

® THE MAGAZINE OF HEIFER INTERNATIONAL

SUMMER 2019 || HEIFER.ORG

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Dear Determined Humanitarians,

Three years ago, we set a refined goal within our mission to end hunger and poverty: to move small-scale farmers to a living income. It's an important differentiator for Heifer, but it unites us with others who have pledged to help achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, specifically those of zero hunger and no poverty by 2030.

Though the SDGs are lofty, we believe they're truly attainable. We also believe that each one of you can play a part in helping shift the momentum so that we do achieve these goals — it's just a matter of how you frame your own goals. No one has illustrated this idea as eloquently as our own ambassador to Africa, Uzo Aduba.

Speaking at the annual Social Good Summit last year, Aduba reflected on how individuals could replicate in their daily lives the work of large-scale organizations. "One choice that we can make one day in our lives

has the potential to affect lives larger than we can count," Aduba said. "Our job is not to change someone; our job is to introduce a pathway for someone to walk down." That's precisely what we do at Heifer International.

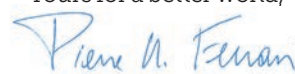
In this issue we'll take a look at one of our early successes of introducing new pathways to families that are helping us achieve our goals and the SDGs: our programming in Vietnam, where we've worked since 1987. While our work there is set to come to a close at the end of June, our projects are on a trajectory to exceed the living income benchmark by at least \$1,000. It's an early achievement in reaching our living income goal, and I find this to be a true Heifer success story at the macro level.

In the spirit of showcasing progress and achieving goals, we also offer a photo essay from Senegal. You'll see the very same communities we featured a year

ago as we return to the parched regions of West Africa where a well Heifer helped drill is now bringing fresh water for crops and livestock. And in a nod to our past, we also feature a historical perspective in an interview with writer Peggy Reiff Miller. She shares interesting tidbits as well as some insight into the evolution of our organization over the years, from a relief effort to community development and into market systems.

As you peruse this issue, I hope you're inspired by the progress we've made over the last 75 years. If so, I encourage you take a cue from Aduba and support our work going forward so we see an end to global hunger and poverty in our lifetimes.

Yours for a better world,



Pierre U. Ferrari
@HeiferCEO

Feed the Hungry. **FEED YOUR FAITH.**

Heifer International is a nonprofit dedicated to helping the least of these around the world lift themselves out of hunger and poverty. Our faith programs allow your congregation to join us on our journey toward a poverty-free future. Visit www.heifer.org/faith today for free resources.



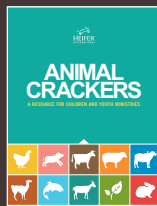
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features



COVER

Bui Thi My Nhan with one of the thousand chickens she's raising.
Photo by Phillip Davis

Top:
Khardiata Alassane Ba and her mother, Mariame Modi Sow, show off eggs from their hens.
Photo by Xaume Olleros

10 Histories Intertwined
Author and historian Peggy Reiff Miller began investigating the stories of post-World War II seagoing cowboys as a way to learn more about her family history. Her research also led her to dive deep into the early days of Heifer International.

18 Moving on in the Mekong
After more than 30 years, Heifer International is ending the Vietnam program, but the farmers and organizations involved in the projects continue to thrive and carry on the spirit of the work into the future.

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In the dry Sahel region, water is scarce, making farming and daily life extremely difficult. Heifer Senegal is making sure families and communities have water for human and animal consumption, crops and daily chores, as well as a reliable source of income and nutrition.





IN DEFENSE OF OVERPACKING

I loved Bethany Ivie's article in the Spring 2019 *World Ark*. I'm sending it to my sister-in-law — they love to travel, and my brother gives her a hard time about overpacking. Bethany, you go, girl.

JULIA CRAIG
Bothell, Washington

FROM MASSACHUSETTS TO MISSISSIPPI AND BACK

World Ark Spring 2019 arrived on a snowy day and brought back many memories. Thank you and your writers once again.

About Prentiss, Mississippi: I started my journey with Heifer in 1965, working in the New England office. Robert Mayhew

was the regional director, and the office was in Bridgewater, Massachusetts. At that time, we received all contributions from New England, prepared receipts and thank you letters, shipped educational materials, spoke to churches, congregations and schools, visited donors, and arranged for animal shipments gathered on farms in New England.

Prentiss Institute was one program that New England supported. First with shipments, via the United States Post Office, with boxes of 100-day-old chicks. We would pick up the boxes at the hatchery, open them, put a quarter of an apple in each of the four sections, tape them up and take them to the post office. I don't recall that we ever lost a chick.

Then, about 1967, we arranged for a freight car of cows and sheep, plus a dentist chair, a piano, and clothing and shoes to be on the rail from Boston to Prentiss. My husband, Paul, and I and Robert Mayhew were on the freight car with the animals, a stack of bailed hay separating us, but allowing us to feed and water the animals en route. I think it was a three-day trip. On one of our stops, the rail company put on a caboose for us. We finally arrived after several delays and being put off on another track until another engine picked

us up. We visited the recipients and Prentiss Institute. If I recall, a man by the name of James Norman was in charge of the livestock program there. That was before Willis McAlpin arrived. I am trying to locate my report on that shipment.

