

# Small WORLD

Issue 82 May 2024



**Practical  
ACTION**

**Big change starts small**



# EMBRACING THE NEW



Stephen uses solar panels to power an irrigation system on his farm in Kenya.

As we began planning this issue of *Small World*, we received several emails from supporters interested to know more about how Practical Action uses “new” technologies, such as mobile phones and solar panels. They wondered what our founder, E.F. Schumacher, would have made of them. Would he still consider them “appropriate technology” for communities pulling themselves out of poverty? We thought this was an excellent and interesting question, so we’ve explored it in this issue.

The climate crisis is creating huge challenges for people living in poverty around the world. Traditional solutions such as composting can help people adapt to the changing conditions, but when they are combined with new technologies, amazing transformations become possible.

In the special feature, we’ll introduce you to three people who are using mobile phones in ingenious ways to overcome challenges and create hope in their communities.

I hope you enjoy your *Small World*. If there is anything you’d like to read more about in future issues, please do get in touch.

As always, thank you for your generous support. You help make everything we do possible.

Best regards,

**Simon Hotchkin**  
Director of Impact,  
Influence and Innovation



## Practical ACTION

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SPECIAL FEATURE

# DIGITAL CHAMPIONS

Meet the people transforming their lives and playing a key role in their communities using a combination of traditional and digital tools.





When our founder, E.F. Schumacher, wrote his ground-breaking book *Small is Beautiful*, he proposed a new approach to working with communities in developing countries that continues to inspire our supporters today. At the heart of this approach was the use of “intermediate technology”. He described it as:

“...vastly superior to the primitive technology of bygone ages but at the same time much simpler, cheaper and freer than the super-technology of the rich... technology to which everybody can gain admittance.”

Today, Practical Action’s ingenious solutions sometimes include technologies that were once the “super-technology of the rich”, but which are now commonplace. Mobile phones are a great example of this.

Around the world, over 5.4 billion people now have a mobile phone\*. Phones have become simple, affordable ways for people to connect to services and each other. Essentially, mobile phones have become intermediate technology.

**If Schumacher were alive today, we feel sure he would embrace solutions using mobile technology to support communities in rising to the increasing challenges created by the climate crisis.**



In Bangladesh, Salma uses her phone to help keep everyone in her community safe.



When there is any danger, Salma receives a voice and text message on her phone. She then goes into action, spreading the warning to her community.

#### Dive deeper with our recent book:

*Digital Development: Stories of Hope From Health and Social Development.*

Buy now at: [practicalaction.org/smallworld](https://practicalaction.org/smallworld)

We're working with people who are using mobile phones to escape poverty in ways that would have astonished Schumacher. These digital pioneers are taking action to dramatically improve their lives, and even save the lives of others...

### Salma is part of a digital warning system

For Salma and her community in Faridpur, Bangladesh, a mobile phone is literally a lifesaver. Voicemails and text messages are at the heart of an innovative flood early warning system.

Two-thirds of Bangladesh is less than 5 metres above sea level. This means a huge number of people like Salma are vulnerable to seasonal monsoon floods, which the climate crisis is making far worse.

*“Before, we would never get a warning. We couldn’t even move to safety. Our family would struggle tremendously. There would be children, elderly people, and our livestock, who all suffered collectively.”*

Mobile flood warnings, coupled with rain and river level data, digital weather boards, and a community-wide flood resilience plan, gives the community time to prepare. And Salma is at the heart of it.

She ensures that when the early warning alert comes, it reaches people in her community who don’t have mobile phones, or who are vulnerable.

When the government's Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre detects danger, Salma receives a voice message on her phone to let her know. She also receives a text message via the disaster alert app that Practical Action developed.

Salma then goes into action. She works with fellow members of the emergency team, going from home to home to let people know about the danger. She will also announce the alert using a megaphone from the local mosque.

*“Now that we know when the floods will come, we can plan ahead. We can make sure that elderly people are in a place of safety.”*

**Last year 211,000 people were better protected from extreme events like floods and landslides due to our work. Your support makes this possible.**

Another way mobile phones can help people improve their lives is through skill sharing, as Emmanuel is doing in Kenya...





