

Small WORLD

Issue 70 May 2020



Practical
ACTION

Big change starts small



School children in Kisumu, Kenya, are enthusiastic ambassadors for handwashing.

WELCOME

In this issue of Small World, we look at the power of ingenuity to transform lives in one of the world's most challenging environments: urban slums.

People living in cities, in low-income countries, without basic services like waste management and sanitation, face huge problems. Plastics, rubbish and human waste accumulate in rivers and around homes, creating a breeding ground for life-threatening diseases. Illness, danger and lack of dignity are part of daily life. On pages 4–5, our Head of Urban Services, Lucy Stevens, will take you through some of the challenges that slum communities face.

But as you'll see in our special feature on pages 6–9, in waste there can be opportunity. Well-managed waste systems create jobs, and even products that can be sold to generate income. Working together with communities, businesses and government, we can turn kitchen scraps into compost and plastics into fuel. We can take informal, humiliating and dangerous jobs like waste-picking or latrine pit-emptying, and turn them into formal, safe, respected services. Astonishing transformation is possible.

On pages 10–11, we'll update you on our *Safe Pair of Hands* project to bring clean water, sanitation and hygiene awareness to Kisumu, the third largest city in Kenya. *Safe Pair of Hands* was our 2017 UK Aid Match Appeal, and now, thanks to your generosity, thousands of families have access to clean water and handwashing for the first time.

Effective waste management and sanitation are gateways to a better life for many of the communities we work with. And right now, as coronavirus sweeps across the world, these basic services are even more critical.

For people living in urban slums, coronavirus will be devastating. Millions will face contracting the virus without a reliable food supply, clean water, income, or adequate healthcare.

As a result, Practical Action is reviewing all our programmes of work around the world, with the immediate goal being to help communities limit the spread of the virus. We have decades of experience working with communities to prevent the spread of

disease through improved hygiene, access to clean water and sanitation services. And we'll bring our skill and knowledge to bear in addressing this new challenge.

We'll also work to keep essential systems running – making sure that the waste management and sanitation systems we've already helped put in place don't collapse in the crisis. People's lives depend on them.

As we go through this challenging time, I'm so grateful for your ongoing support. Thank you for standing alongside us.

Your words of support and gifts are more valuable than ever before, as we race to help the most vulnerable communities.

My best wishes to you and your loved ones.

Paul Smith Lomas MBE
Chief Executive



In this issue

- 04 **Expert opinion:** Building relationships that change the world
- 06 **Special feature:** Cleaning up cities with ingenuity
- 10 **Project update:** *Safe Pair of Hands*
- 12 **Meet the change-makers**
- 13 **Your questions answered**
- 14 **Thanks for staying in touch**
- 15 **Virtual speakers for inspiring events**
- 15 **A gift in your Will to create lasting change**

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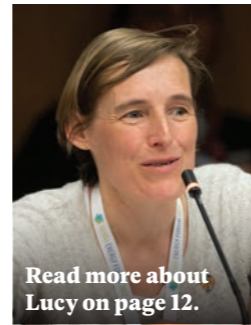
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Cover image

Washing hands saves lives in Bangladesh.

Building relationships that **CHANGE THE WORLD**

We talk to Dr Lucy Stevens, Head of Urban Services, about the complex challenge of waste and sanitation in cities.



Read more about Lucy on page 12.



In urban slums around the world, rubbish and human waste piles up beside homes.

How big a problem is inadequate waste and sanitation in cities?

Well, it's huge. Half of the world's population lives in cities, and that number continues to grow. Cities can be vibrant, exciting places to live. But right now, there are a billion people living in urban slums where the conditions are incredibly challenging, if not hazardous. A billion people - that's one in every eight people on Earth. It's hard to imagine, isn't it?

What kind of challenges do people who live in urban slums face?

In these informal settlements there are no proper systems in place to deal with rubbish

and human waste. It just piles up on the streets. People live without access to proper toilets, or handwashing facilities. The conditions are squalid. This has a huge impact on their health, safety and their dignity.