ROSALEE SINN
Plymouth, Massachusetts
Heifer staff 1965-2004

Q&A SUMMER

In this issue, we share a recipe for summer produce. Do you have a favorite recipe that uses fall vegetables? If you do, we might publish it for the next issue.



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For more stories from the field, tips on how to take care of the environment, recipes and other great reads, visit the Heifer International blog. Just go to **Heifer.org**, and click "blog" at the top of the page. Let us know what you think at **worldark@list.heifer.org**.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Please send your comments to **worldark@list.heifer.org**. Include your name, city, and a telephone number or email address. Letters may be edited for length and clarity, and may be published online as well as in print. Because of the volume of mail we receive, we cannot respond to all letters.



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Since 1944, Heifer has helped 34 million families, directly and indirectly, move toward greater self-reliance through the gift of livestock and training in environmentally sound agriculture.

Heifer International is a member of InterAction, the largest alliance of U.S.-based international development and humanitarian non-governmental

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CAN I RECYCLE THIS?

A **HANDY GUIDE** for
recycling at home.



A WORD OF CAUTION

Keep in mind that it never hurts to check with your **local recycling station** to see what can and can't be recycled – some recycling facilities can handle more types of materials than others. And whatever you're recycling – make sure to rinse all food residue before putting it in your bin.



The EPA estimates that **75%** of the American waste stream is recyclable, but we only recycle about 30% of it.

PLASTIC

This is probably the **most complicated question** on the list. And it's arguably the most important – after food, plastics take up the most space in municipal landfills. So, let's break it down.

Bottles, jars and jugs



ONE MILLION plastic bottles are bought **EVERY MINUTE** around the world and less than half of those bottles end up getting recycled.

Cups





PAPER

Disposable paper cups



NO!

In most cases, you can't recycle your cup because it's lined with polyethylene to hold your liquid better.

Some cups don't have the liner, but it's really hard to tell the difference, so you're safer just throwing it away.

Pizza boxes



MAYBE!

You can recycle a pizza box that has never been used.

Once the box has been coated in grease, most (but not all) facilities will say it's too contaminated to recycle.

Receipts

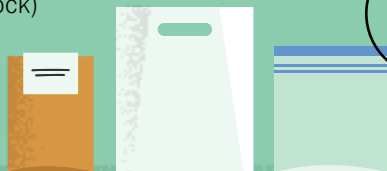
- Made of paper, but thermal paper
- Usually coated in Bisphenol A (BPA)

NO!

Contaminates the rest of the recycled paper with the chemical.

Bags of all kinds

(including shopping, packaging and zip-lock)



NO!

Although you can't put it in your home bin, you might be able to find a **drop-off location** that accepts them.

Styrofoam

That's a hard "no."



NO!

THE GENERAL RULE FOR ALL PLASTICS:



Yes, recycle it.



Probably not recyclable.



Check with your local collection service to see if they will accept it.

GLASS

Glass is **infinitely recyclable** — however, some city recycling programs don't accept it; it's hard to transport because it's heavy and breaks easily. You also generally cannot recycle lightbulbs.



YES!



NO!

METAL CANS

Like glass, you can recycle metal cans pretty universally. **Go for it!**



YES!



DID YOU KNOW?

Germany has the **best recycling rate** in the world and recycles **66.1%** of all its waste.



An Easy Summer Recipe for All Your Farmers Market Veggies

By Liz Ellis, *World Ark* contributor



If you're like me, summer is your favorite time to eat good food. And if you're lucky enough to have access to farmers markets and CSA shares, there are endless fresh goodies to be enjoyed throughout the warmer months. Sometimes though, the trick can be how to utilize anything and everything that's fresh without having to find a special (read: "fussy") recipe.

If this sounds familiar, this pasta primavera is a recipe that you will

want to keep as one of your go-to, easy weeknight dishes. For me, the best recipes are always the ones that I can adapt to whatever I have, and this dish is great with any of the beautiful veggies from your garden or market.

Even better, this is a dish that the kids will love! It's sort of a healthier, more colorful version of mac 'n' cheese. Ask the kids to help by picking out the veggies, chopping them or even arranging them according to which should go in the pan first. If

they are part of the cooking process, it's more likely that they will dig in with smiles at dinner.

Finally, having cooked for people (including myself) with all sorts of dietary preferences, this recipe is super easy to adapt. Using gluten-free or paleo pasta is a simple way to change the recipe. Try making a cashew crème sauce if you are interested in a vegan version of this dish. If you give this a try, let us know how it turns out!



Farmers Market Pasta Primavera

Makes 4 servings

- 4 cups assorted vegetables (asparagus, mushrooms, snap peas, carrots, cherry tomatoes — any combination), cut to bite size
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1 sweet onion, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 cup chicken or vegetable stock
- 1/2 cup heavy cream
- 1 pound small cut pasta (penne, rotelle, farfalle)
- 1 cup finely chopped fresh spring herbs (parsley, basil)
- 1/2 cup freshly grated parmesan cheese
- Salt and pepper to taste

1. Sauté the assorted veggies. Start with the ones that take a bit longer to cook, like carrots, and add in the softest ones last (like cherry tomatoes). Set aside when they are tender, but still a bit crunchy.
2. Start boiling water and cook the pasta according to the package.
3. Meanwhile, heat the oil and butter in a large sauté pan. Add the onion and cook until it softens.
4. Add garlic, stock and cream, and bring the mixture to a simmer. Allow the mixture to thicken for a minute or two.
5. Add in the veggies and cook them until they are heated through.
6. Drain the pasta and stir it into the mixture. Add a few tablespoons of pasta water if needed.
7. Plate the dish and top each serving with the fresh herbs and parmesan.
8. Enjoy!

