

Foreword

Peace falls under the general umbrella of many things: freedom, democracy, human rights, the alleviation of suffering, and the improvement of environmental quality and health. Yet it is global health that connects us all.

Global health can be found in a small child in Mali learning to wash her hands to prevent the spread of diarrheal disease. It appears in the work of a community erecting a water storage tank in the mountains of western Honduras or village members pouring concrete slabs used for latrines in Timor-Leste. Global health is also present in groups of women constructing more efficient cooking stoves in Asia that not only reduce indoor air pollution but also make better use of scarce tree resources.

From these seemingly simple beginnings, global health broadens its reach to affect the prosperity and stability of whole nations—whether empowering communities to better educate and provide for themselves, stopping a rapid outbreak of illness, preventing famine, or eliminating socially and economically devastating diseases.

Having access to the basic needs of water, sanitation, hygiene, and shelter are issues of human rights, not just issues of development and engineering. Providing these basic rights in a sustainable manner is critical if we are to improve the health among poor people afflicted with disease, people who are often isolated, forgotten, ignored, and without hope.

If you examine engineering closely, it is about solving problems. Engineering is also tied to eradicating poverty and disease, just as much as it is tied to planning, design, and construction. One key, though, is to provide engineers and others with resources so they understand the beneficial use of appropriate technology. This type of technology is developed and deployed with ongoing input from local communities to accommodate economic, social, environmental, and cultural conditions unique to each locale. Such an approach holds greater promise of fostering healthy communities and reducing gender inequalities.

One principle of the Carter Center is that people can improve their lives when provided with the necessary skills, knowledge, and access to resources. What is special about this book is that it provides all of these so that people can improve the lives of their families, their communities, and their countries.

I am proud to see that much of the knowledge in this book was created by those who served in the U.S. Peace Corps as water-sanitation engineers. Many do not know that my mother also served in the Peace Corps as a health volunteer. Like the child in Mali, she has been an inspiration to me. Only after global health is improved will we all be connected in a world of peace and equality.

President Jimmy Carter