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Reducing the Stigma of HIV/AIDS in East Africa**





Dear Neighbor,

Climate change promises to be a large focus of our work in the years ahead. The first quarter of 2017 has already been full of activity in our communities around the world. Unusually strong El Niño rains have wrought havoc in Peru with the worst flooding in 50 years! Earlier in October of last year, Hurricane Matthew battered the island of Haiti and destroyed large swaths of the country. Thanks so much to everyone who gave so generously to help the villagers in Haiti and in the Andes, where roads, crops and homes have been badly damaged!

Of course, we can't control changing global weather patterns, but, because of your support, we can help control the impact of future events and support environmentally sustainable practices at the local level. The work we do impacts the health, livelihood and security of thousands of people. I've recently had the honor of meeting some of those people.

In February I had the opportunity to travel to Haiti after Hurricane Matthew. The communities where World Neighbors has been working fared better than most because they were more prepared for this kind of a natural disaster. Although many roads were washed away and food was scarce, the fish ponds we helped build were unharmed by the hurricane and provided protein and nourishment until the roads were passable again. Water filters provided clean water when cholera reemerged as a dangerous threat and infections ravaged the island.

In March I traveled to Indonesia with a few board members and donors to see how we are staving off coastal flooding and other natural disasters. On the island of Flores, we saw villages that are thriving due to the planting of thousands of mangrove trees, which prevent erosion and flooding. Through the influence and with the work of World Neighbors, the Indonesian government is now investing in planting mangroves on an even larger scale.

These are just two examples of how World Neighbors works in 13 countries around the world to help our neighbors prepare for disasters, mitigate the impact of climate change through new techniques, work together within communities and collaborate with surrounding areas.

As Dr. Peters wrote in the conclusion of his book, *Cry Dignity*, "Alone, we will never make it. But I am among that stubborn number who believe that together, and by the grace of God, there's no worthy task impossible of accomplishment."

Wishing everyone a wonderful spring and summer!

Gratefully yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kate Schecter". The signature is fluid and cursive.

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



P.S. June 30, 2017 marks the anniversary of our first year of independence! We are so thankful to everyone for supporting us through this year of being back on our own. Without the support of our committed and generous donors, this would not have been possible!

International Aid Can Remain Beyond Politics

By Kate Schecter, Ph.D.

This editorial was originally published by The Hill on January 9, 2017

As a new Administration prepares to take office, there are once again questions about America's proper role in the world. Is it our place to help people lift themselves out of poverty and build societies that allow and enable individual and communal fulfillment? If so, who does it, and how? Namely, does it make sense for the federal government to spend tax dollars on programs to further economic and social development in other countries around the globe?

To help answer these questions, it's important to understand that the majority of US international aid programs—public and private—are not charity. Unlike charity, these programs are not meant to be providing aid indefinitely. Rather than perpetually alleviating the suffering caused by poverty, development projects are designed to help eliminate it.

Since most people in the developing world are involved in some stage of food production, a large number of U.S. government international aid goes to agricultural development programs.

From our 65 years working in global development, we have learned that successful agricultural projects have the following characteristics in common:

First Things First. Most agricultural production in the developing world is undertaken according to traditional methods, many of which have been passed down for hundreds of years. There is often enormous wisdom in these techniques.

The key is to combine effective traditional methods with appropriate and sustainable modern innovations, most of which are simple and inexpensive. Improved seeds, up-to-date (low tech) tools, small-scale alternative energy sources, use of animal waste for organic fertilizer and pesticides and basic training in how to implement these innovations can greatly improve agricultural yields. Higher yields and the cost savings derived from lower cost organic inputs result in quick increases in profits and incomes. These profits can then be invested to further increase output, educate children and other uses that expand wealth-creating capacity and opportunity.

In Burkina Faso, we worked with a local partner to teach livestock farmers to “finish” their cattle with weeks of feeding of inexpensive and nutritious natural fodder.

