

NEIGHBORS

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Inside:

**Helping Guatemalans
Stay in Guatemala**

*Olga Chivala Mendoza working in
her kitchen garden*



Dear Neighbor:

As this issue goes to print, we are all experiencing an unprecedented global pandemic not seen in any of our lifetimes. All of us at World Neighbors—from Oklahoma City to Bali, Nairobi, Lima and Kathmandu—are working from home.

We are well placed to deal with this crisis around the world. Many of our offices consist of a few people or one person who was already working from home before the crisis. We are in communication with all our communities, and are encouraging enhanced hygiene practices and social distancing, everywhere.

Over the past few years, we have emphasized the importance of basic hygiene, private toilets, accessibility to water and water filtration throughout all our programs. This focus is paying off now. The isolation and rural localities of our communities will help to keep them protected. The danger multiplies if community members return from cities and more densely populated areas and bring the virus. We are working to make sure that these distant communities hear about the virus and take as many precautions as possible.

In the midst of this terrible crisis, we lost a dear friend, Charles Blackwood, who had been in poor health and sadly passed away on March 10. Charles was one of the lucky people who actually attended the groundbreaking sermon by Dr. John Peters in April of 1951 at St. Luke's United Methodist Church in Oklahoma City. Charles always remembered that experience, and he and his wife Carol have been devoted to our mission ever since. Carol is currently a Board member doing her third nine-year term! Both Carol and Charles have been close friends and advisors to me over the past six years. They have seen World Neighbors weather many storms. When there have been difficult moments, they have reassured me that this too shall pass. They have traveled to most of the countries where we work and have been generous donors over all these years. We have received many gifts in memory of Charles and have created the Charles Blackwood Fund to honor his memory and devotion to World Neighbors.

We hope you will include World Neighbors as you think about helping non-profits around the world during this pandemic. As always, we deeply appreciate your generosity and concern for our distant neighbors! Wishing everyone good health and the strength to get through this difficult crisis.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kate Schecter".

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

P.S. World Neighbors continues to have the highest ratings with Charity Navigator, GuideStar and Charity Watch for most sound fiscal policies and transparency! Please know that your contribution will always be used with great care and deep appreciation.



Charles and Carol Blackwood in Kathmandu in 1995 with a World Neighbors staff member



Guatemalan coffee farmers, Odilia Gomez, Felix Escalante and Enrique Samayoa in Huehuetenango

HELPING GUATEMALANS STAY IN GUATEMALA

A version of this article originally appeared in YaleGlobal Online on October 23, 2019 and was written by Kate Schecter

In grappling with the Central American migrant crisis at the southern US border, policymakers must remember that families have fled these countries for decades. This is not a new phenomenon. Drugs, gangs and poverty have long led people to migrate from Central America to take refuge in other countries, including the United States, Canada and Spain. Climate change has become another motivator for migration, especially for farmers struggling with droughts and flooding.

While the numbers of people seeking asylum keep growing, it is important to remember that virtually no one actually wants to flee his or her home and start from scratch in a foreign land. High numbers of people moving to seek refuge in another country are almost always a sign that conditions have become extremely difficult, dangerous and perhaps even hopeless. Those fleeing such circumstances believe they have no other choice but to uproot themselves and their families, risking their lives to find a better place to find safety and start over. In Guatemala, the migration is coming from both rural farm areas and the cities where gang violence has escalated. No matter the prism through which one views migration, the challenge for those who care is to help build on what is working to enable people to remain in their homes and countries. For international development organizations

like World Neighbors, this means investing in what already works – patiently partnering with rural communities to increase incomes and open doors to economic and social opportunities. It means working with local leaders to identify their priorities and helping these communities raise capital, enhance security, ensure they have food and clean water year-round, and helping them to become self-sufficient.

