# Making Ripples
## Plan to Make Ripples with Indirect Service
by Amanda Bancroft

A colleague of mine who won the Brower Youth Award once told me to "respect the process." At the time, I didn't understand, and thought that "the process" of changing the world was just getting in the way of the actual changes. But he is a ripple-maker of the highest magnitude, and he was right.

Instead of listening to his wisdom, I threw myself into direct service and it was worthy work. I made sandwiches for hungry people and felt good about volunteering, not thinking of tomorrow when those same hungry people will need another sandwich but I won't be there to make it. For charities, I organized fundraisers and gathered donations, without evaluating what would happen when the fundraiser was over and the money spent.

It was enough to raise awareness and inspire someone else to figure out how to address problems, instead of addressing them myself. Eventually, I noticed that not much was improving. Lacking the capacity to effectively address their mission long-term, many organizations predominantly focus on short-term gains and consider their constant volunteer turnover and funding roller coaster an inevitable consequence of non-profit sector work.

In a previous column, Go Off-Grid in 7 Steps, one of the steps was to create a plan. This is an important aspect of making ripples through what's called *indirect service*. The previous examples of services were all direct service situations. But the vast majority of my work with Ripples is indirect service – or teaching a village to teach how to fish, instead of giving a fish to one person.

Indirect service involves delayed gratification and intense, long-term planning. It isn't glamorous. Few people opt to sit at a computer and hammer their minds against the nails of world problems. It's much easier to pick up some litter at a stream clean event – and better for publicity, too, but not necessarily the stream! Several organizations have figured out ways to prevent litter from hitting the ground in the first place, in different parts of the world. How did they do this, and why didn't they just hold an annual stream clean event instead?

Because they respected the process: they embraced delayed gratification and unpublicized indirect service hours at a desk. To see the results of their hidden work, check out Ripples blog! In time, indirect service produces more solutions (and opportunities for direct service) than most direct services alone. In other words, bigger ripples. And if you're trying to create an off-grid earthbag educational center that will help increase the efficiency of organizations working on every cause imaginable, while enabling local and international ripple-makers to achieve a

sustainable lifestyle…you'll be glad you spent months writing a 100-page plan (with contingencies) before laying down the first earth bag into the ground and realizing that you forgot to build the foundation first. Direct service, by itself, is a sandcastle on the shore at high tide. Respect the process.

*Ripples* is a 100% solar-hosted website that includes a blog, newspaper column, resources and services for individuals and non-profit organizations. Read more on this topic and others at www.RipplesBlog.org