



FREEDOM FROM HUNGER PROJECT CASE STUDY

The Freedom From Hunger Campaign Stamp Issue and Coin Plan

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In 1963 The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) commissioned a series of postage stamps to promote the Freedom From Hunger Campaign (FFHC). The issue of FFHC stamps was timed to coincide with the World Food Congress in 1963 and was designed to promote FFHC and stimulate action. The stamp campaign succeeded in raising awareness, and it required new cooperation between and among FAO and governmental agencies or departments not normally associated with agricultural development or poverty reduction. The cooperative action required to achieve communications objectives helped embed FFHC objectives in governments and governmental agencies around the globe, and the stamp issue was successful in promoting the campaign and its objectives cheaply, efficiently and at a global scale.

- The stamp issue required new kinds of cooperation between and among FAO, governments and governmental agencies
- 153 countries released FFHC stamps to coincide with World Food Day and the First World Food Congress in 1963
- The success of the stamp campaign resulted in the development of the Food For All Coin Plan and FAO Ceres medals

Stamp campaigns had been successfully conducted by other organizations, notably that undertaken by the International Refugee Organization for the World Refugee Year (1959/1960), and were often meant to commemorate people or events. The FFHC stamp issue was designed to raise awareness in developed and developing countries, and was a component of a larger communications strategy. However, FAO later determined that the “postage media” did not reach millions of people who would seldom or never encounter postage. As a result, FAO later undertook a coin campaign where the issue was in low-denomination, common currencies.

FFHC staffer Raymond Lloyd organized the stamp campaign and was determined that the FFHC stamp issue be the biggest ever, that every government be involved, and that the issue be for postal, rather than philatelic purposes. FAO asked participating countries to produce stamps featuring the Freedom

From Hunger Campaign message and logo, and that that national mints and other stamp producers release the stamps on 21 March, 1963 to coincide with Freedom From Hunger Week (March 17-23, 1963).¹

The Freedom From Hunger Campaign stood on three legs:

- Research
- Information/education
- Action

The FFHC stamp campaign served the information/education and action aspects of FFHC, and was an early example of direct outreach by FAO to the general public. The effort required the development of new relationships between and among FAO, governments and governmental agencies around the world.

To guide FAO and FFHC staff in negotiation with countries on the stamp campaign, FAO hired Robert Siegel, a New York Stamp dealer, who was instrumental in the campaign's success. According to FFHC International Coordinator Charles H. Weitz, organizing the stamp issue was difficult, in part because it stimulated interest by private and national mints and printers that lobbied FAO (and Mr. Weitz personally) for the stamp contracts.² However, the greatest "block" to the stamp issue was the Postmaster General of the United Kingdom who assured Weitz that the

United Kingdom would only issue postal stamps for "Royal purposes." Weitz, understood that the Royal Mint was unmatched in influence in the Commonwealth and beyond, and did not relent until he secured

¹ Charles H. Weitz, Interview, 5 October, 2006.

² Weitz recalled the high stakes that were involved in the Stamp Issue; he was once approached by a Jordanian stamp official who attempted to bribe him in exchange for support of a particular firm. Weitz refused the bribe and the next day Weitz and Sen flew to Jordan to discuss the matter with representatives of the Jordanian government. Charles H. Weitz, Interview, 6 October, 2005.

its cooperation.³ Once the British gave their support, dozens more countries agreed to participate, including 51 Commonwealth countries. The sale of the stamps of raised more than US\$200,000, which enabled FFHC and FAO to organize a series of six regional and national farm broadcasting seminars in developing countries, and a portion of this fund was used in later publicity efforts. In total, 153 countries issued Freedom From Hunger stamps.



After the Stamp Issue, Lloyd conceived and organized the FAO “Food for All Coin Plan,” which ran from 1968 to 1970 before being moved out of FFHC. In 1968 ten countries participated in the Coin Plan; nine of these produced a single, high denomination coin bearing the Freedom From Hunger message or highlighting an aspect of agricultural production relative to their area. In 1968, nine more countries

³ Weitz recalled, Sen ordered Weitz and the regional FAO regional representative for Cairo to London to ensure British support for the Stamp Issue. Weitz recalled “stalking” the Head of the British Royal Mint for months; “it got to the point where after every meeting there I was. Every time he looked up there I was. In the end he gave his support for the sole reason of getting rid of me! After that, the rest [of the Commonwealth countries] fell like dominos...I dogged that man for six months. I turned up every place he was, every meeting...every time he looked up, there I was. Have you reconsidered? We've got now 55 countries...and finally, at a meeting of the Universal Postal Union in Bern, he said to me...'if for no other reason than to get you out of my sight, I am so sick of seeing you, that I am moved to put a Cabinet Paper on this. I will do it.' And what do you know...the government changed its mind after 280 years of issuing stamps, they issued stamps for a non-Royal purpose. And once the British did, ever single British dependency and colony came in." Charles H. Weitz, Interview by author, 5 October, 2006.

joined the effort, most producing coins with relatively high face value, but a significant step was taken by the Dominican Republic which produced a one centavo coin. Within ten years of the Food For All Coin Plan, more than eighty countries had produced more than 220 coins.



FAO Food For All Coins: South Africa, India, Cuba, (North) Korea

A key change in the Coin Plan occurred in 1969. After the example set by the Dominican Republic in producing the one centavo coin, most of the subsequent coins produced under the Plan were of low denomination. Unlike stamps, coins enjoyed a long period of circulation and the didactic element of their use was spread amongst a much larger portion of the population. Especially in developing countries, many people would never see a postage stamp, whereas in all parts of the world most people would use low denomination coins. Like the stamps, the coins featured a wide variety of subject matter, many featuring aspects of agricultural production relative to their area, and all carried the Freedom From Hunger and/or Food For All message. Another key difference in the stamp and coin efforts was that the Stamp Issue was a single world wide event; the Coin Plan was continuously active between 1968 and 1980, and a Food For All coin was issued as recently as 1995. Based on the success of the Food For All Coin Plan, FAO began the issue of Ceres Medals which featured important religious and cultural figures of significance in the fight against hunger and poverty.

The success of the stamp issue, and later the coin plan, engendered in FAO an interest in the production of a wide variety of memorabilia to support a variety of projects and programs. The Stamp Issue and the Coin Plan generated revenue, some of which was used by FAO and FFHC/FAO to finance running costs of each program while rest was directed back into individual development projects. The FFHC publicity efforts diminished in the late 1970s as the program slowed; but FFHC leadership and creativity in this area represented a precedent in FAO public engagement efforts. More importantly, these efforts created a catalyst for fundraising and publicity in FFHC/FAO and in national FFHC committees, and it resulted in increased cooperation between and among FAO, governments and governmental agencies around the world.

References

Charles H. Weitz, Interview by author, 5 October, 2006.

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