It's women and children who face the greatest hardship. Disease is rife in slums, and children are especially susceptible. They drink contaminated water, and they play near untreated sewage. The lack of hygiene allows disease to spread fast, and many children are repeatedly catching diarrhoeal diseases. It inhibits their growth, and tragically, many die.

For women, the slums can be treacherous. They risk sexual

harassment just using the toilets because shared latrines are not safe and secure for them.

And then there's the lack of dignity. For the poorest people in urban slums, waste is often the only way they can make a living. Many families survive by picking through waste to find items that can be sold for a little money. There are unofficial waste workers who risk their lives emptying raw, untreated sewage from toilet pits without safety gear or proper equipment.

Slums are dangerous places to live, but they don't have to be. That's what we're working to change.

How are slum communities affected by a situation like the current coronavirus pandemic?

Well you've seen how fast the virus is passed between people living in developed cities like London and New York who can wash their hands as often as they like, use hand gel or wear facemasks. And who can self-isolate. Many people living in urban slums have nowhere to wash their hands. They lack the most basic ways of protecting themselves. And if they become too ill to work, then their livelihoods are threatened. Coronavirus will be absolutely devastating in these communities. Practical Action has a huge amount of experience working with communities to make urban slums cleaner, safer places to live, and right now that's more important than ever before.

With waste being such a big problem around the world, how do you choose where to focus your efforts?

We have to prioritise. Our strategy is to identify towns and cities where we can make a real difference. It might take a number of different projects over several years to achieve lasting change in a community. And then we share what we've learned at a national and global level to influence wider change. We scale up. That's the approach, and it's very effective.

What's the most important aspect of this work to you?

The relationships we build. By working hand in hand with members of the community, we build a whole set of relationships between communities and authorities. It enables people to talk

to their local council or the water or sanitation company about the things that are important to them. And the authorities are able to really understand the needs of the community and the challenges they face. These relationships are the foundation of working together for better lives and new opportunities.

It's never about swooping in with a ready made solution. The people who live in the community are the experts of their own situation, and we need to give them space to talk about their own experiences and be the leaders of their own development. I love that Practical Action takes that approach.

Our work in urban slums is just one aspect of our work that needs your support. To make a gift today, visit practicalaction.org/smallworld



With your support, Sara was able to build a toilet block near her home.

Cleaning up CITIES WITH INGENUITY

Your support is helping us work with the poorest urban communities to make slums cleaner, safer, fairer places to live and work.

As city populations continue to grow, the problem of what to do about the waste this produces is becoming increasingly urgent. Rubbish and human waste pile up, eventually making the slums toxic for the families that live there. **Poorly managed waste costs lives. But well-managed waste creates opportunity** – for health, for incomes, and for the environment.

At Practical Action, we're working with urban communities in Kenya, Bangladesh and India to find

ingenious ways to manage waste. We work with all levels of society, from the city's poorest people to local and national government and businesses, finding holistic solutions together that transform lives.

Our work in cities focuses on sanitation and waste management. We're also beginning to explore ways of transforming waste into useful items. Let's look at each in turn, and highlight a few of the innovations we've already put in place.



Working with communities to change dangerous, shameful jobs into dignified livelihoods.



Community health workers share life-saving hygiene advice.

Sanitation saves lives

Clean water and soap are simple but powerful defences against disease. We work with communities so they can access a clean water supply and handwashing facilities. Once these are in place, we train volunteer health workers within the community to spread hygiene awareness. These volunteers are the first line of defence against disease in the community. And during a major outbreak like the current coronavirus pandemic, their contribution is invaluable.

Our *Safe Pair of Hands* project in Kisumu, Kenya, is a great example of this work. Together with the community we've already laid almost 11km of water pipeline, and helped 2,045 households access clean water and hygiene awareness. The change there has been life-saving (read Josephine's story on page 10).

Waste management that works for everyone

In urban slums, if there is any kind of waste management, it is usually done informally, by the poorest members of the community. Some empty pit latrines, some pick through rubbish to find anything that can be sold. We bring together these informal workers with local authorities so that their needs are heard and understood, and to build better, fairer systems.



Pumping equipment makes pit-emptying quick and safe.

