STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

“We see the Foundation’s resources as rare risk capital that can be deployed to create change in the most difficult circumstances and geographies.”

Established in 1999, the primary mission of the Howard G. Buffett Foundation is to catalyze transformational change, particularly for the world’s most impoverished and marginalized populations. We see the Foundation’s resources as rare risk capital that can be deployed to improve conditions and create change in the most difficult circumstances and geographies. We invest our funding in three main areas:

1. Food Security
2. Conflict Mitigation
3. Public Safety

Our support for global food security is directed toward agricultural resource development and management for smallholder farmers in the developing world. We support a range of investments in agriculture including research, conservation-based production practices, water resource management and advocacy to promote the best ideas that will have the broadest impact on the most vulnerable and under-resourced producers.

In the United States, we work to raise awareness about the scale and scope of hunger in our local communities and the critical role American farmers play in meeting the world’s growing demands for food while sustaining our natural resources through better production practices.

Conflict remains a key barrier to achieving global food security. We seek out investments to mitigate conflict in two ways: through opportunities to bring an end to active conflict or improve the conditions that fuel conflict; and through opportunities to support communities that have been devastated by conflict.

Public safety is a strategic priority that influences our community grantmaking in Illinois and Arizona where we have operations and employees. We partner with local sheriffs’ offices to identify and address key community public safety concerns, and we support volunteer fire departments where resources are scarce for rural areas.

The Foundation continues to make smaller investments in areas where we have historical knowledge and relationships including initiatives with cheetah and mountain gorilla conservation.

The Foundation does not accept unsolicited proposals, and we typically do not provide general operating support.

December 31, 2045, is the final dissolution of the Foundation’s assets.

TRUSTEES

Howard G. Buffett, Chairman and CEO
Devon G. Buffett, Secretary
Trisha A. Cook, Treasurer
Nicolette de Bruyn
Howard W. Buffett
Erin M. Morgan
Michael D. Walter
Chelsea M. Zillmer
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LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN

“At worst, nothing changes. At best, everything changes.”

It has taken me many years to understand that small efforts in philanthropy can at best yield modest results. That does not mean that small efforts are not important; invariably, they address certain needs and can be deemed successful by some measurements.

However, when our Foundation received additional financial resources from my Dad, it gave us the opportunity to think bigger and to be more focused. It was an opportunity to combine big ideas with our willingness to take big risks. This approach means, when we achieve success, it is significant, but it also means we fail far more often than we succeed.

In 2015, we continued to make large investments in geographic areas that are extremely challenging. These investments test some of our most important beliefs; they are investments that very few—if any other—foundations would make, and they combine our primary focus areas of food security and conflict mitigation.

One of our biggest successes this past year was the December 2015 commissioning of a 12.6 MW hydroelectric plant in Matebe, North Kivu, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). We funded this project at the height of the 2012 M23 conflict because we believed that peace would come, but would only last if there were jobs immediately following the peace agreement. This facility represents what we hope is a different storyline from the kind of fleeting peace achieved after past conflicts over the last 20 years. It is not the complete solution to ending conflict in North Kivu, but it is a critical step. We continue to invest in additional hydroelectric capacity that will literally change the trajectory of economic opportunity in North Kivu. The energy from these hydroplants—generated from the water resources of neighboring Virunga National Park—will serve as the economic engine for industry and the jobs they create, especially in agro-processing, while providing power to area residents, schools and hospitals. All of this provides an alternative to conflict.

We are making these investments despite the reemergence of instability. Violence has increased significantly over the past few years since the M23 were defeated. Brutal killings, kidnappings and roadside robberies have increased as the Congolese government has failed to implement the mandates of the peace accord that ended the M23 crisis, and the international community fails to hold the Congolese government accountable.

The result is increasingly widespread criminal and terrorist activity by rebel groups including the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), the Mai Mai and even, at times, the Congolese government’s own troops (FARDC).

We have done what we can to support the one institution in North Kivu that functions well amidst the chaos and despite a lack of resources: the Congolese parks authority (ICCN), and more specifically, Emmanuel de Merode, the head of Virunga National Park.
In 2015, we hired and trained an additional 200 park rangers along with a number of emergency actions to shore up the remote ranger outposts. The park rangers, the strongest opposition to a system that exploits natural resources for the benefit of a few, have increasingly faced targeted attacks. These rangers are the last line of defense for securing the park, but they are also the only authority offering protection to vulnerable communities. They are critical to ensure our philanthropic investments in the hydroelectric plant are secured. Unfortunately, four of the park rangers from the first 218 new rangers we brought on board in 2013 have been killed, including two who were tortured after being captured.

It is important to understand the real barriers to development in an area like North Kivu, DRC. Local and provincial elections have never been held, and national parliamentary and presidential elections only twice, with the most recent election (2011) widely considered compromised. Rule of law is absent in many places, most of the time.

Virungas National Park’s rangers provide an anchor of stability and work hard to reflect an incorruptible, transparent and functioning institution. It is hard to see how North Kivu develops if Virunga National Park collapses. Our primary partners in North Kivu—ICCN and Emmanuel de Merode, the McCain Institute and Texas A&M Conflict and Development Center—are all working to help establish peace and democracy, but it remains a daunting challenge.

The United States government fails to recognize the significance of this region. It is a shortsightedness that is reflected in our passive policy and contributes to the continued destabilization of a region of Africa that should and could be the growth engine for the continent. Instead, extremism is allowed to thrive in eastern Congo, unchecked. The FDLR, based in and around Virunga National Park, has a single mission: to disrupt and destroy Rwanda, the most progressive country on the continent. The ADF militia is an Islamic extremist organization with a mission to undermine and defeat the government of Uganda.

Groups like these perpetuate the violence and instability in North Kivu and provide an opportunity for extremism to gain a secure foothold in central and eastern Africa. It would be in the best interest of the United States to help stem the growth of extremism in places where it is still possible to defeat it. Instead, the commitment by the West to support peace and democracy in this region is lacking.

Africa does not have a monopoly on conflict. We are engaged in another part of the world—Mexico and Central America—where conflict is driven by a different set of dynamics—organized criminal gangs instead of rebellions and ethnic tensions. Here we have made substantial investments in both regions, especially in El Salvador, primarily in support of smallholder agricultural development in coffee and cacao. We also have a regional effort in Mexico and Central America supporting soil health and water security that builds on 10 years of program work with smallholders and governments in these countries.

Our interest in supporting our southern neighbors is multifaceted. The failing economies of these countries pose a significant national security threat to our own country as the drug trade destabilizes many U.S. communities, undermines our own rule of law and fuels a broad spectrum of criminal activity throughout the United States. These countries are in such disarray that tens of thousands of citizens are quite literally fleeing for their lives to the United States. Unless these circumstances are reversed, the United States will experience additional pressure on securing our border, enforcing our laws and maintaining adequate social services.

We cannot expect increased enforcement to deter desperate people. Nor can we continue to treat our drug epidemic as if it is only an internal problem. The increased availability and affordability of illegal drugs in this country is driving consumption to unprecedented levels. Our efforts to stop drugs entering our country along the southwest border have essentially failed.
The interception of methamphetamine by the Border Patrol in the past year is 6,000 times higher than 10 years ago. The interception of heroin has steadily increased over the past decade and is 16 times higher than it was in 2007. The Border Patrol measures its success based on apprehensions of illegal immigrants and seizures of narcotics, yet these numbers reflect only the numerator of what is an ever-increasing denominator. These “successes” in seizures can be attributed to a whole host of factors that do not necessarily give an accurate picture of what is truly happening.

Like all big problems we face, we must be thinking of big efforts and solutions if we want to see different outcomes. I propose that we set a new standard for Border Patrol’s metric of success. What if we made our border authority accountable to the increase or decrease of drug addiction and crimes driven by drug activity in the United States? Border Patrol’s performance should not be measured by apprehensions and seizures that tell us little about the overall level of traffic coming across our borders; it should be measured by the impact that traffic has on our country, its citizens and communities.

Most of our past investments in Central America have been focused on developing the agricultural sectors for smallholder farmers in these countries as an alternative to migration north. More recently we have worked to address the increasing gang and cartel influences. However, as we know from our experiences in Africa, success in any country is ultimately dependent upon the will and functionality of that country’s government. No single foundation can have enough impact or influence on a country’s economy or policies to make a government function well, nor should any single foundation have that kind of power. We can, however, do our part to test new ideas and contribute to solutions. These solutions require innovative thinking, different policies and ultimately change at scale. However, they require new partnerships with governments south of our border and investment in countries of origin.

When our Foundation first started working in Africa and Central America, we did many different relatively small projects, usually a few million dollars over a three to five year timeframe. This was driven to a certain degree by our financial resources, but it was also driven by a lack of understanding. Fifteen years ago I did not realize how much the rule of law or free and fair elections drives the accountability of governments. I think in part because here at home we take these things for granted. It has been a steep learning curve.

Our Foundation cannot be responsible for instituting rule of law or facilitating free and fair elections in a country. Our investments, and at times charitable contributions, essentially need to provide people with enough hope and encouragement that circumstances can improve and in turn support expectations that spark a demand for these changes in their own countries. We view our investments as a catalyst to empower citizens to expect more from their own governments.

Sometimes our ideas are bold enough to give me pause. Building a one-stop border crossing with two countries, DRC and Rwanda, that are constantly at odds with one another, seems almost self-defeating. We started several years ago because we believed it was critical to try. At worst, nothing changes. At best, everything changes. Today I am hopeful that we are closer to the latter scenario, with the Rwanda side under construction and the DRC side finally approving a plan to begin the construction process.

Hydroelectric plants, border crossings, gang prevention programs and agricultural development investments are only successful if they positively change the lives of the people they affect. We may not know for a decade, maybe two, if we have succeeded, but I believe we are smarter about what we do today than we were when we started. That is progress.

Howard G. Buffett
FINANCIALS

“We may not know for a decade, maybe two, if we have succeeded, but I believe we are smarter about what we do today than we were when we started.”
In 2008, HGBF changed the category of “Immigration and Refugees” to “Immigration, Refugee and Internally Displaced Persons.”

In 2009, HGBF changed the category of “Immigration, Refugee and Internally Displaced Persons” to “Forced Migration.”

In 2011, HGBF changed the category of “Agricultural Development” and “Nutrition” to “Food Security.”

In 2012, HGBF changed the category of “Water” to “Water Security.”

