ABOUT HEIFER
GLOBAL STUDY GUIDE SERIES

TOPICS
• Heifer 101
• Passing on the Gift®
• Women’s Empowerment
• Natural Disasters
Our History

While passing out meager rations of powdered milk during the Spanish Civil War, Indiana farmer Dan West was distraught when the milk ran out with children still waiting in line. He realized that they needed “not a cup, but a cow.” Heifer International was born from that simple idea of empowerment, and for more than 75 years the organization has worked tirelessly to give families a hand up, rather than just a handout.

Explore the history of Heifer International and see how we have helped bring more than 35 million families out of poverty.

OUR MISSION AND MODEL

Heifer’s mission is to end hunger and poverty while caring for the Earth. We help bring sustainable agriculture and commerce to areas with a long history of poverty. Heifer’s model gives families a hand up to lift themselves out of hunger and poverty in a lasting way, as opposed to simply a hand out to help in the short term.

Livestock plays a central role in our work, both as a strategy for alleviating poverty while achieving food security and as a source of proper nutrition. Animals provide Heifer partners with a reliable source of income and food, as well as agricultural products such as milk, eggs and honey that can be consumed at home, traded or sold at market. Through our concept of Passing on the Gift®, families also pledge to pass on the first female offspring to another family in need. Read more about livestock and training.
Changing Lives Through Sustainable Agriculture
Is it possible to help people quickly and permanently lift themselves out of poverty? In Kenya, we are building a sustainable dairy industry through the East Africa Dairy Development project (EADD).

Heifer’s 12 Cornerstones
The essential values we apply to our projects are called Heifer’s 12 Cornerstones for Just and Sustainable Development. Using the Cornerstones as a framework, project partners develop the attitudes, behaviors and skills necessary to improve their lives and transform their communities. Combining personal leadership with the Cornerstones helps partners see how their personal values connect with those of the project.

Living Incomes
For Heifer, helping families achieve food security and earn just enough to be considered above the poverty line is not enough. Our goal is to help families move to truly sustainable livelihoods by reaching a living income, meaning that they can afford all necessities such as clothing, school fees, health care and home improvements. Learn more about living incomes.

Caring for the Environment
Through education on improved and environmentally sound farming methods, we help farmers reap stronger yields, improve the environment and increase their incomes. Farmers learn natural methods of pest control and how to keep soil healthy, preserve clean water sources and deal with animal waste. Learn how our model promotes environmental sustainability.

TAKE ACTION
Set up a fundraising page and organize a fundraiser to help families improve their standard of living and reach a living income. Here’s an idea to get you started.

SHARE YOUR STORIES ON SOCIAL MEDIA
GIVE TO PROJECTS THAT CHANGE LIVES TODAY!
Passing on the Gift is the hallmark of our approach, fueling our sustainable community development philosophy. Initially, the concept mandated that each family who receives an animal pass on the first female offspring to another family in need.

While that handoff of livestock remains a fixture in most projects, the idea has now blossomed to encompass far more than livestock. Whether by passing on knowledge about how to bake and sell bread or tricks of the trade for spinning alpaca wool, people are sharing their abilities and skills to help others in their community build themselves up.

Regardless of what is being passed on, the act transforms recipients into donors and produces a profound sense of accomplishment. Tangible gifts come with the intangible benefits of opportunity, dignity and acceptance.

But it doesn’t stop there — families who received a gift often pass it on again, and then that family passes it on again — and this happens an average of NINE times (sometimes even more!).

This is a very powerful part of our development model. The receivers become the givers, and once impoverished families become full participants who improve and strengthen the bonds within their communities, proving that small actions can lead to big results.

This approach truly creates a ripple effect that at minimum doubles the impact of the original gift.
Meet Jit: The Queen of Passing on the Gift

Meet Jit Kumari Yogi, a widow who made it through unthinkable tragedy and poverty to become a thriving entrepreneur and respected community leader. After rebuilding her life, she now generously shares her wealth with others in her community. She has given away five goats, two buffalo, chickens and clothing. She even gave away land for her cooperative to build offices. As she continues to better her life, she continues to share as much as she can with others!

