

KEEPING THE PEACE:

The Experience of Heifer International in Managing Growth and Balancing Goals

J. Rex Enoch, Ph.D.

**Manager of Adult Education programs
Heifer International**

Heifer International officially began its work in 1944 with a shipment of heifers to Puerto Rico, near the end of World War II. Heifer's founder, Dan West, was a visionary and a true "peace activist" who was a lay leader in the Church of the Brethren, one of the historic "peace congregations" (along with the Quakers and the Mennonites). Dan was involved in various forms of alternative service for a number of years, including some overseas efforts. He taught the principles of pacifism through his church, and was well known as a powerful and dynamic youth leader, actively interested in international affairs and in applied pacifism. He also helped begin the peace studies program at Manchester College in Indiana, a Brethren school.

In the late 1930's, while working in Spain as a relief worker with those impacted by the Spanish Civil War, he recognized the need for a more sustainable method of feeding the hungry. When he returned to his home in Northern Indiana, he shared with his home and church community his vision of a program which would provide "not a cup, but a cow" – not a short-term quick fix, but the resources to plan for a better future.

Heifer's Early History: Dan West's efforts to promote a program that would help feed the hungry, especially those who were the victims of war, was endorsed by the Church of the Brethren and originally organized under the name Heifers for Relief. The early work focused on replenishing livestock destroyed by the war in those countries most impacted by the years of war in Europe, Southeast Asia, and Northern Africa. Under the auspices of UNRRA (UN Relief and Rehabilitation Agency), Heifers for Relief (eventually Heifer Project international) shipped cattle and other types of animals to these war-torn countries from the end of the war in 1945 until the mid-50's. The primary goal was to help "build the peace" by helping stabilize these countries economically. At that time, the "peace-making" and "peace-building" goals of the organization were very clear. The *modus operandi* was to provide animals to those who were resource poor to help them rebuild their lives and become more self-sufficient in providing for their basic needs.

This story has been something of a legend for the organization, and has been repeated many times in Heifer's 60+ year history. The organization has been committed to the basic principle that "*peace happens when the hungry can feed themselves*". But many things have happened over the years to impact the way that Heifer works, and where Heifer has put its efforts. For example, as the UNRRA program began to play out, the focus of our work shifted to the developing world. And most importantly, a more holistic model was put in place. In addition to providing animals, project partners were educated and trained in how to effectively care for the animals, how to care for the earth, and how to work together in community to achieve their common goals. And the recipients of a Heifer animal were required to "*pass on the gift*" to others in need.

Significant Changes in Heifer's Work: For many years, the organization was (by most standards) a relatively small organization, depending on a host of volunteers around the world to make it happen. The staff world-side was rather small, and most of the primary support for Heifer has always come from private contributions. Heifer has historically had a strong base of support in several congregational groups in addition to the continued support of the Church of the Brethren. [The organization is not formally linked with any denomination today, although it continues to acknowledge its faith heritage in the Christian tradition.]

There is relatively little shipping of animals now, and most animals are supplied in-country or from neighboring countries. Our in-country programs are all staffed by people indigenous to that country. Heifer still works primarily through grassroots community development groups, but the programs include much more than just the placement of animals. Heifer focuses on environmental issues, social justice concerns, and community building, as the program seeks to improve the quality of life for those in need, who will in turn pass on an equivalent gift to others. *Heifer's vision is a world of communities living together in peace, equitably sharing the resource of a healthy planet.*

The most significant change in recent years has been the phenomenal growth of the organization. Especially in the past decade, Heifer has grown several times over so that when asked about the greatest challenge the organization faces, most of the issues identified could be summed up in the concept "meaningful growth". Heifer has had to strengthen its staff, build new programs (ever reaching out to new people), increase and improve its facilities, expand its educational programs, and insure its future. And through it all, we are continuing to grow. The central question in this discussion is, in light of all this growth and change, what has happened to Heifer's commitment to world peace?

Re-thinking the Meaning of Peace: One of the major issues in answering this question is that, in the mind of most people (even perhaps many of Heifer's employees), Heifer is seen primarily as a "hunger organization". Our mission statement says "*The mission of Heifer International is to work with communities to end hunger and poverty and care for the earth.*" The idea of "ending hunger" seems to get top billing and is in many ways the easiest goal to address. Everyone knows what we must do to end hunger – we feed people. Perhaps some might argue that this is the easy way out (which it may be), but it is also more easily understood and in some ways less daunting a challenge that ending poverty, making peace, or even caring for the earth.