In 2012, HGBF re-categorized its food security, humanitarian and forced migration grants in conflict and post-conflict countries as “Conflict Mitigation.”

In 2012, HGBF re-categorized its public safety, conservation and community support grants as “Non-Strategic.”

In 2014, HGBF made Public Safety a strategic priority.
**CONTRIBUTIONS BY GEOGRAPHY**

**2000**
- United States: 89.8%
- Africa: 8.2%
- Europe/Asia: 1.0%
- Central America: 1.0%

**2001**
- United States: 77.7%
- Africa: 14.6%
- Central America: 5.1%
- Europe/Asia: 2.6%

**2002**
- United States: 79.0%
- Africa: 20.5%
- Central America: 0.5%

**2003**
- United States: 10.5%
- Other: 0.3%

**2004**
- United States: 15.7%
- Africa: 81.8%
- Central America: 0.3%
- South America: 0.3%
- Europe/Asia: 1.4%

**2005**
- United States: 30.2%
- Africa: 61.2%
- Other: 0.9%

**2006**
- United States: 46.1%
- Mexico: 8.9%
- Central America: 5.2%

**2007**
- United States: 21.3%
- South America: 0.2%
- Europe/Asia: 3.1%
**Contributions by Geography**

- **2008**
  - Africa: 53.8%
  - Central America: 33.0%
  - United States: 2.8%
  - South America: 5.1%
  - Europe/Asia: 1.5%

- **2009**
  - Africa: 66.9%
  - Central America: 27.0%
  - United States: 4.7%
  - Europe/Asia: 1.4%

- **2010**
  - Africa: 44.2%
  - United States: 11.2%
  - Central America: 21.0%
  - Mexico: 4.7%
  - South America: 17.4%
  - Europe/Asia: 1.5%

- **2011**
  - Africa: 38.0%
  - Central America: 34.4%
  - United States: 18.8%
  - Mexico: 2.6%
  - South America: 4.9%
  - Europe/Asia: 1.7%

- **2012**
  - United States: 48.9%
  - Africa: 40.0%
  - Central America: 9.8%
  - Mexico: 0.2%
  - South America: 0.2%
  - Europe/Asia: 0.9%

- **2013**
  - United States: 43.1%
  - Africa: 45.5%
  - Central America: 6.0%
  - Mexico: 2.3%
  - Europe/Asia: 0.3%

- **2014**
  - United States: 25.9%
  - Central America: 17.4%
  - Mexico: 2.0%
  - Africa: 60.6%
  - Europe/Asia: 0.3%

- **2015**
  - United States: 21.8%
  - Central America: 19.5%
  - Mexico: 2.6%
  - Africa: 58.7%
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION
AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2015

ASSETS

Cash and cash equivalents $ 112,853,551
Investments 169,956,445
Land, Buildings, Equipment,
net of accumulated depreciation 2,093,213

TOTAL ASSETS $ 284,903,209

LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS

Liabilities:

Accrued expenses $ 70,844

TOTAL LIABILITIES 70,844

Net Assets:

Unrestricted 284,832,365

TOTAL NET ASSETS 284,832,365

TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS $ 284,903,209

1 Statements prepared on a cash basis/income tax basis
## Statement of Activities
### Year Ended December 31, 2015

**Revenue and Support:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contributions and Grants:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operating</td>
<td>$150,980,361</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total contributions and grants</td>
<td>$150,980,361</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gain on sale of investments</td>
<td>8,736,187</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gain on sale of fixed asset</td>
<td>30,467</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interest and investment income</td>
<td>125,797</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unused grant returns</td>
<td>3,997,149</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other income</td>
<td>89,949</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Revenue and Support</strong></td>
<td>$163,959,910</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Expenses:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Security</td>
<td>$5,990,026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict Mitigation</td>
<td>6,243,612</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>60,080</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservation</td>
<td>203,717</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Safety</td>
<td>54,249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Program</td>
<td>12,551,684</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributions, Gifts, Grants Paid</td>
<td>142,187,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General and administrative</td>
<td>3,058,837</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Expenses</strong></td>
<td>$157,797,921</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Change in Net Assets**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Change in Net Assets</strong></td>
<td>6,161,989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Net Assets at Beginning of Year</strong></td>
<td>314,964,218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Change in Unrealized Gains on Investments</strong></td>
<td>(36,293,842)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Net Assets at End of Year</strong></td>
<td>$284,832,365</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Countries receiving funds in 2015 also may have received funds in prior years.
FOOD SECURITY

“In 2015, we integrated our water security work, which was focused exclusively on water availability and water use for agriculture, into our food security portfolio. This integration better reflects our work promoting conservation-based agricultural development globally.”

Our support for global food security is central to the Foundation’s mission. We invest in food security in Central America, Mexico and a handful of countries in Africa primarily through support for smallholder agricultural development and water-use management. In the U.S., our focus is on raising awareness of the problem of hunger, particularly rural hunger, and promoting adoption of conservation-based agricultural systems by U.S. farmers. In 2015, we integrated our water security work, which was focused exclusively on water availability and water use for agriculture, into our food security portfolio. This integration better reflects our work promoting conservation-based agricultural development globally.

A BIG IDEA FOR AGRICULTURE IN RWANDA

In 2014, the Foundation began exploring the possibility of making a large-scale investment in modernizing sustainable agriculture in a single country in Africa in close partnership with that country’s government. In January 2015, the Foundation determined that Rwanda would be the best partner in Africa for an approximately $500 million investment over a projected 10-year-period. The investment goal is to link practical education and training in sustainable agricultural practices with locally relevant research that informs extension services.

To achieve this goal, the Foundation is exploring investments in four areas:

1. A practical education/research/extension institute, built from an existing research facility in eastern Rwanda (Karama);
2. Building human capacity by training the future educators of this institute through education scholarships for Rwandans in the United States and Costa Rica;
3. Productive capacity and management models for smallholder-led irrigation;
Given the scale of this proposed investment and that no other investment of its kind has been made in agriculture on the continent of Africa, implementation will be defined over the course of the Foundation’s proposed investment period rather than in advance. Still, in 2015, we put into motion progress against each of the four focus areas. Specifically:

- Drafted a site plan design and are working with the Government of Rwanda to define a business case for the near-term and long-term design of the practical training/education institute at Karama;
- Funded more than 150 scholarships for Rwandans for agriculture degrees at the University of Nebraska and EARTH University in Costa Rica, with the first cohort of students completing their first year of education. These students are required to return to Rwanda as a condition of their scholarship and will become a cadre of well-trained and skilled personnel ready to support Rwanda’s long-term targets for agricultural growth;
- Initiated a 63-center pivot project—run exclusively on solar power developed on-site—to form the basis for a 3,207 acre (1,298 hectare) cooperative with nearly 2,000 smallholder farmers. These farmers will be trained in conservation-based agricultural practices to improve their productivity and understand how to best benefit from the investment in irrigation.

The Foundation’s investment is really an investment in the Government of Rwanda’s Vision 2020 strategy for agriculture, which seeks to transform the country to achieve middle income status in part by modernizing agriculture into a more productive, high-value and market-oriented sector.

One of the main reasons for the Foundation’s decision to invest significantly in Rwanda is confidence that people—not process—will be at the center of the model for success.

We have been tremendously encouraged by the Performance Management model at all levels in Rwandan governance as a best practice in public sector governance.

**WATER-SMART AGRICULTURE IN CENTRAL AMERICA AND MEXICO**

In 2015, after a decade of learning and collaboration between the Foundation and Catholic Relief Services (CRS) on smallholder agricultural development, soil health and water resource management, the Foundation launched the Water-Smart Agriculture initiative (WSA) in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and southern Mexico. This six-year, $25 million effort combines on-the-ground field testing in partnership with smallholder farmers with efforts to promote water-smart policies and investments by government, donors and development organizations.

WSA builds on the experience and progress of prior Foundation-funded investments in the region. Specifically, it combines the best of what the Foundation has learned from our prior work in water (the Global Water Initiative [GWI]) and soil health (ProSoils) to focus on influencing change at scale to revitalize smallholder rain-fed agriculture in Mesoamerica. The overarching goal is to positively transform the food and water security of a critical mass of farmers in the region by increasing agricultural productivity, improving the management of water resources and increasing farmers’ economic and environmental resilience. WSA will also work to build long-term institutional capacity in governments, educational organizations and the private sector to support water-smart agriculture.

WSA defines “water-smart agriculture” as a set of principles and practices that increase productivity and water security by improving the management of soils, water resources and crops.

![Photo: Laura Parker](image)

Howard G. Buffett meets with smallholder farmers participating in a 63-center pivot irrigation project in the Nasho area of Rwanda.
The majority of smallholders in the five countries WSA is operating in are rain-fed producers. These producers offer the greatest opportunity for impact in terms of regional food security. Through targeted field research and by gathering evidence from 3,000 smallholder farmers, CRS will leverage WSA into public universities where it will provide curricula support, key government agricultural programs through technical assistance to government extension services and the private sector where CRS is connecting smallholder supply with market demand opportunities.

These sectors will also work together to institutionalize soil restoration services in each country and promote policies that are consistent with water-smart agriculture.

Our outcome goals are ambitious: we hope to bring water-smart agriculture practices and services to 500,000 smallholder farmers. We will measure success along the way by working to achieve five key milestones in the first 33 months:

1. 3,000 smallholder farmers demonstrate the benefits of water-smart agriculture;
2. CRS uses WSA as the technical foundation for all its new agriculture programs across Central America and southern Mexico;
3. Donor, national government and private sector initiatives worth $50 million or more have incorporated explicit objectives for soil and water restoration and management approaches promoted by WSA;
4. National government agencies, private sector actors, municipal governments and local non-profit agricultural organizations have invested resources to train and/or employ at least 250 agricultural professionals in soil and water restoration and management;
5. Key government agencies and universities are able to produce, manage and update digital soil maps that serve decision-making at all levels, from farm to national level.

If we fail to achieve our mid-term goals, we have the option to terminate the effort. By setting meaningful but clear outcome goals and preserving the option to discontinue the project we hope to create clarity of focus and a sense of urgency.

We believe WSA can show smallholder farmers and policy makers what is possible and achievable in terms of productivity, livelihoods and resilience. Over time, if successful, WSA will mitigate the effects of extreme weather events, reduce poverty and forced migration, and improve food security.

