To reduce suffering and foster hope among marginalized populations in developing countries by empowering changemakers from within.
Dear Friends,

It has been another exciting year for those of us on the Global Pearls team, and I hope you enjoy reading what we’ve been up to. It is only possible because of your support.

This past year we were able to grow our presence in Asia by adding a partner in Cambodia and expanding the work in India. With the monsoon failures in Southern India, we are now battling the effects of climate change in addition to continuing our education and maternal health projects. It never ceases to amaze me how much good can be accomplished when local villagers take ownership!

We also expanded our support in Cameroon where, in the spring of 2018, a simmering civil war erupted in full force in our project area. The wonderful work our partners are doing has eased the suffering of those who were displaced by the war, and they are also mentoring new leaders to bring positive change to our world.

Our greatest sorrow this year came when the Guatemalan government notified our mining families they had three days to evacuate the mines or face arrest. They quickly scattered, and most of the mining children had to drop out of school. We are hopeful that in time we will track them down and add them back to our scholarship program. Regardless, I’m sure the love and encouragement they received when they were in our care will stay with them always.

We thank you for partnering with us in this wonderful work.

Sincerely,

Lisa Robinson-Spader

Lisa Robinson-Spader
President, Global Pearls, Inc.
OUR FOCUS PROJECT
INDIA – JONG – MARTIN RICHARD RAJU

MATERNAL HEALTH: The maternal health project continues to be a big success, as we once again had no maternal or infant mortalities. In fact, surrounding villages pleaded to join the program, so a fourth nurse was added. We now serve pregnant women and infants in 85 villages.

CYCLONE GAJA: Last winter a particularly devastating cyclone hit southern India. Many houses collapsed, farms were destroyed, and water sources were contaminated. Martin and a group of volunteer youth worked hard to raise local donations of food and water for 50 villages in the immediate aftermath of the cyclone. We helped with kerosene lamps & flashlights, towels, mats and sheets for sleeping, and tarps for temporary relief from the rain for 150 families. Seventeen of the most devastated families were given cows and goats - an income source to help them get back on their feet. In a fishing village, we gave 55 new fishing nets which was their greatest need so they could once again earn income and rebuild their lives.

THE POWER OF A DOOR
Selvamani is a widow struggling to care for her three children. She inherited a one-room house from her father when he died, but the house had no door. The house was situated along a main thoroughfare so many strangers passed their house day and night. In India, being low caste leaves you vulnerable to sexual assault, and fear kept the family from sleeping well. A door for Selvamani and her children means safety and a good night’s sleep!

MONSOON FAILURES: The monsoon failure has hit the JONG project area hard over the past few years. Our 50 agricultural communities haven’t had rain in 5 or 6 years. Without the ability to grow food and earn an income, families are typically subsisting on government rice rations – just one meal of white rice each day. They can only afford to add protein, an egg or a little meat, once a month. Water sources have dried up and become polluted, so families must buy their drinking and cleaning water from trucks – an enormous expense for these poor families. Men are migrating away in search of work, and women are taking manual jobs digging ditches to earn money for water. They simply can no longer afford to send children to school, so enrollment is falling
The children in the JONG after-school program have fared much better than most. In fact, thanks to another 25 bicycles we gave to girls in the program, high school attendance amongst JONG students has actually increased over the past couple of years while it has dropped substantially amongst non-JONG students. Getting all students back in school is our top priority right now, both for educational and nutritional reasons, because students in government schools receive an egg to eat every day!

AGRICULTURAL BORE WELLS: The most cost-effective way to get children back in school is to restore the incomes of their parents. At the pleading of the villagers, we have begun digging agricultural bore wells. Agricultural land is centralized in each village, so one bore well can serve an entire village. A consistent supply of water means men can return to their villages, families can grow food and receive an income, they have a ready supply of clean water for drinking, and higher incomes combined with lower expenses means children can continue in school! At a one-time cost of $20-$25 per villager, this is a bargain!

As we dig these wells, it is amazing to see how hard the villagers work to support the project. To keep the costs down as much as possible, they are providing the manual labor required for the well construction – carrying the 60 steel pipes and 20-30 tons of gravel to pack around the pipes. We hit a “vacuum” during the construction of one well - a serious issue - and if the hole couldn't be filled we would have to abandon drilling. The villagers quickly scavenged for any materials they could find – bricks, mud, rice husks, sawdust from lumber mills, coconut fiber from discarded shells, and paddy hay – sometimes travelling for long distances to gather the material. Then the villagers, young and old, women and children, sat and made the mud balls and packed them inside special plastic bags, stitching each bag closed with jute thread. It was a very tedious and tiresome job, but the villagers were determined to get the well at any cost. They succeeded!

