

SUSTAINABILITY, PASS IT ON

More than 60 years ago—before the word “sustainable” was in vogue—Heifer International was putting its model of sustainability into practice.

The group donates animals—from sheep to honeybees—to communities in need and, in turn, the recipients of those gifts pass on the offspring to others. The livestock that people receive from Heifer helps provide a source of sustenance and income to residents in places like Mozambique and Romania.

“The largest number of extremely impoverished people live in sub-Saharan Africa,” says Ray White, a spokesman for the organization. “You can see the impact of a gift of a goat or cow there almost immediately.”

Heifer International estimates that it has helped 8.5 million families since its inception in 1944. The group reaches 53 countries and 28 states in the United States.

You can help Heifer by becoming a volunteer, or by sponsoring the gift of a water buffalo, llama or flock of ducks to people in need.

“Hunger can be ended,” says White. “We have the technology and the resources today to produce enough food for everyone. It’s a matter of simple justice.”

Visit www.heifer.org to learn more.

—Matthew Schwartzman-Stubbs



Ambassador to El Salvador Charles Glazer, echoing Negroponte’s remarks.

On June 27, Glazer told a delegation of 12 Americans traveling to El Salvador with CISPES that the United States would not interfere with the country’s January parliamentary elections and its March presidential elections. However, CISPES alleges that Glazer also said that the United States had meddled in El Salvador’s 2004 elections.

According to a CISPES press release, “When asked directly if the U.S. government had intervened in the 2004 presidential elections on behalf of the [right-wing] Nationalist Republican Alliance party (ARENA), Glazer replied in the affirmative. When asked if such intervention would occur again, he said ‘no.’”

Robert Riley, counsel for public affairs at the U.S. embassy, wrote in an e-mail: “Ambassador Glazer acknowledged that certain American officials made public comments in the context of the 2004 Salvadoran elections. ... However, [Glazer] did not suggest or ‘confirm’ that the U.S. government intervened in those elections in any way.”

According to Riley, Glazer “has stated numerous times publicly, the U.S. government will not take sides in the upcoming 2009 Salvadoran elections.”

FMLN candidate Mauricio Funes led ARENA candidate Rodrigo Ávila by roughly 6 percentage points, according to a July Reuters poll. If Ávila loses, it would be the first time since the end of El Salvador’s civil war in 1992 that the conservative ARENA party would be out of power.

The United States has played a nefarious role in Salvadoran history, funding and training the right-wing military and death squads that murdered and disappeared 85 percent of the approximately 80,000 victims during the country’s 12-year civil war.

In the run-up to El Salvador’s 2004 election, Rep. Tom Tancredo (R-Colo.) threatened that the United States would stop Salvadoran immigrants from sending remittances to their families if the FMLN party won. Remittances from the United States make up nearly 20 percent of El Salvador’s gross domestic product, and nearly a quarter of all Salvadoran families receive them.

That spring, newspapers reported on fears of remittances drying up, which some



Salvadoran presidential candidate Mauricio Funes (right), speaks at an April 18 meeting in Panama City.

say helped tip the outcome to ARENA candidate and media mogul Antonio Saca, who won 57 percent of the vote to FMLN candidate Schafik Handal’s 36 percent.

Then-U.S. Ambassador to El Salvador Hugh Douglas Barkley did not respond to Tancredo’s threats until after the election, saying that the opinions of members of Congress are independent from the positions of the State Department.

“The U.S. Embassy in El Salvador never countered this absurd threat or clarified the impossibility of such legislation being passed,” says Rosa Lozano, a Washington, D.C., delegate who attended the CISPES meeting with Glazer. “Ultimately, such intervention helped turn a close race for the presidency into a decisive victory for the right-wing ARENA party.”

To help assuage CISPES’s concern about the upcoming elections, the U.S. embassy’s labor attaché Jami Thompson told the delegation that the International Republican Institute (IRI) and the National Democratic Institute (NDI) will monitor the races.

But delegation members question the groups’ objectivity. Last year, the IRI and Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) honored President Saca with a “Freedom Award,” which CISPES says establishes the IRI’s bias.

Says Laura Embree-Lowry, a delegate from Boston: “The presence of partisan groups like the IRI and NDI will be counterproductive to the goal of the Salvadoran people, which is to hold free and fair elections in 2009.”