Liz Ellis joined Heifer International in 2006 as the culinary coordinator at Heifer Farm in Massachusetts. Since 2015, Ellis has been a community engagement coordinator, currently representing the north central U.S. region.



A Perfect Pairing

This pasta primavera recipe pairs well with Winemaker's White from Maryhill Winery in Goldendale, Washington. Maryhill Winery in Washington State has been a proud supporter of Heifer International for more than a decade. Their latest support comes in the form of a custom wine label, available in both Winemaker's Red and White. Two dollars from each bottle sold will benefit Heifer International.

www.maryhillwinery.com





Histories Intertwined

Interview by Jason Woods, *World Ark* editor and photos courtesy of Peggy Reiff Miller and the Heifer International archives



Seventy-five years ago, farmer and Church of the Brethren member Dan West started Heifers for Relief, the organization that evolved into Heifer Project and is now called Heifer International. After his volunteer service in the Spanish Civil War, West returned determined to create a lasting solution to the rampant hunger he saw among refugees. His plan: instead of giving a cup of milk, donate a cow.

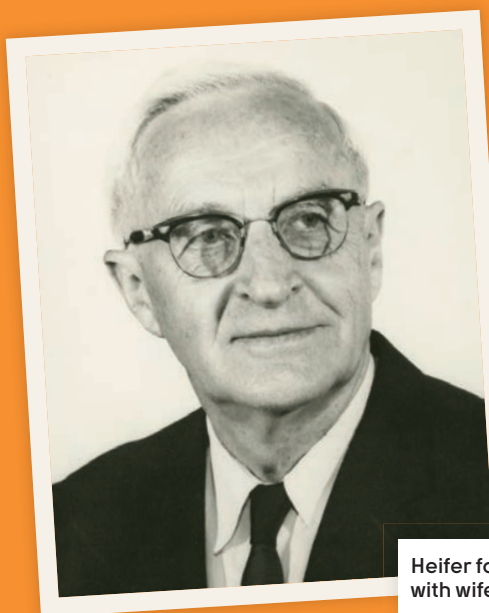
Writer and historian Peggy Reiff Miller can't remember a time when she didn't know about Heifer. When she was a child and West was in his 60s, the two were members of the Church of the Brethren in congregations in Illinois and Indiana respectively. Miller remembers West's involvement as a leader in regional youth events.

"[Heifer] was always a part of our knowledge," Miller said. "We just grew up with it."

Later in life, Miller discovered that her grandfather served as a seagoing cowboy, one of a group of men and a few women who volunteered to tend to the livestock shipped from the United States to other countries by the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration and then Heifer Project after World War II.

In 2002, Miller began interviewing men who served as seagoing cowboys as a way to find out what her grandfather's trip would have been like, and that work snowballed into more interviews, research and writing about the cowboys and Heifer. In 2016, she published a children's book titled *The Seagoing Cowboy*. As we celebrate our 75th anniversary, Miller shares her thoughts about the seagoing cowboys as well as Heifer's early years and evolution over time.





Heifer founder Dan West (left; pictured with wife and children on the right)



WORLD ARK: When did you first hear about Heifer?

PEGGY REIFF MILLER:

When I was a child. [Laughs]. I mean, I grew up in the Church of the Brethren. It was always a part of our knowledge. We just grew up with it.

Of course, Dan West was a huge leader in the church. Had an incredible interest in youth, and he was a leader at some of the regional youth events I attended. So there was always that knowledge.

And my roommate in college was the daughter of Heifer's executive at the time, Thurl Metzger. It's just something that's always been a part of me.

What was Dan West like?

For a teenager, when he was in his late 60s, very intimidating. I didn't really know him well, so

I can't say a lot. But just a very majestic, tall, stately person who carried a very serious demeanor.

When did you find out your grandfather was a seagoing cowboy?

I didn't know until after he died, actually. He died around 1969. Some years after that, I don't even remember when, my father gave me an envelope of Grandpa's pictures from his trip. I knew there were some Polish dolls in Grandpa's attic that we played with when I was a kid. And he had a cane, a wooden, carved cane from Poland. So those pictures really put it all together for me. Because at that time, I knew about seagoing cowboys and was kind of curious about the history. So that's really what got me started in digging into it, trying to find out what Grandpa's experience was like.

And I was interested in writing for children at the same time. So I decided I wanted to write a novel for young adults, and I thought, "What a great topic. A seagoing cowboy going to Poland." So then I started interviewing men who I knew had been cowboys. And one cowboy led to another and another, and, you know, the history just draws you in. And I realized that you couldn't tell the seagoing cowboys story without also telling the Heifer Project story. Because the two histories are intertwined.

