WORLD NEIGHBORS
Inspiring People • Strengthening Communities

FALL 2016

NEIGHBORS

Inside:

Proud farmer surrounded by his lush vegetable garden in the Chitwan District of Nepal.

Dear Neighbor:

A few weeks before the election, the umbrella organization, InterAction, of which World Neighbors is a member, asked me to join other non-profit CEOs in signing a letter to the incoming President. I want to share a few quotes from the letter with you as they are important sentiments as we move forward:

"Alleviating poverty and suffering is not only possible, it is the morally right thing to do and vital to our own national interest. Every war and every unstable country, every region stricken by disease or crop failure, every city hit with flooding or famine is a potential source of instability. In today's interconnected world America cannot afford to sit on the sidelines and hope for the best.

We see the results of concerted action all around us. The World Bank recently reported that in 2013 world poverty decreased by 114 million people—in just one year. Over a decade ago almost a billion people globally were considered undernourished; today the number is just under 800 million. Six million children lived last year that in 1990 would have died of preventable causes. And a courageous partnership between NGOs and leaders in the public and private sectors successfully fought the deadly 2014 Ebola outbreak. True, many challenges remain, but clearly progress is possible. The only problems that are certain never to be solved are those that are never tackled."

Working together with other organizations and local community-based organizations, change is happening around the world. You are an essential element of that change and I want to take this opportunity to thank you for your continued support. As we enter the holiday season, the staff at World Neighbors wishes you and your family happy holidays!

Please share Neighbors with someone you think needs to know about our organization and feel free to share your thoughts with me about this issue. As always, we sincerely appreciate your support and dedication to World Neighbors and our mission.

With gratitude,

Kate Schecter, Ph.D.
President and Chief Executive Officer
The May Ayers Milburn Chair

P.S. On June 30th, 2016, World Neighbors separated from Feed the Children, Inc. and became an independent organization again. We are very happy to be in our new office at 5600 North May in Oklahoma City. During the transition we were supported by our wonderful Board of Trustees and by several community businesses who gave us discounts and gifts-in-kind and worked with us to create a beautiful headquarters. Come visit us if you are in town!

UPDATE: Haiti's Response to Hurricane Matthew

On October 4, 2016, Hurricane Matthew (a Category 5 Atlantic hurricane) reached the island nation of Haiti killing nearly 1,000 people in this impoverished Caribbean nation. More than 300 schools have been damaged, as were crops and food reserves, triggering the worst humanitarian crisis in the country since the 2010 earthquake. Nearly 300,000 Haitians are in shelters across the country, and damage to roads and communications has hampered delivery of supplies. Haiti is also grappling with a worsening cholera outbreak in the storm-hit areas. Hurricane Matthew came as Haitians were already struggling with the intestinal disease spread by contaminated food and water, with more than 500 new cases each week.

World Neighbors' (WN) Haitian staff and partners went into action immediately and while they were completing full assessments and formulating a response, we put out a call to our supporters asking for financial assistance. The response was overwhelming. With this outpouring of generosity, WN started implementing plans that address the immediate needs of our program partners while laying the groundwork to help them get back to their successful, long-term work. Below are just a few examples of how these funds are being used to combat the spread of disease, insure food security and rebuild livelihoods:

- **Bio-sand water filter systems are being installed**
- **Heads of households are receiving twice monthly training on water, sanitation and hygiene strategies**
- **Community health workers are receiving updated, in-depth training on all areas of disease prevention**
- **Rain water catchment systems are being installed**
- **200 households are receiving assistance to rebuild nursery plants that can be used by the wider community**
- **Women are accessing help with their income-generating activities through the bolstering of savings and credit groups**
- **Farmers are receiving much needed access to credits for rebuilding of homes, fields and livestock operations**

Throughout its 65 years, WN has worked in countries that have been subjected to such dramatic natural disasters. Through our work in Haiti, we know that the devastation will go beyond the initial disaster. Due to the hard work and determination of men and women in the villages, WN has witnessed the transformation of poverty-stricken villages into flourishing communities. Although the hurricane will have destroyed some of the work undertaken by these farmers, we are certain that they can, yet again, create flourishing gardens and livestock in order to better their lives, the lives of their families and their neighbors.