I doubt that there has ever been a time in our history when the peace message has not been part of Heifer's work. In the early years, it was more prominent because we were coming out of a major world war, and most people were committed to making the peace. In the 1950's and 1960's, the "cold war" was a reality that made peace-making efforts still viable and meaningful. The threat of a nuclear war was a reality, and we struggled with the choices between building more weaponry or disarmament. Unfortunately, the latter option was seldom seen as a realistic choice, and we bought into the notion that

Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) would ensure that no one would be foolish enough to actually launch a nuclear attack.

Continued U.S. involvement in regional military conflicts (e.g., Korea in the 1950's and Vietnam in the 60's) certainly reminded us that we had not achieved world peace, not to mention the continuing conflicts in the Middle East and the myriad of other regional conflicts around the world. The "Iron Curtain" and the closing of China (1949) made it impossible to have effective diplomatic relations with a significant part of the northern hemisphere, and the problems of much of the southern hemisphere often seemed overwhelming. But the absence of a global conflict on the scale of the World Wars probably continued to give us hope that peace was possible.

Heifer continued to believe that "Peace happens when the hungry can feel themselves", so our work continued although the level of financial support did not change significantly for many years. In fact, in terms of real dollars, support probably went down. In the early to mid-1990's, some dynamic new leadership convinced the Board to consider some new directions in fund-raising (e.g., direct mail campaigns and the use of the internet) which proved to be quite successful, and Heifer's income began to grow. The emergence of some innovative educational programs also made it possible to share Heifer's message and mission more effectively with a larger public. From a rather low point in terms of level of support in the late 1980's and early 1990's, Heifer's future appeared to be much more promising by the time of Heifer's 50th Anniversary in 1994.

The development of Heifer's Cornerstone Model for Sustainable Development in the early 1990's also helped Heifer better define its mission. Although peace was not officially one of the Cornerstones, the values identified as the basis for our work (at home and abroad) would all contribute to a peace-making process. It was not hard to make a case for this, but the challenge was how to educate our support base so they would see the potential impact of our model for sustainable development.

I would argue that one of the most significant events which gave evidence that maybe the public was beginning to "get it" came as a result of 9/11. Heifer was experiencing some exciting growth and our programs were growing overseas and in the U.S. (both in terms of numbers of projects and in organizational development), new innovative programs were in the works, a new Heifer Headquarters was being planned in Little Rock, and more people were learning about the organization and its impact in changing lives and providing hope.

When 9/11 happened, no one knew what the impact might be on our growth pattern. The economy was not all that stable, and there was a fear that charitable giving (especially for programs that provided support for those who might want to attack us) might decline. Heifer put a "freeze" on new program and new hires until the impact could be better known and understood. Surprisingly (and happily), contributions increased! And they have continued to increase every year since 2001. Why was this the case?

Perhaps the public is growing in its understanding of what is needed to make peace more than we realize. Most individuals who study conflict and conflict resolution recognize that peace is most likely to happen when the basic needs of individuals are being met. When people are being fed, when the system works to provide for their basic needs, when they can know what it means to have food security and they can feel safe in their daily lives, when basic freedoms of speech and the press and personal religion are guaranteed, then they do not need to become confrontational and try to change or overthrow the system (especially via a revolution). Maybe (hopefully) many individuals, in response to 9/11, decided the best course of action would be to address the root causes of hunger and poverty instead of engaging in military retaliation. Maybe increased support of programs like Heifer gives evidence that many people do know how to “wage peace”.*

Environmental Programs as Peace Making Efforts: It is not clear when a focus on the importance of “caring for the earth” became an integral part of Heifer’s work. In general, concerns about the importance of taking care of the natural world have been emerging for some time now. It has probably always been recognized as important to Heifer’s work, but the growth of the sustainable agriculture movement on a global scale caused environmentalism to be recognized as a necessary part of Heifer’s work. If people do not take care of this basic resource, the natural world, then more sustainable long-term solutions will not be possible. “Improving the environment” and “sustaining the earth” are two of Heifer’s Cornerstones. Heifer’s AgroEcology program has been growing for more than a decade now. Heifer’s CEO attended the Rio Conference on the Environment and Development in 1992, and an international delegation from Heifer participated in the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002 to emphasize Heifer’s environmental commitments through its global development programs.

Just this month, the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to Al Gore in recognition of his efforts to call attention to the importance of caring for the environment as a way of reducing conflict over scarce resources. The Nobel Committee recognized the importance in making this connection when announcing the Prize, recognizing that for many people this connection between environmental responsibility and peace making might not be clear to the general public.

