districts of Sindhupalchowk, Kavre, and Dolkha. The quantity of initial relief materials was to sustain them for three weeks. Each household received basic food staples such as rice, flour, sugar, salt, and lentils, along with hygiene and infant products. Additional items included vegetable oil, turmeric, potatoes, matches, plastic sheets, and tarps. In hardest-hit Dolkha,



95% are living under tarps. Certain medicines were provided initially. Importantly, World Neighbors has also begun to initiate Health Camps. Srijana shares that “People are being examined by doctors (gynecologists, general practitioners, and pediatricians) who are volunteering. They can prescribe medications and will provide them free of charge. The main additional costs to World Neighbors will be coordinating, travel, and accommodation expenses.”

World Neighbors has been working in Nepal for decades with communities in various parts of the country, successfully carrying out long-term integrated development programs led by the people themselves. But when disaster hits, as it has in a number of countries where we work, we switch into disaster-relief-response mode. This short-term assistance has extended into communities where we worked years ago. In one instance, Srijana relates:

Early on, we did respond to needs in Sindhuli District, where World Neighbors had worked previously. The Dakaha Clinic was damaged by the earthquakes. We helped to rebuild a wall in their clinic. Their work is essential to surrounding communities. It has saved many lives by dealing

with complicated delivery cases and other emergency services. We wanted to ensure that services of the clinic be continued. Also, in Sindhuli District, we provided tarps which were handed over to the District Disaster Relief Committee and distributed to communities with whom we worked in the past.

Day by day, the work continues. Together, World Neighbors and the communities continue to address immediate needs and are moving into medium- and longer-term needs. For example, tarps have been hugely important for temporary shelter to the large percentage who lost their homes. But, the monsoons have already started and permanent housing is all the more important. This will come high on their list of priorities.



What is different today in communities where World Neighbors works currently and has worked previously is that the people and their communities are more organized than ever before. They have learned in new ways to become their own problem solvers. They have been successful in a wide variety of programs and know that they have the capacity to surmount many an obstacle. Now in the aftermath of multiple, high-intensity earthquakes, they will surmount this new mountain as well. To all our U.S. donors—thank you for that all-important hand-up during this critical time.

Guatemala— The Land of the Maya

The times—they are a-changing in Guatemala. Most notably, in the capital city, there are a truly significant number of high-rise office buildings and tall apartment buildings that have sprung up, mixed in with a plethora of restaurant chains, U.S.-style retail complexes, and international hotels. Add to that, much-improved roads, underpasses, and a very modern airport, and Guatemala City looks and feels quite different from decades past.

Yet, the cultural and colorful Mayan influence is still strongly felt and seen in many places, particularly as one leaves the capital city and gets immersed in the beautiful countryside scenery. A number of Mayan languages are still spoken today in rural areas. For World Neighbors staff member Pablo, his first language was Cakchiquel, and at about age six he began to learn Spanish. Today, he said, learning begins with both the native Mayan language and Spanish.

The remote areas where we work mark a clear contrast with the modernity seen elsewhere. Yes, there are roads, but they are of dirt and rock, still require four-wheel drive vehicles, and are sometimes utterly impassable in the rainy season. Many of the people don't actually live by a road, but rather along narrow mountain paths. Most need to walk long distances to retrieve their daily water and then lack drinking filters to prevent disease. For many, electricity hasn't reached their homes, and at best, their sanitation is an outhouse.

In the Chortí region to the east, far from the signs of modern life, a women's savings and credit program was formed less than a year ago with the help of World Neighbors. They are now assessing how they can make a larger profit from their hammock making, which nets them about \$1.25 U.S. per full day of work. They say that while everyone wants discounts on their hammocks, when they go to buy corn or beans during the dry season, the prices are fixed.

Way up in the mountains beyond Lake Atitlán, 250 inhabitants now have clean running water from mountain springs. The network of pipes, which they built themselves, is linked with holding tanks and a chlorine filter to deliver clean water. This new accessibility to water marks a true transformation in their lives. They provided all the labor, starting at a source far above them, and then built a separate holding tank along the way and the housing to hold

the water filter. They dug the paths for underground pipes and strung the airborne portions. Thanks to financial assistance from the Rotary Club and engineering guidance from the local municipality, World Neighbors coordinated this important project with the community.



Based on our farmer-to-farmer approach, one of the young men there, Alberto, received special training that he is now replicating on his family's small acreage. In addition to contour farming on steep slopes, use of green manure, and diversification of crops, including vegetables and irrigation, he has set up a system to capture cow, goat, and chicken dung and urine. This improves the fertility of the land, and extra amounts can be sold. This model approach allows his neighbors to observe and, in turn, replicate his significant results.

In San Lucas Tolimán near the shores of Lake Atitlán, we are partnering with what is becoming a dynamic organization, CPANESA. They have a store and a commercial kitchen where jams, jellies, marmalades, and chilies from home gardens are prepared and sold in jars, along with bakery goods they produce. The store and kitchen employ two shifts per day, and members are also actively involved in sales at

Making a difference even in Chemin Neuf, Haiti

Well inland from the coastal town of Gonaïves in the northern department of Artebonite is one of the most humble and impoverished areas one can imagine. If rocks everywhere and denuded land were an asset, the people of Chemin Neuf would be wealthy. Instead, to an outsider, it is amazing they survive. All the more incredible is their laughter, their singing, their dancing. So Haitian, in spite of nearly unbearable living conditions.

