

# NEIGHBORS

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*Indonesian women dyeing yarn*





Dear Neighbors:

In this age of fast-paced change and daily international crises, it can be helpful to remember the fundamental underpinnings that help keep us grounded. I thought I would take this opportunity to explain some of the unique features of World Neighbors' methods in the field that we use to make sure that the investment in our communities is sustained long after we leave a region.

- First, we work in rural communities in the most marginalized remote parts of the world where people are so isolated they may never have received assistance from outside sources before.
- We truly do not give anything away. We do not distribute in-kind donations nor do we bring equipment or other goods to donate. We adhere to the "teach a man to fish" theory of development and all our assistance is through training and technical assistance with local trainers who speak the local languages.
- Except for one staff member, all our staff are from the countries where they work. This enhances local capacity not only for the communities with whom we work, but for all the staff. It also ensures better communication since all our staff are fluent in the local languages.
- We understand that change is complex and takes time. To that end, we stay in communities for eight to 10 years to ensure that the communities are ready to graduate and sustain all the changes long after we are gone.
- We take a holistic and integrated approach to development by not focusing on one sector. Over the eight to 10 years, we cover all the areas that need improvement in these communities (economic empowerment, water, sanitation, hygiene, health, women's empowerment, sustainable agriculture, disaster risk reduction and many other areas of need).
- We register as an international development organization in every country where we work and develop Memoranda of Understanding with national and local governments to help ensure sustainability once we leave.

While there are many more elements to our methodology, the ones above are keys to our success over these many years. As you read this issue of *Neighbors*, you will see 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".

Kate Schecter, Ph.D.  
President and CEO  
The May Ayers Milburn Chair



*Kate receiving a gift in Tanzania*



*Dairy goat husbandry in Uganda*

## Extremist Violence Still Threatens Global Progress – Analysis

*January 25, 2019 Geopolitical Monitor*

By Kate Schecter

Extremist violence has dominated the attention of much of the globe for nearly 20 years. As attention shifted to the threat of terrorism, great power rivalries were downplayed as developed countries joined forces to battle extremism.

That sense of a common front was temporary. The end of ISIS's caliphate, trade tensions and other events of the past two years have refocused America and its allies on the enduring reality of great power rivalry. The states jockeying for regional supremacy in Asia and Europe are shaping trade relations, governance norms and values, and the economic and political prospects of millions of ordinary people.

Great power rivalry never went away. It is real and promises to intensify in the years ahead.

Yet extremist violence continues, including in Syria and

Iraq, where ISIS has yet to be defeated. This violence diminishes the lives of millions in the Mideast, Africa and other regions. Of course, there's been an uptick in violence directed at aid workers, both by extremist groups and states claiming to be opposed to them. Just as much as any retaliatory state, extremist violence still threatens the international community built over the past 70 years, and all it's done to reduce poverty and suffering.

Violent extremism and the threat it still poses does not exist in a vacuum. It is largely the outgrowth of extreme poverty. Public and private organizations lack the resources to invest in and provide the education, health care, economic opportunity and effective governance that are the necessary conditions for a peaceful society.

This poverty, in turn, is only effectively addressed as it has been for decades: through sustained economic and social development.

This is the work of international development organizations. The most important lesson World Neighbors (WN) has learned while doing this work since 1951 is that development is a years-long process. While large and expensive top-down projects can result in



impressive physical changes and temporary income gains, they rarely result in the transfer of skills and attitudes that equip communities to initiate their own sustained development. Lasting development is achieved when communities identify their own needs and organize themselves to address their own concerns. Effective international non-government organizations, like WN, assist this process.

An example of where this is working is Mali. Insurgencies by extremist groups in Mali and neighboring countries feed off and take advantage of deep poverty. Militant groups often pay more than what people can earn in the agricultural sector, which dominates in Mali and other Sahel nations. Signing on for violence is often as much an economic as an ideological decision.

To help overcome this, WN works with local community groups in Mali's Segou region. The communities in Segou, a semi-arid region, have limited livelihood options. The majority of residents are nomadic pastoralists and semi-sedentary farmers.

WN has worked in and with these communities for 11 years. During that time, village associations and partner groups have greatly increased their capacity to initiate and manage their own development projects. These include literacy training and basic sanitation and health training. Farmers have greatly expanded their agricultural output using sustainable techniques designed to lower input costs and increase climate change resilience.

Perhaps most important, villagers use a savings and credit program to generate capital to invest in improved farming implements, more productive livestock, small businesses, their children's education and more. Participants become highly dependent on one another to improve their living and social conditions. This enhances community solidarity and weakens the appeal of criminal and/or militant groups that may attempt to recruit members.

