



Spirit & Place

STORIES



Opportunity Knocks— Feeding a Hungry World

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SHE WAS HAPPY TO HAVE A COW

A career opportunity in Brazil forever opened my eyes to the differences between the “haves” and the “have-nots,” including the availability and affordability of safe, nutritious food. My thoughts about food were literally transformed with a single knock on my door one evening.

Like many American employees working in foreign countries, I was living in a bubble within a gated community and with the services of a translator/guard. My bubble was cracked when I established a personal relationship with my guard Joaquin. Each morning I spent 10-15 minutes enjoying his company as he taught me Portuguese and introduced me to the warm, Brazilian culture.

It was three months into my life in Brazil—late one night—when there was a knock at my front door. It was my friend and security guard Joaquin. With a deeply humbled expression he explained that his children had not eaten in three days. He wanted to know if I could help.

Of course, we helped him get food for his family. But Joaquin and his family stayed on my mind. His children’s hunger helped me see how we have an incorrect focus on food. In the U.S., we take a ready supply of affordable food for granted. Some even lament the availability of “cheap” food. But the reality is, we live in a world where one in six people does not get enough to eat, and hunger is a chronic struggle for nearly one billion people.

As the world’s population reaches nine billion by 2050, how many more “Joaquins” will worry about feeding their children? Just one daily egg can keep a child from starving. Can’t we produce enough food to feed Joaquin’s children—and billions more?

One desperate knock transformed my thoughts about food and initiated a personal mission that I’ve shared with my associates in my work at Elanco. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has called for a doubling of world food production by 2050, noting that 70 percent of this additional food must come from the use of efficiency-enhancing technologies. Just as scientific advances helped Norman Borlaug, winner of the 1970 Nobel Peace Prize, eradicate hunger in many parts of Asia and Latin America, technology can play a role in helping farmers produce a safe, affordable, and abundant supply of food.

When Joaquin needed help, technology could not provide an immediate solution, but his situation made me think about the old

“give a man a fish, teach a man to fish,” proverb. How could we play some small part in bringing families out of hunger in a sustainable manner given the need for 100 percent more food production by 2050?

Elanco and I are doing two things to help fight hunger. First, similar to how Norman Borlaug used science to increase crop production, Elanco is committed to increasing the amount of animal protein—an inherently rich source of nutrition. Just one egg a day can mean the difference between sustenance and starvation for a child.

Second, Elanco associates and I support Heifer International. Heifer provides animals to individuals around the world, helping them to emerge from hunger in a sustainable manner. Even better, Heifer includes a “pay it forward” component requiring recipients to pass along the benefits they receive. Working with Heifer International, I traveled with a team of associates to Lampung Provinces, Indonesia, home to a lot of families with the same food challenges as Joaquin.

We provided 750 families with dairy cows and poultry. We taught them how to care for their animals and provided nutrition and education to keep their animals healthy. As the animals reproduce, families pass the offspring on to new families, creating a sustainable solution. Beyond food, the animals provide milk and meat that can be sold, serve as transportation, and even provide fertilizer for crops.

The Heifer International work inspires me most when I get to see how it is changing lives and providing hope. A mother named Radiani in Indonesia cried upon receiving her first dairy cow—not just because she was happy to have a cow to help feed her family and produce income, but because people came all the way from the U.S. to present the cow.

Mrs. Juariah worked as a rice field laborer in fields owned by others. Today, with the ducks from Heifer International, she and several other women have started raising and selling salted duck eggs. She and her three children look forward to additional training that will help them expand their duck production and pass on some of their flock to empower others.

My thoughts about food were changed with a single knock. Whether it’s helping Joaquin in Brazil or Radiana and Mrs. Juariah in Indonesia, we are committed to paying forward the benefits of technology and animal agriculture to help feed the world.