Archimedes once said, “Give me a lever long enough, and a place to stand, and I will move the earth”. This notion of simple devices and an suitable operating platform was completely appropriate in 2011 as iDE brought the Smithsonian Cooper-Hewitt Design Museum’s acclaimed Design for the Other 90% exhibition to Colorado. The exhibit and related events showcasing low cost solutions which designers are developing to address the problems facing nearly 7 billion people in the areas of shelter, health, water, education, energy and transportation, were visited by thousands of people and demonstrated that being in Denver was indeed a good place to drive positive change globally.

Our main programs continue to be outside the developed world, however. These are just a few of the highlights:

In Africa, iDE established new country programs in Mozambique and in Burkina Faso, but the Zimbabwe program was closed due to political challenges in the operating landscape. The Mozambique program moved quickly to establish a series of strategic partnerships with microfinance institutions, agricultural input suppliers, and training institutions. The Burkina program established a Center of Technology containing a working demonstration farm, a center for the development of rural marketing strategies, and a base for its Farm Business Advisor program.

In Central America, iDE is pursuing an alternate approach to delivering the social value embedded in microirrigation equipment, in particular, low cost drip systems. In Nicaragua, iDE won first prize at the InterAmerican Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture for the best adaptive technology regarding climate change, and continued to develop local manufacturing capacity for drip irrigation. In Honduras, iDE formed partnerships with two national universities, allowing iDE to demonstrate and test affordable irrigation to promote affordable drip irrigation systems as not just a way to grow healthier, more productive crops but also a way to diversify and escape the poverty-perpetuating monoculture so prevalent throughout the country. Both countries are actively building a strong marketing strategy and retail network for the IDEal Tecnologias brand.

In Asia, the iDE Cambodia program celebrated the significant milestone of 200,000 Ceramic Water Filters sold. Cambodia also launched a $6M scale-up of our water and sanitation program in Cambodia, recognizing the great potential to expand market-based sanitation programs into other iDE countries. In Nepal and Bangladesh, iDE was chosen as lead implementer on the 5.3 million Agriculture and Nutrition Extension Program, which will directly impact 60,000 families in the two countries. iDE Nepal was also selected to lead a major USAID project promoting climate change resilient income opportunities in high value agriculture using micro irrigation, MUS, and best agricultural practices and utilizing community forestry resources from non-timber forest products and essential oils.

Sustainable income flows and food security are closely related concepts. It continues to be iDE’s mission to create income and livelihood opportunities for poor rural families, and we know that when we are successful, food security will also be assured.

Al Doerksen
CEO
iDE has been selected to lead a coalition of organizations in a project that aims to make a major impact on the problem of food insecurity in Nepal and Bangladesh. The Agriculture and Nutrition Extension project will improve food security and incomes for a total of 60,000 rural households living in extreme poverty.

iDE is striking at the roots of food insecurity with a holistic approach to creating sustainable improvements in livelihoods. Together with its partner organizations, iDE will train poor farm families in new and emerging agricultural technologies and practices, helping them step up productivity and increase their annual incomes. The project will expose small-scale farmers to new agriculture technologies through the Participatory Market Chain Approach, which fosters collaboration between farmers, traders, and buyers.

One of the other main goals of the project is to develop market linkages between rural and urban areas and promote exchange of expertise and technologies between agricultural and research institutions in the two countries at both the national and grassroots levels.

The project will extend innovations and building capacities of grassroots institutions, eventually impacting as many as 140,000 other households in action areas.
Improved food + income security for 60,000 homes over the next 30 months
Smallholder Markets + Agriculture Resilience Transformation

According to the World Bank in 2005, 50.3 percent of the population of South Saharan Africa was living in extreme poverty. Many of these people depend on subsistence farming for their survival, relying on crops and farming methods that are highly dependent on rain and subject to unpredictable weather or natural disasters.

iDE’s SMART project builds on previous successes in an effort to reinforce agricultural development in highly vulnerable areas in Ethiopia. The project addresses four main challenges to small-scale agriculture in the area: dependence on low value, rain-fed crops; limited access to agricultural resources; limited access to markets; and limited capacity of farmers’ organizations and local government to promote rural economic growth and stability.

