



Dining for Women

## Program Fact Sheet

**Program: Heifer International, Women in Livestock Development (WILD) Program**

**Web Site: [www.heifer.org](http://www.heifer.org)**

**Our History with Heifer:** new program to DFW, although probably not to many members

**Project We are Supporting:** *Women, Environment and Development in 4 Communities in Boaco, Nicaragua.* See the Project Outline on our Program Schedule Page under Sept. '08.

**Heifer in a Nutshell:** Heifer International's overarching mission is to end hunger and poverty and to care for the earth. At its founding in 1944, HI dedicated itself to ending hunger permanently by providing families with livestock and training so that they "could be spared the indignity of depending on others to feed their children." Since then, Heifer has helped 9.2 million families in more than 125 countries move toward greater self-reliance. Its distinctive strategy is "passing on the gift"—a family donates offspring of its gift animals to another family so the gift continues to grow. Heifer works with grass roots community groups in project planning and training in animal well-being, agroecology, water quality, gender equity and community development. Currently (as of 2007), it is managing some 870 projects in over 50 countries. Heifer is also dedicated to education about world hunger via its learning centers, travel and school programs, and publications.

**Fiscal Management and Evaluation:** HI reported spending 76% on programs and 24% on administration/fund raising overall in 2007. Each Heifer project has detailed monitoring and evaluation procedures. HI also conducts periodic regional evaluations measuring effect according to 36 indicators. For more on the evaluation procedure of Boaco project, see the Project Outline. 86% of that project's budget goes toward program expenses.

**OUR GOAL:** Our goal of \$12,300 will provide for the livestock and training this year, over a third of the total livestock and training budget for this five-year project. 100% of our donation goes to livestock and training. Any surplus we raise can be designated for other aspects of the project such as farm supplies and equipment.

**Gender Equity and the WILD Program:** HI bases its work in 12 "cornerstones," one of which the link between gender and family welfare. Among its major initiatives is gender equity. All Heifer programs must comply with its four gender equity principles and apply its two gender equity strategies.

### Heifer's Four Gender Equity Principles:

- Gender equity is a social justice and human rights issue that is critical to end poverty and hunger.
- Achieving gender equity requires the understanding and recognition that every policy, program and project affects women and men differently.
- Gender equity requires transformation of women's participation from passive beneficiary to active agent at all levels of Heifer's work.
- Gender equity can only be achieved through working with women and men of all ages as partners.

### Heifer's Two Gender Equity Strategies:

- Mainstreaming—integrating the needs of women and men in all policies, programming, project planning, and implementation and monitoring.
- Redressing—closing existing gender gaps through programs and projects that directly address women and girls.

**The Women in Livestock Development (WILD) Program**, founded in 1988, is a special vehicle through which HI focuses on gender equity. 70% of the participants in WILD projects must be female. That means women are the primary participants while men learn to share in labor and decision-making with them. (Children can participate too.) Heifer recognizes outstanding projects and individuals that have promoted gender equity with its WILD Awards.

**Why We Like HI/WILD/the Boaco Project:** Like DFW, Heifer believes that education and hearing women's stories empower committed giving and can help to end poverty and create world community. Unlike DFW, Heifer is huge; but its grass roots strategy multiplied is enormously effective. And while our goal of \$12,300 is small compared to HI's overall budget, it is crucial to the Boaco Project, which we like for its simple but effective strategy to empower women in communities and families and connect them through "passing the gift." We are eager to support food security projects like this one that support women and sustainable agriculture. And we like HI's combination of a holistic approach to gender equity in all its programming and focus on women in WILD projects. We have been delighted with HI's responsiveness and enthusiasm for our participation. And how can we not like all those cute kid and animal photos!

## ***The Plight of Nicaragua at a Glance***



Nicaragua was a Spanish Colony from the early 1500s until 1821. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it was ruled by the Somozas until the Sandanista Revolution (1979). In its first free elections in 1984, Nicaraguans chose the Sandanista Party, but U.S.-backed Contra guerillas challenged it in a civil war that extended until 1990, further devastating a people and land already torn apart by violence. In 2006, former Sandanista revolutionary Daniel Ortega was elected President and vowed to bring relief to Nicaragua's poor. But years of corruption and violence, environmental and economic decay, and the disastrous impact of Hurricane Mitch in 1998 make fulfilling that vow immensely challenging.

The influx of outside money through free trade (CAFTA) has done little to help most poor people. It has been accompanied by privatization, putting education and healthcare out of their reach. While rural poor have flocked to factories or factory farms owned by multinationals seeking jobs, little of the profit finds its way into their pockets or Nicaragua's economy. It's also meant an increase in the already high rate of poor single-woman-headed households and the decay of rural communities and families as men leave for factory work. For young women, often sent to the factories by desperate families who can't feed them, sexual exploitation is an ever-present danger.

Nicaragua is the largest country in Latin America (about the size of New York state) and next to Haiti, the poorest in the western hemisphere. 25% of its people live in extreme poverty. 20% of its children are malnourished. Unemployment is at 54%. And while there is poverty in the cities, all these statistics are worse in the rural areas where 43% of the population lives, almost 70% of it on less than \$1 a day.

Women's activity in the Revolution is lauded in memory and an energetic feminism associated with it and subsequent social reforms exists, but there have been setbacks recently and rural women have yet to realize the gains promised by agrarian reform or literacy campaigns. Domestic violence and abandonment are high in rural areas. Most women spend some portion of their lives as single mothers. Only 15% of women own the land they farm. Of loans granted to farmers, only 11% go to women.

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook>

<http://www.ruralpovertyportal.org/english/regions/americas/nic/statistics.htm>

<http://www.wccnica.org/node/175>