GETTING TO GREAT: INVESTING IN OUR DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

2015 marked the conclusion of Getting to Great (GtG), a $2.16 million project co-funded by the Foundation and CRS to strengthen the institutional capacity of Catholic Relief Services’ Latin America and Caribbean region (CRS-LACRO) to influence widespread change in rural development. The project focused on four priority areas:

1. Sustainable agriculture
2. Management of water resources
3. Agroenterprise
4. Coffee

INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY ACHIEVEMENTS

Prior to GtG, the influencing activities of CRS-LACRO were mainly ad hoc. Today, CRS plans and prioritizes its influence activities, an effort that is now institutionalized through the addition of a dedicated Senior Technical Advisor for Influence and Strategy. This resource supports development of country-level Influence Plans for Agriculture and for Youth. GtG has provided the analytical and operational frameworks and case studies that illustrate how processes for influence unfold in practice.

INFLUENCING RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Through proactive participation in key forums and alliances, CRS GtG staff have shared evidence-based results of innovations in smallholder agricultural development and water resources management, two critical areas for increasing the resilience of vulnerable rural populations to unfavorable weather.

An important part of this success is due to strong partnerships with well-known R&D organizations and technology companies such as Repórter Brasil, Purdue University, Keurig Green Mountain (KGM) and the Sustainable Food Lab.
Through strategic collaborations, CRS has added academic rigor to its work and contributed to novel development solutions. Some examples are:

**Labor rights in coffee value chains.** With long-term partner Repórter Brasil, CRS raised the serious but nearly invisible issue of farmworker labor rights in coffee production to the Specialty Coffee Association of America (SCAA). In mid-2015, the SCAA’s Sustainability Council created a Farmworker Committee, chaired by CRS. The Committee has commissioned a white paper that will provide the basis for coordinated collective action by the industry to address the issue appropriately.

**Soil data and climate change.** CRS’ pioneering work with Purdue University to map the functional soil properties most useful to farmers (organic matter, pH and topsoil depth, for example) over an entire nation is proving a “door opener” with national governments. These governments must find practical responses to the higher temperatures and changing rainfall of climate change but have lacked the detailed information needed to plan and adapt. The digital soil mapping has also been instrumental in fashioning the agenda for the Central America and Caribbean chapter of the Global Soil Partnership of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

**Protecting water resources.** The Foundation’s first phase of the GWI developed a novel approach to water protection and management in coffee landscapes. Blue Harvest, a project to evaluate and refine the GWI approach, was funded by KGM, who will use the Blue Harvest principles in its corporate sustainability strategy. Blue Harvest has also become a part of the Inter-American Development Bank’s Sustainable Agriculture, Food and Environment (SAFE) platform, a group of industry leaders, NGOs and donors working on sustainable agriculture. The Sustainable Food Lab, a global network of corporate, non-governmental and R&D organizations and a partner in Blue Harvest from the outset, is incorporating the Blue Harvest approach as the basis for promoting the protection of water resources in agricultural value chains.

**HUNGER IN AMERICA**

The Foundation continues to partner with Feeding America to raise awareness about the pervasiveness of hunger in America. We have a commitment through 2019 to support Feeding America’s *Map the Meal Gap*, an annual study providing food insecurity rates for every county and congressional district in the U.S.—the most localized data of its kind available.

We see awareness and understanding as the first critical step to developing solutions to address and eliminate food insecurity. In 2015, we completed transitioning our *Invest an Acre* program over to Feeding America to manage and administer. *Invest an Acre* raises awareness of and provides support to address food insecurity in rural communities.
RESEARCHING CONSERVATION-BASED FARMING SYSTEMS

The Foundation supports research to promote adoption of conservation-based agricultural systems in the United States and the developing world. We conduct our own on-farm research as well as partner with a handful of university research partners on farms in Illinois, Arizona and Nebraska to understand the benefits and barriers to adoption of no-till, crop rotation, cover crops, water resource management and nutrient management. The most important characteristic of our on-farm research is its scale. While we test these techniques on smaller test plots applicable to farming in the developing world, we also seek to demonstrate to U.S. farmers that these techniques are adaptable to large-scale, commercial farming. Those “test plots” range in size from 40 to 320 acres.

No-Till: Our no-till research is designed to show the feasibility as well as the profitability of implementing techniques resulting in minimal soil disturbance rather than conventional tillage. We compare the effects no-till has on soil health, soil erosion, water quality, crop performance and cost of production as compared to conventional tillage practices. The goal is to demonstrate that no-till is not only better for the environment but also better for the farmer’s return on investment.

Crop Rotation: Our crop rotation research looks at the effects crop diversity has on soil health, costs and profitability for the farmer. We compare continuous corn crop production to corn and soybean rotations for factors such as yield, disease, soil health and cost of production.

Cover Crops: Our cover crop research includes planting earlier maturing corn crops to allow for planting of cover crops sooner in the fall, growing cover crops designed to break up soil compaction in place of tillage, using cover crops to protect the soil from erosion and using cover crop residue to shade the soil to reduce loss of water to evaporation.
**Water Resource Management:** Our water use management research focuses on different types of irrigation systems and how to manage them to decrease overall water consumption. This includes evaluating different types of irrigation systems such as center pivots, flood (surface) irrigation and subsurface drip irrigation. A second area of research focuses on factors affecting water quality such as soil erosion, nutrient runoff and leaching of nutrients into groundwater and how different farming systems affect these factors.

**Nutrient Management:** Our nutrient management research evaluates several aspects of managing the use of fertilizers, ranging from the type and timing to how the fertilizer is applied. We also study the use of alternative sources of nitrogen, such as legume cover crops to replace the use of synthetic fertilizer. The overall goal of the research is to increase efficiency by lowering the costs associated with crop production while protecting soil and water resources.

### COVER CROP PRODUCTION ON UKULIMA FARM IN SOUTH AFRICA

Ukulima, the Foundation’s 9,200 acre farm in South Africa, began producing cover crop seeds in 2014 for distribution on the African continent. The goal is to make cover crop seeds more freely available to smallholder farmers in Africa and promote adoption of conservation-based farming systems. Planting cover crops directly addresses two of the three principles of conservation agriculture—permanent soil cover and crop rotation.

Seeds are being distributed in partnership with the Program for Africa’s Seed Systems (PASS) and Partners for Seed in Africa (PASA), the latter a Foundation grantee and both working on developing private markets for improved seed throughout the continent. To date, of the 11 PASS/PASA countries, six have successfully received seeds: Burkina Faso, Uganda, Mali, Mozambique, Ghana, and South Africa.

We focus on the following crops: Cowpeas (*Vigna unguiculata*); Lablab (*Lablab purpureus*); Sunhemp (*Crotolaria juncea*); Bush Mucuna (*Mucuna Pruriens*); and Black Oats (*Avena Strigosa*). The main crop for seed production going forward is cowpeas. Texas A&M University screened various varieties over the years at Ukulima and now Sequoia Seeds—the production company created for this effort—will produce two different Texas varieties; three IITA varieties; and one variety from South Africa. Sequoia Seeds also has a royalty-free license to distribute two commercial varieties—TX08-30-1 and TX08-49-1—bred by BB Singh and listed on the South African varietal list as TAMC-1 and TAMC-2.

We chose to focus on cowpeas because it is a good cover crop and good for human consumption. It is also a short seasonal crop where the short rainy seasons in Africa may be enough for a satisfactory yield.

Production challenges include bird and insect damage, drought (2015 was one of the driest years in South Africa), hail and high temperatures, shipping of the seed and the challenges of planting a tropical crop in a dry region like Ukulima.

Looking ahead we will partner closely with the Foundation-funded Centre for No-Till Agriculture in Ghana to promote cover crop use by smallholders and increase distribution of cover crop seed.
NATURE CONSERVATION TRUST: A 20-YEAR LEGACY IN AFRICA

BY HOWARD G. BUFFETT

In 1975, I made my first trip to Africa. I had no idea that a little over 20 years later I would begin a journey that would take me to all 54 countries on the continent and both disputed territories—and spend more than $400 million across 42 countries.

In 1996, I returned to Africa—South Africa—for business. I quickly found ways to combine these work trips, usually a minimum of four to five trips a year, with my interest in conservation. A few years later, I decided to establish a public benefit organization (essentially a nonprofit organization) named the Nature Conservation Trust (NCT). My initial idea was to create a reserve where cheetah research could be carried out with flexibility and long-term goals. Little did I know then what I was taking on.

Twenty years later, NCT has evolved as our Foundation’s mission has evolved. We sold the reserve and began agriculture research on a 9,200 acre farm (Ukulima) only a few miles away. We had an expert in organic farming experiment with new ideas to help smallholder farmers increase productivity with limited synthetic inputs. Many African farmers have few options, they farm to survive (not for profit) and they have little or no access to capital or training. We also had world-class universities like Penn State undertaking highly technical research to find the best genetic makeup to produce corn plants with the best root systems to more effectively utilize nitrogen or phosphorus.

When Zimbabwe began its economic decline under President Mugabe, NCT’s research farm provided a perfect place for the International Center for Maize and Wheat Improvement (CIMMYT) to relocate for the purpose of reproducing certified seed for distribution across the continent. It was likely the largest production of noncommercial, certified open pollinated varieties (OPV) and hybrid seed on the continent, producing almost 200,000 pounds in five years of operation. This seed went to smallholder farmers in 14 countries in mostly southern and central Africa and was distributed to support newly emerging small-scale seed businesses jumpstarted by the Partners for Seed in Africa (PASA), an organization the Foundation has supported in Sierra Leone, Liberia, South Sudan, Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

NCT’s most recent chapter in South Africa is as a producer of cover crop seeds to help promote the adoption of this critical element of conservation agriculture. I don’t know what NCT will do over the next decade, but it will use our resources to support smallholder farmers and promote adoption of conservation agriculture, while maintaining some support to wildlife based on our legacy of support.

Over the past 20 years, 16 of which we have operated NCT, I have learned some of the most important lessons about culture, governance, rule of law, corruption and the human spirit. I have made lifelong friends, learned the difficulty of operating in a foreign country and at times within the framework of dysfunctional governments. NCT served as a base for me to operate throughout Africa. At times it has been home (I am a permanent resident of South Africa), and at times it has presented some of the biggest challenges I have ever faced in development. NCT has been the one constant throughout two decades of investments in Africa. It has taught me a lot, including how to better understand our limitations and that we have a lot more to learn.
THE TRUTH ABOUT NO–TILL
BY HOWARD G. BUFFETT

Why is it that some academic researchers dismiss no-till as a best practice? I have several theories, but I think the main issue is they do not understand conservation agriculture in a non-academic context. Few if any researchers who have spent their farming careers, they have limited money for no-till or strip-till research, their livelihoods do not depend on farming, and there is no “big money” behind it.