Emmanuel

*"I have created a Twitter page where I market my products. I have also opened a WhatsApp group where I share knowledge and skills."*

Emmanuel finds success combining traditional farming with digital messaging platforms.

## Emmanuel is a farming mentor and digital advocate

When Emmanuel was inspired by a friend to start a poultry farm business, he soon discovered that there were lots of challenges to contend with. Poultry food was expensive and the market for selling his chickens was disorganised and inadequate.

Everything changed when Emmanuel discovered ingenious solutions to these problems with Practical Action. He is one 6,000 young farmers we're working with in Homa Bay, Kenya, thanks to your support.

As well as embracing planet-friendly farming techniques such as hydroponics and vermiculture (cultivating worms for chicken food and fertiliser), Emmanuel found that digital tools were the secret to boosting his business and helping others to do the same.

*"I have created a Twitter page where I market my products. I have also opened a WhatsApp group where I share knowledge and skills gained from trainings to*

*other young poultry farmers. I am currently mentoring five young people on hydroponics and vermiculture."*

Emmanuel's new skills have reduced the cost of feeding his chickens by 80%, and he has connected with new markets for selling his produce, generating a decent income. He has become a passionate advocate for farming as a way of life, helping many more people realise the benefits.

John Chettleborough, who leads on our farming and market-based projects, said:

*"For small-scale poultry producers like Emmanuel, WhatsApp and Facebook can greatly improve market access. WhatsApp, in particular, has been successful at connecting producers to a wide network of buyers, enabling them to sell produce when they want and negotiate on price with different buyers."*

The ability of mobile phones to connect people isn't just great for boosting the businesses of young entrepreneurs like Emmanuel, it can also help create opportunities to start new businesses and overcome gender inequality...

## Sushma is a digital ambassador

In rural Nepal, employment opportunities are hard to find. Many men within families have no option but to leave their homes to find work in bigger towns and cities. This puts extra pressure on women left to run the household.

For these women, the ability to use banking services is essential in helping them unlock their potential for running businesses. But in rural Nepal, the "local" bank might be a day's trek away, making it impractical to use. Lack of access to banking services such as affordable loans and savings, and the ability to make and receive payments, keeps people trapped in poverty. Sushma is changing all that.

She is one of 5,500 people we are working with (mostly women) in Lumbini Province. With training from Practical Action, she has become one of 80 digital champions. She introduces women in her community to digital banking on mobile phones, financial education and digital literacy.

In the hands of Sushma and her fellow farmers, a mobile phone becomes a powerful tool. It is a doorway to new business opportunities, and new capabilities in climate-resilient farming. It is a digital shop-front where social media platforms become a market to sell the food they grow. And it is a passport to financial independence and improved gender balance at home.

## Boosting the benefits

As we've seen, when digital solutions like mobile phones are incorporated into wider holistic solutions, they can greatly increase the benefits to communities. They provide another tool to support people in overcoming challenges and leaving poverty behind.

Who knows what technologies might form part of Practical Action's solutions in the decades to come?

## Hope is in your hands. Take action today.

Please make a gift so that more people like Salma, Emmanuel and Sushma can access technology that can change their lives. **Thank you.**

**[practicalaction.org/smallworld](https://practicalaction.org/smallworld)**



Sushma

*"I conduct digital classes for the local farmers' group. We have topics such as agricultural skills, income generation, savings, business selection and market information services."*

Sushma shares digital skills with a women farmers group.





# FINDING HOPE DESPITE CONFLICT

One year since conflict erupted in Sudan, your support is helping people living in poverty to continue improving their lives.



A women farmers group use improved seeds to boost their crops.

In April 2023, the Sudanese Armed Forces and an unofficial military group known as the Rapid Support Forces began a bloody battle for control of the state. Caught in the middle, the people of Sudan have faced extraordinary challenges.

In the last year, thousands have been killed, and millions have had to flee their homes. For these displaced people, the threat of famine looms. Today around half of Sudan's population are in urgent need of humanitarian assistance.

Akinyi Walendar, Practical Action's Africa Director, said: *"The longstanding conflict in Sudan and its impact on the livelihoods of its people has led to the displacement of people, deforestation, and the loss of farming skills and knowledge. Climate change has been a contributory factor in this conflict, as people who have lived side by side have clashed over diminishing resources. It is a vicious cycle leaving people struggling to produce enough food to sustain themselves."*

## We're still here for the people of Sudan

While conditions on the ground in Sudan are dire, Practical Action continues our decades-long work to support communities living in poverty and caught up in competition for resources. Many of our staff had to leave the country due to the fighting, but in some regions the conflict has been less intense and our projects have continued.

Our efforts have focussed on supporting people to produce enough food for their families, to build self-sufficiency, and to promote peaceful collaboration. We've achieved this together by putting a range of solutions into action. These include introducing new climate-resilient farming skills, creating access to water, and setting up irrigation and sanitation to improve farming and health.

## Your support has meant so much to struggling families

In September 2023 we wrote to you, our dedicated and caring supporters, with an appeal for donations to keep our work in Sudan going. Your response was astonishing. Together, you gave over £100,000, which has helped our work in Sudan to continue where possible.

Just as valuable were the hundreds of messages of support you sent. Mutaz E., our Head of Programmes Delivery, who has remained in Sudan, said: *"Thank you for your encouraging words, they made us very proud"*. Your best wishes have given our colleagues living through this upheaval the strength to carry on.

Your backing has meant that not only were we able to complete several projects, but we've also been able to launch four new projects.

## New hope, thanks to you

The new projects will mostly focus on supporting people to grow nutritious vegetables, especially climate-resilient plant varieties. Working in several regions of Sudan, farmer field schools with demonstration farms will teach skills in advanced agriculture and best practices, such as crop rotation, land preparation, and pest control.

In Eastern Sudan, we'll be working alongside private sector companies and social enterprises to support a further 25,000 internally displaced people and host communities. We will focus on supporting women and young people especially. Together, we will find new ways to boost farming and build new income opportunities. The goal is to begin a step-change in people's quality of life, and to create the conditions for a thriving local economy that benefits everyone.

## What next for Sudan?

Though the fighting continues, our projects mean that more people will have access to water, food and a source of income. Through peace-building talks, communities are developing better relationships with their neighbours that promise long-term cooperation. Sadly, there are many more who we're unable to reach, and ongoing conflict threatens decades of progress we've made against poverty in the region. We still hope and continue to lobby for a peaceful resolution as soon as possible.

We couldn't do any of this vital work without you. Thank you for helping us remain in Sudan, supporting people through difficult times.

Please make a gift today to support the communities in greatest need around the world. To give, visit:  
**[practicalaction.org/smallworld](https://practicalaction.org/smallworld)**  
or use your enclosed form. **Thank you.**



Working together, people in Sudan are planting seeds of hope for the future.



# YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

We asked our experts to answer the latest supporter questions that landed in our inbox.

## Q DO YOU STILL USE INTERMEDIATE TECHNOLOGY?

Answered by Simon Hotchkin, Director of Impact, Influence and Innovation, Practical Action UK.

**A** The phrase “intermediate technology” seems to have fallen out of fashion in many development circles, but the concept lives on in our work. We know that our solutions need to be suitable to the local context. Often, it’s simple and practical tools that are the most appropriate. Much of our work in agriculture relies on intermediate technologies that work in harmony with nature. This includes solutions such as the production of organic fertilisers, construction of beehives, or the use of aquaculture (farming fish and food crops in water).

We also use intermediate technology in our work on clean cooking, renewable energy, early warning systems and disaster resilience, waste processing and sanitation. Locally appropriate solutions are as important to us today as they ever were.

We’re learning more and more that these solutions are even more powerful when combined with the appropriate use of digital technologies.

See the feature on pages 3–7 to learn more about this.

## Q HOW IS RABBIT URINE COLLECTED FOR MAKING BIO-PESTICIDE?

Answered by Naman Ondego, Project Officer, Kenya.

**A** Great question! The secret is in the design of the hutch that the rabbits live in. The floor of the hutch is a mesh, covered with leaves and twigs. Below the mesh is a slanting metal sheet. When the rabbits urinate, the liquid drips down through the mesh, onto the sheet. From there, it flows into a gutter and is collected in a container. Every day, the farmer collects the urine and puts it to use keeping pests off their precious crops.



**We love receiving your questions...**

**Please get in touch, and we’ll answer as many of your questions as possible.**

Your question might even be featured in the pages of this magazine!

**Email:** [supporter.services@practicalaction.org.uk](mailto: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.

Team Possible



## OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTION

Bruno from the Practical Action South East London Group concludes more than 30 years of amazing support.



The South East London Group of supporters of Practical Action was founded in 1991. Our aim was to raise funds and awareness of the charity’s important work.



From the beginning, one of the driving forces of our group was Joyce Parkinson (left), a remarkable woman with a long history of service to others. Joyce was particularly adept at recruiting new members to our group.

Over the last 30 years, we have regularly held stalls at fairs and events, selling fair trade goods, with all the profits going to Practical Action. On these stalls, we often displayed examples of appropriate technology, such as fuel-efficient stoves.

To spread the word about the work of Practical Action, we have given many talks at schools, churches and clubs, and shared news stories about the charity’s successes in a world increasingly affected by climate change and inequality.

Charity concerts have been a big part of our fundraising. At first, the logistics of these events were challenging, but we persevered. Our most

recent concert featured the award-winning pianist Haruko Seki, and attracted an audience of 77.

With the majority of the group members now over 70 years old, the group will sadly close in 2024.

Rachel Hudson, Director of Fundraising at Practical Action said: “I had the great pleasure of meeting Bruno and the South East London Group members when I came to speak there a few years ago. On behalf of all our teams around the world, and the communities whose lives you have transformed with your efforts, I’d like to send a heartfelt thank you to everyone who has been part of the South East London Group. Together you have raised an amazing £86,342 for Practical Action. Your outstanding contribution has done so much to help end poverty and help communities adapt to the challenges of the climate crisis.”

## FEELING INSPIRED?

Are you the next Bruno or Joyce? If their story has inspired you to try a new fundraising activity yourself, download our new fundraising guide at:

**[practicalaction.org/fundraising](https://practicalaction.org/fundraising)**



# YES, I WILL PUT MY HOPE INTO ACTION WITH A GIFT TODAY

Most supporters find giving online to be the quickest and most secure way of donating: [practicalaction.org/smallworld](https://practicalaction.org/smallworld)

I would like to give a donation 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: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ If we have your email address we will email you a thank you for this gift. Alternatively we will post a letter of thanks. **Tick here if you're happy to help us save on administration by NOT receiving an acknowledgement for this gift.**

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

Your donation will help communities around the world tackle tough challenges like the impact of climate change.



## Maximising the impact of my gift

*giftaid it*

If you are a UK taxpayer, the value of your donation will increase by 25% under the Gift Aid Scheme – at no extra cost to you!

☐ **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 charitable 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 (below).

☐ I am not currently a UK taxpayer.

**Thank you**

## My personal contact details:

24/SA-CS002

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](https://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](mailto:myprivacy@practicalaction.org.uk)

**Please return in the envelope provided:** Practical Action, The Robbins Building, 25 Albert Street, Rugby CV21 2SD  
**or give online at [practicalaction.org/smallworld](https://practicalaction.org/smallworld).** You can also give by calling **0800 389 1624** (Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm)

## Pass on the POWER OF POSSIBILITY

Leaving a gift in your Will to Practical Action is one of the most amazing things you can do to support people in poverty around the world. We're offering a limited number of supporters the opportunity to **amend or make your Will for free. Find out more at: [practicalaction.org/free-will](https://practicalaction.org/free-will)**

If you would like to speak to someone about leaving a gift to Practical Action in your Will, or want to let us know you have already pledged a gift, please email: [Liz.Webb@practicalaction.org.uk](mailto:Liz.Webb@practicalaction.org.uk) today, or call: **01926 634 400** (Mon-Fri, 9am – 5pm).



**Liz Webb is happy to answer your questions about leaving a gift in your Will to Practical Action.**