



From the Ground Up: Social Movements and Soil Improvement

Though the meat, grains and produce we buy in the store seldom have anything resembling dirt on them, the biological, physical, and chemical composition of the soil determines the nutritional value of all these products. For the smallholder and resource-scarce farmers highlighted in last year's Symposium, fostering and maintaining healthy soil is their first, and often most affordable, line of defense against erratic water supplies, chemical imbalances in local soils, and pest outbreaks that decrease their production. Healthy soils, with high organic content and an abundance of soil organisms, can contribute to food security, and in turn to stronger local communities and robust rural life. Stories and examples of programs and growers who have transformed depleted soils into productive spaces are inspiring and draw attention to one of the most promising growth areas in agricultural improvement worldwide.



Norman Uphoff (top) and Craig Sorley will be the keynote speakers at the 2014 Symposium

This Symposium aims to expand upon the soil science itself to explore the institutional, socio-economic, and cultural factors that promote, foster, inhibit, and prevent dissemination in soil improvement. The relationship between humans and the natural systems on which we depend is a critical area for research and for public awareness, as food demand is expected to double by 2050 due to population increase, primarily concentrated in the Global South. In this new era, a renewed focus on soil health enables agricultural production to continue to meet the growing demands of the global population.

Prof. Norman Uphoff is a professor in the Department of Government, Director of the Cornell Institute for Public Affairs, and the former Director of the Cornell International Institute for Food, Agriculture, and Development. Using the social sciences to engage with the natural sciences, Prof. Uphoff's current interests include agroecology and he is a prolific and highly regarded expert in interdisciplinary aspects of agricultural development. With his experience in rural development worldwide, we are excited to host Prof. Uphoff to present a balanced understanding of why protecting and enriching soils is essential for food security as well as good governance.

In addition to Prof. Uphoff, we have invited the Executive Director of Care of Creation Kenya, Craig Sorley. Having grown up in East Africa, Mr. Sorley's training and experience in agroforestry led him to work with faith-based organizations in the region to develop and to implement sustainable agricultural practices suitable for smallholder farmers in fragile environments. Named a 2008 "Hero of the Environment" by TIME magazine for his agroforestry work, Mr. Sorley directs a Christian organization in Kenya that helps rural churches understand the importance of protecting their natural resource base for long-term agricultural production.

We hope that you will join us to hear these and other speakers at the HNGR Symposium, February 27-28!

The 2014 HNGR Symposium, *From the Ground Up: Social Movements and Soil Improvement* will be held on **February 27-28**. We hope to see you there!



Homecoming 2013

It was a pleasure to see each of you who came through the HNGR office during this past homecoming weekend. Thank you for bringing your families, sharing your HNGR stories and staying in touch with your HNGR family. Any time HNGR alumni get together is a good time!

Catherine Langford (Peru, 2002) posing with Mimi Conradi Gerstbauer (Nicaragua, 1992)



Michelle Mack Fiore (Philippines 1992) and her husband talking to our beloved office manager, Barbara Watson

HNGR Director, Laura Yoder, Allison Flynn (India, 2008), and Christoph Hoashi-Erhardt (El Salvador 1997) listen to Ryan Juskus' (Peru, 2004) South American travelling tales



“Educate your people”

Thoughts from the Micah Challenge

-Chris Wilson, Research and Programs Assistant

With the fall colors in their full array, Ryan Juskus and I made the trip up from Wheaton to Grand Rapids to meet with members of the Micah Network and hear about the work that God is doing around the world. Gathered in a hotel near Calvin College, representatives from World Renew, World Relief, Care of Creation, the Latin American Theological Fellowship, Association for a More Just Society and many others entered into a conversation about justice and the work to which Christians are called.

Among the featured speakers were HNGR GCP author, Nicholas Wolterstorff, and Ruth Padilla DeBorst, an influential spokesperson for Latin American evangelical faith and practice.

Dr. Wolterstorff began the conference with his reflections on justice and the kinds of justice in which Christians participate. With examples from the abolition and civil rights movements in the U.S. and apartheid in South Africa, Dr. Wolterstorff demonstrated how charity is not justice and can, in fact, be a barrier to peaceful society. In acts of charity, the giver of the goods or services is in the center; justice, in contrast, elevates the other and puts her needs at the center. Awakening Christians to doing justice rather than adopting benevolence requires re-reading the Bible, allowing others to place a claim on the giver, and an ethic of empathy standing with those who suffer. Dr. Wolterstorff, who has more than almost any other plumbed the theoretical and theological depths of God’s justice, recounted his conversion to justice during his own HNGR-like experi-

Micah Challenge →

ence in apartheid South Africa. What disturbed him the most was not that the Afrikaners were unaware of the need for justice, but that they supported apartheid as a loving system that kept each racial and cultural group in tact. For this reason, he emphasized empathy as a first step toward justice, because without it, acts of service become laden with demands and expectations of those on the receiving end of benevolence.

Dr. Ruth Padilla DeBorst began her portion of the conference with a story. Visiting Arab Christians in Palestine, she asked what she could do to support them in their struggle for justice. “Educate your people,” was the response from her Palestinian hosts. Dr. Padilla DeBorst went on to describe how Zionism was rampant in Central American churches and was ultimately detrimental to the cause of their Palestinian brothers and sisters. After seeing, hearing and feeling the plight of Palestinian Christians, Dr. Padilla DeBorst spoke about how she had the responsibility to teach those from her own culture how to use their heads, hands and hearts to respond theologically, practically, and liturgically to the systems of injustice in which they were participants.