WE’RE NOT KIDDING — GOATS ARE A BIG DEAL.
Goats generally give birth once a year; this is called “kidding.” Goats average two kids each time they give birth. A goat can have babies for about six years. After a year, the female offspring can give birth, as well. See if you can figure out how much a gift of one goat could multiply after seven years. Make a chart to show the impact! (For the purposes of this challenge, assume that in each pair of kids, one is male and one is female.)

TAKE ACTION
Set up a fundraising page and organize a fundraiser to help families create a cycle of hope for themselves and their communities. Here’s an idea to get you started.

PASS ON THE GIFT
BAKE SALE
Bake an assortment of goods to sell. Package each item into two parts: one for the buyer to keep, and the other to pass on to someone else! Consider including information about Heifer in each bag and ask people to tag @Heifer when they receive their gift!

SHARE YOUR STORIES ON SOCIAL MEDIA

GIVE TO PROJECTS THAT TEACH FAMILIES TO PASS ON GIFTS TODAY!
Women: The Key to Change

Although women are half the population, women and girls are more deeply affected by hunger and poverty. At Heifer International, we believe women have limitless potential, but limited opportunity.

In many struggling communities, girls do not receive formal education and women are not able to own property such as their homes, land or even livestock. Women in our projects receive resources and training so they can be successful in their work.

As a result, farms become more productive, hunger is decreased and their families and neighbors benefit. Many of these women become leaders in their communities and help improve the lives of others around them.

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization, if women had the same access as men to land and other resources such as seeds, tools and fertilizer, their farms would produce 20 to 30 percent more crops. Millions of hungry people can be fed when men and women work together with the same resources to grow and produce food.

WHY WOMEN

- Women reinvest 90 percent of their earned income on their families, while men reinvest 30-40 percent.
- Closing the gender gap in agriculture could lift 100 to 150 million people out of hunger.
- When 10 percent more girls go to school, a country’s GDP increases by an average of 3 percent.
- Eliminating barriers for women increases productivity by 25 percent in some countries.
- A $10 increase to a woman’s income achieves the same results in children’s nutrition and health as would a $110 increase to a man’s income.

Source: Farming First

STORIES

INDIA
Seizing Life By The Handlebars: Meet The First Woman to Ride a Bike in this Small Town
In Rashmi Kisku’s village, women didn’t ride bikes. It was taboo. But with the support of her mother, Rashmi is now blazing a new trail on two wheels.

MEXICO
Three Entrepreneurs Shattering Stereotypes
Beekeeping is traditionally viewed as a male occupation in Mexico, but Edith, Lubia and Clara are forging a path for other women to follow. After seeing these three succeed as beekeepers, other women in the village started to question the stereotypes that prevent them from working alongside men.

NEPAL
Nurturing Her Community
This woman has become one thing she never had: a role model.
We Can’t Wait for These Girls to Inherit the World

How Our Projects Empower Women

Gender equity is key to Heifer projects. We seek to increase women’s decision-making power in their own homes and in their communities, as well as their access to income, assets and leadership roles. We do this by:

**Working with Community Groups:** Groups provide a safe space for women to discover their strengths, allowing them to add value to the decision-making process at home and in their communities. Group savings and loans provide access to cash for business activities or act as a safety net for emergency needs.

**Designing Projects with Women in Mind:** Projects consider livestock and other inputs appropriate for women’s unique needs. This consideration gives women social and economic benefits.

**Promoting Gender Equity:** Programs designed for gender equity allow women and men to share the work and the benefits, leading to poverty reduction.

**Engaging Men with a Family Focus:** Empowering women to end poverty requires engaging men along with way. Gender and Family Focus is one of our 12 Cornerstones for Just and Sustainable Development, which promotes the fair sharing of work, decision-making, resources and benefits among all family members.

TAKE ACTION

Set up a [fundraising page](#) and organize a fundraiser to invest in women and their futures around the world. Here’s some ideas to get you started.

1. **WOMEN & WATER WEEK**
   Ask people to sponsor you to carry around jugs of water for at least four hours a day, which is how long many women spend collecting water.

2. **ARTS AND CRAFTS**
   Many women’s cooperatives sell products such as food, clothing and crafts. Create and sell your own goods!