—Jacob Wheeler

Hospital Flacks Spread Fake News

WHEN GLEN MABIE's boss at WEAU-TV-13 told him he would have to start running stories suggested by a local hospital, featuring its staff and services, Mabie quit in protest.

The agreement with the hospital would have prevented the Eau Claire, Wis., station from using sources from other area hospitals in its stories.

"I was between a rock and a hard place," says Mabie, who had been news director at the NBC affiliate for a year. "I didn't want to be insubordinate to my superior and there was no way I could go into the newsroom and tell my staff this is a good thing."

WEAU ultimately scratched the plan after newsroom employees continued to resist it in the wake of Mabie's January resignation, he says.

The deal at WEAU was one of several that prompted the Society of Professional Journalists and the Association of Health Care Journalists to announce their opposition to the practice of broadcasting, printing or otherwise disseminating content paid for, or created by, medical providers.

"Content produced by hospitals does not fulfill the duty of news organizations to provide the public with independent medical reporting," the Aug. 13 statement from the two groups said. "Ethical problems are compounded when media outlets fail to adequately disclose the source of the content, misleading viewers, listeners or readers into thinking it is legitimate news."

The statement came about five months after a Maryland newspaper sold its weekly health page to a local hospital. The arrangement, which was explained to readers in a column, would have allowed the hospital to provide content for *The Capital*, an Annapolis daily with 47,000 readers. After publishing one column, the paper backed down in response to community pressure.

The alliance may have been the first of its kind for a print newspaper, but journalists' groups and ethics experts have raised concerns for years about broadcast outlets using video news releases that are produced by pharmaceutical companies and health-

care providers to look like news reports.

"We don't really know how big of a problem it is—and that's part of the problem," says Andy Schotz, chairman of the Society of Professional Journalists' ethics committee. "It blends into news coverage in a way that people don't even know the source of the news they're getting."

Eight broadcast reports by the Cleveland Clinic News Service—the PR arm of an Ohio healthcare provider—aired virtually unedited on 26 stations, according to an analysis published last year in the *Columbia Journalism Review*. Of those 26 stations, 23 were owned by Fox.

These video news releases are often inserted seamlessly into reports produced by a station's reporters.

"It takes advantages of news organizations that are pretty much pushed to the max," says Lee Wilkins, an ethics professor at the University of Missouri's journalism school.

In an era of shrinking budgets and rising demand for content in multimedia, news providers are often searching for ways to increase revenue while putting out more news.

Wilkins says part of the appeal of video releases is that they provide high-quality visual images that journalists have to cut through a lot of red tape to get, such as footage of surgeries. But she says while the reports may provide some good information, they are often one-sided and fail to include relevant facts, such as costs or survival rates associated with a procedure.

"It won't have in it the kind of information a good health reporter will go and get. And that skews the news," Wilkins says. "You won't get that kind of critical, analytical look."

Health news isn't the only sector in which partnerships between media outlets and companies have been struck. Last year, after newsroom workers objected, the (Memphis) *Commercial Appeal* newspaper backed off a plan to pursue a six-part series that would have been sponsored by FedEx. And the *Philadelphia Inquirer* also launched a column last year sponsored by a local bank.

Schotz says he didn't know if partnerships between media and companies could specifically be tied to smaller

newsroom staffs, but he did say that broadcast news directors who responded to his group's inquiry about the practice of using provided content said that staffing was a concern.

"The whole news industry is feeling pressure," he says.

The statement released by the two journalism groups advises media outlets to disclose the source of all information that's gathered by other entities, to avoid favoring advertisers and sponsors over the competition and to identify clearly



**This news was brought to you
by your local lobbyist.**

the packaged stories produced by healthcare providers as ads.

"The importance is how it's presented and how it's labeled," Schotz says. "If it's paid for, it's an advertisement. The importance is thinking about what your readers and viewers and listeners need to know. If this is a paid relationship, why not let them know?"

Former news director Mabie says he was concerned that if a deal like the one proposed at WEAU had taken hold, it would have paved the way for further ethically questionable alliances.

"Things like that are a slippery slope," he says. "Who's to say that six months down the road a Lowe's or a Home Depot isn't going to come to you and say, 'Talk to our people and we'll give you a home improvement segment two times a week'? Then pretty soon your newscast has become, quite literally, a paid commercial."

—Emily Udell