SMART will promote increased economic and social stability within the drought-prone regions of Ethiopia by increasing access to credit, which will allow small-scale farmers to purchase irrigation equipment, improved seeds and fertilizers, or expand their business to include off-season income generating endeavors such as honey cultivation. SMART also engages local government and farming organizations, which in turn provide a network of support and business advice to small-scale farmers.
50.3% of the South Saharan African population is living below the poverty line.
In Zambia, iDE partnered with CETZAM Financial Services PLC to develop an agricultural loan product suitable for iDE smallholder farmers which would allow them to purchase micro-irrigation technologies and other agricultural assets to improve their incomes and livelihoods.

iDE worked with CETZAM to design innovative loan products that meet the needs of smallholder farmers, who don’t realize any profits until harvesting is complete. With extended payback periods, group lending and staff agronomists to conduct informed business appraisals and provide technical assistance, the iDE-CETZAM program has been a remarkable success.

In 2011, over 2,820 loans had been provided, with an astounding loan recovery rate of 97.2%. To tap into this potential, CETZAM has expanded operations and opened 13 satellite offices, with plans to expand further this year. iDE Zambia believes that this approach can be successful not only in Zambia, but in other Southern African countries where low population density, long distances, poor transportation networks and low income levels act collectively to limit poor rural people’s access.

Access to micro credit

In many countries, the rural poor are unable to take advantage of low cost income generating technologies because lending institutions often believe that lending to poor farmers is prohibitively risky. To address this, iDE has sought partnerships with microfinance institutions to provide micro loans that can then be repaid with profits from improved crop yields and expanded growing seasons.
iDE provides micro loans that can then be repaid with profits from improved crop yields and expanded growing seasons.
Marketing Drip Irrigation

Drip irrigation delivers water directly where it is needed; it is extremely efficient, has low environmental impact, and allows small-scale farmers to grow diverse high value crops with better yields even during non-rainy seasons. This technology, long available to large scale commercial farms, has been adapted by iDE to be affordable to the rural poor.

But poor farmers are often reluctant to adopt a new technology, even though traditional watering methods are wasteful, labor-intensive, and produce inferior results. iDE’s expertise in rural marketing helps potential customers understand the importance of investing in irrigation technology to increasing incomes.

In Burkina Faso, iDE has established a Center of Technology to serve as a facility where affordable water technologies could be developed, tested, and demonstrated to local farmers. The team faced many challenges in getting the center underway, including poor soil quality, long distance from the nearest water source, abundance of plant disease, and a need for system uniformity. Addressing these problems, which are shared by many of the farmers iDE serves, has helped validate the effectiveness of drip irrigation in the local context. In its first year, the Center’s demonstration farm is expected to yield a 200% return on the initial investment.

In Honduras, iDE has partnered with two universities, Panamerican Agricultural School (Zamorano) and the National University of Agriculture, to set up demonstration plots for drip irrigation. We have also established several Centers for Sustainable Rural Innovations, which provide farmer training in different subjects related to sustainable agriculture. These centers will also create a supply chain for producer cooperatives to sell affordable drip irrigation systems to other farmers. iDE is also working with partners to develop a microfinance product that will allow village producer organizations to provide credit to their members in rural communities where microfinance institutions are not present, making drip irrigation attainable in the country’s poorest areas.
iDE’s Sanitation Marketing program in Cambodia has been recognized internationally for its success, winning the International Design Excellence Award and recently being inducted to the World Toilet Organization’s Hall of Fame.

After a pilot project confirmed the effectiveness of iDE’s sanitation marketing program in Cambodia, the innovative program was the subject of a major scale-up effort, expanding into 60 districts and serving 115,000 households. In the next year, the project will be replicated in Africa, bringing this innovative, market-based approach to Zambia for the first time.

The Sanitation Marketing approach, which uses the private sector as the exclusive channel for delivering latrines (as opposed to governmental or NGO distribution), has been successful largely because of its innovative marketing approach to sanitation marketing based on principles new to the development community but well known to the private sector. It uses aspirational motivators and social pressure to encourage latrine uptake instead of focusing on health benefits alone. It applies world-class product design to develop latrine options that are attractive to both consumers and supply chain enterprises, and encourages competition to ensure low prices and high quality. A large network of small enterprises markets the latrines, ensuring that a larger number of households are reached. By moving beyond the traditional question “what is good for people?” to ask “what is desirable for people?” iDE has begun to make a major impact on the problem of poor rural sanitation, a key factor in breaking the cycle of poverty and food insecurity.
Cambodia loses approximately $448 million per year due to poor sanitation. In Zambia, the cost of poor sanitation is $190 million per year; in Burkina Faso, $171 million; and in Ghana, $290 million.

(Source: World Bank)