

# Small WORLD

Issue 86 January 2026

**STANDING STRONG**

*Building resilient futures  
for a changing world*

**Practical  
ACTION**

**Big change starts small**

# SHAPING THE FUTURE TOGETHER

**I'm delighted to welcome you to the first *Small World* of 2026. Thank you for standing with us through another year of change and challenge.**

As Head of Impact, my job focuses on understanding the difference your support makes - listening to people in the communities we work with and making sure the solutions we back truly last. It's a privilege because it means I hear the stories behind the statistics and I get a feel for the determination and the hope that run through them.

Around the world, families are working hard to keep life on track despite facing tough odds. Floods, droughts, conflict or personal loss can undo years of effort in a moment, yet time and again I meet people who refuse to give up. They try new crops when old ones fail, set up small enterprises to replace lost income, and share what they've learned so neighbours can also thrive. Their creativity and drive are extraordinary - and your support makes it possible for those sparks of progress to grow.

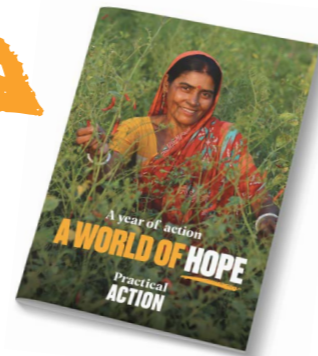
This issue takes you inside that spirit of perseverance and practical action. You'll meet people who have turned setbacks into opportunity and discover how fresh ideas and community know-how can put a better future within reach. You'll also find our latest Impact Report enclosed, it offers an uplifting snapshot of the progress you helped make possible over the past year, told through real stories from the people involved. These stories give depth to powerful numbers such as the 875,000 people now safer from floods, landslides and other climate threats.

**Thank you for making this work possible.**



**Yahoska Berrios**  
Head of Impact  
and Learning

**For more stories of hope,  
check out your enclosed  
Impact Report 2025!**



▲ Cover image: Indigenous leader Elvi was at the forefront of climate disaster when the 2024 wildfires destroyed the crops her community in Bolivia depends on. The experience strengthened her resolve to build resilience and ensure her community is protected in the future.



Facing uncertainty,  
**BUILDING  
RESILIENCE**



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

When I think about resilience, I picture the people I've met whose lives have been upended yet somehow keep going. I think of Faith, a young farmer in Kenya with a calm, matter-of-fact confidence who told me she was determined to build a steadier life for her children. These moments stay with me because they show what resilience really looks like in people's everyday lives.

At Practical Action we want that strength to be based on more than luck or personal grit. Too many lives are precarious, and one flood, fire, or illness can sweep away a family's only income. When people have the tools, skills, and opportunities to learn and adapt, those shocks don't have to mean starting from zero. I've seen how a simple change - a solar pump that keeps crops alive when rains fail, or a savings group that provides a safety net - can give people the confidence to plan for the future rather than fear it.

E. F. Schumacher, whose ideas shaped Practical Action from the start, wrote about these ideas in his 1979 book *Good Work*. In it, he described work that is creative, meaningful, and rooted in people's own skills and surroundings. He believed that technology and progress should serve people, not overwhelm them, and that real change happens when work builds dignity as well as income.

▲ Faith, the young farmer I met in Kenya, tending the vegetables that now support her family and help her build a more secure future through regenerative farming.

One inspiring example comes from young Kenyan farmers in the RAY (Resilient Agriculture for Youth) project, who are using practical, joined-up ideas to strengthen their livelihoods. Faith is one of them. She supports her extended family from a smallholder plot where she grows beans, cabbages and kale.

Her strength lies in building simple systems that work together. She added chickens, feeding them with leftovers from the vegetable beds and turning their waste into organic fertiliser. A solar-powered incubator helps her hatch chicks reliably, and the chickens she sells locally funded three beehives. Honey sales now help cover school fees for her two children.