World Neighbors has assisted more than 27 million people since 1951 to alleviate poverty, hunger and disease in 45 nations throughout Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa and Asia. Through a unique, holistic approach to development, the program team does not focus on one sector, rather it helps address all the gaps through training, ultimately, “graduating” communities to be fully self-sufficient. In Guatemala, the group helps poor farmers to improve their lives and stay in their homeland. An example is an eight-year-old program in the dry corridor department of Chiquimula and the highland department of Atitlán, which includes Lake Atitlán. Many families in these areas grow coffee, the country’s second leading export after clothing. More than 40 percent of Guatemala’s coffee is exported to the United States. While coffee farming can produce sustainable incomes, the product is a commodity, and like all commodities, its price depends on the



Alejandra Pic showing her weaving in Atitlan

international market and fluctuates. While international buyers like Starbucks pay premiums and have programs to help moderate price cycles, there has long been a clear need to develop diverse sources of income. That's the focus of the holistic development program World Neighbors (WN) conducts with local Guatemalan partners. In Chiquimula, nearly 20,000 people growing coffee and other agricultural products have participated in this program. They have started nearly 600 small businesses. The overwhelming majority of those businesses – 494 – were started by women. For example, in the Olopa region, women have traditionally made handmade rope and straw bags for their families' use. The bags incorporate local designs and dyes and can be used for shopping, carrying produce or as book bags. Through a savings and credit group, the women developed a cooperative and started a small business, now offering a range of designs and undergoing training in basic financial and marketing techniques. As a result, local bag production has been successfully commercialized, with women selling their bags in Olopa, a town of 24,000, and surrounding regions. The bag business provides significant income for hundreds of women, including those whose families farm coffee. Women make an average of \$100 a month from the bags.

Producers have organized themselves into the Association of Olopenses Women, or AMO. With its success in Olopa, the AMO has expanded to the larger communities of Jocotán and Camotán and now encompasses 37 communities. In addition to its own small business and agricultural initiatives, the AMO partners with other international groups to improve local economic and social conditions. For example, the group has worked with the Habitat for Humanity Foundation to purchase and install cleaner and more efficient stoves to reduce indoor

air pollution along with asthma and other respiratory illnesses. AMO is now completely independent of WN's assistance and continues to grow without external support. This association of women is a model that can be replicated to ensure financial security and encourage people to stay on their land.

In addition to starting small businesses, farmers who grow crops other than coffee have learned sustainable techniques to increase output. This includes raising more and healthier chickens, a major source of protein in rural communities. Farmers sell surplus agricultural output, including poultry, in local markets. Using a savings and credit program, profit is reinvested to expand output or start small businesses like rope bags.



Lesbia Maria Sajquiy weaving a traditional fabric

The story is similar in Atitlán, where nearly 21,000 people have participated in small business development and related efforts. The funding for the training has come from

a local Rotary Club, Rotary International and the Starbucks Foundation. Community members have started nearly 800 small businesses. As in Chiquimula, women dominate here, running 590 of them.

Why haven't the gangs and violence pushed out these communities? For one, the communities are in rural areas. WN identified communities where there are fewer gangs and drugs so that trainers and volunteers are safe and communities are free and willing to participate in the projects.

The impact on migration speaks for itself: In Atitlán, nine people who have participated in our program have migrated to the United States. In Chiquimula, the number is zero.

WN has started a similar project in Huehuetenango, supported by the Starbucks Foundation. This project is in its early stages, but already the demand for training and participation is high. This only reinforces what those who work in community-based economic development know – there's no magic wand. It takes time to help poor communities diversify and increase their incomes and catalyze sustainable economic and social development.

But it can be done.

Guatemala is among the strongest economic performers in recent years, reporting a 3 percent rate in economic growth, according to the World Bank, but inequality is high and indigenous people represent more than half of those living in poverty. Per capita GDP is about US\$4,500. Guatemalan families want a more secure and prosperous home and a better future for their children. Successes in Olopa, Atitlán and Chiquimula demonstrate that such a future is possible in this beautiful country of resilient people with patient investment in programs that work.

How Fish Farming is Combatting Kenya's "Sex-for-Fish" Trade

A version of this article originally appeared on thefishsite.com on February 28, 2020 and was written by Rob Fletcher

A program that encourages the adoption of pond-based fish farming in Kenya is raising household incomes and halting the spread of sexually transmitted disease, according to WN. The US-based charity focuses on integrated projects that combine health, natural resources and agriculture/aquaculture and recently told The Fish Site how a project

encouraging the adoption of small-scale, pond-based aquaculture is proving fruitful in Kisumu, one of the poorest parts of Kenya.

