

NEIGHBORS

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Inside:

**Resilience in the Face of the
Pandemic and Climate Change**

A Nepali farmer and his son



Dear Neighbor:

Once again, the past year has taught us that challenges are interrelated. Viruses, extreme weather, economic stress and even moving essential goods across borders all affect one another – none of these stand-alone. The same is true of reducing poverty and helping communities achieve economic and social development.

Improving lives means addressing all the factors that affect income and opportunity. That is why every World Neighbors program you support helps communities increase their resilience – to natural disasters, drought, and unanticipated crises such as the pandemic or political instability.

We are proud to report that the communities you have invested in have shown their resilience this year.

- In Indonesia and Timor-Leste, disaster preparedness committees quickly pivoted to COVID-19 prevention.
- In Kenya, families planted sack gardens (that use very little water), critical as climate change alters rain patterns.
- In Haiti, communities have turned to kitchen gardens and fishponds for adequate and nutritious food in the face of violence and political instability.

The women and men with whom World Neighbors and our local partners work, are incredibly resourceful. They can see a better life over the horizon and will not allow anything to knock them off that path. We are fortunate to work with such people. They are fortunate that you provide the support that enables their hope for a better future.

Please consider making an investment, today, in World Neighbors.

Every dollar you donate will be doubled through a \$100,000 matching grant from the Paul Milburn Charitable Gift Fund!

You can read more about this exciting opportunity on page 10 of *Neighbors*. Thank you for your ongoing commitment to improving lives around the world.

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. More than 83% of your contribution goes directly to programs that improve lives and build resilience. We continue to look for ways to raise that percentage higher!



Kate with the World Neighbors team and a community-based organization in Guatemala in 2017



Community health volunteers in Burkina Faso

GLOBAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: THREE LESSONS TO APPLY AS WE PULL OUT OF THE PANDEMIC

By Kate Schecter

This article originally appeared on the Wilson Center's [newsecuritybeat.com](https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/newsecuritybeat) on August 2, 2021.

No country has escaped the setbacks caused by COVID-19, but impacts on low-income countries are proving far worse. The World Bank estimates the pandemic and the actions necessary to contain it will drive 150 million people globally into extreme poverty. Post-pandemic, there will likely be long-term effects. Even with this grim reality, there is hope. Governments and international development organizations have accumulated a wealth of knowledge about what works to reduce poverty and increase economic activity. As the Biden administration and other actors work to build a post-pandemic environment, key lessons can be drawn from this knowledge to inform recovery efforts.

Applying these lessons will be important for poor women who were struggling even before the

pandemic. Women who live in rural areas are particularly marginalized and often lack access to education and livelihoods. International development organizations had made in-roads in this area before the pandemic struck. For instance, girls in isolated or traditional societies were starting to make progress in gaining access to education. Decades-long gains achieved through the globalization of ideas, investment and trade could evaporate due to the setbacks caused by the pandemic. Regaining educational and developmental advances could take many years, due in large part to the devastation wrought by the pandemic and the impacts of severe climate change on poor communities.

American Leadership Matters

The United States has led and sustained the global economic development agenda for the past 70 years. There have been notable successes, such as the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, which started in 2003. This ongoing, multi-billion-dollar global effort to treat and prevent HIV/AIDS is widely considered to be among the more successful public health efforts in history. The relief plan saved more than 20 million lives and prevented millions of HIV infections in more than 50 countries. It has also enabled millions of people to continue to work, helping promote economic growth, food security and poverty reduction. Since much of the \$85 billion was focused on building health care capacity and infrastructure, the far-sighted program has helped strengthen health care and sustainability around the world.



Malnutrition screening in Burkina Faso

The United States can once again mobilize public and private sectors to enable poor communities to help themselves during and after the pandemic. After COVID-19 is better controlled, climate change will still play a harmful role around the world. Countries which are largely agricultural, are particularly vulnerable. Droughts, floods, and other extreme

weather events can destroy economic capacity and drive increased migration—often to other countries also affected by climate change. Even while the focus on vaccine distribution and access will remain the priority until we are living in a post-COVID world, the global community must continue working to address climate change.

Public and private development organizations must integrate climate change resilience in all decisions and programs, from lending for food security to health care programs. International assistance needs to become more preemptive in helping communities prepare for natural disasters. It should also create local disaster management teams in vulnerable communities and implement agricultural techniques which both protect the environment and are resilient to the extremities of climate change. Many disaster risk reduction strategies and agricultural techniques are already in use, such as how remote villages in Indonesia's climate change strategy improved the islanders' resilience in the face of the pandemic. Local strategies like these need to be scaled up and disseminated in hard-to-reach communities.