Each piece reinforces the next: vegetables feed chickens, chickens feed the soil, bees boost crop yields, solar keeps everything running. These low-cost loops mean her farm produces more food, more income and more protection when a season turns bad.

She has moved from growing only what her family needed to having enough to sell. That shift brings real security - one poor harvest no longer wipes out everything. It's Schumacher's idea in practice: resilience built through resourceful work that fits the people and place and gives families greater control over their future.

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# Living with an UNPREDICTABLE CLIMATE



**Across the world the weather has become harder to trust. Floods hit without warning, rivers rise faster, and storms arrive with little time to prepare. When water sweeps through homes or fields, families can lose years of work in a single night. We provide technical support and training so that these shocks no longer force people to start again from nothing.**

Practical, low-cost solutions protect lives and livelihoods. In flood-prone areas, farmers raise their growing beds, improve drainage, and store water safely so their crops survive sudden surges and the dry spells that follow. Keyhole gardens and drought-tolerant crops stay productive when the rains turn erratic. Solar pumps and other simple technologies keep food growing even after a storm has passed.

Early warning systems are now a central part of this effort. Communities learn how to monitor local rivers, practise evacuation drills, and use clear communication plans so they can move to safety quickly. Recovery is faster too. Savings groups offer a buffer after a flood; links to fair markets help people reopen their businesses; affordable insurance covers damaged homes or lost harvests. Clean energy systems, from solar power to biodigesters, keep essential services running when the grid goes down.

This work has grown through our long-term partnership with the Zurich Climate Resilience Alliance. What began with a focus on floods now tackles a wider range of threats, but the goal remains the same: fewer lives lost, fewer livelihoods destroyed, and stronger communities ready for whatever the climate brings.

▲ Here's what resilience looks like in action, Gyanu prepares new timber to repair her home in Melamchi, Nepal. Her efforts are part of her steady progress to rebuild her family's life after the devastating 2021 floods.

## Smart insurance for farmers in Nepal

For smallholder farmers, one bad season can mean ruin. They often can't afford to wait for traditional insurance to pay out. Together with local partners we have been implementing a smarter approach that gives farmers rapid support when floods hit.

The product, known as parametric insurance, pays out automatically when independently verified rainfall and flood levels pass an agreed threshold. This avoids long assessments and lets farmers receive support quickly. Local cooperatives help farmers understand the system, while our teams improve the accuracy of the weather and flood data behind it.

Insured farmers tell us they've been able to increase their savings and that they feel better prepared for the next extreme weather event as well as less anxious about the future. The fast payout is the key. It lets them buy seed and fertiliser for the next season, purchase groceries, repair damaged homes, and keep children in school at a moment when every day matters.

Stories from the ground show why it works. A farmer called Selina told us that her payout arrived in time to help her cope with the immediate shock of losing her paddy crop. Another farmer used his payment to buy fertilisers and seed to restart his field. Others value the regular SMS updates about river levels and climate risks, which help with planning long before any flood arrives.

Communities involved in the pilot feel more secure investing in their land because they know support will come when nature turns against them. It is a practical safety net for a changing climate.



“**Before the insurance I lost all the paddy I cultivated. After the insurance, the payout was sufficient to overcome my initial problems. I feel more secure.**