In Faridpur, Bangladesh, we helped informal pit-emptiers get the specialist equipment they needed to do their job safely, and to form officially recognised cooperatives, with decent pay and better working conditions. Through a partnership with a local telecoms company, we created a smartphone app that makes it easy for people to hire pit emptiers and to pay them.

Transforming waste into wealth

Once the waste has been safely collected, the question is, what to do with it? We work with local governments to set up and maintain waste treatment plants. Wherever possible, the waste is turned into something useful.

In Bangladesh, for example, we're in the early stages of a partnership with the Lamor Foundation and are discussing a potential project to collect plastic waste from rivers. Using an ingenious system the waste will be converted into fuel (see the interview on page 9).



Volunteers recycle waste in Cox's Bazaar.

In the Rohingya refugee camps in Cox's Bazaar, Bangladesh, we've partnered with UNICEF to introduce a new waste-recycling system. Volunteers collect waste from people's homes and take it to a central processing plant. Here biodegradable waste is turned into compost fertiliser, which the community can use in 'box gardens' to grow nutritious vegetables. This makes for a healthier environment, an extra food supply for families, and there's enough surplus compost to sell to neighbouring smallholder farmers. Meanwhile, plastic waste is safely melted down and turned into alphabet blocks, which are used as teaching aids in schools.

Continued overleaf...



Jute, a sustainable fibre transforming lives.

Reducing waste for a cleaner environment

Plastic is hugely detrimental to the environment – clogging drains and polluting rivers and oceans. So we encourage the use of sustainable alternatives to plastic where possible. Jute is a great example from our work with rural communities.

Jute is a natural fibre that, when processed, can be turned into a huge variety of environmentally friendly

products, from bags to yoga mats. We're helping train and equip people living in poverty to set up jute businesses. We have designed a leasing system to help them access the machines that process the jute, and we're helping them access business training so they can create sustainable livelihoods.

Cleaner cities, better lives

All together, our approaches to tackling waste in cities are making a huge difference. But of course we can only work in so many cities. That's why we share everything that we learn so that others can adopt our approach and the benefits can spread far and wide. Partnerships with other organisations and businesses are vital to this.

Support more life-transforming innovation today by making a gift. Visit practicalaction.org/smallworld

Aklima turns waste into opportunity



Aklima's job processing waste has transformed her family's life.

Aklima Begum lives with her three children in a slum community in Faridpur, Bangladesh. She has struggled her whole life, doing unskilled work for little money. And when her husband became critically ill, life became even tougher.

“We barely had enough money to get by. Sometimes I couldn't afford to buy food for myself or my children.”

Practical Action has been working with the slum communities in Faridpur to help people like Aklima improve their lives. As part of this project, we worked with local authorities to create a compost plant. The plant provides a household waste collection service for slum inhabitants, as well as employment opportunities for the poorest people in the city. Aklima now has a job separating out waste that can be recycled or turned into biogas. She's helping make her local environment a cleaner, safer place to live, and earning fair pay.

“I have a lot of pride in my job. Not only has Practical Action helped me change my life, it's also helped change my children's lives. Now they have opportunities I never had.”

Innovative solutions for a cleaner world



Small World talks to Lamor Foundation President, David Nazha, and Practical Action's Ian Derbyshire, about an exciting new partnership.

How did the partnership come about?

David: So, Lamor works in environmental protection, preparedness and response around the world, and it does that as a business, for profit. I'd been running Lamor as CEO for four years, and I realised that we could make a much bigger impact through a not-for-profit. So last year I set up the Foundation. Our goal is to solve environmental issues, create sustainable economies and lift people out of poverty. We quickly realised that the most effective way to create big change was to work in partnership with like-minded organisations... like Practical Action.

What kind of problems will the partnership solve?

Ian: We're just starting to explore that, and we've identified an opportunity in Bangladesh. Plastic waste in rivers is a big problem there. Lamor already has a technological solution to this. And Practical Action has been working in Bangladesh for many years, building strong relationships with people and government. This creates a nice synergy that could enable us to work creatively together and transform lives.

David: Yes, Lamor has developed units that collect plastics from rivers. The collectors pull all of the plastic debris into one area, and then the really innovative bit is that we use a process called *pyrolysis* to convert the plastic waste into ultra clean fuel.