You know, at first, they were separate. The seagoing cowboys were a program under the Brethren Service Committee to provide the cattle attendants that UNRRA needed—the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration. UNRRA isn't the same as today's U.N., it was kind of a precursor.



Abraham Reiff, Peggy Reiff Miller's grandfather, served as a seagoing cowboy. Pictured: his Merchant Marine card (top left), seagoing cowboy card file (right) and a signed photo from his 1946 UNRRA trip to Poland.



4845 Abraham Theodore Reiff Age 11523 49
Name Abraham Theodore Reiff
Address Milledgeville, Illinois
Church Affiliation Brethren Tel. Green 130R2
Injections for: smallpox ☐ typhoid ☐ typhus ☐ tetanus ☐
Remarks First of Sept.
Likely will come East to visit and contact us

Report	Report
S.S. <u>Pierre Victory</u>	S.S. <u>S.S.</u>
Sailed <u>9/30/46</u>	Sailed <u></u>
From <u>Newport News</u>	From <u></u>
To <u>Poland</u>	To <u></u>
Amt. due for trip <u>\$150.00</u>	Amt. due for trip <u></u>
Less: advance <u>50.00</u>	Less: advance <u></u>
travel <u>50.00</u>	travel <u></u>
Amount paid <u>100.00</u>	Amount paid <u></u>
Ck. No. <u>4440</u> Date <u>10/22/46</u>	Ck. No. <u></u> Date <u></u>

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Heifer Project leadership had been trying to convince UNRRA to ship some of the Heifer Project animals. Because this was after World War II when shipping wasn't available, except through the military and organizations like UNRRA.

The seagoing cowboy program was under the Brethren Service Committee to begin with. And Heifer Project was under the Brethren Service Committee. They were parallel. And UNRRA had about 12 of their 360 shipments carrying Heifer Project animals. Then when UNRRA disbanded after just two years of service, Heifer Project continued, and then the

seagoing cowboy program was directly under the Heifer Project.

That's interesting that you knew about the seagoing cowboys before you knew you had a family member who was one.

We never talked about it. And we kids didn't know to ask. That's been one of the really interesting things about my work. There are a lot of families that have been in that situation, that discovered. And they've been really grateful for knowing more about what their relative did through my work. That's been one of the biggest motivators for me in continuing for 17 years.

What's the most surprising thing you've found digging into the history of the seagoing cowboys?

That's a hard question. There's no one specific thing, but overall, for me, I think it was the power of the internet to make connections. Because I started my website in 2008, which was kind of fairly early on in terms of websites and blogs and so forth. And I had no idea when I started that website what was in store for me. And since then, it's just been one surprise after another. Because as I posted more and more material, I began to get requests from people for information. You know, from families of seagoing cowboys, from students, from



Hope the cow was delivered to Poland with 334 other heifers via the S. S. William S. Halsted in 1946.



Finding the Stanislaw Debert family, which received a heifer from the Heifer Project and a horse from UNRRA in late 1945, was the highlight of Miller's research trip to Poland in October 2013.



Cornelius Queling was one of many German Heifer recipients in 1950. Miller met him in Nierswalde, Germany, in September 2013.

elementary school through graduate students who were writing papers, Heifer International staff, when they would get inquiries from families of seagoing cowboys and needed information, they would contact me. And it would work the other way, too, when people were sharing information for me. And the biggest surprises were the international connections. Because that led to trips to Poland and Germany and Finland for me.

In Poland, it was an architectural history graduate student who contacted me for permission to use photos in an article that she was writing. We developed an email relationship, and using materials

that I had found in Heifer's archives about the shipments to Poland, one of her friends was able to track down one of the recipients of a heifer in 1945. That was in 2013, and he was just turning 90 at the time. And I had just an amazing interview with him.

And then another request came from a museum in Germany that led to an exhibition about the Heifer Project deliveries after World War II to the German-speaking people from Silesia and the seagoing cowboys that delivered the heifers to them. That was one of those Heifer trips through UNRRA.

This German museum is about Silesia. It's called the

Upper Silesian Museum. So I was able to go over, and I fed them information for the exhibit, and I was able to go over and see it.

And then the most recent surprise was contact from Japan public television that led to the piece that was in the Holiday issue of the *World Ark*. You know, I never know where the requests are going to come from. It's just ... that's been the biggest surprise of all, I think. Seventeen years ago, when I started this, I would never have dreamed that I'd have all these international connections related to the work that I was doing.

All because of my grandfather's packet of photos.



Dan West stood by the conviction to do as much for peace as a soldier does for war.



A color slide of Faith, the first heifer donated, with the donor, Virgil Mock (left), and the boy who raised her, Claire Stine (right).



Wilbur Stump, the first seagoing cowboy Peggy Reiff Miller interviewed, tending to a heifer on the Zona Gale.



Children from the Vila Skaut orphanage in Konstancin, Poland, stand by four seagoing cowboys and Hope, a cow donated by the Heifer Project, on Christmas Day 1946.



Do you have any favorite stories that you found?

I do. Story-wise, I think one that stands out — well, there would be three. The first, Heifer founder Dan West's story of his experience serving within the military as a conscientious objector in World War I. And that led him to the conviction that he wanted to do in his life as much for peace as a soldier does for war. And that was a large part of his motivation in starting the Heifer Project and many of the other things that he ended up doing. So that's probably my favorite of all stories.