The Power of Worm Poop

A version of this article originally appeared on NPR.org on August 12, 2016.

On small farms and in gardens around the world, a legless invertebrate has been quietly helping crops grow — simply by eating and pooping.

That's vermicomposting — using the power of worms for the good of humanity. A growing number of advocates believe this technique can improve soil quality, produce more food to feed hungry mouths and even increase income for some farmers.

It sounds too good to be true. Are worms really poised to take the agricultural world by storm?

Well, not exactly. For a variety of reasons — more on that later — vermicomposting is unlikely to make a dent in large-scale agribusiness. But for subsistence farmers in rural regions, worm-aided farming can change lives, says Dr. Kate Schecter, CEO of World Neighbors, an international development organization that works in 13 countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. In Nepal and other countries, the organization has helped people save money and invest in worms.

"Vermicomposting is not going to solve the world's food problems, that's for sure," Schecter says. "But I have seen it all over the world now very successfully used by small-scale farmers to create healthier soil and healthier crops." They grow more food for themselves instead of having to buy food, she says, and they can generate income as well by selling their produce.

Vermicomposting, also called vermiculture, has been around since at least the 1880s and is widespread commercially in many parts of the world, including China, Cuba, India, the United Kingdom and the United States. Interest has been growing steadily, says Rhonda Sherman, a solid waste specialist in the Department of Biological and Agricultural Engineering at North Carolina State University in Raleigh, and co-founder of the North Carolina Composting Council.

In 1994, Sherman published a fact sheet about how to set up a worm bin at home. Interest snowballed as she fielded growing numbers of calls and emails from people who wanted to know more. In 2001, she held a one-day workshop on large-scale vermicomposting. The latest conference, this past June, lasted two full days, involved an international group of participants and included sessions about worm farming to improve soil quality in Mexico and worm fertilizer for the American medical marijuana industry. Sherman says she's now fielded inquiries about vermicompost from people in 107 countries, many in the developing world.

So how does it work?

Unlike traditional composting, which depends on microorganisms to decompose organic matter and create heat that kills pathogens and weeds, vermicomposting requires cooler temperatures to ensure the survival of earthworms, which do all the work.

Inside a vermicompost bin, worms eat both microorganisms and bits of organic material, which can come from food waste, animal manure, aquatic weeds and other sources. Once ingested, those organic materials get ground up by the worm's gizzard and broken down even more by enzymes and microbes in the worm's gut. What comes out the other end is teeming with nutrients and bacteria that are beneficial for plants, along with valuable plant growth hormones and humic acids that enhance plant growth.

Scientists are still working out all the details of what makes worm manure so magical. And they are compiling data to back up its effectiveness. Dr. Norman Arancon, Assistant Professor of Horticulture at the University of Hawaii at Hilo, has run tests with tomatoes, strawberries, peppers, raspberries and grapes; he and colleagues have found that substituting a portion of standard fertilizer with vermicompost increases yields by 30 percent. They've published the results.

One believer in the developing world is Dr. Ephrem Whingwiri, CEO of Zim Earthworm Farms. With funding from a Dutch development organization called Hivos, his for-profit company is focusing on small farmers in rural communities. For the past two growing seasons, he and

his team have taught people in the Hwedza district of Zimbabwe to use worms to produce fertilizer from the community's own waste. Some farmers in the area use the worm-produced fertilizer to help grow tomatoes, green vegetables, onions, maize and more. They are also breeding worms to sell back to the company, adding to their otherwise meager income. But Whingwiri says it can be hard to persuade people in Zimbabwe to adopt techniques they aren't used to.