Prior to this simple innovation, cattle roamed over areas without fences and clearly defined boundaries. This led to lower weight and communal conflicts. The “finished” cattle weigh more, which results in significantly higher prices and income for producers.

Innovation takes Education. It's one thing to have new seeds and tools, but how to use them effectively requires education. Much of this can be transmitted through hands-on work. But at least some of it requires continued access to current information and the means to communicate with new suppliers and customers. This can be a powerful catalyst for the development of new ideas about how to both produce and sell food, as well as other ways to reduce losses and increase profits.

In the Burkina Faso example, livestock farmers who “finish” cattle in contained areas need to acquire basic animal health techniques and medications. The skills learned with cattle are then transferrable to other livestock, reducing losses due to disease and illness and further raising family incomes.



Grow for the Market. Real development means building the capacity to identify and sell to real markets. Even more, it means moving up the value chain--food processing, marketing and even exporting.

In Peru, we are helping local farmers raise and sell guinea pigs (cuy) that are fed organic alfalfa. These animals command a premium price in markets and restaurants, including some of Lima's top-ranked establishments. Peru also exports frozen guinea pigs around the world, including the U.S. Our partners are exploring the potential U.S. market for the organically raised cuy that is a delicacy in Peru.

Taken together, these three elements of successful agricultural programs translate into sustainable livelihoods. It is only through improving an entire food system--sustainable development--that aid organizations can “work themselves out of a job.”

More importantly, it is only through sustainable development that poverty and suffering are reduced and, eventually, eliminated. We can all play a role in this. In fact, if you pay federal taxes, you do play a role. You help fund the programs that help lift millions out of poverty and lay the basis for a more stable and peaceful international community.

International aid--public and private--is one of America's great success stories. We all have a stake in policies built on the truth that helping others is the best way to help ourselves.

Peruvian Farmers, Chefs (Yes, Chefs) Cash In On Guinea Pig Craze

This story was originally published on NPR.org on October 17, 2016

Rodents are generally the last things most restaurant owners want in their kitchen.

But in the larger cities of Peru, chefs are practically fighting over guinea pigs in a restaurant craze that is bringing financial stability — if not exactly wealth — to small farmers in the Andes Mountains.

People have eaten this furry rodent for centuries in the high country of Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia. Called cuyes in Spanish, guinea pigs were traditionally fried or grilled and eaten for special occasion-meals, or boiled into a stew and served to the ill or injured as a sort of tonic. Andean lore even holds that guinea pig meat contains cancer-fighting properties.

In the past decade or so, guinea pig popularity has exploded, as the cosmopolitan dining culture of Lima and other Peruvian cities has taken a liking to the animals — not so much for their big fawn-like eyes but more for their fatty flesh. The guinea pig's skin, crispy when fried, is also coveted.

For farmers in the high mountains of southern Peru, the rising interest in this rabbit-sized rodent comes as a chance to cash in. The average income for a household here may run the equivalent of only \$100 a month, according to Lionel Vigil, the Lima-based Regional Director for the social aid organization World Neighbors. "These people really are the poorest of the poor," Vigil says. "But when we incorporate guinea pigs into their lives, they can add an extra \$100 per month."



Since 2005, Vigil's group has helped several dozen families in the impoverished regions of Apurimac and Ayacucho get started in the guinea pig business. One of the first things the organization must do, Vigil says, is help a family establish credit and take out a loan to buy a few breeder guinea pigs, which may run about \$10 apiece. World Neighbors' on-site staff helps the farmers install basic guinea pig infrastructure, like cages and feeding troughs.

Sold to restaurants, each of the rodents pulls in about 15 Peruvian soles (the equivalent of almost \$5) for the farmer, according to Vigil. He says no one he knows is getting rich in the guinea pig trade. However, some are doing quite well. The animals breed prolifically, and one particular farmer who bought two guinea pigs a year ago now has 400, Vigil says.