How will this solution benefit the poorest communities in Bangladesh?

David: We hope to install around 100 collection units. Maintaining each one will create 20-30 jobs, raising people out of what is currently an informal business (waste picking) and giving them formal employment with fair pay. Then, because we're using the plastic to create a useful product that can be sold (the fuel), there are further job opportunities created.

Ian: Beyond that, there's the environmental aspect. The poorest communities often rely on fishing and farming to survive. River contamination is damaging their livelihoods. If you remove contaminants from the river system, people can fish, farm and thrive.

What excites you about this partnership?

Ian: This partnership breaks new ground for us. We need to be continually challenging ourselves to think about new ways to tackle global problems. The joy of working with a partner like Lamor is that they can challenge our assumptions and help stimulate new ways of approaching the problem.

David: I'm excited about combining Lamor and Practical Action's skills and knowledge and networks to create big and lasting change.

Watch a recent video interview with our team in Bangladesh to learn more about our current work there at practicalaction.org/smallworld



Keeping rivers clear from waste will allow families in Bangladesh to fish and farm safely.



SAFE PAIR OF HANDS

The life-saving sanitation work you helped make possible in Kisumu is now helping to protect thousands of people during the coronavirus outbreak.

Back in 2018, we asked you to support our UK Aid Match appeal: *Safe Pair of Hands*, to fund work in Kisumu, Kenya. Communities there were facing enormous challenges in their daily lives. Without access to clean water or toilet facilities, disease was rife. Diarrhoea, especially, was having a detrimental effect on children's health and development. The aim of the project was to work with the poorest communities in Kisumu to make the slums cleaner, healthier places to live.

You helped us raise an amazing £1.18 million, which the UK Government matched with a further £1.18 million. Your generosity has made an enormous difference to nearly 8,700 people in Kisumu.

As of December 2019, nearly 11 km of appeal-funded pipeline has been laid, giving people access to clean water for the first time. Our project team has been busy training more than 3,000 local volunteers to share hygiene advice in the community, so families can get the full health benefits of their new water supply. These skills are vital and life-saving in normal circumstances, but during the current pandemic, they are absolutely critical.



Right now in Kenya we are working with regional government to help them limit the spread of the virus. Over 300 hygiene volunteers, trained within our projects, are playing a vital role, ensuring health messages, soap, cleaning products, and personal protective equipment are reaching the most vulnerable communities.

To find out more about Practical Action's response to coronavirus in the communities we work with, visit practicalaction.org/smallworld

Hygiene advice helped Josephine protect her children's health

Josephine Muhonja is a mother of three. Her youngest child, Ada, aged just 20 months, had been suffering from persistent diarrhoea. It was so bad that she wasn't sleeping at night, and couldn't feed properly. Josephine was especially worried about her daughter's weight, which was falling rapidly.

One of our community health volunteers met Josephine while doing routine household visits in her neighbourhood. She introduced Josephine to the project nurse and nutritionist at the local clinic.

"When I went over to the clinic, Ada was found to be underweight and she had started developing stunted

growth-related complications. She was immediately put on nutritional supplements, and I was enrolled for hygiene and sanitation training," Josephine says.

After training at the clinic, Josephine learned proper hygiene and sanitation practices. Now that she has access to clean water, she can wash her hands regularly, wash food before cooking it, treat her drinking water and store it in clean containers.

To make a gift today and help more communities transform their lives, visit practicalaction.org/smallworld

"The teachings have been so impactful and I am also glad to have received a handwashing facility which has helped me exercise good hygiene practices. My child is now healthy and has become a good feeder."

Josephine Muhonja

YOUR IMPACT

10.9KM of water pipeline laid.

2,045 households have safe access to water.

83% of people now have access to soap, compared to 45% previously.

60% of people have access to a toilet, compared to 11% previously.



Meet the CHANGE-MAKERS

The Practical Action team is powered by talent, passion, expertise and commitment. Together we're working with the world's poorest people to tackle their toughest challenges.



Lucy Stevens

Head of Urban Services, UK

What's your role at Practical Action?