Worms aren't universal miracle workers. It takes a lot of little wigglers to churn waste into fertilizer, Sherman says. And initial costs can add up. In the U.S., a pound of worms — that's about 1,000 of them — can cost $25. Depending on the size of the farm, 100 pounds of worms or more may be needed at the outset. The bins that hold them have to be shallow to prevent heat from building up. So lots of horizontal space is needed. "I've had municipalities with really large amounts of organics contact me and say, 'I've heard vermicomposting is a better way of doing things,'" Sherman says. "Quite often, I talk them out of it."

Because the digestive process reduces large loads of waste into small volumes of compost, vermicomposting is likely to make the biggest difference on small scales as one of many solutions, adds Dr. Jerry Glover, an agricultural ecologist and fellow at the Leshner Leadership Institute at the American Association for the Advancement of Science in Washington, D.C.

"It's a terrific practice for home gardens," he says. "It just is very, very challenging to rely on something like vermiculture to significantly improve highly degraded soils on large scales."

But small-scale farming is prevalent in the developing world, notes Schecter of World Neighbors. And worm believers like Whingwiri remain undeterred. "This will change Africa," he says, "as long as governments take the time to think about earthworms."

Plastic Ponds Remedy Water Shortages in Rural Nepal

A version of this article originally appeared on Braced.org on July 19, 2016.

KUBHINDE, Nepal – On a sultry and overcast afternoon in Kubhinde village, Ms. Beda Maya Nepal clears out the twigs and branches lying in her pond. She then takes out a bucketful of water and pours it over her vegetable garden.

Although there is no shortage of ponds during the rainy season, hers is no ordinary water reservoir: it is made of plastic. In this region of central Nepal where prolonged

dry spells threaten crop production, farmers are building plastic ponds to collect rainwater and wastewater during the monsoons.

The plastic stores the water more efficiently than traditional earthen ponds, which absorb most water into the ground. The water is then used to irrigate gardens and other facilities in dry periods.

"The ponds allow us to collect and use water that could have gone to waste," Ms. Nepal said.

World Neighbors, a non-governmental organization, has jumped on the plastic pond bandwagon and helped villagers build 55 ponds since 2014, which typically conserve 2,000 litres of water at a time.

The organization teaches communities to build and maintain the ponds – for example by showing them not to mix soapy water with normal wastewater – and provides them with the plastic material to do so.

The improved access to irrigation allows villagers to double the length of their harvesting season – to seven-eight months (May-December) a year. The extended harvest fetches them an additional income of around 8,000 rupees ($75) on average each year.

OFF-SEASON VEGETABLES

A year after a deadly earthquake flattened cities and villages in the region, killing over 8,000 people and injuring many more, families are struggling to make ends meet after losing their houses, land and cattle. To boost local farmers' income, World Neighbors also facilitated the creation of savings groups in Kubhinde and nearby villages.

Members deposit 100 rupees (just under one dollar) each to the group's bank account every month and can take out loans when needed. Once per month, they meet to share their hardships and experiences, and discuss potential solutions.

Ms. Srijana Karki, the organization's Regional Director for South Asia, said the groups aim to empower communities to achieve change themselves. "Improved farming techniques and access to finance are just a few ways they can participate in their own development."

For example, group members have been cultivating "off-season" vegetables – vegetables that are grown beyond their normal harvesting season.

Mrs. Bina Devi Gautam, a group member dressed in a flowery pink dress, said she didn't use to buy seeds or grow vegetables beyond their normal season. "We've learned to preserve the seeds and use them during the off-season – I am now growing tomatoes and chili peppers," she explained, pointing to her vegetable garden.

Vegetable farming has not only helped farmers in the region provide more food for their families, it has also become an additional source of income, helping to pay for children's education, among other things. "When my son asked me for money to cover his schooling fees, I just gave him onions and told to him to sell them and take the money," said Gautam jubilantly. Karki added that "being able to cultivate vegetables almost all year round brings more diversity to diets, thus improving people's health."