I don’t know that Heifer International has necessarily always recognized our environmental efforts as part of our peace heritage. But it was certainly never seen as being in contradiction to the basic values and goals of Heifer. Caring for the earth was just the logical thing to do if we want to end hunger and poverty, and it is identified as key to achieving Heifer’s goals.

The basic point of this discussion is that there are many things that can be done which are basically peace making activities which are not always recognized as such. If we define peace too narrowly – e.g., as only the cessation of conflict and/or the absence of war – then we fail to recognize the importance of many peace-making activities available to us.

*Unfortunately, until those who are in positions of power “get the message”, military options may still be pursued first, or emerge as the primary course of action to achieve peace.

Heifer has been involved in many peace-making activities through the years which have probably not always been recognized as such.

Peace Efforts Through the Years: As mentioned earlier, the peace efforts of Heifer in the early years were more obvious – i.e., we needed to build the peace following the war. But there have been several points in our history, and places in the world, where our peace making efforts have been important, if not always so visible.

*Much of Heifer’s work in the early years focused on helping former “enemies” gain some degree of economic stability in rebuilding after the war. Heifer provided livestock in countries where the livestock has been one of the major casualties of the conflicts (e.g., in Eastern Europe, Italy, Russia, China and Japan). Heifer provided the gift of livestock where most needed, not just where it served the U.S.’s political interests.

*With the “Fall of the Wall” in the early 1990’s, Heifer returned to some of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) where work had been initiated at the end of World War II. The first efforts were in Poland in 1992, but in the past 15 years Heifer has developed programs in at least 15 CEE countries. In some cases, these efforts have created opportunities for countries where traditional conflicts have hindered peaceful cooperative efforts to find new grounds for mutual support (e.g., Armenia and Georgia, and Albania and Kosovo).

*Heifer was involved in Korea and in Vietnam, not necessarily during the conflicts, but in helping the countries to rebuild following the conflicts.

*When the doors were open for us to develop programs in China, we began work there that has developed into one of Heifer’s strongest country programs anywhere in the world. Given the current global tensions between the U.S. and China, Heifer’s work there will be even more important in years to come. Heifer is providing support for the agricultural base so vital to China’s future. Heifer is addressing environmental issues there (e.g., water quality) which are becoming more important to China every day. And our efforts are providing important diplomatic ties at a point where they are critically needed to keep the peace.

*Currently, Heifer’s work in other SE Asian nations (e.g., Indonesia, Myanmar and Nepal) are helping to provide hope for grassroots groups and some degree of economic stability and hope in the presence of national struggles that threaten to destabilize these countries. Fifty years of work in the Philippines have helped warring tribal factions to heal the wounds brought on by years of conflict over limited resources and cultural differences.

*Heifer’s work in the U.S. began in the Deep South with minority groups struggling for some hope for their future. The first U.S. projects were in Arkansas and Mississippi. They were not always recognized as part of the Civil Rights struggles, but they provided

hope for some rural black families during these difficult times.** In more recent years, Heifer has had many new programs focusing on the needs of the growing Hispanic populations and Native Americans in the U.S. and Canada. Heifer's work in the U.S. is growing significantly.

*Heifer's work in some African nations has provided opportunities to heal the wounds resulting from situations like the years of Apartheid in South Africa and the genocide in Rwanda. The healing is made easier because Heifer provides a model for community building which brings people together through programs of mutual aid and shared resources.

*Finally, Heifer's continued efforts over the years to eliminate poverty, to improve the status of those without power or resources, to work toward full participation for all individuals within the system, to encourage sharing and caring, to acknowledge and respect cultural differences, to work for social justice – all of which are Cornerstone values – are peace-making efforts, even if these activities go by a different name or label.***

Keeping the Peace: The basic premise of this discussion is that peace efforts have continued to be a part of Heifer's work throughout its history. At the beginning of this project, there was a question as to whether the amorphous goal of peace-making was still a meaningful part of Heifer's work. When members of our public volunteer base were questioned concerning Heifer's major goals, peace was not often mentioned. In discussions with colleagues working within Heifer, some expressed concern that we might have lost sight of our ultimate goal because "we don't talk about it". It appears that hunger continues to be the issue most often identified as Heifer's primary goal.