Heifer International, based in Little Rock, Ark., is independently running a similar program geared toward improving people's quality of life. Since 2000, the nonprofit's Peruvian program has donated 23,000 guinea pigs to 2,300 families, according to Jason Woods, Heifer International's senior communications director.

The animals are usually kept in barns outside the home. Many are fed a blend of mealtime leftovers and alfalfa grass. Since they convert plant matter into body mass about twice as efficiently as cows, guinea pigs are cheap to grow. Guinea pig ranching "is a very good way to raise livestock, improve nutrition and make some money," Woods says. Guinea pigs are slaughtered and sold at the tender age of about two months. At this point, each cuy is gutted and its hair removed after a dunk in boiling water. The idea is to leave the delicious skin intact. "When guinea pigs are fried in pieces like chicken, the skin becomes crispy, which is most appealing to consumers," Vigil says, describing the more traditional approach to dining on guinea pig.

In upscale Lima restaurants, such as El Rocoto or Panchita, chefs have fancier tricks up their sleeves. One, Vigil says, is to make "guinea pig rolls" by removing the bones and wrapping vegetables and guinea pig meat together within the skin. "Of course, the head and the claws are also removed in those restaurants in Lima, but in the Andes restaurants and in traditional restaurants in Ayacucho and Apurimac, the guinea pigs are served with the head and paws," he says.

Another typical dish is chiriuchu, a specialty of the Cuzco area. "It combines all kinds of food — guinea pig, chicken, beef, fish, cheese and vegetables," says Woods, who has traveled in the region while working with Heifer International. "It basically looks like a big pile of meat."

HIV/AIDS Interventions and Reducing Stigma in East Africa

“People think that I’m not infected just because I have learned how to take care of myself. I am busy in productive activities which have really changed my economic life status,” Esther, a person living with the Human Immunodeficiency Virus from the World Neighbors (WN) program in Tanzania



Woods says guinea pig consumption, once mainly limited to households, is exploding in Peru’s restaurants. Some, called *cuyerias*, actually specialize in cooking and serving guinea pig. Sol Moqueguano, for example, was launched 17 years ago in Cuzco. “The owner told me that when he started, there weren’t any restaurants that sold *cuy* in Cuzco,” Woods says. At the time, Woods says, *cuy* was served mainly for weddings, anniversaries and other special celebrations. That’s changed dramatically. Sol Moqueguano now runs through 1,400 guinea pigs per week. And Woods says other *cuyerias* are now running similar operations in the same city.

While South Americans revisit old traditions of dining on *cuy*, interest in other countries is minimal, rooted mainly in small populations of Andean ex-pats, Vigil says. One United States importer based in Connecticut is importing about two tons of frozen guinea pigs into the United States each month, mostly at the demand of immigrants from Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia, according to Vigil. But he doubts the guinea pig as a kitchen staple will ever go mainstream in the United States. “It will never catch on with Caucasian Americans,” he says. “They see guinea pigs as pets, not food. This is not something the culture of the U.S. will accept.

Close to 25.6 million people in sub-Saharan Africa are living with HIV, which is about 70% of the global total. This has necessitated the incorporation of the prevention and management of the pandemic into WN’s development programs as a priority development issue in Africa. Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is caused by HIV that weakens the body’s immune system, making it susceptible and unable to recover from opportunistic diseases that may lead to death. The pandemic is caused by factors that are sexual, socio-cultural (such as widow inheritance, female genital cutting, polygamous unions and forced or early marriages of girls) and reproductive (e.g. mother-to-child transmission). Most infections occur among people in the most economically productive age groups. Hence, it is a serious public health and socio-economic problem. In WN’s programs in East Africa, HIV prevalence rates are significantly higher than the national averages, thereby necessitating a concerted effort to contain the situation.

The effect of the pandemic is devastating as it impacts all spheres of human development. It reduces household productivity and incomes as the morbidity of the affected members reduces their participation in income generation and a large proportion of household resources is spent on medication. The pandemic also results in the increase of the number of widows, and orphans and vulnerable children; increases in the number of child-headed households when both parents die; making children drop out of school due to lack of fees; and forcing orphaned young girls into prostitution in order to fend for their siblings.

