



Heifer International: Advocate for the Meat Industry



An Investigative Report by
People for the Ethical Treatment
of Animals (PETA) and Sentient

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I. Introduction

Heifer International sells goats and other animals online in the form of “gifts” to marginalized communities. Its catalog deceptively portrays animals in seemingly ideal circumstances, but a PETA and Sentient investigator who traveled to Rajasthan, India, to observe the treatment of goats in the Alwar region and adjoining areas where Heifer International’s program operates documented negligent care and abuse, among other shocking findings. This inhumane treatment is what the goats donated by Heifer International and their offspring can face.

II. Findings of the Investigation

A. Animal Welfare Lacking

Goats provided through its program are usually added to those already kept by farmers and used for breeding. The investigator saw goats housed in crowded pens or tied up so tightly they could barely move, baby goats with sticks jammed in their mouths to prevent them from drinking their mothers’ milk (which is taken away for human consumption), and male goats including those who could be the offspring of those donated by Heifer were pinned down and castrated without the use of any anesthesia. The eyewitness documented suffering among the goats that included an infected udder, fractured limbs, and a maggot-filled wound—none of which were properly treated.

While a paraveterinary worker from Heifer International’s partner organization SPECTRA (the Society for Public Education Cultural Training & Rural Action) may occasionally give advice about goat keeping and basic veterinary care, the animals’ treatment is largely left up to the villagers, who can be unwilling or unable to comply. At least two families admitted that they could not afford to take care of the goats, relying solely on grazing for their sustenance.

Participants are expected to “pass on a gift,” or, in other words, to become “donors” themselves by giving a goat produced through breeding to another family within the project.



Goats are crammed into a small pen
in a village in Rajasthan.



Numerous goats and bucks are forced to live in small, crowded pens.



Goats are tied with short ropes that severely restrict their movement.



Some goats become entangled in their short ropes and are unable to move.



These goats are tethered with chains.



This goat is tied by a very short rope and can barely move around.



Other goats are shackled with metal chains.



Wooden sticks are inserted into the mouths of some baby goats to prevent them from suckling.



This cruel practice prevents baby goats from drinking their mothers' milk so that it can instead be used for human consumption.



Castration is performed without the use of anesthesia.



This goat is suffering from mastitis.



The goat with mastitis wasn't provided with veterinary care, and her condition worsened.



This goat has a maggot-infested wound.



The wound became infested with maggots because of the owners' negligence.



This goat limps with a swollen hind leg.

B. Destined for Slaughter

The goats and other animals Heifer International sells online as donations or gifts to marginalized communities may look like happy members of human families in the pictures on its website, but in reality, Heifer International is an advocate for the meat industry. It works in conjunction with SPECTRA to support a farmer producer organization (FPO) called Spectra Adarsh Utpadak Mahila Producer Company Limited. This FPO has several stakeholders, two of which are Heifer International and NGO SPECTRA. One of the FPO's goals is to contribute to India's goat-meat trade. Heifer International's practice of giving goats to families, largely those who already have individual goats or herds, which boosts breeding (some families said that they went from three goats to more than 20 in three years), means that more animals are destined to be killed for the meat trade through the FPO.

The goal of the FPO is clear: to expand the meat trade. SPECTRA Director Pradeep Pundir said that it expects families to sell 10 to 15 bucks a year for meat. He said the vision of the FPO is to “develop [our own] slaughterhouse, [our own] shops, [our own] marketing place and become a major role in meat in our NCR [National Capitol Region] area” and to develop centers “where the buyer [can] come and choose the goat or buck ... FPO can develop the mini-meat shop and mini-slaughterhouse, where they [can sell] their brand [of meat] They can cut 40 to 50 bucks per day.”

