

Dining for Women



Program Fact Sheet

Program: Women for Women International (WFWI) WFWI is special to Dining for Women. After watching an Oprah show featuring Women for Women International, Marsha Wallace felt compelled to support the important work of this nonprofit organization. In January 2003, they received our very first collaborative donation.

Web Site: www.womenforwomen.org

Mission: WFWI provides women survivors of war, civil strife and other conflicts with the tools and resources to move from crisis and poverty to stability and self-sufficiency, thereby promoting viable civil societies.

WFWI envisions a world where no one is abused, poor, illiterate or marginalized; where members of communities have full and equal participation in the processes that ensure their health, well-being and economic independence; and where everyone has the freedom to define the scope of their lives, their futures and to strive to achieve their full potential.

Who They Serve: WFWI has helped thousands of socially excluded women, who are often a family's sole breadwinner and caregiver, to overcome the horrors of war and civil strife – in ways that can help them rebuild their lives, families and communities.

Where They Give: Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Columbia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Kosovo (in the former Federal Republic of Yugoslavia), Nigeria, Rwanda and Sudan. ***Dining for Women's October donation will support women in Rwanda.***

Rwanda Background

WFWI Rwanda Fact Sheet can be viewed and downloaded at www.womenforwomen.org/downloads/country_factsheet_rwanda_sunday.pdf

There are three primary "ethnic" groups in Rwanda; the Bahutu, the Batutsi and the Batwa (referred to in the West as Hutus, Tutsis and Twas). Following genocide in 1994, Rwanda is still in the process of rebuilding its economic and social infrastructure while also addressing post-genocide justice and reconciliation and the long-term effects of conflict on the population.

Rwanda came under colonial German control in 1899. After WWI, Belgium ruled indirectly from 1919 to 1935. Belgian colonial administrators allied with the Parmehutu political party, which was founded on partisan ethnic beliefs. With the knowledge of the Belgian government, the Parmehutu began a campaign of massacres in 1959 that eventually led to the unseating of the Tutsi elite. In 1962, Rwanda formally gained independence from Belgium.

During the 1960's and in subsequent years, the government's (First Republic of the Parmehutu and President Gregoire Kayibanda) ideology of "ethnic cleansing" caused over 150,000 Tutsis to seek exile in the neighboring nations of Burundi, Uganda, Tanzania, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

In 1990, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (comprised of exiled Tutsis and supported by the Ugandan government) invaded Rwanda, sparking a civil war based on ethnic divisions. Every level of Rwanda society participated in an attempted annihilation of the country's Tutsi and moderate Hutu populations. Between April and July (in the course of 100 days) 1994, approximately 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus were systematically killed and up to 500,000 women were raped, and 2 million fled into exile. Most genocide survivors were women and many were widows who suffered through bereavement, injury, trauma, isolation and illness. Women whose husbands were in prison, charged with committing the genocide, also struggled to raise their families alone.

In 1994, the regime collapsed. Rwanda's infrastructure was devastated by the genocide and millions fled to neighboring countries to escape prosecution for their part in the genocide. In 1996, the Rwandan government passed a law that called for the prosecution and punishment of those responsible for the genocide. The United Nations established the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda to prosecute persons responsible for genocide

and other serious crimes. With over 130,000 persons being held under accusations of complicity in the genocide, the government of Rwanda is facing a penal and judicial crisis.

The 1994 genocide devastated the already weak economy. 90% of the people work in agriculture. Today, over a third of all households are headed by women who lost their husbands. Many women, facing life without family members, are raising children who were born as a result of brutal crimes. Some have contracted sexually transmitted diseases, including AIDS. An additional 95,000 children were orphaned as a direct result of the genocide conflict.

In 2004, Rwanda marked the 10th anniversary of the three-month genocide that devastated the country. Despite numerous obstacles, Rwandan women have made great strides in the reconstruction of their country, and following the 2003 elections, Rwanda's parliament is close to gender parity with 49% female members. Yet, with a high number of female-headed households and a poverty rate of more than 60% among women, creating opportunities for women at the grassroots level is one of the country's major challenges.

History of WFWI: The organization was founded in 1993 by a wife and husband, Zainab Salbi and Amjad Atallah, who were motivated to act after learning of the plight of women in rape camps in the former Yugoslavia and the slow response of the international community. WFWI launched its activities by creating "sister-to-sister" connections between sponsors in the U.S. and women survivors of war in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In its first year, WFWI worked with eight women, distributing about \$9,000 in direct aid. They realized that financial assistance alone was not enough to create deeper change in lives of women who had lost everything. WFWI developed marketable skills, cultivated an understanding of women's rights and potential and helped secure ways to earn an income for years to come. By doing this, women gradually build the strength and stature they need to survive the horrors of war and become active community members.