More and Better Globalization

At its base, globalization is the worldwide integration of economic activity. Its downsides have been well documented by both its opponents and supporters. Nevertheless, the sharing of ideas, goods, services and capital has resulted in the largest poverty reduction in history. It has also contributed to more women joining the workforce. Advances in maternal and reproductive health have also played a large role in advancing women's rights. Improvements in health, education, and more women entering the workforce are all advances we need to maintain and continue to promote. The world needs more integration of these positive factors of globalization, but done in ways that benefit both industrialized regions and more rural, marginalized communities. For example, it would benefit everyone to ensure education for all young people, with an emphasis on including girls and young women.

Invest on the Community Level

Low-income countries seeking to lift themselves out of poverty need more investment—especially in sustainable agriculture and clean energy. These investments can both reduce poverty and mitigate out-migration by reducing “push factors,” such as lack of jobs and food scarcity which force people to

leave their homes and seek basic subsistence in other countries. While larger globalization efforts are fueling societal shifts, we need to continue to invest at the grassroots level.

In every community where World Neighbors works, we help people develop savings and credit programs. Villagers contribute small amounts each month and take out small loans at low or no interest, often to invest in greenhouses, increase agricultural output, start small businesses, pay children's school fees or other livelihood improvements. Profits are reinvested in the savings and credit groups, enabling others to take loans. In Kenya, savings and credit groups have accumulated enough capital to register as cooperative banks. Increased access to capital is even more important as countries recover from the pandemic.

Humility and Patience

One key to sustainability is understanding the resources and strengths which already exist in each community. By building on what is already working and helping to develop capacities on the ground, communities can help themselves and they start to value existing strengths. Not only does this avoid the problem of dependency on outsiders, it creates pride and ownership. Training needs to focus on technical skills and on leadership with a focus on women and youth.



Sack gardens in Kenya

This kind of support work requires long-term horizons and consistent effort. World Neighbors works with communities for a minimum of eight to ten years.

This long-term strategy is the only way to ensure that investments in communities will be sustained and they will develop the capacity to continue improving on their own. Real change—that is built on improved knowledge and skills, capital accumulation and integration with government policies—is difficult to accomplish in the short-term. Long-term improvements in income, well-being, and other factors can add up to a better standard of living. These processes take time.

Keep Focusing on Women and Girls

Women play a crucial role in development. Take the example of Laxmi B.K., who lives in the rural village of Sindhupalchok, Nepal. Laxmi is a member of the Dalit community.

A few years ago, Laxmi was invited to a World Neighbors training. She joined a savings and credit group and took every class being offered—water management, worm composting, basic bookkeeping, women's health, and more. After the training sessions, Laxmi planted a kitchen garden—from which she now earns hundreds of dollars per month in vegetable sales. Her profits are a substantial sum in her village.

Over the years, Laxmi has borrowed from her savings and credit group to purchase additional land for vegetable cultivation and sales. She registered her community development group with the municipal and tax offices, and is now able to apply for publicly available healthcare and other funds. Laxmi's success has changed her relationship with her spouse, other men in her village and members of other castes. They now support her leadership efforts that bring public resources to her village.

There are millions of people in low-income countries with similar challenges and potential. They need the kind of opportunities and support which leads to success.

The world has been through some tough times. The current pandemic and economic stress may be the toughest in a century. These challenges require us to work much harder and smarter to continue the tremendous improvements in living standards and poverty reduction achieved over the past 70 years.

While wealthier nations and international development organizations can play a part, as they have for decades, communities and nations are ultimately responsible for their own improvement. The challenge is to find the right balance to create a more open, prosperous and equitable world without poverty.



Sindhupalchok region of Nepal

COMMUNITY RESILIENCE IS A BEACON OF HOPE

By Kate Schechter

This article originally appeared on reviewnepal.com on June 26, 2021.