Other favorites would be seagoing cowboy stories about the impact that their trip had on their lives. For some of them, these younger cowboys, for some of them, they changed their college major when they came home. To social work, or they went into the ministry. And many of them became peace activists. My favorite story of all with that is Harvard theologian Harvey Cox, who was a seagoing cowboy, and he tells about his experience in his book *Just As I Am*. And it's an incredible story about how seeing the destruction over there in Poland made him have the conviction that there could never be another war, and he became a peace activist. And it tells more about that in his book, too. It's just an amazing story, a 16-year-old who secretly wanted to be a part of the war but was too young and ended up being a peace activist.

What are some of your favorite Heifer historical photos?

There are three basically. One is a color slide that I found in Heifer's archives that I had no idea existed

of Faith, the first heifer, and her donor, Virgil Mock, and the teenage boy who raised her, Claire Stine. That's one of my favorites.

Another is the heifer Hope that was given to the Konstancin Orphanage outside of Warsaw, Poland. It's a picture taken on Christmas Day 1946 that shows Hope, who had only been there maybe not more than a week, and children from the orphanage and four of the seagoing cowboys from that trip who stayed behind in Poland to do kind of a tour for the Brethren Service Committee. So they were able to visit this orphanage and that's the heifer that I kind of modeled my picture book on. That's a favorite one.

And then one of seagoing cowboy Wilbur Stump, taken with him and the heifer he was tending on the Zona Gail on his trip to France. Wilbur was one of the first seagoing cowboys that I interviewed. So that's always been kind of special one for me.

In your view, how has Heifer changed over the years? How is it similar or different than the organization that started in 1944?

Well, it started out simply as a relief organization, just to provide relief to people who had been hurt in the war. And then it evolved into development, where the training aspect was added. Then, as the development aspect continued with the introduction of the 12 Cornerstones, Heifer evolved into community building. I mean, the transformation that takes place in communities through those 12 Cornerstones is just amazing. The stories that Heifer has told.

It's moved the next step now in terms of the marketing angle. Using cooperatives and marketing to ensure that there's sustainability for these communities that take on the Heifer project model. So it's an amazing development in terms of the purposes and the outcomes.

And then, I think another change, originally it was a Christian organization. It was started by the Church of the Brethren, within a couple of years, it became ecumenical, which was the goal from the start on the part of the Brethren Service Committee. The gifts of animals that were given were given in the name of Christ, not to proselytize but simply to be a form of service given in the love of Christ. And that was very important to Dan West all through the years.

But when Heifer incorporated in 1953, the tie with the Brethren Service Committee was broken. Broken sounds like a negative term, I didn't mean it that way because the Brethren Service Committee was very supportive of incorporation. Heifer was still faith-based at that point, but as the years progressed and board members were added for their expertise and not just simply because of their denominational connections, the church connection gradually fell away, and Heifer is no longer a faith-based organization.

Another change that I've seen is the personal connection between donor and recipient. In the early years, that personal connection was there. Either directly, from donor to recipient, or through the denomination, who had a connection that set up the recipients and overseas relationship through



Members of the Schulz family stand next to the cow they received in Lubeck, Germany, in 1956. In 1945, the Russian military forced the family to flee their native Poland.



The Labatzki family children with a cow donated from the Heifer Project in Friedrichskoog, March 1956.



An East Prussian settler with the heifer that was donated to his family from the Heifer Project.

a denominational agency or whatever. But there was more of a personal connection. And that was especially strong during years of the German shipments. There was a decade in the 1950s when Heifer made shipments to the German-speaking displaced people from Eastern European countries who were sent back according to the Potsdam Agreement, sent back to Germany at the end of World War II. So there were like 10-12 million of these displaced persons that Germany had to resettle. And many of those had come from farm

backgrounds. Heifer's shipments were mostly to help those displaced farmers. And the Brethren Service Committee had an office building they built in Kassel, which they called Brethrenhaus. And there was a Heifer Project office as part of that. They encouraged recipients to write thank you letters to the donors. So there were a lot of international relationships between these families that developed, and some of those still hold today. There's an incredible two boxes full of material in the archives that contain these thank you letters.

But as Heifer grew and the program expanded, it wasn't possible to keep up that donor-to-recipient relationship.

So what are you working on now, and what's next?

Well, I've been working on and hope that this year I can really focus on a book about the first decade of the Heifer Project. I spent the two past springs, three months in 2017, two months in 2018, at the Heifer Ranch to kind of sequester myself. I took all the minutes from the Heifer Project and Brethren Service



Seagoing cowboy Richard Tobias delivered twin calves on this trip to Germany in September 1956. The mother heifer was donated by his church.



Donald Baldwin talks with Japanese-American farmer Dale Sakuma in Burlington, Washington. Sakuma donated a heifer to be sent to project participants in Japan.



Two heifers arrive at the Vila Skaut orphanage in Konstancin, Poland.

Committee meetings up through incorporation in 1953. And I put all of those actions in a timeline. That gives me a framework to work with now. That's my goal for this year, is to hopefully get a first draft written. It's a big undertaking.