Since 1993, WFWI has expanded its operations to serve 55,000 women survivors of war and distributed \$24 million in direct and microcredit loans.

Women for Women International has received amazing media coverage, including Oprah, Good Morning America and CNN Headline News. Anyone interested in viewing media highlights can find them at www.womenforwome.org/iinthenews.htm

How They Work: WFWI helps women in war-torn regions rebuild their lives by giving them financial and emotional support, job skills training, rights education, access to capital and assistance for small business development. They mobilize women to change their lives by bringing a holistic approach to addressing the unique needs of women in conflict and post-conflict environments.

WFWI works with women participating in a one-year program launching them on a journey from victim to survivor to active citizen. As women go through the program they assume leadership positions in their villages, actively participating in community reconstruction, building civil societies, starting businesses, training other women and serving as role models.

Women being in the **Sponsorship Program** where direct financial aid from a sponsor helps them deal with effects of war such as lack of food, water and medicine. Exchanging letters with sponsors provides women with an emotional lifeline. As their situations begin to stabilize, women begin building a foundation for their lives as survivors. The sponsor provides \$27 per month for financial aid and training. Today there are more than 19,000 sponsors in all 50 states as well as in 53 other countries. Last year, WFWI facilitated the exchange of 47,000 letters.

While continuing to receive sponsorship support, women then participate in the **Renewing Women's Life Skills (ReneWLS) Program** that provides them with rights awareness, leadership education, vocational and technical skills training and the opportunity to engage in community-based income-generating projects.

To help women transform their new skills into financial independence, job skills training strengthens women's existing skills and new skills are introduced so they can access future employment opportunities. A comprehensive business service helps women start and manage their own micro-enterprises. WFWI gives the women access to capital and microcredit programs as well as access to markets by facilitating product sales through outside retailers and an online Virtual Bazaar. They provide expertise in product design, production assistance and business development workshops. They also help women form micro-enterprises such as production facilities and cooperative stores to sell the goods women produce.

In Rwanda, the WFWI program is directed by 35 Rwandan staff members and offered services to 7,838 women through a core program in 2005 for a total of 11,116 women since 1997. Aside from providing malaria prevention

training, the Rwanda program provides job skills training in basket-making, tie-dye, tailoring, beadwork, card-making, hairdressing, mushroom-growing, knitting, catering, peace basket making, bag-making and soap and candle-making.

Please refer to [Violette's Story](http://www.womenforwomen.org/sffrwanda.htm) for an example of the women benefiting from WFWI programs in Rwanda:
www.womenforwomen.org/sffrwanda.htm

How Will DFW's Gift Be Used: Our collaborative October gift will be directed to women in Rwanda, training them in job skills so that they can become economically self-sufficient.

How They Measure Their Success: WFWI measures their success through notable achievements such as:

- * Linked more than 55,000 women survivors of war with sponsors worldwide.
- * Facilitated the translation and exchange for thousands of letters of support between sponsors and sponsored women.
- * Enrolled and graduated more than 55,000 women in Renewing Life Skills for Women.
- * Helped thousands secure employment and establish their own income-generating businesses.
- * Distributed more than \$24 million in direct aid and microcredit loans, maintaining a 98% repayment rate.

% spent directly on programs: 79% of contributions directly fund WFWI's Sponsorship, ReneWLS, and Income Generation programs. WFWI is committed to ensuring that every woman they work with receives the most from our contributions. Charity Navigator, one of the largest charity evaluators in America, recently gave WFWI its highest 4-star rating for "prudent fiscal management". Although Women for Women International operates on an overall budget in excess of \$11 million, the Rwanda program operates on an annual budget of \$480,000.

DFW Giving History with Program: Women for Women International is a special program for Dining for Women. When Marsha Wallace, founder, invited her first group of women to dinner in January 2003, WFWI was the first program we funded. Marsha learned of them while watching Oprah and was inspired by this organization to make a difference in the lives of women living in less fortunate circumstances than our own.

DFW's past financial gifts to WFWI include:

2003	\$600
2005	\$840

Note: Additional information regarding Women for Women International and Rwanda can be found on the Women for Women International website.