AVOIDING PATERNALISM

Traditional development organizations follow a very paternalistic model. They tell villages what they need and provide it for them. Typically, when the organization leaves, the project disintegrates because locals didn’t have ownership for the project. Global Pearls avoids this by letting locals take charge from the beginning.

The agricultural bore well project was not our idea. We visited villages and asked them what help they wanted, and water was the unanimous response! The agricultural bore well project is their project, and that is why they are willing to sacrifice to make it succeed. All the labor they provided for the wells was volunteered. And the materials they worked so hard to acquire to fill the vacuum? They used their own scant savings to pay for them!

“The Global Pearls visit was really appreciated by our villagers, as they think it is a great blessing to them. No government official comes to their remote villages and listens patiently to their needs like you did.... The villagers appreciate very much your approach to need-based projects as opposed to agencies which impose what they think good.”
In Cachora, with the hostel construction completed, focus shifted to decorating the rooms and developing a website to advertise it. Educational toys and books were provided to the local kindergarten. Up in Marampata, we funded the construction of 5 simple bathrooms to help families attract Choquequirao trekkers to their camping and eatery businesses. Several volunteers visited the Heritage Trail project site, and locals benefitted from English classes, mending of fences in Marampata, and English-translation for Juan’s Apurimac Adventures website.

**SANDALS IN THE SNOW?**

The Heritage Trail project expanded this past year to a high mountain village called Willoq Alto. This traditional Quechua village is situated at 12,500 feet and is well off the tourist track. Life in Willoq Alto revolves around alpacas and the weaving industry. Of concern to us was that the people of this village had nothing but sandals to wear in the rain, snow, and mud of these high-altitude Andes. Juan remembers how painfully cold and numb his own feet used to get growing up in similar conditions. We therefore gave rubber boots and two pairs of socks to each child in the village.

**GUATEMALA – ESTUDIA CON AMOR – SANDRA ALONZO PAC**

This was a hard year for us in Guatemala. We were thrilled that we could expand the program to more mining children this year, and they were really thriving! But half-way through the school year the government decided to close the mines and gave families three days to evacuate or face arrest. Sadly, the mining families paid a very heavy price as they scattered to find new jobs, and children had to leave their schools.
The rest of our children are still doing well and progressing educationally. We added 8 new students to the chicken program which gives students the means to raise money for their schooling while they learn the basic business skills of production, marketing, and finance from their chicken businesses. This allows students to progress beyond middle school and pursue a professional career. Two students who were early beneficiaries of our chicken program have even become university students now, studying linguistics and business. We are also starting to work with young street children building relationships with new shoes, meals... and plan to add them to the scholarship program next year.

KENYA – KONG ASIS – ABRAHAM KOSGEI

We took a couple of big steps forward on our running tourist camp this year. First, we purchased 2 ½ acres which will be the site for our camp. It is flat and has beautiful views looking over the escarpment of the Great Rift Valley towards Torok Falls. Second, two American families chose to visit Matungen and participate in a few of our future activities. The feedback they provided was really valuable, helping us focus our training efforts. Turning a subsistence agriculture village into a welcoming destination for adventurous tourists is going to be a fun challenge.

We continued to fund a school feeding program and a teacher salary for the local preschool, and school supplies were given to the Epkai elementary school. An additional 190 feminine hygiene kits were distributed to local women. Thanks to the two American families, we received funds to start a sewing cooperative which will give income opportunities to local women.