GAINING INDEPENDENCE

To some villagers, especially the "untouchable" castes in South Asia called the "Dalits," growing vegetables has meant breaking away from a tradition of relying on others. Superstition dictates that Dalits should not grow vegetables, as their touch would destroy the harvest. "We never thought we could cultivate vegetables ourselves," said Ms. Sukumaya Bishwakarma, a farmer plucking weeds in her field of chili peppers.

Training provided by World Neighbors on vegetable farming encouraged Bishwakarma and fellow Dalit farmers to overcome their fear and adopt new farming techniques. These include cultivating grass on fallow land, saving hours that used to be spent gathering fodder for cattle – a task rendered increasingly difficult by growing deforestation.

"We would normally spend a whole morning just looking for grass for our cattle," said Mrs. Rammaya Lama, whose husband has polio, leaving her to manage all household and farming tasks alone. "Now it takes me an hour."

In the past year, World Neighbors has intervened in 11 villages across Nepal, helping 1,555 people, most of them women. The project's biggest achievement, however, is helping people lift themselves out of poverty, said Kate Schecter, the organization's chief executive. "They are gaining confidence and a sense of their own potential," she added.

Reports from the Field

World Neighbors has a long history of exceptional student volunteers lending their talents to further our mission. Earlier this year, Mr. Nicholas Duncan continued this tradition by setting out on a journey to capture photos and stories from many of World Neighbors' programs. Over the remainder of the year and much of 2017 we will be sharing highlights of his trip with you.

One of Nicholas' first stops was the village of Nappu on the Indonesian island of Sumba. Here he attended a disaster simulation designed to train our partners in how to deal with the impact of a tsunami. The following is a brief summary of the training with pictures.

People from many of the surrounding communities attended the event and were trained in the basics of search and rescue. To commemorate the event, all those attending ceremoniously planted a tree on the beach. The event was also attended by a number of emergency medical teams and a doctor. Mock "victims," both young and old, then applied makeup and were hidden in

various locations along the beach. At a certain point the simulation was triggered by approximately 30 children running from the beach screaming. The participants were then required to find the victims, assess their condition and attempt to move them to a safe location where they would be able to receive medical treatment. The villagers were very involved and had a blast performing the exercise.

Commemorative Gifts Received

June 1 – October 31, 2016

IN MEMORY OF

Burt Barth
- Kevin & Mary Barnes
- Donna Jean Bricker
- Ronald Burkard
- Jack & Pat Burns
- Marsha Busson
- Diane Cape
- Richard & Linda Craft
- Mary Dixon
- David Houser
- Richard & Jane Sidwell
- Howard Teasley
- Robert Voytas
- Bob Wood

Burt and Rose Barth
- Chris & Kimberly Berger

Stephanie Burkard
- Charles & Carol Blackwood

Ronnie Claire Edwards
- Joseph &
- Margy Messenbaugh

Doral Hopper
- Julie Edwards

John William Hunt
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- Charles & Carol Blackwood
- Carl Capelouto
- Lina & Joe Ellis
- Randolph & Faith Everest
- Patricia Harper
- F.W. & Marcia Hunzicker
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- Craig & Carla Malever
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- Margy Messenbaugh

William S. Myers
- Joseph &
- Margy Messenbaugh

IN HONOR OF

Charles and
Carol Blackwood
- Sherry & Ike Bennett
- Richard &
- Kitty Champlin
- Virginia Greenberg
- Sarah Roy
- L. B. &
- Mary Trachtenberg

Jim Morley
- Bill & Ann Brackett
- Peter Copeland
- Mindy & Stephen Galoob
- Jerry &
- Katherine Haapanen