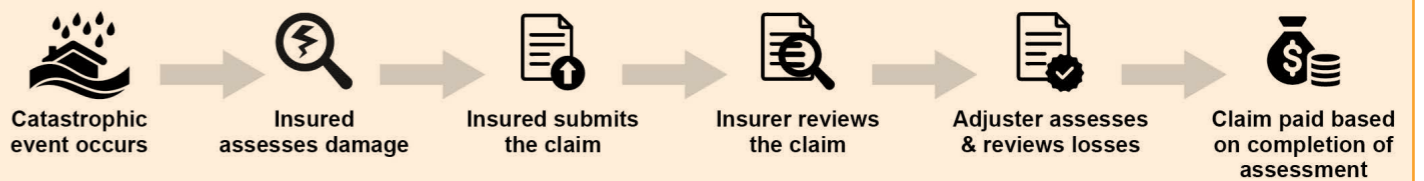
Selina, Farmer, Nepal



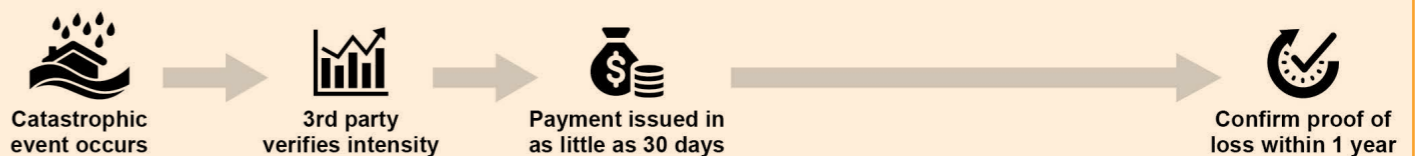
► Selina is facing the future with confidence knowing her livelihood is protected if her crops are damaged during extreme weather events.

### Traditional vs Parametric Insurance

#### Traditional Insurance



#### Parametric Insurance



“

**My father's plot of land burned entirely; it was already in production. In this area, more families have lost all their produce. It's sad, they had just implemented new farming techniques.”**

*Daniela, Community Leader, Bolivia*



▲▲ Since fires destroyed her father's crops, Daniela has joined other community members to form brigades and early action groups, so they are better able to prepare and prevent losses from heat and fire.

▲ Thousands of acres of forest have been lost to wildfires in Bolivia and Peru in recent years, devastating local communities.

► Community members have been given training and equipment enabling them to respond quickly to fires, protect their land, and save lives.



## Daniela's fight against fire and flood

Daniela lives in a rural community in Bolivia. Her family and neighbours had been preparing for floods, strengthening riverbanks and planning safe evacuation routes. Then, in 2024, disaster came from an unexpected direction. Weeks of extreme heat turned the forest into tinder, and wildfires swept through. Cocoa and banana trees that had taken decades to grow were lost overnight.

Daniela remembers the fear and the smoke, but also how she and her neighbours were able to organise themselves calmly because of the training they had received. “We helped each other evacuate the elderly and children,” she said. “We fought the fires with what little we had.” After the flames passed, we worked with Daniela and her community to rebuild - replanting, restoring income and preparing for whatever might come next.

Now the focus is on being ready for multiple threats. Community groups share early warning information, map out escape routes, and plan how to protect crops and timber from both fire and flood. Women like Daniela play a leading role, making sure families' voices are heard in local disaster planning.

Stories like hers remind us that resilience is not abstract. It is about real people using courage, knowledge and cooperation to face danger and keep moving forward. Our role is to stand alongside them with practical tools and know-how that turn determination into lasting security.



## Pedalling towards a brighter future

At dawn, 57-year-old Mairaj loads mushrooms onto his bicycle and pedals through the village where he lives in rural Nepal calling out, “Chyau aayo!” – “Mushrooms are here!” His booming voice lets his community know that fresh, healthy food is on the way. It also reflects the hard work that helped him rebuild his life.

Mairaj left home at 14 to work in India. He spent years in a wood factory and later ran a small fruit shop, sending what he could back home. Five years ago, with his three sons working elsewhere, he returned to Nepal determined to make a living from the same land his ancestors farmed. Mushroom farming seemed like a way forward, but his first crop failed when disease wiped out 600 mushroom balls and all of his savings. “It felt like the earth had swallowed all my investment,” he says.

Kidney disease left Mairaj with a painful limp, slowing the work he was determined to continue. His wife, Dhyanu, who also has a disability, could help only so much with the heavy labour. But even as debt mounted, they refused to give up.