The old saying about follow the money is true. Fertilizer, chemical, seed and equipment companies are not aggressively supporting no-till because they do not believe it is in their financial self-interest to do so. This is exactly why farmers should pay attention.

Many researchers accept financing from companies with an agenda, one that does not always align with farmers. Government grants have been cut, and research costs have increased, so researchers must find alternative sources for funding. This funding can be about meeting their academic needs, not always about meeting the real-world needs of farmers. (Because this doesn’t apply to all research or all researchers, but it is time to stop throwing stones at no-till as a best practice until those doing the throwing provide real-world alternatives.) Business as usual will not cut it any longer. Do we as farmers believe that mere fertilizers, more chemicals and reduced organic matter as a result of soil erosion are the most sustainable solutions? Or that fights over contamination of water sources from fertilizer runoff and challenges between urban and agricultural water rights will all go one way in the long-term?

When research and money support all alternatives equally, why stop writing these columns? Until then, let’s look at the myths that are perpetuated by the naysayers of no-till as a best practice.

**MYTHS**

**Myth 1:** It takes five years for no-till to demonstrate benefits.

It may take time to recognize the full benefits of adopting no-till, including improved soil structure, better water holding capacity, improved cation exchange capacity and increased organic matter, but it isn’t like your soil at your farm go on a five-year vacation.

Production from our farms in Illinois, Nebraska, Arizona and South Africa show that fields that have been conventionally tilled for years and switched to no-till have no yield reduction the first year of conversion, and we have less soil loss and much lower operating expenses. Our no-till fields produce yields equal or better than conventionally-tiled fields and, more importantly, are more profitable and withstand extreme weather better.

**Myth 2:** Tilling helps farmers get rid of weeds. So no-till farmers use more herbicide.

I would laugh at this particular myth off but it’s amazing how many people believe this to be true. Every pass through your field that tills over soil germinates weeds. You do not need to be a master gardener to understand why this occurs. When we occasionally work our fields (very occasionally), more weeds germinate the end rows than in our undisturbed covered fields. If no-till required more herbicide, then every chemical company would be lining up to promote no-till. I don’t see any lines forming.

Another best practice that’s relevant to herbicides is the use of cover crops. Cover crops reduce herbicide use, help inhibit weeds, scavenge nutrients while improving soil health and reducing potential chemical and herbicide runoff. The benefit of that begins your row.

**Myth 3:** No-till is easier for startup farms.

Trading five pieces of conventional equipment for two pieces of no-till equipment usually works to your advantage. You are the exact same planner but you add between two to four attachments depending on your system. You get rid of your disc, field cultivator, show, chisel plow, disk ripper or whatever it is, in your shed that turns over soil. This as a myth because farmers trade equipment on a regular basis and the myth of trading more for less is not difficult to understand and apply to all farms, new or old.

One study demonstrates that no-till requires less than half of the tractor hours of conventional farming. You do not need to be a startup operation to realize those gains.
At the end of the day there are two things to consider: How do we protect our greatest asset, our soils, and how do we learn to farm with a systems approach?

**MINDSET**

We face a serious mindset challenge within our farming ranks and from many different external sources. From adopting best practices like no-till and cover crops. For example, in one state where we farm, we struggled with limited success with cover crops and couldn’t understand why the results were so different from our experiences in fields that were done by.

We consulted and shared information with our chemical supplier/applicants, but eventually discovered after several years that they continued to apply chemicals that were not compatible with the cover crops we were using. Unfortunately, we had to figure out the problem for ourselves.

On one of our other farms, year after year when our fields were sprayed, the companies we contract with would cut across our rows in their effort to reach back to refill the sprayer, leaving serious ruts that required tillage to correct. Other times they would run obstacles that crushed our corn stalks, destroying the uniformity of the field, an important factor in no-till.

Farmers in the United States didn’t become the world’s greatest producers by accident. We can continue to be global leaders, but we must demonstrate new leadership.

Researchers have contributed significantly to our success. But success in 2023 will not look like success back in the 1950s. Times have changed and we need to keep changing with them. As David Nickell put it in the Illinois Ag News, “No-till is probably the most sustainable method that can be done on a large scale.” We can help define “sustainable” or we will be forced to use someone else’s definition.

Howard G. Buffett is an farmer and Chairman and CEO of the Howard G. Buffett Foundation. He has farmed for over thirty-five years and the foundation has invested over $156 million in research to improve agriculture and invested an additional $130 million in agriculture-related programs globally.
1935

“Out of the long list of nature’s gifts to man, none is perhaps so utterly essential to human life as soil.”

-HUGH HAMMOND BENNETT
Soil Conservation Pioneer and Founder of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

2015

“Healthy soil is the foundation that ensures working farms and ranches become more productive, resilient to climate change and better prepared to meet the challenges of the 21st century.”

-TOM VILSACK
USDA Secretary of Agriculture

THAT WAS THEN. THIS IS NOW.

Soil conservation has been a topic of concern throughout the century; and though we cannot change the past, we can certainly learn from it. During the Dust Bowl era of the 1930’s, large areas of rich American farmland were destroyed by soil erosion. Even today, soil erosion remains a great risk to the productivity of both domestic and international agriculture.

The Howard G. Buffett Foundation believes in the importance of the American farm and the role each farm plays in our world. Harvesting the Potential, along with the Brown Revolution campaign, strive to maintain the productivity of the American farm while protecting our soils for future generations to come.

For more information, visit www.harvestingthepotential.org

Sponsored by
Smallholder farmers throughout Africa are adopting conservation agriculture practices on their farms to improve their farming opinions and their livelihoods. The soil health and moisture benefits of conservation agriculture mean these families can raise enough to send their children to school, have sufficient supplies of food, have more fruit and durable forests, and have healthier livestock.

Protecting our soils and practicing smarter methods of farming is critical. Brown Revolution Save Our Soils, Save Our Future is an initiative to raise awareness about and promote the adoption of conservation agriculture practices. By educating farmers about the positive impact healthy soils have on productivity and conservation, as well as demonstrating an improved return on investment, we can feed the world more profitably and sustainably — now and for generations to come.

ABOUT THE HOWARD G. BUFFETT FOUNDATION

The Howard G. Buffett Foundation is a private family foundation working to eradicate food insecurity and improve the world and the lives of the most impoverished and marginalized populations. The Buffett Foundation has invested over $2.5 billion in recent years to support agriculture and in additional $350 million in agriculture-related programs globally.
Africa’s NO–TILL REVOLUTION
BY HOWARD G. BUFFETT

AFRICA’S NO–TILL REVOLUTION

Originally published in Des Moines Register, October 14-16, 2015.

Sustainable, integrated cropping systems improve food security
and add value among smallholder
African farmers.

By Howard G. Buffett

In a quiet rural corner of Uganda, near the dusty village of
Aminda, Mr. Buffett has given new meaning to African
food production one farmer at a time.

“It is my dream that the whole of Africa will know how to
produce the grains of a million bottles of oil. I think a
group of farmers in Uganda could do this. The Ugandan
government is very interested in seeing other farmers
on their own land learn how to produce these grains,”
Mr. Buffett said.

African farmers now have a unique opportunity to do
something American farmers did not originate—create
“no-till” farming practices.

“Nothing beats a farmer who can’t keep up on his
time, a farmer who doesn’t have the capital,” says
Mr. Buffett. “He doesn’t have the capital, he doesn’t have
the ambition.”

In Africa, the main question is how to grow enough food for the people who need it without destroying the land. Smallholder farmers are the key to the solution.

In Africa, most farmers still use traditional methods, which are labor-intensive and require a lot of energy. This makes it difficult for them to meet their needs and support their families.

In Africa, Mr. Buffett is not just an opportunity, it must become a mandate. Africa has a high percentage of displaced soils, but it also has millions of people who are displaced.

In Africa, a new generation of farmers is emerging, and with the help of the Howard G. Buffett Foundation, they are learning new techniques to improve their farms and bring food to their families.

In Africa, a new generation of farmers is emerging, and with the help of the Howard G. Buffett Foundation, they are learning new techniques to improve their farms and bring food to their families.
PASA, with support from the Foundation, is working to establish a seed supply system and soil health service in North and South Kivu, DRC, to increase farmers’ access to improved seed varieties, increase their productivity and improve food security. A test plot of improved hybrid maize is planted in Rumangabo, North Kivu, near the entrance to the Virunga National Park’s ranger station.
Originally published by Inter Press Service, October 16, 2015.

OPINION: AFRICA’S AGRICULTURAL POTENTIAL BEGINS ON THE GROUND

BY HOWARD G. BUFFETT

Howard G. Buffett is a farmer and Chairman and CEO of the Howard G. Buffett Foundation which has invested in research to improve agriculture and in agriculture-related programmes globally.

LONDON, Oct 16 2015 (IPS) - My friend Kofi Boa is a Ghanaian agronomist and is probably the biggest advocate for conservation farming in Africa. For decades, Kofi taught farmers how to increase their yields using no-till, cover crops and other techniques.

He once showed me a demonstration plot I’ve never forgotten: it was a sloped field planted with corn, divided into three equal areas. On the first section, he used traditional plowing and at the bottom were five barrels full of soil—the run-off from a single rainy season.

The second plot he strip-tilled, and there was one barrel of soil that had washed down. On the third section, he never tilled the soil at all. That field had a strong harvest—and its soil run-off barrel was almost empty.

Kofi’s demonstration is one that every farmer and everyone working in agricultural development needs to see, understand and appreciate. I have heard philanthropists and others say things like “Africa can feed the world,” but it’s vital that we first focus on Africa feeding itself. Growing sufficient food for Africa’s fast rising population demands preserving and enriching its fragile soils.

The continent is home to dramatically diverse landscapes from the vast Tanzanian Serengeti savannahs; to the hilly, volcanic, jungle landscape of the Democratic Republic of Congo; to the Afromontagne and coastal forests that span the entire continent. But what’s often overlooked is that less than 10 percent of Africa has what are considered high-quality soils for agriculture.

When you see photographs of dense jungle or animal migrations, it can be hard to imagine that Africa has such poor soils. The fact is—that during early periods of soil formation while glaciers deposited valuable minerals and rich sediments in regions such as the American Midwest, the Ukraine and Argentina—Africa was shortchanged.