Villagers, including those to whom Heifer International donates goats, work through the FPO to sell their animals for slaughter. Some villagers sell privately. In other cases, SPECTRA negotiates the best price from buyers, and

villagers sell bucks and unwanted goats via the FPO. Bucks are sold to buyers who supply animals to slaughterhouses in larger cities, in the goat and buck market located approximately 55 miles from Alwar, and to local butcher shops, many of which are unlicensed. They are transported in vehicles in the searing heat on long journeys. According to Heifer International's India staff, some of the goats have even been sent as far away as Dubai. At slaughterhouses and roadside butcher shops, the goats and bucks are forced to stand on blood- and offal-covered floors, waiting and watching in fear, while other goats are killed right in front of them. Most slaughterers in India don't stun the goats before taking their lives, even though the law requires it.



SPECTRA Director Pradeep Pundir shows a PowerPoint slide displaying the FPO's plans for building a slaughterhouse and a meat shop.



A buck is slaughtered in a local meat shop in Alwar, Rajasthan.



Carcasses of slaughtered bucks and goats are piled up on the bloody floor of a meat shop in Alwar, Rajasthan.

C. Viable Options

There are several other ways to help those in need in Rajasthan. Many organizations are driving the transition toward sustainable industries that empower women for long-term financial stability and to help them gain self-reliance and autonomy.

Freedom from Hunger and its partners, Freedom from Hunger India Trust, Vaagdhara, and Pradan, work to bolster the women's self-help group (SHG) movement in Rajasthan. Its programs reach approximately 8,000 clients and, by extension, tens of thousands of family members. Located primarily in the tribal areas of Banswara and Sirohi, the project serves populations at high risk for undernourishment, stunting, and maternal and infant mortality.

Inspired by the work of Nobel laureate professor Muhammad Yunus, the Grameen Foundation was founded in 1997, and in 2016, it and Freedom from Hunger decided to collaborate in order to support poor women in India through access to financial, health, and nutritional information and other services.

A combination of participatory, dialog-based health education—delivered by community nutrition advocates, who are also members of these groups—complement the skills that SHG members are practicing around nutrition-sensitive agriculture, which focuses on kitchen gardens and growing local, nutritious greens and grains. Families acquire new knowledge and skills supported by increased access to local services and resources.

The goal of the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) is full employment and self-reliance for women throughout India. In Rajasthan, SEWA Bharat has partnered with the Central Labour Ministry to conduct research on home-based workers engaged in Bikaner's *papad* (flatbread) industry. Trades ranging from tie-dye creation to street vending to *papad* rolling are just some of the skills fostered by SEWA. The association also runs advocacy campaigns such as minimum wage and sustainable livelihood in Jodhpur, the right to free compulsory education in all districts, and sanitation in Jaipur and Jodhpur.

SEWA Bharat's microfinance program in Rajasthan is focused on helping women organize SHGs. Members meet every month to contribute to savings accounts and receive financial literacy training.

D. Self-Driven Trades

Mangos, apples, apricots, oranges, avocados, guavas, lychees, and papayas are abundant in much of India. According to the Fruit Tree Planting Foundation, planting sustainable fruit-bearing trees and plants not only serves communities for generations but also helps alleviate hunger and improve the surrounding air, soil, and water.

But even smaller-scale businesses, such as *rajai* (quilt-making); polishing, drilling, and sharpening semiprecious stones; spice processing; rural *mojri* (shoemaking); *sithaphal* (custard apple) pulp extraction; tailoring; *meenakari* (metal coloring); and cotton bag design, in partnership with SHGs, can sustain families.

III. Conclusion

While scientists warn that meat production perpetuates world hunger, Heifer International promotes meat-eating among a largely vegetarian population and is planning to support building a slaughterhouse in another state. Heifer International affiliate SPECTRA also supports plans to construct a butcher shop and a goat-collection center through the FPO.

Donors who see Heifer International's glossy promotional materials are led to believe that the animals spend their days frolicking and being hugged by children. Nowhere in the literature is there any indication that these donated animals will likely end up neglected and cruelly killed on a blood-soaked floor.



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