What are the most interesting points on the timeline you're working from?

Well, those first years were really fascinating in terms of the number of people that were involved. I mean, it was very much a volunteer organization at the beginning. And

to watch that evolution of going into staffing and the committee. It was all volunteer work on the committees. And the dedication of the people. And the difficulties that they ran into. I mean, there were a number of times, just in that 10-year period, where they talked about, "Can we go on? Should we close?" When UNRRA disbanded, that was a critical point because their free shipping was gone. Because their agreement was that the Brethren Service Committee would recruit UNRRA seagoing cowboys, and in return, UNRRA would ship Heifer

Project animals free of charge. So with that free shipping gone, that was a critical point where there was discussion about, you know, should we just bless what we have done and wrap it up?

But there was so much commitment, I mean the stories that the seagoing cowboys brought home about the tremendous need in Europe helped fan the flames. And the people who had already donated so many hours just wanted it to keep going. It's an amazing story of commitment and dedication and trials. ■

Moving On in the ➤ Mekong



The countless tributaries that crisscross the Mekong Delta are a major means of transportation.

For more than three decades, Heifer Vietnam has given farmers the tools they need to feed their families and make their farms profitable. This year, Heifer Vietnam farmers are set to exceed the living income benchmark — \$4,500 in the Mekong Delta — by at least \$1,000. Overall, in the last 20 years, poverty rates in Vietnam have fallen from nearly 60 percent to 20 percent. Heifer's work in Vietnam will end this year, but the future is bright for project participants in the country, as incomes continue to rise and institutional and provincial government partners continue to strengthen rural communities for years to come using the Heifer model.



Bui Thi My Nhan and her husband, Vo Thanh Khoa, raise a thousand chickens at a time, making a good profit.

By **AUSTIN BAILEY**, *World Ark* editor
Photos by **PHILLIP DAVIS**

A towering spread of cookies, hot tea and fresh fruit on a lemon-colored lace tablecloth welcomes visitors at the home of Vo Thanh Khoa and Bui Thi My Nhan, in the Tra Vinh province of Vietnam. Temperatures in the Mekong Delta stay balmy year-round, so the common room of the house is open to attract any breeze, its tile floors cool against bare feet. The bounty on the table reflects the bounty in the yard, where a thousand chickens scratch and cluck underneath tall net tents. Cows rest under trees in the back.

With its tall ceiling and sparkling white tile walls, the airy home is a welcome respite from the muggy heat and dust. The house used to be open all the time,

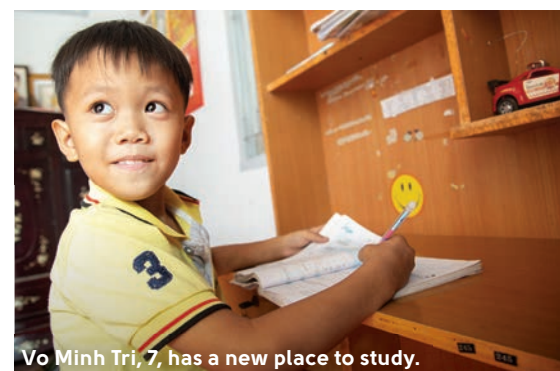
simply because the family didn't have the money to buy a door. Farming small amounts of rice, coconuts, pigs and chickens kept husband, wife, mother-in-law and son fed, but paid for little else.

In 2011, Vo Thanh Khoa and Bui Thi My Nhan joined with 14 of their neighbors on a Heifer project. They had raised free-range chickens before, but with the new project they penned the birds, vaccinated them against disease and kept them on a bed of rice bran and microorganisms. The special bedding mixture kept the pens from getting smelly and, once it mixed with the chicken litter, could be sold as fertilizer. The family soon added beef cattle to the mix.

Within a few years, their income doubled and so did the size of their home. While the original structure was cement

and thatch, the new addition gleams with pristine tile and a sparkling metal roof. As in most homes in this region, a few stairs lead from the ground up to the house, and everyone shucks off shoes before climbing them so as not to track in dirt.

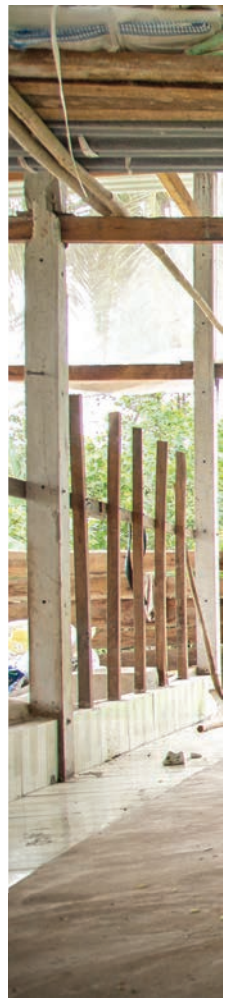
The new living area makes a clean, comfortable spot for 7-year-old Vo Minh Tri to study.



Vo Minh Tri, 7, has a new place to study.



Rice paddies make up a large portion of the landscape outside Can Tho City.



Farming communities that adopted the Heifer model will continue to share knowledge and animals in a ripple of giving with no foreseeable end.