When he joined a Practical Action training programme that equipped farmers with the skills, tools, and connections to build more reliable incomes, everything began to change. Equipped with new skills and confidence, Mairaj and Dhyanu built three mushroom tunnels and now tend 80–90 mushroom balls a day. Their business

“

**Every day was a lesson in failure, but with each failure I learned.”**

*Mairaj, Farmer, Nepal*

is thriving, their income is steady, and they are gradually paying off debts that once weighed them down.

Mairaj is now seen as an example of what is possible. Other farmers visit to learn from him, and he is planning to grow new mushroom varieties and expand his business. “Before, we were drowning in debt,” he says. “Now, we're paying it all back.”

Each morning as he pedals through the village, Mairaj is not just selling mushrooms – he is delivering proof of resilience, hard work and a future he and Dhyanu built together.

## Work that works for people and planet

Across each of these stories runs the same thread: the ability to keep going when life takes an unexpected turn. Whether it is a farmer replanting after floods, a community facing fire instead of water, or as you'll read about in the next article, a refugee starting a new business, the goal is the same – security, dignity and a future worth working for.

▲ Mairaj delivers fresh mushrooms to his customers every day, refusing to be restrained by his physical disability.

## Your donations help build resilience

Ensuring people can protect themselves against climate shocks and build a secure income is one of the ways a donation today can help make a better future possible: [practicalaction.org/smallworld](https://practicalaction.org/smallworld)

Project update

# GROWING STRONGER with refugees in Rwanda

For people forced to flee their homes, the journey to stability is long. Many people arrive at refugee camps with few resources and uncertain futures, expecting to stay only briefly. But for many, months turn into years as conflict or disaster continues, and life remains on hold.

Our work helps change that, supporting displaced families to rebuild through enterprise, skills and access to energy so they can move forward rather than wait indefinitely for change.

## Chillies and chickens create new futures in Rwanda

In southern Rwanda, a new project is giving young people in and around a refugee camp fresh hope through farming. With your support, they're learning to grow chillies and raise chickens - chosen because they're low-cost, quick to yield results, easy to manage and in high demand. This helps create reliable income from the start. For people displaced by conflict, and for their neighbours rebuilding after hardship, this opportunity to earn a living and build a future is truly life-changing.

## Practical support that makes progress possible

Many participants arrive with little more than determination. Our training sessions cover everything from preparing the land and caring for crops to keeping poultry healthy and productive. Farmers receive quality chilli seed and robust chicks so their first seasons can succeed. Solar-powered irrigation is expanding the amount of land that can be cultivated, with 30 hectares set to be brought into production over the next three years.

Business skills are a vital part of the support. Simple tools for planning, record keeping and fair pricing help people think like entrepreneurs. New market links mean that when chillies are harvested or chickens are ready for sale, there are buyers willing to pay a fair price. Access to finance is also improving, giving new farmers the ability to invest in tools, feed or extra land without falling into debt. With solar-powered irrigation in place, farmers can grow crops across the seasons. This reliable water source



“This work is equipping young farmers with the tools and skills to create better futures for themselves and their communities.”

Denyse Umubyeyi, Practical Action Rwanda's Country Director

▲ Denyse (centre) meets with local community members and project partners in a Rwandan refugee camp.

▼ With improved knowledge and markets links, farmers are finding chicken farming a reliable source of income.



increases income and strengthens food security. It also supports our wider regenerative agriculture approach that improves soil health and cares for the environment.

## Stronger communities, lasting impact

Around 2,000 young people are expected to benefit directly, and the ripple effects go further. A thriving chilli and poultry market creates jobs in transport, feed supply and food processing. Families with steady income can pay school fees, buy better food and plan for the future. Local economies grow stronger, and entire communities become less vulnerable to sudden shocks.