"Fishing traditionally supports many livelihoods in Lake Victoria but wild fish stocks are in decline, both in terms of the numbers and size of fish. This is due to several factors, including pollution from sugar cane factories and overfishing caused by the increase in the human population around the lake," explains Makonge Righa, Africa Regional Program Officer with WN.

"There's pressure on fishermen and a growing demand for fish. Fishing methods are also becoming less sustainable, with fishermen using increasingly fine-meshed nets, as well as chemicals and even explosives, so we're trying to encourage more people to move towards fish farming," he adds.

Righa reflects that, as well as the environmental concerns surrounding Lake Victoria's declining fish stocks, there's also a sinister human cost involved.

"The current fish shortage is leading to the exploitation of women and the spreading of sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS," he says.

"This is driven by both cultural and economic factors. In many communities there is a cultural taboo against women fishing. It's considered men's work. Women's role is to procure fish for their families. Demand is high due to the growing population, availability is limited and, as a result, many women trade sex for fish. The practice degrades women and exposes them to sexually transmitted diseases. The problem is made worse because of the itinerant nature of the fishermen, who ply their trade all around the lake, including in Tanzania and Uganda," he explains.



"Cage farming is too expensive for most families in the region – cages cost in the region of \$1,500-\$2,500 each – so instead we encourage people to look into pond farming," says Righa.

Mary Achiemy Onyango with her pond in Kisumu, Kenya

In response to the issue, WN has looked to encourage an alternative, affordable and sustainable means for women to obtain fish: aquaculture.

"Families dig large ponds and line them with plastic. The ponds are filled with rainwater and stocked with tilapia if there's a good water exchange and catfish if the water is more stagnant."

"A typical catfish farm consists of ponds measuring 10m by 5m into which about 400-500 fingerlings can be introduced. After three months, by which time the fish are typically 1-1.5kg, they are ready for harvesting. As a result, typical harvest volumes are 400-600kg – and these can be achieved three times a year."

"The ponds are not only used for growing fish, but also to store water, which can be used to irrigate crops in dry periods. As it's enriched with fish waste, it helps to fertilise the crops too," Righa notes.

"The fish are largely fed household food waste and select crop waste, which dramatically lowers the cost of production and increases the profit of those fish sold in local markets. Using ponds also allows farmers to

accurately predict the number of mature fish they will be able to sell, which allows them to plan and budget," he adds.

"Perhaps most importantly, pond farming is often done by women and female fish farmers don't need to trade sex for fish, nor do they spend large amounts of time locating and bartering for fish. That time can be spent on agricultural production, contributing to greater food and income security," Righa explains.

Farmers have access to good-quality breeding stock from the Kenya Agricultural & Livestock Research Organization and the Kenyan Marine and Fisheries Research Institute, while some bigger farmers sell fingerlings too. While there have been some production issues, disease has – thankfully – not been one of them.

"We are fortunate that there are few fish-disease issues in the area but there are issues relating to theft of stock and the expense of buying supplementary feed," says Righa.

Eight years after the project was launched in Kisumu, 15 farms have been constructed and the results have been startling, according to Righa.

"Households with fish ponds have increased incomes by 32 percent through the sale of fish and improved agricultural productivity – with access to the water in the ponds allowing farmers to cultivate a diverse range of crops even during dry periods," he reflects.

Furthermore, he suggests that HIV infection rates in the communities in which fish ponds operate have been reduced by around twenty percent.

"The ponds ensure availability of fish in the village, women don't have to go to the lake shores or markets to access fish; this means women have extra time to engage in other economic activities and also ensures increase in household nutrition especially among women and children," agrees Eddy Ouko, a farmer and community leader in Nyakach.

Unlike many NGO projects in East Africa, WN provides neither funding nor infrastructure, concentrating instead on sharing expertise – a philosophy based in part on the failure of past aquaculture initiatives in the country.

"Fifteen years ago the government launched a fish farming initiative but it was never taken seriously enough, despite the government offering funding to develop fish ponds," Righa reflects.