This success story is a typical one for Heifer project participants in Vietnam, who have been turning gifts of chickens, beef cattle, dairy cattle and training into money for home improvements, savings and economic security since 1987. After 32 years, Heifer International will close its offices in Vietnam in 2019. The work, however, will continue. Farming communities that adopted the Heifer model will continue to share knowledge and animals in a ripple of giving with no foreseeable end.



Narrow paved paths allow motorbikes to access neighborhoods off main roads.

JUNGLE COWS

The ingredients for successful farming – water, sunshine and frequently replenished soil – all exist in abundance in the Mekong Delta, where annual floodwaters quench tired fields with mineral-rich silt. The ubiquitous rice paddies glow a nearly fluorescent green, and palm trees mark the boundaries between fields,

neighborhoods, jungle and the countless tributaries that reach into every part of this region. Women in matching flowered tops and pants cut elegant silhouettes in their iconic *non lai* straw hats.

The region grows more rice than it needs and exports it to the rest of the country. And in recent years, some farmers in the Mekong have added another product to



Duong Ut Mao pampers her Holstein mixes, even chopping their food for them.

their repertoire that's increasingly in demand, both locally and as an export: milk. Veer off the main roads into the rice paddies and jungle and you can find thriving Heifer dairy projects in the hidden communities around Can Tho City.

Boats were long the main form of transportation in the Mekong region. Today, though, motorbikes stream down roads and onto the narrow concrete paths that reach into the neighborhoods hidden behind curtains of dense jungle. The home of Tran An Sarinh and Duong Ut Mao stands where a narrow cement track gives way to an even narrower dirt path. The flat front yard rolls up to a waterway bustling with boats carrying fruit, ducks and other farm goods to market. The small wooden home seems quiet and lonely in comparison, but that's only because all the



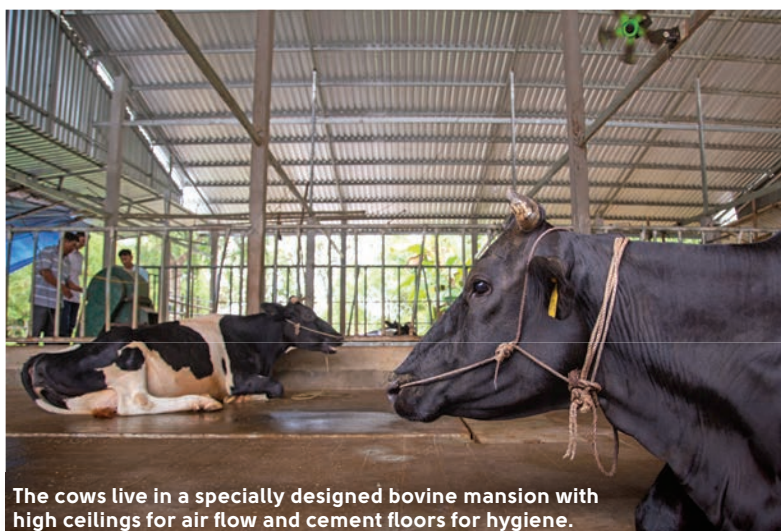
Tran An Sarinh runs a chopping machine that makes fodder more easily digestible.

activity happens around back in a palatial open-air dairy cattle operation the size of a fast-food restaurant. A slanted concrete pad provides a sanitary base for the

13 black-and-white Holstein mix cows who spend their days here, munching fodder and enjoying the shade of a 20-foot metal roof that keeps the sun away and the



Duong and Tran sleep in a loft inside their cow shelter so they can hear if a cow goes into labor or becomes ill during the night.



The cows live in a specially designed bovine mansion with high ceilings for air flow and cement floors for hygiene.



A mechanical milker makes the work go quickly.

“Beef takes a long time to see dividends, but for dairy you can get income daily.” – Phan Minh Hieu, Heifer animal well-being coordinator

air circulating. These beauties look like they would be more at home in the pastures of Wisconsin than in the balmy tropics of southern Vietnam. In fact, the cows are a cross of Holsteins and a local breed, giving them some good adaptations to their tropical climate and conditions while helping them produce the copious amounts of milk that Holsteins are known for. While they're relatively hardy, Duong admits she does pamper her Holstein mixes with mosquito netting, a chopping machine to make their fodder easier to digest and a three-times-a-day cleaning regimen that

keeps the cow shed manure-free and visitor-ready at all times.

The babying goes on 24-7. Duong built a loft bed with lacy pink mosquito netting at the corner of the dairy and sleeps there every night, just in case a cow goes into labor or gets sick. Her husband stays with her in the loft, so a grandmother sleeps in the house with the couple's 15-year-old son and 10-year-old daughter.

When the cows do need her care in the wee hours, Duong has many years of experience to call upon thanks to her Khmer heritage. While dairy farming is still not common in her country in general,



Tran delivers milk to a collection center via motorbike twice a day.

FAST FACTS ABOUT VIETNAM

Vietnam is an oblong country only 30 miles wide at its narrowest point, but it looms large in the American psyche. Nearly 60,000 American soldiers died in the Vietnam War, while the death

toll among the Vietnamese people was 2 million or higher. In Vietnam, the war is known as the Resistance War Against America. In 1975, a reunited Vietnam limited trade to fellow communist

countries. In the 1990s, the Vietnamese government reestablished economic relationships with Western countries, and its economy has since strengthened.



