

MAKE YOUR PLANS FOR WAI2018

# Aviation *for* Women<sup>®</sup>

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## GIRLS

IN AVIATION DAY 2017  
REACHES 9,700!

**4** WOMEN  
RUNNING  
AERONAUTICAL  
CITIES

HURRICANE  
WATCHING  
FROM THE SKY

NOAA  
WOMEN





KIMBERLY PERKINS

## ON BEING A CHANGE AGENT

Sitting in a classroom of pilots discussing aircraft systems, an instructor mentioned that my aircraft generates enough electricity to power 1,600 60-watt lightbulbs all at once. That got me thinking; there are a lot of places in the world that don't have one 60-watt lightbulb. How can an industry that is partially responsible for globalization take some responsibility for

the pervasive global inequity? The thought stuck with me.

Sometimes getting pulled off course turns out to be a great thing. With an aviation undergraduate degree in flight operations, I gained my hours as a CFII and obtained a first officer position with a regional airline. Then the 2008 U.S. financial crisis hit, crippled the airline industry, and sent my career trajectory into a tailspin. What initially felt like a career setback turned out to be one of my most rewarding changes in my journey.

I packed a duffle bag of British wall adapters, flip-flops, and my favorite travel books and headed for West Africa. I took an opportunity flying CRJs for an airline in Nigeria. This experience opened my eyes to a different type of flying, including equatorial thunderstorms, sandstorms, and lots of logistical hurdles. But, the most important lesson was not about aviation; it was about humanity.

While in Nigeria, I saw stark inequality and inequitable circumstances. The juxtaposition between the hotel workers and guests was heartbreaking. I started bringing basic necessities into Nigeria—used clothes, sneakers, notebooks, and even a computer—and distributed these items among the hard-working hotel staff while living in Nigeria. It was a little aid for a much larger problem.

In 2009, I packed up my things and headed east to Malaysia. My experiences were similar. Hardworking locals were not afforded the same opportunities that I received back home. In between my trips on a Lear 60, I volunteered as an English teacher to Myanmar refugees. I collected mini shampoo bottles



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and soap for a women's shelter in the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur. These small tidbits of humanitarian work felt good, but left me asking how I could do more.

How could I tap into the global aviation industry with ample resources to support communities in need around the world? Creating Aviation for Humanity in 2016 was my answer. As a 501(c)(3) organization, my goal is to deliver humanitarian aid through the network of international aviation by bringing

school supplies directly to students and communities in need.

I designed the organization to encourage volunteer crewmembers, backpackers, families, and business travelers to bring school supplies to wherever their developing world destination may be and engage in the community. The goal is to bring people together whose lives may never have crossed. If you have an overnight in Delhi, why not bring school supplies to an orphanage in need? Visiting Angkor Wat on vacation, why not bring educational resources to a school in Cambodia? Let's use aviation as a sustainable way to bring school supplies to communities in need. And, let's create a global community that supports education, and empowerment throughout the developing world. ➔

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*Kimberly Perkins, WAI 55647, is an international captain on a Global Express and lives in Seattle, Washington. She founded Aviation for Humanity in 2016 as a vehicle to help school-aged children in developing countries. Find out more at [www.AviationforHumanity.org](http://www.AviationforHumanity.org)*