It is home to some of the oldest and most weathered stretches of land anywhere. While there are some regions with good soils in lower West Africa, and within several countries including Zambia, Zimbabwe, South Africa and Mozambique, most of Africa’s 54 countries did not receive equivalent soil resources.

And unfortunately, the picture for soil never improved: the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimates that 65 percent of agricultural land throughout Africa has been degraded by human activity, including farming and overgrazing.

Recently the Montpellier Panel, a prominent group of agriculture, ecology and trade experts from Africa and Europe, estimated that these degraded soils are too damaged to sustain viable food production. There is no quick fix. Reversing this picture means overcoming physical, cultural, and political impediments.
The history of Africa’s soils and land use also complicates the picture. For example, while visiting Eastern Congo last month, I stood on a high ridge overlooking the Virunga National Park.

The air was hazy and the landscape was dotted with several dozen or more small, smoky fires that signal the practice of “slash and burn” agriculture, which is widespread in Africa. For centuries people have used fire to convert jungle and forests to farmland and to burn crop residues. Unfortunately, this destroys important ecosystems, offering only a few seasons of fertility before farmers must keep slashing into surrounding forests to find land with enough nutrients to support a crop.

Understanding these complex dynamics is essential to making a real, practical difference. Many one-size-fits-all plans are designed by academics, bureaucrats and others with little or no input from farmers themselves.

Above all, we must beware of solutions that involve simply transplanting Western farming techniques. Generally speaking, approaches that reduce diversity and rely heavily on synthetic fertilizer, hybrid seeds and expensive equipment are not practical for millions of Africa’s smallholder farmers, at least not today.

Western farming is also focused on a small number of staple crops such as corn and soybeans. Pushing African farmers toward mono-cropping systems can actually increase hunger. More research aimed at improving African seed types is important, but many crops Africans rely on are not on the list of the 20 crops with historical importance in the world. Therefore they are largely ignored by researchers and seed companies.

As Kofi proves every day, however, there are immediate tools available to help solve Africa’s challenges. At our Foundation, we look at Africa’s potential for agriculture through a different lens than some in development.

We are focused on what we call a “Brown Revolution.” That means a heavy emphasis on protecting and remediating soils. Regardless of terrain, crops, wildlife, culture or history, every farmer in the world needs productive soil to grow food. The critical element is to appreciate the unique conditions on the ground in each region. In the Eastern Congo I reviewed soil maps of a relatively small region where the soil quality ranged from nearly “dead”—lacking organic matter and key nutrients—to very rich. Each of those different soil profiles requires a different recipe of ideal crop rotations and farming techniques to achieve maximum production from the land.

This work demands good information about where we are today and the communication of practical ideas for improvement. Our Foundation has produced an in-depth analysis that we hope achieves both goals, called Africa’s Potential for Agriculture, available for download on October 16th at www.brownrevolution.org.

We will share this publication at the 2015 World Food Prize Borlaug Dialogue where Kofi and I will join Imperial College’s Sir Gordon Conway and Argentinian agronomist Alejandro Lopez to talk about the importance of soil health and the role of conservation agriculture. Food security is one of the most fundamental challenges the world faces, and these are critical conversations.

When I travel to Africa I always visit with smallholder farmers who, despite backbreaking work every day, frequently experience hunger. There is something terribly ironic about farmers who are hungry. In many parts of the world, farmers farm to survive, not for profit. We must realize these different dynamics and risk profiles when proposing solutions that are realistic and applicable in situations that are quite different from our own.
CONFLICT MITIGATION

“We invest in conflict mitigation strategies because we believe that progress in development is impossible without lasting peace.”

We invest in conflict mitigation strategies because we believe that progress in development is impossible without lasting peace. We also see development as a strategy in itself for promoting peace.

In 2015, the Foundation’s investments in conflict mitigation coalesced around a handful of partners and ambitious ideas.

PEACE-BUILDING THROUGH PUBLIC WORKS

The biggest idea is our partnership with Virunga National Park in the DRC. Virunga National Park is biologically Africa’s most important protected area. It has more mammal, reptile and bird species than any other park on the continent and is the only park in the world to have three types of great apes, including an essential population of mountain gorillas.

Here we partner with the parks authority, ICCN, to test a premise that reflects our current priorities around achieving peace and food security but also respects the Foundation’s past priority: conservation. Virunga National Park’s very existence is under constant threat from the risk of oil exploitation and from encroachment by the 1 million desperately poor people who live within a day’s walk of its border and derive no obvious benefit from Virunga’s UNESCO World Heritage site designation.

With the support of the Foundation, Virunga has implemented an effective security sector reform program, doubling the size of its ranger force and significantly improving professional standards, allowing the park to grow into a position in which it can initiate innovative and effective peace building and post-conflict reconstruction programs.

This has the potential to bring lasting stability and peace to a critically important area at the heart of the Great Lakes regional conflict.

Rural electrification through the establishment of medium sized (1 to 40 megawatts) off-grid hydro-electric plants provide the highest return on investment for:

1. Re-launching the rural economy and creating large-scale employment as a viable and sustainable strategy for peace building in eastern DRC;
2. Ensuring the financial sustainability for Virunga National Park;
3. Providing a robust strategy for protecting the park against damaging industries such as oil extraction within the national park.
The Matebe project is the second phase in Virunga National Park’s wider sustainable energy program and overall objective to produce 100 megawatts of hydropower by 2021. In the third phase, and with additional financial support from the Foundation, Virunga National Park will build an additional hydroelectric power plant (11.6 MW) along with associated training and a peace-building facility in the territory Lubero, on the park’s western border. For the first time Virunga will offer significant employment to young men who have demobilized from Congolese armed groups (including former M23, Nyatura and Mai Mai). The worksite hopes to integrate 100 to 150 ex-combatants who will ultimately find employment within the agro-industry sector, occupying five to eight percent of the available employment.

(The relatively low proportion of jobs that will be made available to the ex-militias is to avoid marginalizing the population of the host communities).

The overall program objectives for Phase III are:

- To build a hydroelectric plant in Lubero, generating 11.6 MW of electricity;
- Initiate private sector investment in rural industry and job creation (estimated at over 30,000 rural jobs);
- Tie job creation to the demobilization and disarmament of armed groups (secure the demobilization of 150 militia over the duration of the worksite construction, and a further 1,500 in subsequent years, integrated into park worksites);
- Ensure that 100 percent of the park’s basic operating costs ($7.7 million per year) are generated through the sale of electricity and through equity investments in rural businesses;
- Generate an additional $5.3 million per year in revenue to be invested in community development projects including agricultural transformation businesses.

For this third phase of development, and with the successful completion of Matebe, the Foundation will provide only partial financing. The Park has announced the first institutional investment loan in North Kivu in 30 years which will provide the balance of the funding for additional hydroplants.

Unfortunately, it appears increasingly likely that national elections and a transfer of power to a new government will not take place in 2016 as required by the Congolese constitution. Our investments in North Kivu could become compromised if democracy, transparency and accountability are further weakened.
These developments will also undermine the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) process and likely bring further instability and violence to North Kivu. Renewed conflict could have adverse implications for our ability to make further investments in the region.

**AMERICA’S REFUGEE CRISIS**

Over 3,000 illegal immigrant men and women and 1,700 unaccompanied minors are detained in Arizona on any given day. The vast majority come to the United States illegally, fleeing violence in their home countries. We would call them refugees in any other part of the world.

The Florence Project has long been a leader in offering assistance to detained immigrants and refugees around the United States and offers a national model for best practices. It remains the only group in Arizona providing free legal and social work services to detained immigrants.

The Foundation first partnered with The Florence Project in 2006 to provide support for additional services for detained minors. In 2014, the Foundation provided additional funding to enable The Florence Project to hire social workers to meet the needs of unaccompanied minors detained in Arizona and to improve their operating efficiency.

It is estimated that 70 percent of detained immigrants in The Florence Project’s areas of operation have claimed asylum based on violence or persecution. Eighty-six percent of individuals represent themselves in immigration court, due to a lack of resources. In addition, the number of children being detained in Arizona has tripled over the past three years. The Florence Project ensures children receive adequate care and legal support while their claims are being adjudicated before the court. With the support of the Foundation, The Florence Project has expanded its legal representation of meritorious claims before the immigration court and the Board of Immigration Appeals while continuing its model of offering holistic services for detained immigrants.
ENERGY + OPPORTUNITY

BY HOWARD G. BUFFETT

The Virunga Alliance is creating a new model for sustainable development through investment in the Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. Emphasizing the need for streamlined and equitable distribution of resources, it’s a compelling opportunity for principled investors to help bring about peace, initiate economic growth, and support conservation in one of the world’s most beautiful yet challenging regions.

BY HOWARD G. BUFFETT

Just a few months ago, I stood on a hilltop overlooking an extraordinary ecosystem that I first visited in 1997 in nearby Uganda. This time I was in Virunga National Park in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Virunga is a World Heritage site and home to a third of the world’s nearly 900 remaining mountain gorillas. It contains spectacular volcanoes and lush jungles. But within an hour’s walk of Virunga’s borders live four million of the poorest and most marginalized people on the planet. An estimated six million Congolese have died since 1994 due to the effects of persistent conflict. Only 26 percent of the population has access to safe drinking water and the vast majority has no electricity and minimal educational and healthcare resources.

Fifteen years ago we began supporting conservation efforts to protect the Great Lakes Region. In 2012 when conflict erupted again in Eastern DRC, we partnered with Virunga’s Chief Warden Emmanuel de Merode. We changed our investment strategy to include the needs of the surrounding communities. Emmanuel and I agree on a fundamental philosophy: to preserve fragile ecosystems, we must first ensure the people living nearby have viable livelihood options. As a friend once told me, “No one will save a tree.”

Behind Emmanuel and I stood overlooking the Ramburu River was a hillside full of construction equipment and local workers welding pipes and setting huge generators in place. That activity signaled something very different and very exciting—the engine of economic opportunity.

In December 2015, we will flip the switch on a 12.6 MW hydropower plant here at Mixite, funded with a $28 million investment from our Foundation.

That milestone could push the region into a new economic era. For the first time, 30,000 local people will have access to electricity. The plant has already created hundreds of construction and maintenance jobs but promises to create thousands more by using plentiful, renewable hydropower to attract agro-processing plants and other businesses. On-site worker facilities will be converted to vocational training schools. Profits generated by the power plant will fund park operations and community development. A smaller pilot plant in the nearby village of Matha is already providing free electricity to hospital and schools. Based on the Matwa pilot, we estimate that we will generate 800 to 1,000 jobs per megawatt—up to 12,600 jobs at Mixite. The long-term plan is to generate nearly 100 MW from Virunga water resources by building a total of eight power plants by 2024.

