Young Woman Takes Road Less Travelled in Quest to End Extreme Global Poverty

Daphne Nederhorst honours people, creates conditions for entrepreneurialism by building on local strengths

Raised in Tanzania with a mom as a diplomat and a dad who worked on typical international aid projects — think big dams, big roads — Daphne Nederhorst became convinced as a young child that international aid was not the answer to the most pressing issues countries like hers were facing.

She recalls visiting local communities of extreme poverty and seeing children her age suffering. While she hated the pain she saw and felt a deep urge to make things better, she also sensed a beauty and strength in the community.

Those insights turned into life-shaping questions for her as she grew older: How can we not have people suffer from extreme poverty? And, at the same time, how can people living in these situations lead the change?

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Daphne embarked on a quest to find the answers.

She tried first to work within the "system" — government, international aid scenarios — but ran headlong into what she describes as brick walls. Expelled from schools and fired from her jobs, she kept meeting resistance to the message she tried to share: If we truly want to see a world without extreme poverty, we need to

honour and put first the people who live it every day and what they know.

And then it was Christmas, 2005. Daphne was working for a large corporation but on vacation in Colombia. There, she met a woman living in poverty who had rescued more than 100 abused and abandoned street children and brought them to an abandoned farmhouse that she'd transformed into a beautiful home of refuge.

Daphne had been studying film and media, and she decided to create a video clip sharing this woman's story.

"And that's when it all clicked for me," she recalls.

"There are so many amazing people like this woman that have found simple solutions with almost nothing; they live in adversity themselves and they've created enormous change, and so how can we allow that to spread to a bigger level."

Daphne began to imagine documenting these stories in short videos and sharing them with other communities. She imagined people in those communities inspired to see that they too can make change and finding practical things in the video that they could try to replicate.

Even more exciting, Daphne saw tremendous possibilities in training local youth to be the ones to collect and then distribute these stories.

Talk about empowering communities and youth — creating the conditions for entrepreneurialism to spark and thrive by building on local strengths.

A year and a half later Daphne resigned from her corporate job and launched [Sawa World](#).

"I've never looked back," she says.

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