SHARE YOUR STORIES ON SOCIAL MEDIA

GIVE TO PROJECTS THAT **EMPOWER WOMEN TODAY!**
Risk Mitigation and Resilience

Heifer International helps families and communities plan for potential setbacks with strategies that reduce risks and help them rebuild together through livestock and agriculture-based livelihoods. Our goal is for families to become resilient, or able to withstand the challenges that result when disaster strikes.

**ABSORPTION**

We help farmers build savings accounts and appropriate storage supplies. We also provide support during the recovery process. For example, Heifer distributed revolving loans in Nepal after the 2015 earthquakes to equip farmers with the specific tools needed to rebuild. The revolving funds will remain in the community to ensure future access to capital.

**ADAPTATION**

During and after disaster strikes, we encourage families to document the experience. This allows them (and others) to prepare more effectively for future disasters. We make adjustments based on our learnings. For example, as Hurricane Irma approached Haiti in August 2017, we used the social tool WhatsApp to rapidly share information with communities about how to shelter livestock and protect crops. We learned this strategy from Hurricane Matthew in 2016, when the digital tool provided a more flexible format to reach farmers.

**TRANSFORMATION**

We seek changes within communities and systems to mitigate risk and encourage resilience. Our Community Managed Disaster Risk Reduction Training in the Philippines was credited with saving lives during Typhoon Bopha and Super Typhoon Haiyan.

Additionally, we focus on these areas to support climate mitigation efforts:

- Reduce the impact of incidents that affect production systems
- Respond to agricultural emergencies rapidly and efficiently through early warning systems
- Strengthen farmers’ capacities to deal with future extreme climate incidents themselves through additional training and revolving loans for supplies

**STORIES**

**NEPAL**

Relief Efforts After Deadly Storm
See how the Heifer Nepal team provided relief for 550 families who were impacted by destructive thunderstorms that swept across the country.

**GUATEMALA**

Emergency Supplies After Volcano Eruption
After the eruption of the Volcán de Fuego or the Volcano of Fire in Guatemala, Heifer provided humanitarian support to the affected communities and for the thousands in temporary shelters.

**INDIA**

Two Heifer Project Areas Among Those Damaged By Cyclone Fani
Cyclone Fani was the largest storm to hit India in years. The massive storm displaced more than 1 million people. Livestock were killed and animal coops and sheds were damaged.
The Curse of the Kosi

Devastating floods brought on by monsoon season make it almost impossible for communities of so-called untouchables to keep their heads above water in the flood zone of the Kosi River in Bihar, India. This annual disaster is known as “the curse of the Kosi.”

Once upon a time, Bihar was one of the richest regions of India. The Kosi River and its tributaries, rich with sparkling silt, created verdant farmland. As a naturally meandering river, the Kosi had room to roam and spread its abundance over wide swaths of land. Monsoon season was manageable because the river’s shape shifted to accommodate the overflowing water supply.

The blessings of the Kosi have taken a dark turn. Climate change and attempts to control the river by building ill-advised embankments have conspired to make the yearly monsoon intensify into devastating floods, a phenomenon now referred to by locals as “the curse of the Kosi.” Unable to get their feet back under them during a constant barrage, communities in Bihar are now among the poorest in India. The Kosi River is known nowadays as “the sorrow of Bihar.”

As more local women break the traditional limitations foisted on them for centuries, they are discovering that empowerment is the cure to the cycle of poverty exacerbated by the Kosi’s curse. Read more about how they are breaking the curse.

LESSONs FROM FLAWED RESPONSES

When Haiti was struck by Hurricane Matthew, it was able to apply some lessons learned from a hurricane seven years prior, leading to a much-improved disaster response.

FIGHTING FIRE WITH GOATS

A surprising hero has emerged to help the world’s wildfire problem: the ever-versatile goat.

TAKE ACTION

Set up a fundraising page and organize a fundraiser to help families prepare for potential natural disasters. Here’s an idea to get you started.

USE YOUR VOICE

When a natural disaster affects an area where Heifer works, share what you’ve learned about how families prepare and recover. Spread the word creatively, whether that be making a video to share on social media or creating informational posters. Then, host a fundraiser among your friends and family.

SHARE YOUR STORIES ON SOCIAL MEDIA

GIVE TO PROJECTS THAT PREPARE FAMILIES TODAY!