

A Simple Bridge is the Solution by Monica Gray

In rural Ethiopia, a river three football fields wide can prevent a child from getting to the closest medical clinic. The problem: no bridges to bypass bodies of water.

A basic footbridge could solve the dilemma, yet countless communities in the developing world lack this simple structure.

Bridges to Prosperity aims to resolve this issue. The Denver-based nonprofit builds footbridges to provide isolated communities with access to health care, education and economic opportunities.

“It’s not the only thing that’s going to help folks get out of their situation, or to rise out of their poverty level, but it sure is a catalyst,” explained Bridges to Prosperity Executive Director Avery Bang.

With nearly 100 bridges in 14 countries, Bridges to Prosperity is aspiring to create positive social change in communities worldwide. Studies show that an average footbridge results in a 12 percent increase in community school enrollment and an 18 percent increase in people treated in local health care facilities. In the two years following a footbridge opening, communities have 24 percent more women employed, 15 percent more businesses in surrounding communities and overall per capita income increases an average of 10 to 20 percent.

Bridges are also a low-risk, cost-effective investment. “I used to work on water projects,” said Bang, “but their failure rates were astronomical. If you see 80% projects failing in the first 2-3 years you really have to think about am I doing a service?” With bridges, the impact is clear. A \$10,000 investment yields a footbridge that will serve a community for at least 30 years.

On your next work commute, perhaps consider Bang’s question: “If you didn’t know how to get to work without your bridges and your roads in your everyday commute, how would you expect folks in the middle of Ethiopia to do any different?”

To find out how you can get involved, [click here](#).