REVIVING INDIGENOUS CULTURE

Indigenous cultures are disappearing at alarming rates throughout the world, and Kalenjin country is no exception. A strong local culture builds unity and strength as a community, fosters a sense of dignity, and sustains hope for the future, so reversing this cultural disintegration is important if we are going to help these communities move forward. The main focus of our “running” camp will therefore be immersing visitors in the local culture in order to honor and celebrate Kalenjin culture. The elders will be invited to tell tales of life from their childhoods to revive their story-telling culture. Adults will teach visitors how to do beadwork, weave baskets, decorate gourds, or make traditional beehives out of hollowed logs, and younger adults will need to learn these traditional crafts if they want jobs at the camp. Even running, which has been the backbone of Kalenjin culture, is losing its appeal among the youth, so visitors will challenge children at local schools to a running race, and instead of typical medals, prizes will be a sheep for first place, a goat for second, a rooster and three hens... So often tourism weakens indigenous cultures, but we hope to do the opposite!
Nakinti continues to drive forward fearlessly in caring for IDPs (Internally Displaced Persons) and vulnerable women in Cameroon, and she is receiving more and more attention for her work. Last fall the U.S. State Department chose her to represent Cameroon at a “Women in Leadership” conference held in the United States. She headed back to Cameroon “with a million memories and two million ideas to change the world.”

This summer she was chosen by the U.S. Embassy to coordinate and implement a project to strengthen the leadership capacities of 50 girls from all 10 regions in Cameroon. We are so proud to be partnering with this amazing woman!

Over the last year, we partnered with Nakinti to provide 62 secondary/high school educational scholarships, and the long-term vocational training program for 25 young IDPs in Kumba continued to teach tailoring and other employable skills. In the Oroko refugee camp in Nigeria, construction of a vocational training center is almost complete.

Many people in our original project area are still caught in the forest communities that are now controlled by rebels. Their suffering is extreme, so we funded several dangerous forays to bring them aid. Food and basic supplies were taken to 9 IDP camps behind enemy lines and reached 1,700 people. Food, hygiene kits, and other supplies were taken to 250 people in the Nigerian refugee camp.

On a more personal note, before the war broke out in earnest, I trekked through the jungles from village to village with an amazing young man, Ndoh Leonel, as my guide. Despite his dream of becoming a doctor, he had no plans to someday attend a university because poverty precluded that option. I promised him if he could gain entrance to a public university, I would sponsor him. He just graduated from high school, and the results from the General Certificate Examinations have been posted. He had the highest score in his school! (Proud mama here!)

MENTORING OTHERS

Our partners often mentor others who are eager to do humanitarian work themselves. Nakinti has a staff of volunteers she trained to help with the work of Rescue Women. Etang is mentoring another local organization that wants to do similar work. He will invite them to participate in his upcoming projects in his on-going effort to help them learn and succeed. We love that our partners are not only doing wonderful things themselves, but they are inspiring others to make a difference as well.
Etang, too, was active in responding to the IDP crisis. While Nakinti was helping IDPs who escaped north and west, Etang was situated to help those migrating south. Arriving with no belongings and no marketable skills, the IDPs were quite vulnerable. Etang distributed relief supplies to new influxes of IDPs and enrolled 141 in a vocational training center which he established to give them income-generating training. The vocational center is focused on teaching basic computer and culinary skills – two of the most marketable skills in the area.

**FROM DESPERATION TO HOPE FOR AN IDP**

Egbe is a single mother who escaped into the bush at the height of the rainy season. “Sleeping unprotected under trees was the last thing I dreamed for my children who were under the mercy of mosquitoes, malaria, and cold. At this time, we had no access to food.” Eventually she made her way to Limbe where she heard about ESARDEF. “I felt some relief when I went there and collected some food and non-food items, like hundreds of other IDPs did.” Egbe also enrolled in ESARDEF’s Vocational Training Center and studied catering. “I give immense thanks to ESARDEF and friends for the knowledge and skills I acquired, as I am now able to make a living.”

Aside from IDPs, Etang also runs various agricultural projects to help single mothers and other vulnerable women who struggle with extreme poverty and malnutrition. A high-yield cassava and maize project taught women to use organic fertilizers and high-yield seeds to dramatically increase their harvests. They were given tools and post-harvest processing equipment to increase their incomes. A piggery project taught 39 Ochemabigy women how to raise pigs. Starting with 7 pigs (4 females) they gained 27 piglets. After one more year of breeding, the project will be turned over to the women. At the end of each project, the women are formed into a cooperative union to facilitate marketing, provide greater access to future capital, and support one another through hard times. With each project, women also attend a 2-day workshop for training on basic human rights and how to advocate for themselves and others who are being abused.
MOROCCO – AMAL – NORA FITZGERALD

Amal is “dedicated to the empowerment of disadvantaged women through restaurant training and job placement.” The center of their work is a working restaurant in Marrakech where the women are trained. After six months of training the women are placed in jobs in restaurants, hotels, riads, and private homes. So far, over 350 “champions” have graduated from the program and have permanent jobs in the local food industry.