WN’s programs treat HIV as a cross cutting theme and apply different approaches to address the issue among various categories of people infected and affected by the pandemic: orphans, widows/widowers, expectant mothers and the community at large. WN’s programs begin by facilitating a process with the community during which their challenges are identified

and prioritized for action. If HIV/AIDS is identified as a challenge, then WN will partner and collaborate with the relevant government departments to provide mobile health clinic services to the community where voluntary counselling and testing (VCT) is done. VCT is a confidential session where an individual is counselled in private about HIV followed by voluntary testing for the virus which causes AIDS, followed by further counselling irrespective of whether the result is positive or negative. Those whose results are positive are facilitated to form 'support groups' through which they are further counselled and encouraged to provide support to each other by sharing their experiences. These support groups are considered a vulnerable category that WN targets for intervention in initiating income generating activities (through savings and credit) in addition to being trained in proper nutrition and facilitated to have kitchen gardens planted with nutritious traditional vegetables and fruit trees and also engage in small-scale livestock rearing.

Also in the category of vulnerable groups are orphans and vulnerable children. WN has taken steps in helping these orphans by educating the community and the orphans themselves together with their caregivers on the prevention of HIV infections and caring for the affected. The orphans and their caregivers have been supported to initiate income generating activities, often focusing on rearing small animals such as goats, rabbits and poultry. Raising of goats and poultry are the most popular activities because the orphans consume the milk and eggs as part of the nutrition boosting strategy in addition to getting income through the sale of offspring, milk and eggs. The money generated is used for household upkeep, school fees and paying for health services.



A group member looking after her poultry

When WN launched development programs in some communities in East Africa, some people living with HIV were so weak that they were bedridden. WN, in partnership with the government health departments, initiated the home-based care programs. Home based care is the act of nursing a patient in terms of medication, nutrition and hygiene outside a health facility. In most cases it is the family members who take care of their sick relatives. WN helped train the family members who were charged with this difficult task. Due to WN's interventions, there are currently no HIV positive people that are bedridden in the program areas. Due to effective home-based care and nutrition education, many of the former bed-ridden people are now participating actively in program activities and living active lives despite the virus.

An expectant mother who is infected can also transmit the virus to her unborn or born child. Hence the strategy known as the 'prevention-of-mother to child transmission' has been devised to reduce the transmission during pregnancy, labor, delivery and post-delivery through breastfeeding. Sensitization and awareness campaigns are mounted among women to attend ante- and post-natal clinics in order to detect if the mother is HIV positive and then efforts are made to teach her how to avoid infecting the baby, including putting her on anti-retro viral therapy.



HIV counseling and testing in a secondary school

WN applies various strategies to educate the community on HIV/AIDS prevention, care, and support. One way is the training of volunteer youth theatre groups to pass information about the pandemic by staging entertaining dramas with simple and clear HIV messages in public places and during public functions. Because the majority of the new infections are found among the youth aged between 15 through 24, another strategy is to use youth peer educators. Due to the breakdown in traditional

cultural practices where the elders used to provide sex education to the youth, the current situation is that the youth have very scarce information on sexuality which puts them at risk of contracting HIV. Therefore, WN trains youth volunteers who can then advise their peers on how to avoid infections and those already infected on how to live positively and avoid reinfection as well as infecting others. In addition, WN uses school health clubs in both primary and secondary schools as a platform to pass HIV/AIDS messages to the youth and the communities as a whole.



Training of Community Health Volunteers in HIV/AIDS management and family planning

Thirdly, WN has trained community health volunteers who also play an important role in information dissemination. They offer door-to-door information and raise public awareness and offer support to those already infected by teaching about proper nutrition, counseling on behavior change, and linking them to health facilities for specialized support and follow up. Finally, in addition to the practice of members of the support groups sharing information and encouraging each other, support group members are also encouraged to give public talks in various forums. Because they have conquered stigma and are known to be living with the virus they are taken much more seriously by their audiences. Their courage has helped to destigmatize HIV/AIDS and encouraged more people to go for testing, join support groups, publicly declare their HIV status and live active lives.