I lead our work in urban slums and low-income communities around the world. We have teams in Kenya, Bangladesh and India all working on multiple projects in towns and cities across their countries. My job is to connect them all and share learnings between them.

How did you come to be working in urban development?

Well, I'm a city girl! I've always lived in cities. I did my PhD on urban slum development in Johannesburg. And I've worked on city-based projects at Practical Action in several different roles for the last 18 years. I think if you're going to specialise in a certain area it has to be something you feel an affinity for.

What do you enjoy most in your job?

I love representing Practical Action. I feel so proud of what we do as an organisation. It's great to be able to talk with other organisations and peers who are passionate about the same issues, to share with each other and to learn.



Hossain Ishrath Adib

Head of Programme Implementation, Bangladesh

How did you come to be leading our project work in Bangladesh?

By training I'm an economist, but I have worked in development in Bangladesh and East Africa for over 20 years. For most of my career I've been involved with project implementation – that is, turning an idea and a plan into real change on the ground. I spent about 15 years with BRAC, the largest development organisation in Bangladesh, and also some time at Water Aid. I joined Practical Action two years ago.

What drives you?

I believe everyone, regardless of their social identity, income status, gender or religion has the right to a dignified life in a clean and healthy environment. My passion is for working directly with the low-income and marginalised communities.

It's an incredible feeling, to go into a community and build relationships with them over many years, and to see the difference that a little ingenuity can make to their lives. My wish is that everyone, even the poorest, can afford to dream big and strive to achieve those dreams.

Read more about the Practical Action team at practicalaction.org/smallworld

YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED...



When you're solving the world's toughest problems, no question is too small. In this new regular segment, we'll be answering questions from our supporters.

Q How do you measure the success of your projects?

Answer by Stuart Leckie, Monitoring and Evaluation Advisor.

A Each of our projects is designed with a specific aim in mind – for instance, to decrease poverty in a farming community. From the outset, we work hard to break that aim down into specific targets and indicators, so that we can monitor the effectiveness of our work both during and after the project.

Most often our projects are complex and take many years. We constantly monitor our progress towards the project aim, and adapt what we're doing on the ground if it's not working as planned. We also commission an external evaluation for our projects, so we get the benefit of an objective assessment.

Measuring the success of our projects is essential to our ethos of continual improvement. We work out what works, and we do more of it.

Your gifts keep vital work going during the coronavirus crisis.



Q How has corona virus affected your work, and what's the best way to support you?

Answer by Dawn McGahey, Supporter Services Manager.

A All our offices around the world are closed for the time being, and our staff are working from home to stay safe. Many supporters have been sending in messages of support to our staff, and that means the world to us. Please do keep them coming!

Right now, the processing of postal donations and acknowledgements will be delayed. We're really sorry for the inconvenience. Please bear with us.

The best way to support us right now would be to make any donations online at practicalaction.org.uk/donate

Alternatively, you can call our freephone number **0800 389 1624** (Mon-Fri, 9am – 5pm) to chat about other ways to give, such as setting up a new regular gift or amending an existing one. Unfortunately we can't take card payments on the phone right now.

Regular updates about our work are posted on our website and also on our social media pages. **If you would like to stay up to date with our work via email, please sign up to our email updates at practicalaction.org/smallworld**

What would you like to ask our experts about Practical Action's work?
Send your questions to: supporter.services@practicalaction.org.uk
with the subject line of Small World questions, or write to Small World questions, Practical Action, The Robbins Building, 25 Albert Street, Rugby CV21 2SD.

THANKS FOR STAYING IN TOUCH

Community is so important at the moment, so it's been especially touching to receive so many messages of encouragement from our supporters.

"We appreciate your efforts, thank you. Please keep up the good work."

"We are so grateful for your continuing efforts in the places you work. Our thoughts and prayers are with all your staff."

"Please stay safe and continue to help those who need your support and guidance."

"Thank you to all your staff wherever you are for all the amazing work you do and continue to do in these incredibly difficult times."

"Very good luck with your work helping people stay safe."

"Thank you for all your good work."