### Project milestones

- 10 hectares of land are fully irrigated
- 500 cooperative members are growing and selling chilli, soybean and maize
- 432 people are farming chickens
- 1,740 chickens are producing eggs

## News in Brief

### 3D printing powers better forecasting in Bolivia

Tracking rainfall and river levels is essential when floods and drought threaten lives. In Bolivia, we helped the national meteorology and hydrology services start using 3D printing so they can make and repair parts for monitoring equipment.

During the training, technicians learned to design and print replacements for weather-station components that are costly or difficult to import. This keeps stations producing reliable data so people can prepare for climate shocks.



▲ Technicians learn how to make and maintain life-saving equipment.

### Women lead change in the Amazon

In northern Bolivia, Delmira is helping transform how indigenous communities prepare for floods, fires and drought. Through Practical Action's Women Who Teach programme, she and other local leaders have taken risk management training to eighteen communities.

More women are taking an active role in planning, running emergency meetings and sharing information. This work is strengthening confidence, improving safety and helping families protect their livelihoods.



▲ Delmira hosts training for women and girls about disaster preparedness.



▲ Kisumu residents help clear harmful waste from the city's streets.

### Roadmap lights the way for cleaner cities in Africa

We're working with governments, waste workers and city teams across Africa to phase out open waste burning. A new roadmap, endorsed by ministers in Nairobi and piloted in Kisumu, shows how cities can strengthen collection, respect informal workers and build fair funding, creating cleaner air and healthier neighbourhoods.



### Krishnan backs our work in Sudan on BBC Radio 4

You may have heard Krishnan Guru-Murthy championing our work in Sudan on BBC Radio 4. As an experienced journalist who has reported extensively from the region, he chose to support our appeal because he's seen the challenges families face and the positive difference our approach can make. Listen to Krishnan's full appeal broadcast on our website.

For more in-depth news and updates visit our website: [practicalaction.org/smallworld](https://practicalaction.org/smallworld)

## Hope and action

### An update from Sudan

Violence in and around El Fasher has killed and displaced thousands of people in recent weeks, including people we've been working with for years. Our regional coordinator Awadalla, who was also forced to flee his home, now supports our North Darfur team through satellite links as they continue supporting families across the region.

Some of the villages where we once worked have been destroyed. Thankfully, families downstream of the Wadi el Kur river basin have kept access to water and food thanks to the dams, soil restoration and farming support we introduced in earlier years.

Awadalla's team is now focused on rebuilding essential infrastructure with climate-resilient materials and helping people restart their livelihoods. Your support keeps this vital work moving and gives families in Darfur a foundation to rebuild their futures.

Visit our website to read Awadalla's full update, his hopes for the future and the latest updates from Sudan.



▲ Access to clean water means families in North Darfur can stay healthy even in the face of conflict.

Donate today to support people facing conflict, poverty, and the climate crisis. visit: [practicalaction.org/smallworld](https://practicalaction.org/smallworld)

# Celebrating 40 YEARS of Small World

I've been part of the team who works on creating *Small World* magazine for the past five years. So, I was absolutely delighted when Catherine Budgett-Meakin, a long-time supporter and former Practical Action staff member, got in touch to say that she had collected every edition of *Small World* since it began in the mid 1980's, and wanted to donate them to us.

Looking back through all the editions has been inspiring. Seeing the challenges faced around the world over the years, and all the success stories. I scanned some of them and have included them below, I'd love to hear if you remember any of them.

The magazines are more than just a walk down memory lane. They're a powerful reminder of the positive change made possible by you, and the stories that have bought you closer to our work over the years.

I'm going to take the time to look at the collection more, it's a wonderful piece of Practical Action history, and see what other treasures I can find. We're looking into ways we can digitalise the collection, not only to have copies, but hopefully so that we can share them with you too.

Thank you so much to Catherine for collecting this archive so diligently and for donating it to us so others can enjoy it.

