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July 2010 Newsletter

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Greetings from Melissa Cook and Bob Demchuk, and welcome to the first newsletter from Scene East. We're writing to highlight issues and global connections we're watching, while offering you great photos and greeting/holiday cards. We donate a portion of our sales to our nonprofit partners. And every card you send carrying the nonprofit's logo helps raise awareness of their work. Last year we wrote checks to five nonprofits including sponsorship of a woman in Rwanda for a year in our partner Women for Women International's training and support program. Help us make those checks bigger this year! Ideas and feedback are welcome. Please share this email with your friends.

Nearly 25 years after our first date to see the movie *Out of Africa*, we're regular travelers to Africa and to other developing and "frontier" markets. Once you see life as it is lived on less than \$1 per day, it changes your priorities for charitable giving. We are committed to using our photography, business and marketing skills to raise money for nonprofits in the areas of education, conservation and women's causes. We focus on the poorest parts of the world where donations have the greatest impact. We're also building knowledge and relationships in an effort to see how business development can alleviate poverty. Scene East started as a way of selling photos—but now, it's much more.

Empower women and change the world

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Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn's book *Half the Sky* captured the fancy of Oprah and many others—illustrating the links between girls' education and safety; availability of income-earning opportunities for women; stable families; and more productive, less violent societies. Lisa Shannon wrote about the horrors inflicted on Congo's women during the country's endless civil war, in *A Thousand Sisters*. Consumers are starting to learn about the connection between the metals in the guts of their sleek iPhones and BlackBerries, illegal mining of Congo's minerals and the money flowing through international banks to ruthless militias. Rules forcing manufacturers to certify that their components are "conflict-free" were inserted into the pending financial reform legislation. These proposed rules only affect US listed companies, not their global competitors.

The women we visited in Rwanda this spring through Women for Women International's program write letters to us about positive changes in their lives. One used her newly improved earnings to buy two goats and a cow. Their manure fertilizes her thriving garden, with excess crops selling for ready cash. Another is in a mushroom-growing training class, drawing strength from her cooperative members. One woman describes her anguish during the annual April commemoration of Rwanda's 1994 genocide, in which she lost her husband and two sisters. She writes that she has hope for a better future for herself and her son thanks to WfWI.

Our newest sister—sponsored with money raised by Scene East from last year's holiday card sales—is illiterate. Her three children are not in school, but one mission of the WfWI program is to change that. Like most of Rwanda's rural women, she lives in a house with no running water. She collects the day's water from a public tap or a stream and carries it home in a plastic jug. Her home has no electricity and a kerosene lamp offers little light, making any evening study or chores virtually impossible. During her year in WfWI's program, she'll learn about health, nutrition, financial planning and civil rights, and she'll receive job training

that will help her improve her economic circumstances. For more information on Women for Women International's programs, click [here](#).

Wildlife: an asset for future generations



We originally went to Africa to see wildlife. We remain awestruck by the animals and humbled by the fragility of the landscape. Africa's national parks are in a constant fight to preserve territory and migration pathways against rising needs for land by a rapidly growing local population and their livestock.

Tanzania recently approved construction of a highway across the Serengeti National Park—cutting off the northern path of the migrating wildebeest. Anyone who has seen the spectacle of thousands of wildebeest and zebras marching north to find water and grass—stalked by lions, crocodiles and other predators—understands the conservation issues at hand here.

Dr. Paula Kahumbu, Executive Director of our conservation partner WildlifeDirect, interviewed renowned conservationist Dr. Richard Leakey about the proposed road's impact. Dr. Leakey agrees that Tanzania needs an improved road network in order to secure the prosperity of its far-flung regions. However, he urges the government to plan for the very long-term and to consider alternative routes that will facilitate needed economic development while preserving the sanctity of the parks. He sees the imperative for Tanzania to balance its economic development needs with the conservation efforts that are his life's work. For the full interview, click [here](#).

Peace and prosperity through education



Why does education matter in poverty-stricken countries?

In *The End of Poverty*, Jeffrey D. Sachs quotes French Enlightenment philosopher Marie-Jean Condorcet about the need for education to pave the way for science and technology to create a better world. Sachs notes Condorcet's views that education "enabled individuals to stand on their own feet, to avoid charlatans, to abandon useless or harmful superstitions..."

A June 28 *New York Times* article *Right-to-Know Law Gives India's Poor a Lever* describes victories against corrupt or lazy bureaucrats by poor Indians using the country's 2005 Right to Information Act. India elegantly states that "democracy requires an informed citizenry and transparency of information which are vital to its functioning and also to contain corruption and to hold Governments and their instrumentalities accountable to the governed." For the *Times* article, click [here](#).

Greg Mortenson's *Stones into Schools* articulates a vision of promoting peace through education by building schools and educating boys and girls alike in war-ravaged Afghanistan.

Our partners Akanksha Fund (click [here](#)) and buildOn (click [here](#)) are committed to improving access to education in the developing world.

Reading Corner

This month's picks

The End of Poverty, Jeffrey D. Sachs

The Elusive Quest for Growth, William R. Easterly

The Bottom Billion, Paul Collier

The Fortune at the Bottom of the Pyramid, C.K. Prahalad

Stones into Schools, Greg Mortenson

In the River They Swim, Michael Fairbanks and team

Building Social Business, Muhammad Yunus

Between Two Worlds, Zainab Salbi

Half the Sky, Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn

A Thousand Sisters, Lisa Shannon

The Weight of Silence: the Invisible Children of India, Shelley Seale

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Fine Arts Corner

Photo of the Month



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