In June, heavy rains hit Nepal and the Sindhupalchok District was devastated. Flooding has been unprecedented. Homes, bridges and livestock were swept away. Many of those who have lost homes were sleeping in community centers. While masks were being worn, this forced density raises additional risks for villages that had been recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The municipality and relief agencies were providing immediate aid to Sindhupalchok in the form of food, blankets and other urgent needs. One of the major reasons the flood relief aid reached the Gufadanda community, in Sindhupalchok so quickly is that the community had prepared for just such a disaster. World Neighbors (WN) has been working with this community since 2015 and we helped them focus on disaster risk reduction including initiating close ties with the local government. When we initiated our program in 2015, right after the earthquake, the Gufadanda community was devoid of any external support including the local government

– the community was not aware of their right to receive government development support, nor did the local government know how to reach this tiny community. There was no linkage between the two. Along with other development activities, WN helped the community become aware of their rights and the importance of approaching the ward and municipality offices with their development agendas. As a result, the community was successful in building a strong suspension bridge, a community hall, an irrigation canal and a road to their villages. Because of the relationship building, Gufadanda was quick to inform the emergency services of their situation and their need for immediate relief support. A once unknown community is now well recognized.

Once aid was distributed, and the crisis was over, the work was not over. It was just the beginning. Restoring everything to the way it was will not be easy. The challenge is to build back in a way that increases the capacity for long-term income and wealth generation in these hard-hit villages.

The good news is, as noted above, Gufadanda and other communities in Sindhupalchok have done it before.

Like many villages in Nepal, Gufadanda was nearly destroyed by the 2015 earthquake.

Villagers were struggling to maintain a subsistence level of income and nutrition. Working with a local partner, we started trainings in agriculture, health and sanitation, public advocacy and more.

After six years of putting the trainings into practice, Gufadanda Gauchet was a thriving community:



Bridge used to reach rural villages in Sindhupalchuk, Nepal

- After construction of a bridge in 2018, 19 children from eight households started going to school. The community also worked with the government to obtain a new road and community center.
- All families had built new houses.
- Families had diversified their crops from rice, corn, local green leaf and beans. They were growing additional produce and varieties of rice, corn, beans, cow peas, radishes, broad leaf mustard, cauliflower, tomatoes, water cress, cardamom, ginger, turmeric, garlic, onions, chili, bananas, mangoes and mandarins.
- As a result, nutritional variety and quality had greatly increased. In 2015, it was common for families to eat only one type of vegetable. With training about nutrition and the cultivation of new crops, by this year, families were eating legumes, green vegetables, fruits, fish and meat. Child malnutrition had been greatly reduced.
- In 2015, farmers often spent hours a day traveling to and from the jungle to gather grass and tree fodder.

The community established its own fodder “garden” of ipilipil, bhatmase, mendola and other local grass. This reduced jungle visits by 80%. The “extra” time was often devoted to food production, trainings and other activities that increase incomes.

- All farmers participated in livestock management training. As a result, livestock diseases had been treated with a 99% recovery rate with almost zero animal deaths. Meat production had increased, improving nutrition and adding significant income.



Nepali farmer working in his kitchen garden

- Women’s reproductive health improved. Women were comfortable consulting professionals and openly discussing reproductive issues during group meetings.
- Families had received training about government development programs and advocacy methods. The community was in continuous contact with local officials about resources that would further accelerate development.

Gufadanda’s destruction by the 2015 earthquake was traumatic, so was June’s flooding. However, the community’s previous experience rebuilding lives and livelihoods gives it the tools, experience, and relationships it needs to build back quicker and even better this time. The same is true of our other communities in Sindhupalchok. While this has been terribly traumatic, these communities are resilient. I have no doubt the villages, with which we work, will strive even harder to regain recent losses and create even better lives for their families and communities.



Deforestation in Timor-Leste

EDD WRIGHT ON CLIMATE RESILIENCE IN TIMOR-LESTE

By Ankit Panda

This article originally appeared on diplomat.com on May 26, 2020.

Timor-Leste faces particularly acute climate challenges as an isolated, poor and dry nation. Water remains scarce, intensifying public health concerns amid the ongoing spread of the COVID-19 pandemic worldwide. International organizations have long supported efforts to build public health capacity and climate resilience in Timor-Leste. One such effort includes World Neighbors' Increasing Community Resilience Program (ICRO), which focuses on proper water management in the Timorese region of Oecusse. To better understand these efforts, The Diplomat's senior editor, Ankit Panda, spoke to Edd Wright, who oversees World Neighbor's projects in Timor-Leste and Indonesia.

What are the major climate change risks for Timor-Leste?

Timor-Leste is increasingly being affected by severe weather events as a result of climate change. In the region of Oecusse, where World Neighbors works, this is seen most prominently in the form of short periods of intense rainfalls (which cause landslides and flooding), interspersed with longer periods of hot, dry weather, which can cause droughts. Rains are generally arriving later, and stopping earlier. This can have a very negative impact in Timor-Leste because around 90 percent of Timorese households are involved with agriculture. With little irrigation, the majority of the people rely on rain-fed agriculture for their food security and livelihoods.