But in more than one conversation, I have asked "what do you do to solve the problem of hunger?" and the answer was "You feed people". But when I have asked the question "what do you do to promote peace?", the answer was the same, "You feed people". Maybe we have not lost sight of our goal – we just define it in a different way, in a more active manner. To achieve any goal, we recognize there needs to be some action component. Heifer's action is to feed people; more specifically to assist them in feeding themselves.

Another issue of concern was whether it is possible to keep a rather idealistic goal like peace in proper perspective when dealing with the day-to-day challenges of keeping the organization going and "paying the bills". This challenge is especially real when going through a period of significant growth or a period of transition (either within the organization or in the society at large). This is a basic challenge for any organization,

**One of the interesting stories coming out of some early work with black farmers in Southern Mississippi is that these farmers chose to "pass on the gift" to poor rural white farmers in their neighborhood. This is an example of "peace-making" at its best!

***The Appendix to this paper includes some basic descriptions of various projects around the world which have been, or still are, identified as "peace projects". They suggest that such projects can take many forms and address a variety of problem areas.

and it is not a problem unique to Heifer. But it has certainly been Heifer's challenge in recent years and some concern has been expressed as to how strong our commitment is to this goal. But as already stated, I would argue that we have not lost sight of our goal; it is happening all of the time. We are "keeping the peace" by keeping on keeping on, just doing what we do best to make peace happen.

The peace message is still there. In all of the educational programs where I am involved, at some point we talk about the issues of "peace" and peace-making. I often have special times when group participants are asked to think about situations where they have seen peace in action, not just in Heifer's work, but in their own lives and work. The responses are often fascinating, usually quite powerful, and sometimes deeply moving. When do we "see peace happen"? Perhaps only when people can really see peace happening in their everyday lives, and/or in the world around them, will they be able to see how peace happens through the various programs and projects which are part of Heifer's work.

At least once a year, Heifer has a specific peace appeal, usually closer to the holiday season when many people support Heifer through alternative gift giving. (Approximately 40% of Heifer's annual income currently comes in during the Christmas holiday season.) These efforts focus specifically on how Heifer's work promotes peace. Evidently the messages resonate with Heifer's donor base because they tend to be very generous. The peace message is probably appropriately timed for the Christmas season, but our goal is for this to be more than an effective marketing ploy. It works because the message speaks to our public. They do care about peace-making, and they see this action as something they can actually do to promote peace.

There are a number of projects, especially in the Central/Eastern European program, that are designated as "peace projects". [*This is not meant to imply in any way that all of the others are "non-peace" projects.*] These projects involve actions that have come about because there is a defined need for some overt action that will be recognized as a peace-making effort. A specific example of this has been in Albania where some projects were identified as "Guns for Cows" projects. These projects were established specifically to deal with the fact that in 1997 a large amount of military weaponry had ended up in the hands of private citizens, and the cows were traded for these guns. All other aspects of the Heifer project model were the same – recipients received an animal, they were given the resources to help make this a successful project, and they passed on the gift to another member of their community. The project proved to be very successful.

Hopefully, people will always see in the peace message an exciting goal of how to live meaningfully in community. Peace is more than just some kind of idyllic existence, absent of conflict, and basically rather passive. Peace is a very holistic lifestyle and is an on-going process of purposeful action. It involves strong, caring people who are searchers – searching for a better way to find common ground so that we can live and work together while celebrating our differences. It does not mean the absence of conflict, but channels conflict toward powerful resolutions that hopefully will make a better life for all. Heifer's peace programs offer that possibility, and the goals of peace-making and peace-keeping are alive and well.

Appendix A

Examples of Peacemaking Projects

AFRICA

Mozambique:

Growth IV: Two decades of fighting, drought and famine depleted traditional livestock and plunged farmers into chaos. This project placed 1,050 goats with 450 families and supported the process of passing on 1500 more goats to 375 more families.

South Africa

Greater Mooiplaas: The communities of this project were deliberately neglected by previous governments, and are the poorest in the Eastern Cape province. Heifer distributed 204 animals to 66 families over a three year period.

Nkosinathi Mooiplaas Project: Working with resisters of relocation during apartheid, this project included a permaculture training center that showed families how they could move beyond subsistence levels in a sustainable way. Heifer integrated a livestock component: cattle, goats, sheep and vegetable and fodder seeds.

Masamanyane Livestock Project (Peelton): Political struggles divided the community of Peelton. To promote unity, the community initiated small-scale pig farming, community gardens, and wire net making. Heifer provided 60 dairy goats to 30 families, and 180 point of lay pullets for 15 families.