As graduates of the HNGR Program, these principles likely sound familiar to you. On the ride home, Ryan and I reflected on the place of HNGR within the Micah Network movement. Educate your people, Ryan said, should be the new mantra of HNGR. After learning with our heads, hands and hearts, HNGR alumni have the responsibility to return home and educate those around us about what we saw around the world and respond with justice and empathy.

The HNGR Funnies

Enjoy the following real Facebook conversation between the high school versions of Jenn Ruppelt (HNGR ‘10) and Remer Brinson (HNGR ‘10) before they began as students at Wheaton

Jenn: “I got that registration packet too. I haven’t given it too much thought yet. I think I’ll do a little bit of both (stuff for my major and requirements). I’m going to major in Spanish and History (at least at this point), it may change If you want a more informed answer I would ask one of the students on the Wheaton group or even one of the counselors. What is your major?”

Remer: “I’m thinking I want to major in Sociology with a ministry emphasis. I might do a double in Biblical/Theological Studies. I’ll just have to see if I can do both. Have you looked at the HUNGR certificate. It stands for Human Needs and Global Resources. In a nutshell it is a program that confronts and helps solve the problems like the ones in Invisible Children.

Hotel Rwanda, and Blood Diamond. I am definately going to do it. You get to spend a semester in a third world country, which would be extremely cool.”

Jenn: “Sociology is another one of the majors I’m considering (instead of History). It might turn into International Relations though.... we’ll see.

“Yeah- I was really interested in the HNGR program when I visited. It sounds like a great opportunity. It would just depend on whether I have enough time to fit it in. I have to do a study abroad when I’m a junior for my Spanish major. I would love to at least check it out some more and see if I could make it work. Did you talk to anyone about what kind of HNGR projects would be available for a Soc/Theo major?”

Returning to the Field

This past summer, Morgan Younkin (Peru, 2009) returned to his HNGR host organization, the Luke Society in Moyobamba, Peru.

What have you been doing since graduating from Wheaton?

Since graduation -- over 3 years now - I have lived in Boston with my wife, Lainey. I worked at an air pollution public health research institute for a few years to test out how I fit with public health policy and research. I'm now in an MD/MPH program at Tufts because I realized my passion lies in my community and neighborhood and I want an education that will equip me to work on the ground with my neighbors to improve our community's health. Our church community though is what has transformed us the most since Wheaton. We love the blessing of community and being a part of the local church as an agent for neighborhood transformation.

What were you doing with the Luke Society in Moyobamba, Peru?

I interned in rural community health and development. My preceptor and I partnered with Nuevo Jerusalem, a small coffee farming village, as the village worked on agriculture improvement, community health worker training, leadership capacity building, community organizing, basic sanitation, and composting latrines.

Why did you choose to work with your former HNGR host organization?

I had a great opportunity through my university to intern with a public health organization overseas for the summer. I was blessed with good relationships with San Lucas during HNGR and had been able to maintain those relationships over the years. It was natural to intern at an organization that I knew and knew me--I'd be more helpful and learn deeper. Plus, Lainey had never met my host family and friends, so it was a wonderful opportunity to introduce her to my Peruvian family.

Most of all, my time in Peru was a blessing to reconnect with family and friends in Moyobamba. One particular day stands out as a highlight: visiting Nuevo Jerusalem with Lainey. It was wonderful to visit with well-remembered friends and to see the beautiful everyday impact of their partnership with San Lucas.



Morgan (left) with his Peruvian host parents, Rigo and Nelly (middle), and wife, Lainey (right)

The composting latrines that they had built with the Luke Society were functioning perfectly--the result of a lot of community organization and genuine care and pride on the part of the villagers.

What have been some ways that your time with HNGR has influenced your life choices?

Every way. From the neighborhood we live in, the church we attend, to hopeful career path and spiritual and theological formation. Most of all, it has impressed upon me the importance of being a member of the community to which I am called. When my neighbors and I share a common context we can work together to affect positive change among ourselves. HNGR also helped me appreciate the mystery of the physical and historical reality of the gospel and the Kingdom of God, a history that we, as the community of the faithful, are tasked with retelling and making intelligible.

What are your goals for your next stage in life?

I'm hoping to become a family doctor and be active in working with my neighbors to improve our community's health, whether that be in Boston or in another urban context. I'm also hopeful that my church community will ground me against the often distant and institutional nature of the medical system. I also pray that God and the people in my life will shape me into a person of integrity and commitment to the call placed on me.



2013 Intern Placements

Please join us in praying for these interns as they complete their internships around the world.



Student Name	Organization	Student Name	Organization
Kailin Cornwall	Kagando Hospital and Rural Development Centre	Riley Mulhern	Nuevas Esperanzas
Micah Dennis	World Relief	Leya Petrovani	Paz y Esperanza
Nathan Gencarella	Paz y Esperanza	Rachel Rasmussen	Amani ya Juu
Josh Grizzard	Freeset	Stephan Rauh	Luke Society
Brittany Hawkins	Amani ya Juu	Lou Smith	Luke Society
Molly Jamison	Semillas de Nueva Creación	Isaac Smoak	Jubilee Centre
Heather Kaufmann	Mosoj Yan	April Sylvester	Pro-Life Advancement and Education Programme
Clara Kent	Caritas	Hailey Thompson	World Renew
Sean Larsen	Vida en Abundancia	Nathan Trump	Pueblos in Acción Comunitaria
Jamie Marshman	Ubuntu Partners	Hanna Tzou	Alongsiders
Lili Mejia	The Warehouse	Abbi Watkins	EFICOR
Josh Miller	International Organization for Migration	Jessica Witten	EFICOR
Lauren Miller	Juventud Para Cristo	Leah Younkin	La Asociación Agape