**Jade Smith**  
Supporter Fundraising Team

## Building on local needs and resources

It is estimated that 800 million people live in informal settlements in the world's urban areas each year. The buildings are dilapidated because they are made from mud and thatch, mud-brick, cardboard and other recycled materials, which the country's fast-growing population can get hold of and afford. Building regulations drawn up 20 years ago at a time when the population was half the size of today's do not take account of the need for affordable, safe and secure housing for the urban poor.

**Grassroots**  
This successful attempt to change the policy led to the development of a new type of building materials for production in small local workshops. These include fibre-concrete roofing tiles, blocks made of stabilised earth and rammed earth.

Following a project supported by Intermediate Technology, a Design Council Medal Prize for a Design Council Medal Prize was won by David Hayward's project. The project was a partnership between Intermediate Technology and the Kenyan government to produce fibre-concrete roofing tiles, blocks made of stabilised earth and rammed earth.



The magazines capture decades of shared progress and the steady impact of working alongside communities where poverty spans generations and long-term support is vital.

Our community-led approach is clear in this article from issue 12 on local building techniques.



Looking at our first issue of *Small World* in 1985, it's clear how our core principles still guide us: local solutions and long-term support that helps people lift themselves out of poverty.

This 1988 issue bought home how long we have been working with people effected by extreme weather events.



# Thank you to our amazing supporters for sparking change around the world



**An inspiring adventure**  
Long standing supporter John Morgan tells us of his "bucket list" summit of Kilimanjaro.

"When first travelling through Tanzania with a backpack & Lonely Planet I rushed onwards south and have always had a 'number one bucket list' desire to go back and try an ascent of Kilimanjaro.

On 25th August my eldest son and I departed on an 8 day trekking expedition on the Lemosho route towards the 5895m/19340ft peak...

We made it past the foothills to summit around sunrise on Sunday the 31st! I was delighted to raise £1,251 to date from this attempt in aid of Practical Action, which is a charity I have supported since uni, with its focus on small scale projects in developing countries which can have huge local impacts."

## Keeping special memories alive

We were so inspired by the words of Rosalind, who gives regularly to our work in memory of her late husband, Stephen:

"Stephen was a passionate traveller - he whisked me off to many far-flung places such as Nepal, India, Kenya and Venezuela to name but a few. He cared about the places we visited, and always engaged with the people we met there. Inevitably, we often witnessed poverty, but Stephen firmly believed Practical Action was one of the best ways to give something back, due to its grassroots nature. It gives me comfort knowing his memory will be kept alive through your work of positive change in communities across the world. This really is keeping Steve's memory alive in a beautiful way."



## Cooking up inspiration

Karena Jarvie and Tricia Getley hosted a cooking fundraiser after joining our March event, which celebrated women entrepreneurs improving health with clean cookstoves. They turned their love of cooking into an evening where they raised £500 for more safe kitchens around the world.



## The key to good harvests

In 2022 John Pryce built a keyhole garden at home after reading about Kenyan farmers who use this simple, sustainable design to grow vegetables all year. John's initial concerns that the keyhole garden would lose fertility were cast aside by this year's bumper crop of fresh produce.

**A new year is the perfect time to set meaningful goals and take action. However you choose to do it - big or small, near or far - you can make a real difference.**  
Find inspiration for your fundraising journey at: [practicalaction.org.uk/smallworld](http://practicalaction.org.uk/smallworld)

\*  
**SPARK  
BIG CHANGE**  
this winter  
\*



\*  
\*  
**This winter, people around the world are facing conflict and the climate crisis, but with a spark from someone like you, everything can change.**

Hundreds of generous supporters have already contributed, but we are still short of our target to help deliver the urgent solutions that are needed.

Will you donate to help spark big change for people like Generet this winter?

[practicalaction.org/smallworld](http://practicalaction.org/smallworld)

*Through our renewable energy work in Malawi, Generet's school is now powered by a hydro-electric grid. This has changed how the school day works and opened up new opportunities for every child who studies there.*



**Spread the word!**  
Pass on your magazine to a friend

**If you enjoyed reading *Small World*, please make a donation today:**



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