A rainwater catchment in Timor-Leste

Water constraints for Timor-Leste are an acute problem and a priority for the government. What is the source of the issue and how is the government managing the challenge?

Small island nations in the Pacific, like Timor-Leste, rely on groundwater to compensate for freshwater shortages due to increasing consumption. But higher temperatures, rising sea levels, erratic rainfall and drought are affecting both the quality and quantity of available groundwater.

Deforestation is also a problem in Timor-Leste. This loss of forest cover negatively impacts the capacity of the soil to absorb water and recharge springs on which rural communities rely for their water needs.

One of the ways the government is managing this challenge is by partnering with World Neighbors, on the Increasing Community Resilience in Oecusse Program (ICRO), which is funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), which promotes sustainable practices in water and environmental conservation. We improve and protect community water sources (mountain springs or wells)

through the use of micro-watershed management technologies and a community-based natural resource management approach.

At the practical level, this is done through tree planting, digging absorption wells, water catchment holes, hedgerow terraces, water traps and other appropriate micro-watershed management technologies around the water sources, to increase rainwater absorption and reduce run-off and loss of water. At the governance level, we work with the government to draft and enact bylaws to protect and maintain these water sources.

Tell us a little bit about the Increasing Community Resilience Program. How has ICRO affected public health outcomes?

ICRO is funded by USAID and implemented by World Neighbors.

The goal is to improve the health status and quality of life of Timorese citizens by increasing the availability and use of clean, safe water; improving sanitation facilities; and enhancing the uptake of improved hygiene practices.



Community members working together to build a water catchment system in Timor-Leste

On the physical level, this means creating a well-functioning water supply source/piping system. Around the water point, 1 to 1.5 hectares of land are converted into a forested, protected conservation area.

At the governance level, this means that both the water supply system and the conservation area are being managed by community groups who can independently maintain the area and water system; are financially responsible in collecting and managing community funds; and have a close relationship with the regional forestry and water and sanitation government departments, requesting and receiving assistance when needed.

In an assessment we carried out:

- 88 percent of respondents reported that their water was now cleaner.
- 75 percent of respondents reported that the quantity of water had increased.

- 96 percent of respondents said that they boil water before consuming. This is up from 78 percent from the baseline study taken at the start of the project.
- There was an increase in knowledge on the critical handwashing times.
- Respondents who had children under 5 reported that only 13 percent of these children had had diarrhea in the previous two weeks. This is down from 28 percent from the baseline study.

Which governments and international development organizations are most active in assisting the Timor-Leste government to increase resilience against climate and other shocks?

I am sure there are many. I have had contact with: WaterAid, UNICEF, Plan International, DFAD (Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade), World Vision International and the Timor-Leste Red Cross.

The Paul Milburn Charitable Gift Fund at the Oklahoma City Community Foundation Awards World Neighbors a \$100,000 Matching Grant

In his lifetime, Mr. Paul Milburn of Shawnee, Oklahoma, was an extraordinarily generous friend and trustee to World Neighbors. Following his death in 2016, Paul's dedication to World Neighbors continues through a charitable gift fund he and his wife, Ann, created at the Oklahoma City Community Foundation.

We have been awarded a fantastic opportunity to double all donations this fiscal year up to \$100,000!

We hope you will join us in taking advantage of this generous matching grant and help us to continue Paul's generous legacy by reaching hundreds more marginalized communities throughout the world.



Paul and Ann Milburn

Commemorative Gifts Received

April 16 – August 2, 2021

IN MEMORY OF:

Bert and Rose Barth
John and Joyce Paulacs Lunde

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Sarah and David Bearden

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Become a Monthly Donor

Make an impact throughout the year! Become a monthly donor and provide steady support for the ongoing work of World Neighbors. To easily start your monthly donation please visit www.wn.org/donate for more information.



I've had the good fortune to visit projects in 9 of the 13 countries World Neighbors works in, what I discovered is an organization that is driven to affect significant and lasting change in the most marginalized communities in the world.

– Nicholas Duncan
World Neighbors Board Member
and Volunteer



CARES ACT EXTENDED; CHARITABLE GIVING INCENTIVES INCREASED IN 2021

Whether you itemize your tax deductions or take the standard deduction, the extended giving incentives of the CARES Act can help you get more for your charitable dollars in 2021.



**WORLD
NEIGHBORS**

Inspiring People • Strengthening Communities

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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