The impact of WN's work on HIV/AIDS at the community level is evident in the fact that stigma has been reduced and people living with HIV are readily accepted in the community, information on the pandemic has increased, more people are ready to go for testing, agricultural productivity in households with infected members is increasing due to the sick no longer being bedridden, and children orphaned through HIV/AIDS are getting support from caregivers and the community at large. More, however, still needs to be done to mitigate the negative consequences of the lack of available pre- and post-exposure prophylaxes and to scale up WN's successful interventions.

Reports From The Field



Dick and Faith Duhring have been devoted donors to World Neighbors since the 1960's. Dick first met Dr. Peters at a meeting in Carmel, California in the early 1960's. Through his Rotary Club, Dick first visited a World Neighbors community in Honduras, and later traveled to Indonesia with Faith to see more of our work in the field. This excerpt from Dick's diary is from the trip to Indonesia in 1990:

"We soon stopped at one of the World Neighbors Yayason Tananua program settlements and visited with some farmers along the road. Since it was perpetually only "500 meters" walk, we hiked the next half hour into one of the farms where a group was showing off their nursery of coffee plants which would develop into a valuable cash crop. We avoided actually chewing the betel nuts that were passed around, but the freshly whacked coconuts gave up a very welcome drink. We had by now gotten ahead of schedule drinking our bottled water.

We continued down a very pretty recognizable valley, and near Nggongi we stopped at the home of the Rajah, who formed that region of Sumatra, to see if we could borrow a replacement jeep. The good natured Rajah was sorry but both jeeps were off at a market in some unidentified village. (On Sumatra about 2% of the population are nobility, 88% farmers and 10% slaves.)

So we tightened our belts, climbed into the 2 viable jeeps leaving Munjuk, Larry's office auditor and the 3rd driver near the Rajah's and headed down to and along the Indian Ocean to the village of Lailunggi where we pulled to in the main square for a pit stop in a little room in a nearby back yard. Meanwhile we entertained a large crowd of kids who had never seen anything like us.

Night was falling and Larry polled us finding us ready to pack on to Ramuk since they have been expecting us

Commemorative Gifts Received

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since late afternoon. So we headed back into the hills and up a steeper and more incredible road for 2 more hours in the dark. We kept a good grip on the roof ribs. Some running ahead with flashlights to locate the so-called road, several roads, grassy stretches with only one rut – we were shocked at the precipitous drops when we came out on Monday. Passed no traffic at all on this run – wheel or hoof.”

We are deeply grateful to Dick and Faith and the many other families that have been so generous to World Neighbors over the years! It is through your generosity that millions of lives have been transformed!



Paul Milburn

Mr. Paul Milburn, a long time donor and friend of World Neighbors, passed away on November 25, 2016. Paul had a long and successful business career in Oklahoma and gave generously to World Neighbors and other organizations. Before his passing, World

Neighbors recognized Paul for his contributions by naming him an emeritus board member. An endowment from Paul supports World Neighbors' administrative budget, providing financial security. Paul was a true friend to World Neighbors and will be remembered fondly by us and the millions of lives he affected.

Did you know?

Planned giving helps World Neighbors secure long-term stability, which allows us to spend more time on the vital work that we undertake.

Through a planned gift, your legacy can provide World Neighbors financial security that allows us to spend less time fundraising, and more time focusing on our mission. There are many planned giving methods, and gifts can even be made in the name of loved ones. If you are interested in supporting World Neighbors' growth and establishing your legacy, consider planned giving.

To learn more about the many ways to make a legacy or planned gift, please contact Robert Lachance at 405-286-0805 or rlachance@wn.org.

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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