It’s a big idea based on investment, not charity. It is the kind of investment that 15 years of intense work in Africa and Latin America has convinced me is the only way to have impact. It is also the kind of approach that we want to encourage all stakeholders, including provincial and national governments, the private sector, the philanthropic community, and the for-profit sector, to be involved in.

We believe the Virunga Alliance will be a new model for development in the DRC because it addresses a reality that is often lacking in conservation: local populations bear the opportunity cost of conserving ecosystems for the world’s benefit. Any sustainable solution must compensate and include them. At two million acres, the Alliance estimates that preserving the Virunga ecosystem from extractive industries and agricultural development costs $506 per acre—$1 billion a year. That’s not an opportunity cost hungry people can afford.

As Emmanuel explains, “The two most underutilized resources in the park are water and people.” Unemployment exceeds 75 percent and contributes to conflict when young men cannot find work and instead join armed groups. Congolese farmers work very hard, but today they are invited to selling crops locally for low prices. Electricity-enabled processing capacity can help move them up the value chain and increase prices for crops.

The Virunga Alliance has brought together more than 127 local institutions committed to the development of the park’s resources through tourism, rural electrification, sustainable fisheries, and agriculture. Alliance members have pledged to operate in a transparent way while respecting the ecosystems in which they are working. The Alliance has vowed to return profits to benefit local people. The Virunga Alliance is a permanent commitment among stakeholders whose futures depend on its success.

This has been a challenging and at times even dangerous journey. When the project broke ground in late 2013 amidst active conflict, our workforce was small, but our investment commitment never wavered. We could not afford to wait for an uncertain peace so we proceeded with the faith that jobs are an attractive alternative to violence. In fact, a key element of the plan is to use five to eight percent of the jobs generated to reintegrate former combatants into the legal workforce.

Our foundation is committed to investing where others may see the risks as too high. We are already co-financing two additional hydro plants and other public works projects to create immediate jobs while the long-term development takes hold. Our investments in the Great Lakes Region are on track to exceed $796 million by 2018. We hope these investments will lower the risks for others to invest.

Watching the workers complete the final stages of this landmark hydroelectric plant was humbling experience. Mach is maching: mach is at stake. The ultimate objective of our investments and of the Virunga Alliance is to bring peace, stability and prosperity to a part of the world that is flooded with conflict.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Howard G. Buffett is Chairman and CEO of the Howard G. Buffett Foundation. The Foundation invests in food security, water security and conflict mitigation efforts, with experience working in 44 countries in Africa. Mr. Buffett is a permanent resident of South Africa and has traveled to all 54 countries on the continent.

The foundation has funded feasibility studies for nearly 100 MW hydropower sites in more than 15 countries, including two sites in DRC, where the Virunga Alliance is developing more than 200 MW of renewable power from existing hydropower resources.

The 12.6 MW hydropower plant at Mixite in Rwanda, North Kivu, DRC will be completed in December 2015. It will generate power for 30,000 local residents and encourage investment in approaches to create an estimated 850 to 1,600 local jobs per MW.
Howard G. Buffett announces support to the International National Women’s Media Foundation’s work at the 2014 Courage in Journalism Awards.
The Foundation has partnered with the International Women’s Media Foundation (IWMF) for a number of years in the Great Lakes Region of Africa to promote women’s journalism in conflict areas. In 2015, we expanded this partnership to include Latin America through the Adelante program.

Reporting on the balance between progress and peril in Latin America is seldom, if ever, achieved in today’s media. A large part of the challenge is that there are few women in the international mainstream or in the local media examining the issues from a holistic angle.

Employment indicators for Latin America show there are still significant gender gaps in the media, compounded by a highly patriarchal culture where women’s viewpoints and inputs are often suppressed. In many Latin American countries there is little room for women journalists to rise in the ranks of local media organizations, with men vastly outnumbering women and few journalism training opportunities dedicated to women journalists. There are also critical safety issues for women reporters that go entirely unaddressed.

While Latin America has made real economic progress over the last two decades, significant development issues remain. Violence and lack of economic opportunity has led to increased and forced migration into the United States from our southern neighbors.

The Foundation’s support allows IWMF to increase the visibility of reporting by and about women in Latin America, while also working to ensure their personal safety. IWMF will leverage and replicate the successful work that is being carried out by the IWMF in conflict areas of Africa and bring it to violence-prone areas of Latin America. Adelante is exploring some of the toughest and most challenging development issues in the region by focusing on Mexico, the U.S./Mexico border, Colombia, El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala. In addition, the IWMF is launching its new Reporta™ security application for women journalists to improve women’s safety in the field.

It is a priority for the Foundation that communities ensure women’s voices are heard and that women help shape the solutions to these challenges. Our hope is that by investing in the Adelante reporting initiative we will help amplify those voices.

SUPPORT FOR GLOBAL DEBATES

Countries around the globe have begun to establish candidate debates as a centerpiece of their elections. Debates help voters make informed choices, focus candidates on policy issues, reduce the potential for violence in countries emerging from conflict and hold elected officials to their campaign promises. Debates in some countries have failed for many reasons, including:

- Debate sponsors were unable to overcome logistical and other challenges in order for the debates to occur;
- Organizers could not allay fears that they may have a political bias;
- Reluctant candidates could not be convinced to participate or were arrested or threatened if they did agree to participate;
- Negotiations with rival media outlets to show a common debate broadcast were not successful;
- Producing live national television and radio programs proved challenging.

The Foundation is supporting the National Democratic Institute in partnership with the Commission on Presidential Debates to address these and other challenges, specifically to: strengthen the ability of participating organizations to hold effective debates for the first time; institutionalize debates in countries where debates have been held before; and promote the exchange of best practices, peer support and informational resources among debate organizations. This grant has already achieved early successes in Argentina where the program facilitated Argentina’s first national debates. The debates were believed to have substantially impacted the outcome of the election. Overall, the program has been successful in improving the capacity of individual debate sponsors as evidenced by the progress in Argentina; anecdotal debate improvements by groups in Colombia, Guatemala and Jamaica; and the facilitation of more structured support among regional groups of debate sponsors from Africa, the Caribbean and Latin America.
In the months leading up to the 2010 election, the Foundation funded a partnership between the Commission on Presidential Debates and the National Democratic Institute to help Burundians organize debates among presidential candidates. The debates allow Burundians to engage candidates for public office on the issues for the first time in nearly two decades. In 2015, the Foundation continued this partnership to support debates globally.
Rule of law is the necessary underpinning for any community’s prosperous development. We have come to understand how rule of law—or the absence of rule of law—contributes to the success or failures of our investments in development outside the United States. These same lessons have strengthened our appreciation for the importance of supporting public safety here in the United States.

Our goal with our grants in support of public safety is to fill some of the critical gaps left by budget cuts or insufficient financial resources in the communities in which we operate, primarily in Illinois and Arizona. We target operations that, based on our experience, are typically under-resourced and have limited alternatives for securing additional funds. In particular, we support rural communities to augment the public safety capacity of all-volunteer fire departments and sheriffs’ offices. To date, we have provided more than $48 million to over 100 public safety agencies in Illinois, Arizona and Nebraska.

ILLINOIS K9 PROGRAM

In 2015, we initiated a statewide program in Illinois to provide K9s and associated training and equipment to sheriffs’ offices. By the end of 2016, we will have provided $3.6 million in support to 54 sheriffs’ offices through this program. We are already seeing the positive impact on law enforcement and public safety in the participating communities. Following are several first-hand accounts from the communities that have benefited from this program. This program concludes in 2016.

FAYETTE COUNTY SHERIFF’S OFFICE

Sheriff Chris Smith
We have the only K9 in Fayette County and have used Tex for traffic drug interdiction and tracking. Tex was critical in tracking a missing nine-year-old girl in the southern part of our county. She was playing hide and seek with her cousins when she went missing. Tex was able to track the girl for a mile-and-a-half going in the opposite direction of her home.

The temperatures were in the 30s that evening. She was found around 11p.m., wearing only a t-shirt and pants. She had hypothermia, but was released to her family that night. We are a county with a limited budget and could have never been able to afford a K9 program without the support of the Foundation.

KNOX COUNTY SHERIFF’S OFFICE

Sheriff David Clague
K9 handler, Deputy Greg Jennings, and K9 Edo recently helped recover a missing 10-year-old child. The weather that evening was rainy and very cold. Edo was able to pick up the child’s scent and led Deputy Jennings approximately one mile to a heavily wooded area and found the child taking cover under some brush. The child was frightened but was returned to his relieved parents.

This grant has also enabled our Department to combat narcotics in a more aggressive manner in the Knox County area and has been valuable in improving public safety.
MARSHALL COUNTY SHERIFF’S OFFICE
Sheriff Rob Russell
The K9 program has affected our agency tremendously. We are a small rural county with limited resources, and the grant has had a tremendous impact on our agency. We were unsure whether we were going to continue with our K9 program as our vehicle had outdated equipment. We did not have the funds in our budget to replace it, so thanks to the K9 program, we are able to continue with our K9 detail and continue to serve the residents of our county. This support has also had a positive impact on morale with our staff.

USE OF FORCE
Police agencies globally face new challenges regarding use of force. It is clear that training and adoption of less lethal tactics can prevent deaths; however, there is a need to balance these options with officer safety. Our Foundation is supporting police and Sheriff agency use of force training in the local areas where we operate, as well as with the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF). Determining and implementing best practices for de-escalation should be every agency’s priority. This will, however, remain an imperfect approach when decisions are made in a split second and under extremely stressful and life-threatening circumstances.

Sharing lessons from foreign police agencies is valuable; however, every community is different and criminals have access to different weapons so not all lessons are transferable. Our goal is to learn what can apply and ensure agencies have access to the information and training techniques that best fit their circumstances.
USE OF FORCE FIELD STUDY AT POLICE SCOTLAND

Through a grant provided by the Foundation, the PERF arranged for police chiefs and other high-ranking executives from 23 United States police agencies to travel to Scotland to understand how officers, who do not carry weapons, are trained to de-escalate hostile situations. As an undersheriff serving the Macon County Sheriff’s Office, Howard G. Buffett attended.