Uganda

Abayudaya Women's Heifer Project: The Abayudaya have practiced Judaism in eastern Uganda since 1918. In the 1970's they went into hiding because of persecution. Although they relocated to their farms, they still suffered the effects of relocation. Heifer provided 60 multipurpose cattle and trained women in managing livestock sustainability.

Church of Uganda, Gulu Heifer Project: With the funding from the Veterans program of USAID, Uganda Mission, this project was revived to help families of demobilized soldiers. Veterans' families received training and pregnant dairy heifers.

Zimbabwe

Civil Unrest and Instability in Zimbabwe: Violence, lack of rule of law, land crises, factory invasions and collapse of the economy have haunted Zimbabwe. An acute shortage of foreign currency resulted in shortages of fuel, drugs, spare parts, etc. Companies closed and there was serious starvation in areas affected by floods and lost

crops. The government had no money to engage in food relief schemes. Several NGO's and churches that normally assisted with food relief during a crisis such as this no longer have financial support from their traditional donors due to deteriorating security and political situations. The result is more people are perishing, especially children under five, widows, disabled people, and orphans from AIDS and other causes. Heifer authorized money from the disaster rehabilitation fund as a small, initial response to be used for immediate food relief. Heifer Zimbabwe explored linkages with other experienced hunger relief organizations in order to alleviate these problems.

ASIA/SOUTH PACIFIC

Afghanistan

Traditional Livestock and Reforestation for Healthy Communities: Much of the livestock were decimated during the war with Russia and much work is required to help Afghans achieve food security. This project was planned to improve the nutritional status of participants, generate income, improve the agricultural productivity of farmland and establish sustainable veterinary services in the area around Kabul and Jalalabad. Almost 1200 families were to receive poultry, cattle, goats, training and seedlings. (Project currently on hold due to political instability)

China

Yunnan Minorities microcredit Project: Provided microcredit loans for the purchase of a buffalo, piglets, chickens, tree saplings, and materials for handicraft production. This was originally part of Heifer's "borderless" Mekong River Regional program which promoted collaboration among six countries on the River.

North Korea

Small Animals for Food Security and Peace: Droughts, floods, and successive crop failure caused North Korea to suffer tremendous famine for several years. Heifer offered to help ease the situation by distributing 300 Dairy goats to 150 families, 1000 rabbits to 100 families, and 3000 chickens to 300 families. Each recipient will pass on animals or money. The Government called this the model for their future (unfortunately, poor management and government red-tape kept the project from being as successful as hoped).

Pakistan

Integrated poultry and community Health Project: To help Afghans in refugee camps near Peshawar achieve food security following 20 years of war, this program provided poultry to 2000 families and trained them in animal husbandry. The focus of the project was to improve nutrition and generate income.

Central/Eastern Europe

Albania

Emergency Relief: The conflict in Kosovo had serious repercussions for Albania. As many as 450,000 refugees entered the county, and the Albanians opened their doors to total strangers. Heifer initially provided concentrated feed, forage seeds, and other agricultural supplies to increase the overall production of small farms. The second phase provided 140 families with one dairy cow to improve milk production and meet the increased nutritional needs of these households.

Albania Peace Project: When the provisional government collapsed in 1997, the military abandoned their weaponry which ended up in the hands of private citizens. Heifer exchanged cows for guns. This has been a very successful program.

Kosovo

Rehabilitation of Small-Scale Farms in Kosovo: This project aided victimized Kosovar families who experienced the destruction of war in March-June 1999. Focused on three villages. The goal was to rebuild shelters, increase milk production and increase family income through microcredit loans and the distribution of 140 dairy cattle to 100 farm families.

Ukraine:

Helping Rural Families Recover from Chernobyl Reactor Damage: Kuzmivka village is located in the region contaminated by the Chernobyl disaster. Inhabitants have elevated levels of cancer and thyroid disease. High unemployment coupled with the overpricing of food led to rampant malnutrition. The project distributed one heifer to each of 60 families to provide good quality dairy products for consumption and for sale.

Latin America and the Caribbean

Guatemala

Improvement of Livestock and Agriculture with emphasis on Rabbits, Chickens, and goats: This project assisted families who were affected by the violence of the Guatemalan Civil War as they attempted to relocate and settle the region of El Paraiso. Families have improved nutrition and increased family income through the use of goats, rabbits and laying hens. They also received training in agroforestry and the use of earthworms for the production of compost that could be used for organic gardening.