Before the final ascent, a river is crossed. At the time, it looked at best 5% of its high-water mark. This is where the women and children come to fetch their water, albeit dirty, cholera-laden water. After about two miles of a steady climb up a narrow road, the hilltop landmark is reached—a humble, covered community building.

The surrounding land is a combination of hillsides loaded with rocks with small, narrow valleys below not looking much better. Set amidst a near absence of trees or healthy vegetation, the most modest of farm homes are scattered over a wide area connected by narrow dirt paths and dry river bed paths consisting exclusively of stones. Some huge mango trees, mainly along dry river beds, stand alone in sharp contrast.

World Neighbors is right there, working alongside the people, facilitating a progression of community-led improvements. Involvement includes stimulating discussion as the people themselves decide their own priorities, learn, and participate in their own organizational development. Our strengthening of local partners and working together with community members create newfound hope as early initiatives turn into small triumphs.

Food security is huge. Rocks are being removed and used as a part of contour farming efforts to keep what little soil there is from further erosion. Stopping burning off land prior to planting their next crops becomes a priority as well. Soil improvement comes by adding green manure plantings, making compost, and planting a diversity of nutritious food crops. In a number of small-scale nurseries, tree seedlings, including nutritious fruit

trees and others best for their needs, will help greatly with desperately needed reforestation.

A savings and credit group has already been formed, as well as an agricultural group. Basic health and sanitation education is beginning to produce results. Ahead, will come efforts in producing clean water with locally available filtering materials to combat cholera, which is highly prevalent in Haiti. Also, water catchment will be key to coping with the dry months. The people are learning through networking with other groups. In fact, eight rural communities have formed a network named “Ropla,” which World



Neighbors supports. Organizational strengthening and learning are actively taking place. Farmer-to-farmer visits are becoming an important cross-training ingredient as well.

The innovative process is catching hold, even in Chemin Neuf. With initial successes, people are beginning to see the light of a new day in which they indeed can surmount obstacles long since in their way. Latent human potential lying under the burden of these distressed conditions for generations is now surfacing with newfound hope, new ideas of their own making, and a collective energy and desire to keep pushing forward.

Our Haitian staff is so dedicated. They work in the field under difficult conditions. They also continue working on improving their own capacities so that they can deliver more effective training in a wide-

Continued on back

Commemorative Gifts Received

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The family of Lenora Avery

Charles and Carol Blackwood
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Harbour Winn

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Martin Neisen
Ken, Bonnie and Breanne Milano
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W.A. Van Valkenburgh



**WORLD
NEIGHBORS**

Inspiring People • Strengthening Communities

Haiti continued -

ranging number of areas. They collaborate with other groups. They start or strengthen local community groups. Challenges are great and results all the sweeter. For, indeed, they are making a difference today and paving the way for much better tomorrows.

It can't be emphasized enough how profoundly impoverished the people are in areas where we work and, for that matter, in the towns as well. If there were nothing that could be done, that would be one very sad matter. If throwing a lot of well-intentioned money could change their world for the better, that would be another matter. But World Neighbors continues to find our low-cost, hand-up approach a great path forward. With World Neighbors creating the spark, providing the training, and working alongside communities through initial successes and a progression of internal growth achievements, the people themselves become their own problem solvers and doers. Much still needs to be done, and that is an understatement. But, much can be done and that is a wonderful thing to hold onto in Haiti.

Guatemala continued -

numerous locations. CPANESA has already secured its own barcodes, and both a trademark and quality-assurance seal of approval are pending for wider distribution. Working alongside CPANESA, we are able both to strengthen the organization and reach 32 communities in the greater Lake Atitlán area. There are 400 students from the 4th, 5th, and 6th grades with whom they have special educational programs. Health, sanitation, and other trainings are also enhancing the capacities of people throughout these areas.

Not far from the border with Honduras, a group of 1,700 has formed the Asociación de Mujeres Olopenses (AMO). They weave baskets and purses, and make shoes—all with maguey, a natural fiber from the Agave family. They also work with seven varieties of native corn and bean seeds, including Bejuco, Chiquimulteco and Villano. The aim is to rescue native seeds of grains (maize and beans) that are part of the staple diet of families in Guatemala, as well as to provide an added source of income for the member growers. They sell these certified seeds from their seed bank maintained in the town of Olopa. Health, nutrition, and sanitation, along with savings and credit, are additional key themes they are working on through their collaboration with World Neighbors.

Though much has changed in Guatemala in recent decades, much still needs to be done—particularly to lend a hand-up to our distant neighbors in the more remote parts of the land of the Maya.

An Additional Way to Help

If it works for you, we would love to send you *Neighbors* by email. Not only will it save money and trees, you can forward *Neighbors* to your family and friends in an instant.

Just go to www.wn.org and sign-up for email right there. It's easy. For those who would rather not make the switch, of course we will continue to send you *Neighbors* by traditional mail.

OUR MISSION

World Neighbors inspires people and strengthens communities to find lasting solutions to hunger, poverty and disease and to promote a healthy environment

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