Kitchen Renovation: When Nora Fitzgerald initiated the restaurant, her goal was to train 10 girls at a time and serve 30-40 customers a day. They are now serving 200-300 customers a day, and this places an incredible burden on the kitchen staff and girls in training. What’s more, safety issues developed, including gas and electrical risks. It was time to tear everything out of the kitchen, redo the plumbing and wiring to ensure it was up to code and would serve their expanded needs, install safer gas installations for the stoves/ovens, get a non-slip floor, proper exhaust vents, and a number of other things which would make work in the kitchen much smoother and safer. In the process, the kitchen was expanded to about twice the size, and this will allow Amal to add more trainees.

THE POWER OF A FAMILY

While Jihane was training as one of Amal’s “champions”, the house she lived in with her mentally ill mother and brother collapsed. Just one tiny room was left standing, and there was no running water or electricity. Landlords refuse to rent to the family due to the mother’s condition, so we helped fund the purchase of a small house for Jihane using specially designated donations. When the other trainees at Amal learned Jihane would get a new house, many broke down in tears of happiness. This really drove home something they already knew – when they join Amal they don’t just receive job training; they are adopted into a family.

CAMBODIA – CAMBODIAN CARE
KOY CHHIM & RENY PHOEURCK

In Toulpongror, the garment factory district of Phnom Penh, women work very long hours for extremely low wages. Some, desperate for money, are lured into the sex industry. With insufficient money to pay for school (the government schools typically cost about $40/month), children used to be left home alone where they were vulnerable to predation. That changed four years ago when Koy and Reny started Cambodian Care to provide an elementary education for the children of this district, and we help fund the elementary school.
The school uses the government curriculum but they teach using the Montessori method, highly unusual in a developing country where rote memorization is the rule, and the children are excelling. It is important to Koy and Reny that their teachers are highly qualified, so they want their teachers to receive ongoing training in the Montessori method and effective teaching techniques, and we support their training.

Finally, child labor and trafficking is a serious problem throughout Southeast Asia, and poverty-stricken communities like those Cambodian Care works with are particularly vulnerable because they struggle to feed their children. Koy uses quarterly meetings with parents and caregivers to teach about the dangers of trafficking, and we provide large bags of rice each month to twenty of the poorest families from the Tuolpongror school if the families keep their children in school.

**HONDURAS – IHER – SOR MARTA SOTO**

Instituto Hondureño de Educación por Radio is an alternative school for youth who cannot attend traditional school due to poverty (they must work to help support their families), distance (some students must travel up to 6 hours one-way to reach the nearest secondary school), or danger (in urban areas, neighborhoods are strictly divided by gangs, and a child who crosses a gang boundary to attend a secondary school is at great risk of being killed). We provided the textbooks—a cost beyond the reach of very poor students—for 140 IHER secondary school students who wouldn’t otherwise have been able to continue their education.

We also funded a number of school-based projects which promote project management and leadership skills as well as instill in the students the belief that they are indeed capable of bringing positive change to their communities. The projects bring the communities together as they work to achieve a common goal. The highlight of our trips to Honduras involve visiting these projects and letting the students show off their accomplishments!

Thanks to a grant we received from Intel Corporation, we helped bring IHER into the 21st century. IHER now has an app so students can download their weekly lessons on phones at an IHER center and access them in their villages even if they don’t have Wi-Fi.

**SOLAR LIGHTS**

In remote mountain villages, the only source of electricity is from small solar panels. Many families cannot afford such a luxury, so their children still use candles to study. We distributed dozens of solar-powered lights to our students in need. One girl who received a light travels 2 hours each way on horseback to get to the closest IHER center. A Lenca boy, for whom Spanish is a second language, lost his father in 2011 and his mother in 2013. He and his siblings still live and work together to survive, but electricity is out of the question, so he, too, received a light. We brightened the lives of dozens of our students across Honduras.
Global Pearls is a 501(c)3 and contributions are tax deductible.
100% of donations are used to fund the projects. Administrative costs are covered by the Board of Directors, and travel costs are funded by those travelling.

**TRAVEL**

We are excited to see our travel budget grow! That means more of our supporters are traveling to visit our projects in person. That is not only rewarding for our supporters, it is very encouraging to our friends in the local communities. They not only benefit from the work we do when we visit, but they also receive the important unspoken message, “You are not alone in your struggles.”