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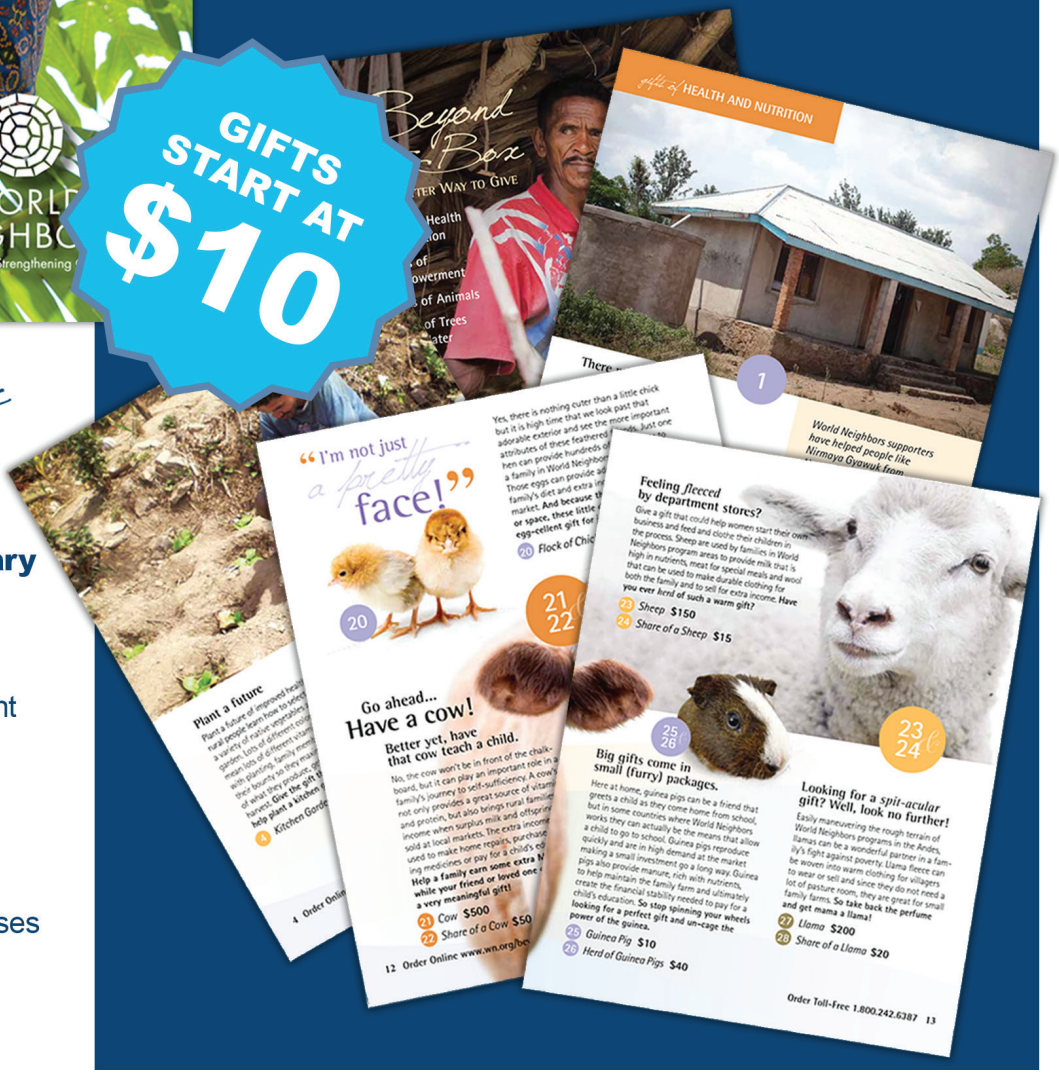
CONSIDER GIVING A GIFT THAT HELPS TRANSFORM COMMUNITIES IN NEED.

GIFTS START AT $10



Beyond the Box

A Better Way to Give because your symbolic gifts can go far beyond the traditional boxed items and have an extraordinary impact that helps transform communities in need.

These gifts are *symbolic* and represent the work of World Neighbors and the many items that communities around the globe use to lift themselves out of poverty. Because you are helping World Neighbors inspire people and strengthen communities, your purchases are tax deductible.

Give.org BBB WISE GIVING ALLIANCE

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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