"Sending my support and encouragement to your staff around the world as they prepare to work even harder to keep communities safe. With best wishes and thanks for all you do."

"The work you are doing around the world is more important than ever. Thank you so much."

Keep in touch via email

Make sure you don't miss out on the latest news.

If you haven't already signed up for e-updates from Practical Action, now is the ideal time to do it. Alongside regular updates on the work you're supporting, we'll let you know about how we're working with vulnerable communities during the coronavirus crisis.

To sign up for email updates, visit practicalaction.org/smallworld



Virtual speakers for inspiring events

Our Practical Action Volunteer Speakers are available to talk at your virtual events and get-togethers during the lockdown.



Are you in a community or faith group who are continuing to meet virtually, online? If so, one of our Volunteer Speakers would welcome the opportunity to come and talk to your members about Practical Action's work.

Rob Marshall – a long-term Practical Action supporter – is one of our sixty Volunteer Speakers.

"It has always impressed me how Practical Action uses ingenuity to find solutions that support communities as they work their way out of poverty."

"This is what I love about Practical Action – coming up with solutions and then making those solutions available to everyone – it's the multiplier effect."

"My role as a Volunteer Speaker is to get the word out in a committed and passionate way – building awareness of Practical Action."

We have speakers like Rob across the UK who are happy to give an online talk to your group during lockdown.

To request a Volunteer Speaker, please contact Adam.Walker@practicalaction.org.uk or call **01926 634 478**

A gift in your Will to create **LASTING CHANGE**

Having an up-to-date Will can provide great peace of mind. It's reassuring to know that the people and causes you care most deeply about will be taken care of in the future. But making or amending a Will might seem a bit daunting at first. That's why we've created a new booklet: *Lasting Change*. It helps to simplify the process, offering practical advice and easy steps to follow.

If you have any questions about leaving a gift in your Will, or would like us to post a copy of *Lasting Change* to you, please get in touch with our Senior Legacy Officer, Liz Webb on **01926 634484** or at Liz.Webb@practicalaction.org.uk

To download the booklet now, along with all the resources you'll need, visit: practicalaction.org/legacy-resources

Together, we can make a world that works better for everyone.



Will you make a gift today to put ingenuity to work?



Safe, dignified employment turning faecal sludge into compost means Abdullah's future is full of possibility.

Please accept my donation of: £25 £35 £50 £100 or my own choice of £ _____

I enclose a cheque / postal order / charity voucher made payable to **Practical Action**

OR please debit my: MasterCard / Visa / Charity Card

Card number: Expiry date: /

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Please tick here if you would prefer us not to acknowledge this gift.

Please tick here to receive information about how to leave a gift to Practical Action in your Will.

Small World features examples of Practical Action's many projects around the world, and funds raised will be used wherever the need is greatest.



My personal contact details:

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Title: _____ First Name: _____ Surname: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

We will post you information about our work, fundraising activities and ways to get involved. If you are happy for us to provide this information by phone or email please provide your details:

Email: _____

Telephone: _____

We take protecting your personal information seriously. We will never sell or swap your details with another organisation. We aim to provide you with a great experience of Practical Action and to communicate with every supporter in the best way possible.

To do this, we may analyse your data and obtain further information about interests, preferences and level of potential donations using publicly available sources. We sometimes ask carefully selected companies to do this for us.

You can find out more about how we collect and use your personal information by reading our privacy notice at practicalaction.org/privacy. To change how we manage your personal information or opt out of receiving communications from Practical Action, call us on **0800 389 1624** or email myprivacy@practicalaction.org.uk

Maximising the impact of my gift

Yes, I would like Practical Action to treat this donation and any donations I make in the future or have made in the past 4 years as Gift Aid donations. I am a UK taxpayer and I understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in the tax year it is my responsibility to pay the difference. Gift Aid will be used to fund all of Practical Action's work. **Date:** ____ / ____ / ____

Please note HMRC requires us to have your full name and address above to Gift Aid your donation.

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Thank you

Please return in the envelope provided: Practical Action, The Robbins Building, 25 Albert Street, Rugby CV21 2SD

You can also give online at: practicalaction.org/smallworld or by calling **0800 389 1624** (Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm)