

Small WORLD

Issue 83 August 2024

GOING THE DISTANCE

*Increasing access to life-changing products
for those hardest-to-reach*

**Practical
ACTION**

Big change starts small

BARE NECESSITIES

Tabetha helps boost rural economies and people's lives by supplying solar energy.



In the developing world, a worrying trend is happening. Limited employment opportunities mean people in rural communities are struggling to earn an income and feed their families. This forces people – mostly men – to leave their villages to find work in cities. Women, children and elderly people are left behind.

This is bad for many reasons. It breaks up families. It exacerbates the strain on services in overcrowded urban areas. And it diminishes rural

communities, depleting the local economy and making it harder for those that remain to survive.

Our founder, E.F. Schumacher, believed that the solution to many of these problems was to create work opportunities and develop local economies. To give people a reason to stay. In his book, *Small is Beautiful*, he said:

“

The solution cannot be found in the cities of the poor countries. Unless life in the hinterland can be made tolerable, the problem of world poverty is insoluble and will inevitably get worse.”

An important aspect of developing rural economies is ensuring people living in poverty have access to life's essentials. The bare necessities. With a reliable energy source, clean water, and the means to grow food, life and small businesses can begin to flourish. People then have a reason to stay, businesses develop further, which creates more jobs, and so on.

In this issue, we look at how, with a bit of ingenuity and collaboration, it's possible to make life's essentials available to everyone, and make Schumacher's vision for flourishing local economies possible.

Thank you for helping work like this to happen with your amazing support.

The *Small World* team

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His Majesty, King Charles III

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SPECIAL FEATURE

BRIDGING THE GAP

Why making a world that works better for everyone means going the extra mile.



Discover how your support helps more people access life-changing products such as clean cookstoves...

Around the world, a shocking number of people live without the basic necessities that most of us take for granted: electricity, lighting, clean water, nutritious food.

But why? Poverty is a big barrier of course. If you can't afford to buy a solar-powered lighting system, you can't have light. Or perhaps you live somewhere so remote that there's no one selling products like that nearby.

This problem is known as "the access gap". The access gap perpetuates the problems that arise from poverty, from health issues to gender inequality.

We believe everyone has a right to the basic necessities of life. But what does it take to bridge the access gap that prevents some people from having them?

To find out, we talked to Russell Lyseight. He's an expert in this area, having worked as a distributor for life-changing products to underserved communities.



Russell Lyseight

He now leads the Global Distributors Collective, hosted by Practical Action. It brings together and boosts the performance of last-mile distributors: businesses who supply underserved people typically living in rural locations on low, unstable incomes.

Who will serve the "hard-to-reach"?

"Mainstream businesses simply don't have the appetite to overcome the challenges of serving last-mile communities," Russell says. "But there's a different business model that makes serving the underserved possible and profitable. It just takes a bit of ingenuity."

2.6 BILLION
people lack access
to clean cooking*



759 MILLION
people lack access
to electricity*



*Source: www.globaldistributorscollective.org

Lack of access to clean cooking stoves means daily toil for women who have to gather firewood to cook on.



Dal supplies clean cookstoves to people in a mountainous region of Nepal. These innovative stoves save people's time, and their health.



Dal maintains cookstoves too. Kaushila's cookstove was quickly back in action after he repaired it for her.



He says that there are already small independent businesses out there who supply products like solar energy systems, clean cookstoves and water filters to hard-to-reach people. "Our goal is to support them in what they're doing, to help expand their reach and overcome the challenges of providing high-quality products to low-income customers in small rural communities. They are the drivers, and we are the enablers, or one of them at least."

"Imagine you're living far out in a remote, rural area. You don't have access to an electrical network. You're likely cooking on a wood fire, which comes with health risks. It also wastes a lot of your time because you have to keep going out to collect more wood. If you need to go outside at night to get fuel, you've only got moonlight. If you're a woman, do you feel safe being out in the dark? These are the people our distributors want to serve."

What is the difference we're trying to make together?

Dal lives in Rolpa, a rural district of Nepal. It's about seven-hours' drive from the nearest big town, and most people there don't have access to a car. For the last year, Dal has been part of a team working with Practical Action to close the access gap and supply improved cookstoves directly to local families.

These improved cookstoves offer many advantages over the traditional way of cooking on an open fire. Dal says: "This stove requires much less firewood."

The fuel which would cook one meal in a traditional stove would cook almost four meals in the improved stove."

As well as being more efficient, Dal's stoves reduce the amount of hazardous smoke in the home. This means families gain valuable time in the day, and enjoy better health.

Dal wants to encourage more people to use improved cookstoves. The first challenge though is to convince people of the benefits. Sometimes people are reluctant to change. They are used to the unique taste of food cooked over a fire. But Dal is skilled at demonstrating the difference the stoves could make to people's lives, and his customers are growing in number.

Dal truly cares for his customers and wants to ensure they can put their trust in their new cookstove. On the day we spoke with him, one of his customers, Kaushila (pictured above), was having trouble with her cookstove. Thanks to his training, Dal was able to diagnose the problem (a faulty wire) and repair it within an hour.

Thanks to Dal, every one of his customers is benefitting from improved health and more time in their day to be productive. It's great for Dal too, as he's earning an income he's very happy with.

But what about people who don't have a decent income and can't afford to buy products like his outright...

Continued overleaf...



How can we make products affordable to anyone?



Thiobiano offers his customers affordable ways to pay for their biodigesters, which produce energy and compost.

Thiobiano sells biodigesters directly to last-mile customers in Burkina Faso as part of a project with Practical Action. A biodigester is a clever device that turns organic waste such as animal dung into biogas and compost. The biogas can be used to power lighting in the home, and the compost helps boost farmers' crop yields. Biodigesters have many benefits, but they can cost well over £1,000. So how can people who earn barely £2 a day pay for one?



A farmer uses his biodigester to make energy from cow dung.

Thiobiano is offering customers flexible ways to pay for their products. For some, low instalments might be best. They also have the option to buy as a collective, sharing the cost between multiple people. They can even pay off their debt with compost. A biodigester can produce 64 tonnes of compost a year, so, over time, it pays for itself.

Thiobiano's flexible payment schemes mean many more people can access transformative technology like this. Thiobiano is proud of the difference he is making: "Biodigesters are the future of Burkina Faso. They are low-cost compared to paying for normal gas, and they are the route out of poverty".

More products to more people

Many distributors begin selling one thing, but with encouragement soon grow their business to supply multiple products. If a supplier is already set up in one region, it makes good sense to help them add more useful products to their sales inventory.

"68% of our Global Distributors Collective members sell more than one type of product," Russell Lyseight says. So if our goal is to get more distributors selling more products to more people, how do we help make that happen?

Trailblazers

Russell says that knowledge-sharing is just one of the ways the Global Distributors Collective helps businesses to grow and add new types of products and services. By sharing the experiences of their members, everyone learns from each other.

"If you're an innovative person starting a business serving last mile customers, it can help to learn from the successes and failures of other organisations following a similar path."

This culture of sharing and group learning encourages the spread of good ideas, which inspires more ideas that then feed back into the system.

Distributors are actively helping each other to improve their businesses and find new ways to serve hard-to-reach customers. In this way, everyone benefits: businesses and customers.

Distributor spotlight: Caroline from Powerlive



Caroline (centre) lights up lives as a Global Distributors Collective member.

Africa is the least electrified continent in the world, with 600 million people living without access to electricity. This "energy poverty" has a greater impact on women, as they are more often the ones who look after the home and family. Lack of electricity means feeling unsafe at night, being unable to study after dark, and limited opportunities to work.

Powerlive is working to change that. This women-led last-mile distribution company provides solar systems for homes, schools, clinics and small businesses in rural Zimbabwe. Caroline is one of their community-based sales agents. Not only is she improving the lives of her customers, she has benefitted too:

“

When my husband passed, my children could not go to school, we were unable to get enough food. It was very painful [...] it was hard, emotionally and financially.

I started as a Powerlive door-to-door agent. I managed to open the shop using the money I got from commissions. Now I am filled with joy. I have hope for my daughter's future too.”

See Caroline tell her story in the Powerlive video at: practicalaction.org/smallworld

Profound change

Hearing Russell speak, his passion is clear. What is it that motivates him? "It's the difference these products make when our distributors get them to people. I remember when I was working as a last-mile distributor, I visited a woman in her 70s living in rural Zambia. She'd never had electric lights. She'd always used candles, or kerosene lamps. When her grandson set up the solar panel on her roof and the system was switched on for

the first time... seeing the look of joy on her face. It was really moving. She was so proud. There were tears in the room. It was quite overwhelming actually."

For Russell, the path to bringing these kinds of profound life changes to more people is clear: "If we want a world in which there is universal access to the most important products that human beings need, the world has to include last-mile distributors as part of the mix of solutions."

Your gifts help bridge the gap

Bridging the access gap so more people can get basic necessities, such as solar energy and clean cookstoves, is just one of the many solutions your gift today will help make possible:

practicalaction.org/smallworld

EVERYONE'S A WINNER

Big thanks to players of People's Postcode Lottery.
We can't wait to put this new funding into action.

We are thrilled to have been awarded £500,000, thanks to funds raised by players of People's Postcode Lottery. Rachel Hudson, Head of Fundraising at Practical Action, said:

"This funding is a real win for people in Africa, Asia and Latin America who face the twin challenges of poverty and climate change. It will help us work with them to develop innovative and practical ways to be safer when climate events happen. To keep making a living, keep growing nutritious food and to live safely, even as climate change impacts are becoming more intense."



This is the second time Practical Action has received player support awarded through Postcode International Trust. The £300,000 we were awarded in 2021 made some truly life-changing work possible with farmers and refugees in Rwanda. This year's funding is not restricted to any one project – it will support our work with the communities who need it most.

We also thank our brilliant Practical Action supporters. Every £1 you give helps to unlock, on average, another £2–£3 in grants from foundations and other funders like this, meaning even more people can access our innovative solutions.

£500,000



will support new work with people around the world facing extreme challenges from poverty and the climate crisis.

Previous funding from People's Postcode Lottery supported our climate-resilience work with farmers in Rwanda.

50 years of publishing for real world impact

Celebrate Practical Action Publishing's anniversary by diving into this amazing pool of knowledge.

50 Practical
YEARS ACTION
PUBLISHING

In 1974, Practical Action launched a publishing company to put transformative books, articles and documents into the hands of change-makers around the world.

Our online bookshop, now home to over 2,000 books and 3,000 articles, many of which are free, is a treasure trove of insight, knowledge, and practical solutions for a better tomorrow. Dive into the pages of a new book about the global issues that are important to you today.

Over the last 50 years, Practical Action Publishing has produced a huge range of print and digital resources on international development: from practical manuals and academic texts, to inspiring commentary on pressing global issues.

We work with more than 250 global publishing partners to bring you the latest thinking in areas including: food and farming, technology, sanitation, disaster preparedness, the environment and climate change, economics, social development, and so much more.



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Find out more about our 50th anniversary and journey, buy discounted books and watch our author video via the link at:
practicalaction.org/smallworld

*Excludes the Humanitarian Standards book series.

Thank you, Your Majesty

We are delighted to announce that His Majesty King Charles III will retain his patronage of Practical Action.

HM King Charles visits our windpump project in Kenya in 1987.



Following a major review of more than 1,000 Royal Patronages and charity Presidencies, the King will continue to support the work of Practical Action as our Patron.

An admirer of our founder E.F. Schumacher's book, *Small is Beautiful*, the king became our Patron in 1980. For nearly 45 years he has done so much to raise the profile of the organisation in the UK and around the world.

The King has been involved with the organisation in so many ways, including visiting our windpump project in Kenya in 1987, writing an article in *The Observer* advocating the *Small is Beautiful* message, and hosting an event at Clarence House to celebrate Practical Action's 50th anniversary.

Sarah Roberts, Practical Action CEO said:

"His Majesty is a long-term supporter of our approach to development and working with people living in poverty. Today, with climate change and environmental decline threatening years of progress against poverty, this work which has always been important is urgent and we are delighted to still be able to count on His Majesty's support."

To find out about the latest Practical Action news, visit: practicalaction.org

TAKE ACTION

your way

It's time to make fundraising personal.

Nothing makes us happier than receiving a letter or email from supporters like you, sharing a story about how you are raising funds to support action in communities around the world.

We love to see your ingenuity in action, how you've found your own unique ways to support the work you care about. Your stories are always so different,

but one thing they all have in common is the photos of you with big smiles on your faces.

And this is so important! Raising funds is an opportunity to have fun! Whether you do it alone, or with a group of friends, being a fundraiser is a great way to feel really motivated and proud of yourself.

HOW MIGHT YOU PUT THE FUN IN FUNDRAISING AND DO IT YOUR WAY?



Nicola and her son Ed took a big leap together to raise funds.

Set yourself a challenge

Perhaps you'd like to try an extreme challenge or adventure, like Nicola and Ed? The daughter and grandson of our founder, E.F. Schumacher, followed in the footsteps of their radical relative and did something remarkable...

"When Fritz Schumacher was the age I am now, he set up the Intermediate Technology Development Group - as Practical Action used to be known. To do that he needed courage to hold fast to his ideas against the prevailing views and criticism of academics and politicians. He also needed to trust in people to back him with funds and enthusiasm, and they did not fail him."

We wanted to recognise the leap of faith he took with our very own jump - from an aeroplane! Ed and I are very grateful to everyone who supported us and who continue to support Practical Action today. Without you, Practical Action would not be here to continue to 'help people help themselves'. Thank you!"



Put your skills to use

If leaping out of a plane feels a bit too far out of your comfort zone, perhaps you'd like to take inspiration from Kate, who put her skills to a new use...



Kate turned her love of sharing stories into a fundraising success.

"During my days as a geography teacher, I used examples of Practical Action's ingenious solutions to capture my students' imaginations and start conversations about important issues. Their favourite solutions included floating gardens and the gravity goods ropeway. Together we learnt how communities helped themselves using sustainable solutions."

Now retired, fortunately the conversations have not stopped. Inspired to share how Practical Action supports a world that works for everyone, I started to present talks in my community. I share stories about Practical Action's work, and about local history, with donations from participants going to Practical Action."

“

We all have our different strengths. I am no athlete. Starting conversations works for me. I enjoy the chat before, the talk during, and the reflection after."

"These conversations, with audiences from 3 to 300, are like a successful Practical Action programme - they are something small that can bring bigger changes through encouraging others to support the charity."

Fundraise your way!

What activity would put a smile on your face?

We want you to enjoy fundraising your way. That's why we've put together a free guide.

You'll find everything you need to get started, including practical tips, inspiration and encouragement.

What will you do to make a world that works better for everyone? When you decide, let us know so we can celebrate you and cheer you on! Thank you for all the different ways you support us.



Get your guide to ingenious fundraising now, at: practicalaction.org/fundraising

YES, I'LL MAKE A GIFT FOR A FAIRER WORLD

Most supporters find giving online to be the quickest and most secure way of donating: 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/SB-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. 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

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

Something to consider...

Before you finish reading your magazine, can we ask you to consider something very important?

By leaving a gift in your Will, large or small, you could help the work that you care about continue long into the future. Just imagine the power of possibility that you'll pass on to the next generation...

For answers to all your questions about leaving a gift in your Will to Practical Action, please get in touch:

Visit: practicalaction.org/leave-a-gift-in-your-will/

Call: **01926 634 400**

Email: Liz.Webb@practicalaction.org.uk



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