The travel portion of our budget is always funded by the travelers – never by donations.
Lisa Robinson Spader, President
Lisa is a dreamer and visionary who is passionate about making a direct impact. She studied Economic Development at Harvard, and thrills to see it take shape in real communities.

LeeMin Chong, Vice-President
LeeMin wants to leverage her MBA and program management experience to come alongside those who strive to break the vicious cycle of poverty, helping them reach their dreams.

Arlene Say Soto, Secretary
Growing up in Manila, Arlene was exposed to the harsh realities of life because she shared the city with many people who lived in extreme poverty. She now uses her education to help others.

Kylie Palacios, Social Media Director
Kylie loves using social media as a tool to help others. After an internship in Guatemala with Global Pearls, she decided to join the Global Pearls team.

Katharina Root, Treasurer
Katharina was blessed to grow up an Anglo minority on the Navajo and Sioux Reservations, and she still loves and values exposure to a diversity of cultures. For the past 25 years she has worked as an accountant specializing in non-profit accounting, and has now joined our team because she wants to partner with an organization that inspires hope and impacts future generations.
GLOBAL PEARLS PARTNERS

Sandra Alonzo Pac - Guatemala

Driven by her passion to help women, children, and those suffering from great poverty in Guatemala, Sandra works tirelessly to help others. She doesn’t just provide scholarships, but creates a true community for participants – teaching them they are valuable, monitoring their progress, providing emotional support and love, even planning dance lessons or pizza parties to bring joy into their lives. She is greatly loved by project participants.

Sor Marta Soto - Honduras

A woman of great faith and dedication, Sor Marta has developed a country-wide alternative education program for tens of thousands of Honduran youth on little more than love and prayer. Her vision and pure heart attracted countless others, and now she has an amazing network of volunteer staff throughout the country. She never tires of impromptu exchanges with students, and with each one her face brightens with delight.

Juan Covarrubias Ccaihuari – Peru

This gentle Quechua man with a great love for his community is a born leader with a keen business sense. He values Quechua traditions and the communal nature of his culture, which he is trying to preserve through this project. He is greatly trusted by his community and all those who have trekked with him through his beloved Andes.

Nora Fitzgerald – Morocco

To sum up Nora in one word, I would say “compassion.” She has a deep and tender love for the marginalized women of Marrakech. When you combine that love with her business acumen and the support of dedicated staff and friends, that compassion turns into amazing results. Always seeking new ways to reach more women, she loves to dream forth new entrepreneurial ventures.

Project Directors do not receive a salary from Global Pearls. They work out of love for their communities and earn a living through other means. We are honored to support and empower their efforts.
Nakinti Besumbu Nofuru – Cameroon

Bold and fearless, Nakinti is creating a path for other women in Cameroon. Using her love of journalism, she is bringing attention to their plight and fighting for change. She has won numerous awards for her work improving conditions and opportunities for women and girls in the forest communities of the western regions.

Etang Samuel Manyi Mbeng – Cameroon

Having grown up an orphan in an impoverished forest community of Western Cameroon, Etang knows first-hand the suffering that the people of his project area endure. With help from a distant relative, he was able to pursue an education and escape the poverty of his youth. Now he is using his education to help others. As he says, “Someone needs to sacrifice to help others achieve their dreams. I choose to be that person.”

Abraham Kosgei – Kenya

Abraham is a dreamer with the talent and drive to make his dreams come true. Running earned him a spot on the Kenyan Olympic team, and it is now the vehicle he is using to bring development to the Kalenjin Tribe of Kenya’s Rift Valley. Equally important, he wants to revive and strengthen the Kalenjin culture, the strength of a people, that is quickly disappearing with exposure to western media.

Martin Richard Raju - India

An outstanding administrator, Martin makes development success look easy. He pursues his projects with a quiet and measured determination, planning each step with great care. From education to healthcare to economic empowerment, he pursues a holistic approach with a talented team, and everything he touches turns to gold.

Koy Chhim & Reny Phoeurk - Cambodia

Koy and Reny are a husband and wife team who are as innovative as they are dedicated. Koy expects nothing less than excellence from his students and staff, and Reny is a quiet, but powerful force behind the operations. Their love for the marginalized people of Cambodia is tangible.