In November 2015, PERF led a delegation to the Police Scotland College at Tulliallan Castle. There, in both classroom discussions and scenario-based training exercises, officials experienced first-hand the training and tactics that Police Scotland employs when dealing with persons with mental illness and individuals armed with knives or other non-firearm weapons.

One of the key elements of the response is a training and operational tool called the “National Decision Model” (NDM). It is used by personnel at all levels of the agency to structure and support their decision-making. Using the NDM, officers ask themselves a series of questions to guide their response to a variety of situations, including incidents that have the potential for the use of force. In this way, officers attempt to buy themselves more time to gather information about the incident, establish and maintain communication with the person, bring in additional officers and resources as needed, and otherwise try to resolve it with a response that is proportional to the threat, as well as ethical and safe. Officials had the opportunity to see the NDM in action during a variety of realistic training scenarios.

The delegation also had the opportunity to interact with members at all ranks of Police Scotland. United States police officials were able to see and understand what Police Scotland does with respect to use of force, and to discuss and debate its applicability to policing in the United States.

In this demonstration, this officer with a weapon is a member of a special response team. Officers on the street in Scotland are not armed; they carry mace, handcuffs, a baton and a radio.
THE IMPERATIVE TO SECURE OUR BORDER

BY HOWARD G. BUFFETT

Our Foundation has worked on a wide range of issues related to illegal immigration for many years. A decade ago we funded a center for the return of unaccompanied minors in Sonora, Mexico, to reduce the risk these children faced from traffickers. We have funded micro-lending in Mexico on the border to determine the impact on reducing migration. We have invested heavily in countries of origin to address the drivers of forced migration: food insecurity; economic instability and violence. To date, we have committed nearly $200 million to immigration-related projects.

We own two ranches in two different areas of the U.S./Mexico border in Arizona. As a result, we regularly experience the effects of the wave of illegal activity into our country; not so much illegal immigrants crossing for jobs, but the constant flow of “mules” hauling drugs. Unfortunately, many Americans are ambivalent about border issues because the discussion has become so polarized in this country, with most politicians offering simplistic solutions that pit humanitarian interests against national security concerns. It is hard for most people to understand why they should care about a secure border or how it affects them. However, every community in this country is directly affected by these issues.

My experience in law enforcement and our Foundation’s long history of investing in our southern neighbors has helped me recognize the complexity of the current situation and how we need to produce solutions that satisfy both the humanitarian and national security aspects of this debate. This has led to our Foundation’s expanded involvement supporting Public Safety, especially in the areas where we have Foundation activities, including Cochise County, Arizona. Cochise County is located in the Border Patrol sector with the highest drug seizures along the entire U.S./Mexico border. It also hits home in Macon County, Illinois, when I respond to calls where young adults have died from heroin overdoses, something that is occurring more frequently.

One of the most difficult phone calls I have ever made was many years ago to my cousin to tell him that his brother had been found dead as a result of a drug overdose. Those drugs most likely originated on the other side of our southern border. Heroin, cocaine, synthetic drugs and methamphetamines have made a huge comeback recently and are having a devastating effect on communities across America. Late last year, I was involved in an arrest of a 65-year-old woman, a grandmother, for purchasing heroin. Addiction affects people from all walks of life and all ages.

The resulting pressure put on our jails and our law enforcement agencies is enormous. We are locking up non-violent drug offenders, occasional users, lifelong addicts, small time dealers and hardened criminals who distribute these drugs. Our system is not designed to deal with this kind of pressure, and incarceration does not address addiction. Unfortunately, alternatives to incarceration for addicts and personal use are expensive, politically charged and often lack the necessary resources.

Our Foundation has invested in a number of programs to try to address these challenges. They span from a program that allows amnesty for drug addicts who turn in their drugs and enter a rehab program; a financial crimes unit that investigates, prosecutes and recovers funds that are generated by drug activity; and a program that identifies and attempts to rescue migrants in forced labor situations here in the U.S.

We have also provided substantial support to the sheriffs’ offices that respond to the increased drug activity and the criminal activity driven by drug addiction and distribution. Cochise County is the first line of defense against drug traffickers who routinely breach our borders and are responsible for increased violence across our country.

However, the border is the beginning of this problem; drug use and drug violence affect every community in America.

All of this starts at our southern border. The New York Times article reprinted on the facing page connects the dots between the challenges we face in this country and border security. Unfortunately, even when someone is directly affected by drug addiction, drug overdoses, cartel or gang violence or other criminal activity as a result of the drug network, people react and think locally. No one helping a family member trying to re-enter society after drug addiction is thinking of a lack of border security as the problem. However, we need to realize that this is where the problem—and part of the solution—begins.
Less than half a mile inside the U.S. border, drug mules haul 50-pound packs of marijuana. They communicate by radio with “scouts” who are located on both the Mexico and U.S. sides of the border, employing both Mexican and U.S. citizens. The mules have increased their use of camouflage and other tactical maneuvers to avoid detection and apprehension.
U.S. CRIME SPIKE IN ST. LOUIS TRACED TO CHEAP HEROIN AND MEXICAN CARTELS

BY TIMOTHY WILLIAMS APRIL 2, 2016

ST. LOUIS—Clara Walker, a mother of nine and grandmother of eight, was peering out the window of her home three years ago after hearing what she initially thought were gunshots from a television crime show.

But at that moment, Anthony Jordan, who the authorities say was a gang enforcer known as “Godfather,” was spraying gunfire on the street outside, and two bullets struck Ms. Walker, killing her.

“St. Louis is a dangerous place right now,” Johnny Barnes, Ms. Walker’s longtime boyfriend, said during a recent interview. “It’s all around us.”

The death of Ms. Walker was linked by the authorities to a violent St. Louis street gang with ties to a Mexican drug cartel that in the past has supplied marijuana and cocaine throughout the Midwest. In recent years, however, Mexican traffickers have inundated the St. Louis area with a new, potent form of heroin, drastically reducing prices for the drug and increasing its strength to attract suburban users.

The dispersal of the cheap heroin has led to a surge in overdoses, addiction and violence in cities across the country.

Besides St. Louis—where the problem is particularly acute—Chicago, Baltimore, Milwaukee and Philadelphia have attributed recent spikes in homicides in part to an increase in the trafficking of low-cost heroin by Mexican cartels working with local gangs.

“The gangs have to have a lot of customers because the heroin is so cheap,” said Gary Tuggle, the Drug Enforcement Administration’s chief in Philadelphia, who observed the same phenomenon while overseeing the agency’s Baltimore office. “What we are seeing is these crews becoming more violent as they look to expand their turf.”

To attract customers, the cartels—usually through a local surrogate—instruct gangs to sell the drug at prices as low as $5 for each button (about one-tenth of a gram of powdered heroin, which could last a novice user an entire day). At times, the gangs distribute free samples, according to agents with the Drug Enforcement Administration.

The purity level of heroin seized by drug agents on the streets of American cities has grown significantly in recent years, federal officials say, rising to 50 percent from 5 percent in St. Louis in the past several years, and as high as 90 percent in Philadelphia.

In a trend mimicked in large cities nationally, many of the heroin consumers in St. Louis are young whites in their 20s, who drive into the city from suburbs and distant rural areas, the police say. And while most heroin overdose victims here are white, nearly all of the shooting victims and suspects in St. Louis this year have been African-American men and boys, police data shows.

“What I’m seeing at street level are violent disputes about money owed around heroin debts, with sometimes the dispute being about money, and sometimes about drugs,” said D. Samuel Dotson III, the police chief of St. Louis.

In 2014, St. Louis had the highest homicide rate of any city with more than 100,000 people.

Its 157 homicides that year increased by 18 percent in 2015 to 188, and while the rate has slowed in the initial months of this year, St. Louis is again on pace to be among the nation’s most dangerous big cities.

The heroin problem has been difficult for the city’s leaders to ignore. Those who have succumbed to the drug include a nephew of Steve Stenger’s, the St. Louis County executive, who died from an overdose in 2014. A brother of Mayor Francis Slay’s was arrested on a charge of heroin possession in 2012, and the stepson of Jennifer Joyce’s, the city’s top prosecutor, was arrested on the same charge last month.

“These heroin addicts are daughters, sons, husbands, wives or, in my case, a brother,” Mr. Slay told reporters last month.

Mexican cartels, including the Sinaloa cartel, which dominates the supply of illegal drugs throughout the Midwest, have generally not engaged directly in violence in St. Louis, law enforcement officials here say. But cartel lieutenants have sought to incite rivalries among street crews, the authorities say.

The drug syndicate that federal authorities say mistakenly killed Ms. Walker four days after Christmas in 2013 was led by José Alfredo Velazquez, a Mexican-born businessman who speaks little English, and Adrian Lemons, who has a drug arrest record in St. Louis dating to the 1990s, according to a federal indictment and other court records. Officials say that Mr. Velazquez has been linked to the Sinaloa cartel, long headed by Joaquín Guzmán Loera, the drug kingpin known as El Chapo, who has repeatedly escaped from Mexican prisons only to be caught again. The partnership between Mr. Velazquez, 55, and Mr. Lemons, 38, began around 2012, primarily as a cocaine dealing operation, officials said.

BY TIMOTHY WILLIAMS APRIL 2, 2016

CHEAP HEROIN AND MEXICAN CARTELS

U.S. CRIME SPIKE IN ST. LOUIS TRACED TO CHEAP HEROIN AND MEXICAN CARTELS

But as tastes in the area changed, the operation began to sell more heroin.

For four years, the enterprise proved nearly unstoppable, law enforcement officials contend. While Mr. Velazquez and Mr. Lemons focused on the logistics—racking up millions of dollars in heroin and cocaine sales—their street crew, including Mr. Jordan, 30, protected their turf by killing at least 17 people, including Ms. Walker, federal prosecutors say.

After a two-year investigation, the enterprise was finally dismantled in January, when 18 members of the gang—including Mr. Velazquez, Mr. Lemons and Mr. Jordan—were indicted on a variety of charges, including murder and drug trafficking. Trial dates have not yet been set.

When he fatally shot Ms. Walker, 51, Mr. Jordan was apparently aiming at a member of a rival gang, the authorities say. Two bullets struck Ms. Walker—one in the neck, the other in the shoulder. Several other rounds fatally wounded a man sitting in a parked sport utility vehicle nearby.

Ms. Walker, who felt unsafe in the neighborhood and had wanted to move, had been cooking pig’s ears and cleaning the house while her children were watching a crime drama on a Sunday afternoon, said Mr. Barnes, 54, her boyfriend for more than 12 years. “She was just an innocent person,” he said.