"We're a capacity-building organization, which means we don't give money, and don't even help with the construction of the ponds – too many projects collapse, leaving ponds abandoned, as soon as NGOs leave – so we concentrate on improving knowledge and providing training. A sense of ownership is vital for the long-term success of the projects and many are now adopting the



Pauline Achieng Omondi and her daughter, Mercy Adhiambo Omondi, tending to their fish farm pond

model," he continues.

"Fish farming is more technical than artisanal fishing, especially amongst a poorly educated population, so our priority has been to encourage simple production techniques that even schoolchildren should be able to operate," he adds.

"This fish farming method is simple. Once you introduce the fingerlings one just waits for them to mature and harvest... there are no diseases and expensive feeds to deal with," says John Obuom, a farmer in Nyakach in Kisumu County.

WN's model is based on the Organization operating in an area for 8-10 years, which allows them to see the project

through the five key stages: initiation, growth, expansion, consolidation and maturity.

Looking ahead, WN is looking to build on their success in Kisumu.

"We're encouraging the formation of a female fish-trading association to give women collective bargaining power – better prices, better markets and higher incomes," Righa says.

And the success of the project has also inspired them to roll out similar projects in lake-side regions of Tanzania and Uganda, where WN is encouraging farmers to start stocking irrigation ponds with fish.

Commemorative Gifts Received

August 21, 2019 - February 19, 2020

IN HONOR OF:

Charles and Carol Blackwood Alice Ball Susan Murray Van and Joni Peters	Dave and Jean McLaughlin Joan Burke
Bill Brackett Rollin and Elaine Dix	Ann Milburn Van and Joni Peters
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Emily Estes Alice Ball Dee King	Pete Whitley Kathleen Whitley
Lalita Henderson Mr. and Mrs. Wingeier	Jim and Kathy Worley Mark Worley
Robert Lachance Evan and Heather Walter	Chen Xu Roger Lui
	Michael and Sheri J.H. and S.L. Liles

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Martha King Joseph and Martha Ferretti	Robert C. Reed Emily Reed
John E. Kirkpatrick Bob and Nancy Anthony	Denny and Diane Roberts Kathy Hill
	Lisa Slater Dr. Leonard Slater

Kirkpatrick Family Fund Awards WN a \$20,000 Endowment Matching Grant



WN has a fantastic opportunity to increase its endowment at the Oklahoma City Community Foundation (OCCF)! The Kirkpatrick Family Fund has awarded WN an Endowment Matching Grant for \$20,000 against our pledged goal of \$60,000. This means that if we are successful in raising \$60,000 by February 2021, WN's endowment will receive an additional \$20,000 from the Kirkpatrick Family Fund.

WN's \$60,000 will be added to its endowment at the OCCF. An endowment is designed to keep the principal amount intact while using the investment income for operational costs. We cannot use the principle of the endowment funds today. ***It is an investment in WN's future.***

Consider Stretching Your Annual Contribution

We hope you will consider stretching your support to WN this year by contributing an additional gift towards the \$60,000 endowment goal. Sustaining the future work of WN is one of the greatest gifts you can give. We are here to help you figure out the best plan for you and your legacy. 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.

In Memory of Charles Blackwood as of March 20, 2020

Carol Asin	Robert Ellis	Mary Ann Haskins	Marla Persky and	Steve and Janie Schomberg
Chris Bartholomew	Barbara Erickson	Jerry Hemry	Craig Heberton	Tiffany Stevens
Sherry Bennett	Jim Everest	Bette and Frank Hill	Ray and Pat Potts	Berit Sweeney
Helen Bondurant	Elizabeth Foster	Paul and Beverly Kanaly	H.E. Rainbolt	Jim and Beth Tolbert
James and Becky Buchanan	Lucy Fritts	Sue Loftis	Bob and Candy Reece	Joe and Zula Walters
Ronald Burkard	Mindy and Stephen Galoob	Robert and Karen Luke	Elizabeth Robertson	Myralin Whitaker
Art and Sandy Cotton	Anthea George	Hedra Merson	Sarah Roy	Helen Woodward
Elizabeth Eickman	Marinell and Ralph Guild	Valerie Naifeh	David Sanders	Anne Workman
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OUR MISSION

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

5600 N. May Avenue, Suite 160, Oklahoma City, OK 73112-4222
405.752.9700 | 1.800.242.6387 | wn.org



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