WN and other international development organizations run similar programs in Burkina Faso, another country threatened by extremist groups. These too have shown impressive results in reducing poverty and strengthening communities in sustainable ways. With all of these communities in Burkina Faso and Mali, the development process takes time, so WN will work with them for as long as it takes before they are "graduated." Once graduated, communities possess the capacity to sustain their own initiatives and advocate with government bodies for the public investments necessary to accelerate development and wealth creation. Over time, this political involvement further strengthens commitment to peaceful change.

More than any military solution, it is development that will drain the life from extremist ideology and violence. As General Paul Selva, vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs

of Staff stated: "Dollar for dollar, every dollar spent on diplomacy and development — the growth of democratic institutions or at least civil institutions in countries that allow their leadership to be sensitive to the needs of their citizens — are immensely more effective ... than having to deploy soldiers, sailors, airmen or marines to a crisis..."

Great power rivalry will always be with us. Extreme poverty and the violence it germinates do not have to be.



*Using plastic bottles for drip irrigation in Timor-Leste*

## What Communities in Developing Countries Can Teach Us About Plastic

The number of single use plastic water bottles has skyrocketed in recent decades. In the US alone, 67% of US bottled water is sold in single-use containers. These bottles end up in landfills and, even worse, in oceans and other public spaces.

Like plastic straws, plastic bottles are increasingly the object of boycotts and regulation. Offices, department stores, zoos and other public spaces in the US and Europe have stopped selling bottled water. A string of towns in Massachusetts have banned the sale of small bottles. A proposed bill in New York City would outlaw the sale





*Plastic bottles used to grow avocado seedlings in Tanzania*

of single-use plastic bottles in city parks, golf courses and beaches. Cities including London and Berlin have encouraged local shops and cafes to display stickers saying they will fill reusable water bottles for free.

The problem isn't so much plastic itself as the way it's come to be used in consumer packaging. What makes plastic so useful is its low cost, durability, light weight and, especially, its long life.

It's the last quality that makes plastic less than ideal for packages and other items that are used once and then thrown away.

But what if these "single-use" plastic packages like water bottles are in fact not disposed of but reused in innovative ways?

That's exactly what happens in many developing countries.

In Timor-Leste, for example, discarded plastic bottles are used as a virtually cost-free irrigation system. Farmers put tiny holes in the bottles, fill them with water and place them near seedlings. It's a quick and easy drip-irrigation method that greatly reduces water usage under very dry conditions. This is critical as communities in dry places like Timor-Leste adapt to climate change.

Another innovative use of single-use plastic bottles is to store and apply natural pesticide made from animal urine. In India, Nepal and many other low-income countries, goat and other animal urine is mixed with substances that ferment it into an effective pesticide. When it's ready for use, the pesticide is transferred to reused plastic bottles





*A woman farmer in her kitchen garden in Tanzania*

and applied in fields. It is safe and free. Inadequate storage of chemical pesticides is a great risk factor in developing countries. Leakage of chemicals into the soil and water is dangerous for the farmers' health and for consumers of the crops.

Eliminating this risk helps protect health, as well as, lower input costs and raise profit margins.

Perhaps the most significant and established use of disposable plastic bottles is the SODIS (solar disinfection) method for producing clean drinking water. Clear PET bottles are filled with water and set out in the sun for six hours. The UVA rays kill germs such as viruses, bacteria and parasites. The method also works when air and water temperatures are low. Disinfected water is then typically transferred to a large container for household consumption and hand and dish washing. SODIS is recommended by the World Health Organization, UNICEF and the Red Cross.

SODIS has changed lives in Tituque, a poor community of 1,400 people in the eastern department of Chiquimula in Guatemala. The village lacks potable water sources. As part of comprehensive health and hygiene training by World Neighbors and our local partner, farm families learned the SODIS method.



*School boys in Tanzania learning about planting trees*





*A Kenyan farmer checking his plants*

Families now have clean drinking water. As a result, gastrointestinal illnesses have fallen dramatically. This is critical in a developing area. These debilitating illnesses prevent people from working, reduce incomes, kill young children and keep people in poverty. SODIS is a simple and very inexpensive technology that has a large impact on health and productivity.

The enormous increase in plastic production in the past generation has presented the world with real challenges and difficult choices. But if used as originally intended, as it is in farm communities in dozens of developing countries, plastic can actually be an important part of environmentally sustainable practices. Disposable water bottles are just one issue on which those in the developed world can learn from the creativity and resourcefulness of communities with far less resources at their disposal.

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## ANNUAL REPORT 2018

### Did you know?

World Neighbors' Fiscal Year 2018 Annual Report can now be accessed online. Simply go to the Accountability section of our website, [wn.org](http://wn.org), and view the tremendous work we accomplished last year.

### 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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