Federal officials have so far seized 65 firearms, including several assault rifles, and confiscated more than $1 million from the group, according to court records.

“As we kept peeling away at it, we kept finding there was more and more to it, that ultimately connected St. Louis to Texas and Mexico,” Chief Dotson said.

Federal officials say that the Sinaloa cartel manufactures the heroin in the mountains of northwestern Mexico and transports it across the border, where operatives like Mr. Velasquez are responsible for ensuring it gets to St. Louis.

Chief Dotson said the local gang had been responsible for so much violence in the city that the arrests might lead to a significant reduction in violent crime, which rose by 7.8 percent in 2015, including an 18.2 percent increase in homicides.

Lawyers for Mr. Velazquez and Mr. Lemons declined to comment. Despite the indictments, heroin continues to be sold openly in the mainly African-American neighborhoods of North St. Louis once dominated by the group.

“They call and we tell them what time and this spot,” said a lanky 17-year-old who was selling heroin recently, and who gave his nickname as “B.” “If they have the right money, it’s right.”

On one recent afternoon, young men moved quickly from parked car to parked car as part of prearranged meetings. They passed small packages wrapped in wax paper through open windows in exchange for handfuls of cash. In fewer than five minutes, the line of cars—some with Illinois and Kentucky license plates—and the dealers were gone.

On the neighborhood’s neatly tended front lawns, signs erected by weary residents had a simple, if frequently ignored, plea: “We must stop killing each other.”

A version of this article appears in print on April 3, 2016, on page A16 of the New York edition with the headline: Violence in St. Louis Traced to Cheap Mexican Heroin.
We provide limited support to areas we consider nonstrategic to our overall mission, but where we see the value to the organizations and individuals receiving the support.

Our nonstrategic grantmaking falls into three main areas:

1. Funding for conservation efforts based on our legacy of experience and historical interests;
2. Support to the local communities in which we operate and have employees;
3. Other opportunistic, one-time grants.

Cheetahs once ranged throughout Africa and Asia, but their numbers have steadily declined. In recent decades cheetahs have become extinct in more than 30 countries, and there are thought to be less than 7,000 left in the wild. Howard G. Buffett has been directing grants to support cheetah conservation since 1997.
RANGE-WIDE CONSERVATION PROGRAM FOR CHEETAH

The Foundation began funding the Range-Wide Conservation Program for Cheetah (RWCP) in 2008 with the overall goal of significantly advancing cheetah conservation across Africa by promoting endorsement and implementation of the then recently compiled Regional Conservation Strategies for Cheetah in Southern and Eastern Africa. RWCP set out to help state governments translate regional strategies into national action plans.

Over the last seven years, the RWCP has produced 11 national action plans from among the 16 range states in Eastern and Southern Africa. The grant produced a number of important outcomes in support of cheetah conservation including:

- Surveys to identify current cheetah populations;
- Human-wildlife conflict toolkits;
- Campaigns to build awareness and support for cheetah conservation efforts;
- An international coalition of countries and conservation bodies to bring the issue of cheetah trade to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES);
- Training for senior wildlife managers from 11 range states in Eastern and Southern Africa to address knowledge and capacity gaps relating to cheetah conservation;
- Focus on the illegal use and trade of bushmeat across the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and a report on macroeconomic impacts and policy recommendations;
- A policy and legislation review to identify conflicts in existing legislation pertaining to large carnivore conservation in SADC cheetah range states;
- Cheetah recognized as a ‘species of priority’ in the Horn of Africa by CITES Animals Committee;
- CITES Standing Committee Working Group on Illegal Cheetah Trade formed with range states and Gulf states with a survey of compliance and enforcement conducted across 22 governments;
- Sightings project established on iNaturalist.org to crowd-source cheetah observations;
- Scientific articles and blogs published documenting the catastrophic declines in Saharan wildlife.

Cheetahs face many threats: killing by pastoralists and farmers; illegal hunting; capture of cheetah and a serious reduction of habitat.
African wild dogs live in large packs while cheetahs are largely solitary or live in groups (males), normally no larger than two or three; however, both animals need vast amounts of ranging space. Cheetahs and wild dogs face similar threats, so through our partnership with Dr. Sarah Durant, the Foundation brought these two groups together to consolidate resources. Biologists supported by the Foundation are working with communities to find ways of managing land use to create or maintain corridors of habitat and to minimize conflict, so as to better protect these animals.
THE BIG CATS INITIATIVE

As part of the Foundation’s legacy of support for cheetah conservation, we have provided funding to the National Geographic Society’s Big Cats Initiative, which funds research to protect habitats and promote human-animal coexistence.

Andrew Jacobson is one of the Ph.D. students at the Zoological Society of London and University College London supported by our funding. Andrew is conducting research to understand the distribution of cheetah and other large carnivores in eastern Africa and to identify and illustrate large carnivore conflicts. He contributed to a recently published paper called *Leopard Status, Distribution and the Research Efforts Across its Range*, detailing the loss of up to 75 percent of the leopard’s historical territory, making leopards more endangered than previously known. The implications for cheetah and wild dogs, threatened by many of the same actions and processes as leopards, is stark: leopards are more adaptable than cheetah or wild dogs. Our hope is that work like Andrew’s will prompt more attention and resources to conservation actions such as conflict resolution, de-snaring, crackdowns on illegal trade networks and protection of wildlife corridors.

Big cats share a vulnerability to human encroachment and other threats, but conservation plans must take the diversity of species’ behaviors and adaptations into account. For example, lions and leopards may kill cheetahs and their cubs and steal their kills, making it difficult to maintain populations of all these cats in the same general area, especially in fenced reserves.
Ensuring a future for big cats will demand an entire ecosystem approach: communities, countries and large geographic regions must create safe corridors across which the animals can move.
BY HOWARD G. BUFFETT

Over the past decade, we have worked in some of the most difficult places in the world: Afghanistan; Burundi; Central African Republic (CAR); Central America; Chad; Colombia; the Democratic Republic of Congo; Iraq; Liberia; Sierra Leone; South Sudan and Sudan. I have visited Sahrawi refugees in Algeria who have lived for two decades in nearly uninhabitable conditions, and I have seen the remnants of civil war in Libya where civilians have tried to reclaim a country. I have learned that conflict knows no boundaries. It undermines hope and destroys the rule of law.

I couldn’t write a caption for the photograph on the adjoining page. However, this man reflects everything about conflict that anyone needs to observe. I have seen the physical, mental and emotional toll inflicted by conflict in many places.

So when people ask me why we work in conflict areas, I cannot always articulate why; I just know in my heart it’s where we need to be. Over a decade ago, we committed to work in the places where the most impoverished and disenfranchised populations reside. There are no populations more affected by poverty, hunger or abuse than where there is or has been conflict. We have played a small role in recovering victims from one of the worst warlords in history, Joseph Kony, and we have made investments in the DRC in the middle of active conflict; at times the construction sites were shelled with rocket-propelled grenade (RPG) fire, yet we continued.

Our success will never be defined by metrics or memorialized by a name on a building. It will be measured by an unknown number of lives that we have touched and hopefully improved.

We cannot put an exact dollar value on it, or summarize our achievements in an impact evaluation. Not everyone would be comfortable with this approach, primarily because I cannot always tell you specifically how successful we have been. But, I know where we have succeeded and where we have failed, and how our failures have shaped our new ideas.

In some cases, we have succeeded in changing expectations, which I believe is the biggest success, providing new hope and newly inspired goals to populations that had little future.

I have always been comfortable taking risk, and that is reflected in our Foundation’s work. It is never enough to succeed; our failures encourage us to find new solutions. I believe that risk-taking drives innovation.
Given the challenges we face in tackling food insecurity and conflict, it will take new ideas to create new and better outcomes.

I am constantly reminded that the risk we take when we travel to a conflict area has minimal impact on our lives. However, the populations we work with in places like the DRC experience a different type of risk that affects them every day. For most of the past two decades, the Congolese people in North Kivu have not known life without conflict. They do not know day-to-day if there will be peace or war. Mothers do not know if their daughters will be raped. Children do not know if they will attend school. Farmers do not know if they can work their fields. Unfortunately, there are pockets of conflict similar to this across much of the world.

What should never be normal becomes normal. Expectations change, hopes change and opportunities change. Sadness, suffering and uncertainty become routine and another regular hurdle of life. Our Foundation cannot “fix” the core issues that create conflict, but we can do our best to work toward a future without it.

Our Foundation wouldn’t be in existence if my parents had not provided the funding. But they gave me something more important than money; they gave me the encouragement to take risks, to take on challenges that might never be solved and to see failure as a path to success. This has allowed us to work in areas of the world where many organizations choose not to.

I remain cautiously optimistic that the human spirit will overcome the terrible consequences of conflict. Sometimes working where the odds of failure are so high can be discouraging, but we have accepted that creating positive, permanent change never comes easily. Therefore, after 15 years of lessons learned through our philanthropy, we remain committed to support the people who live with conflict but want and deserve peace.

ECONOMIC IMPACT OF CONFLICT IN AFRICA

THE WORLD BANK

- By 2025, conflict will add 26 million more people in poverty.
- A civil conflict costs the average developing country roughly 30 years of GDP growth. Sharing a border with a fragile state can reduce a country’s economic growth by 0.4 percent annually.
- Conflict can reduce per capita expenditure in an affected region by 70 percent.

OXFAM

- Across nine African conflicts, indirect deaths were 14 times greater than deaths occurring in combat.
- Thirty-eight percent of the world’s armed conflicts are fought in Africa.
- Conflict cost $284 billion in aid to Africa between 1990 and 2005, and annually costs Africa $18 billion.

UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

- War increases the gap between food production and need; aggravates poverty and hunger; and promotes continued dependence on food aid.
- Between 1980 and 2000, Africa lost over 50 percent of its infrastructure as a result of conflict.
- Countries bordering conflict zones must increase security expenditures in military and non-military sectors. Bordering countries also incur new costs for refugees and assume losses from deteriorating trade.
- Natural resources are often exploited to purchase weapons or enrich members of controlling forces.

Children are often caught in the middle of conflict. They cannot attend school, girls are often raped and boys are recruited to fight at ages as young as 10.
A young girl in Rumangabo, North Kivu, has no idea that the single word on her shirt could change her future.
THE HOWARD G. BUFFETT FOUNDATION DOES NOT ACCEPT UNSOLICITED REQUESTS.

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