Pho, a noodle soup with countless garnishes and variations, is a popular street food in Vietnam and can be eaten any time of day.



Vietnam is officially an atheist state. In practice, however, most Vietnamese people practice a combination of Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism.



The Vietnamese unit of currency is called the dong.

milk has long been a part of the Khmer diet, and Duong and many other of the participants in Heifer's dairy projects here are combining their experience and expertise with new training and technology to capitalize on the growing market for dairy products in Vietnam.

Duong and Tran rise early each morning to milk their cows, then Tran sets off to deliver the milk to a cooperative collection center, a process he repeats each evening. Two large dairy companies, Vinamilk and Dutch Lady, buy milk from the cooperative, providing a reliable income source for the farmers. Phan Minh Hieu, an animal well-being coordinator who has worked with dairy farmers in the region for years,

says she's confident farmers have the knowledge and equipment they need to be successful even after Heifer International ends its Vietnam program this year. "The prices are good and the market is stable," Phan Minh Hieu said. She is among the growing number of parents in Vietnam who are now buying milk for their children, a cultural shift with both nutritional and economic benefits. Unlike beef cattle farmers, whose long-term investments come with delayed payoff, the Khmer dairy farmers are constantly motivated by nearly immediate returns on their investments. "Beef takes a long time to see dividends, but for dairy you can get income daily," Phan Minh Hi said.



The family keeps their animals comfortable and well-fed, and it shows.



There's no doubt Nguyen Van Dua and his wife, Huynh Thi Loan, have green thumbs.

LAND OF PLENTY

Vietnamese cuisine brims with fresh herbs and vegetables, and a chef would likely find every single ingredient he or she might need growing fresh and abundant on the farm of Nguyen Van Dua and his wife, Huynh Thi Loan. The farm itself takes up only a couple of acres, but it's so jam-packed with productivity that the family is enjoying financial security for the first time.

Success seemed elusive before 2013, when the family of five divided their efforts between rice and vegetable farming on less than one acre of land. Along with 25 other families, they signed on to a Heifer project that offered members training in how to boost farm production and loans to buy seeds and farm



Life blooms on every corner of the farm.



Integrated farming methods utilize animals and plants.



Vegetables are the focus, but the family raises cows, too.



Cow manure is composted into fertilizer.

equipment. Nguyen Van Dua and Huynh Thi Loan soaked up all the know-how they could at trainings on business planning and how to boost soil fertility, and they became star students. The couple opted to stop farming rice and focus on more labor-intensive but also more lucrative vegetable farming. By fertilizing their soil with compost and cow

manure and incorporating lots of clever and efficient tricks into their operation, the family more than doubled their income.

That extra money went directly back into the farm. The family doubled their land holdings and built an extensive irrigation system that saves countless hours they used to spend hauling buckets of water to each plant. The irrigation

LIFE ON THE WATER

The Mekong Delta at the very southern tip of Vietnam is not quite land and not quite river, but a soupy mix of the two. With its highest points still less than 10 feet above sea level, the entire delta sees annual floods that swallow towns and villages, regularly and to no one's surprise. The river and tributaries, along with manmade canals and flooded rice paddies, shape the land and the lives of all inhabitants. Elevated roadways are built to peek just above the annual floodwaters, and rice farmers rely on the huge nutrient-rich silt deposits brought in by the river to keep Mekong Delta soil productive enough to keep churning out enough rice to feed the entire country, plus some.

Boats have always been the main means of transportation in this region. But more than that, boats are, for many, home. Waterways bustle with houseboats where multiple generations of families live and work. Toddlers learn to paddle and swim at the same time they're learning to walk.

The water is also a source of food, livelihood and waste disposal, although the government is working to curtail the latter. Visitors crowd in to see the interplay of all of these elements come together in the Cai Rang Floating Market. Passenger boats launch throughout the morning from the boardwalks of Can Tho City,



The Cai Rang Floating Market attracts locals and tourists.



Boaters can fill their gas tanks without leaving the river.



Snack boats cater to hungry shoppers.

under the gaze of an enormous golden statue of Ho Chi Minh. From 5 to 8 a.m., this section of the river splashes with parades of Western tourists packed into canopied motorboats for the 45-minute commute to Cai Rang.

Traditional grocery stores and markets in Can Tho City are beginning to squeeze out the floating wholesale bazaar that clogs a half mile section of the river each morning. The market is much smaller than it

was even a decade ago. But it still bustles with boats piled high with pineapple, mangos, durian and other tropical fruit. Vietnamese women in traditional conical hats paddle canoes-turned-cafes to customers eager to buy bowls of steaming noodles for breakfast. Other floating snack shops offer coffee and rice cakes.

By 9 a.m., the sun and heat drive the vendors away, and the tourist boats head back to Can Tho City.



The family built their own biogas system.



Jackfruit rinds can be made into tea.



All-natural pest control really works.

Maestros of industry, Nguyen Van Dua and Huynh Thi Loan are geniuses at squeezing the most out of every resource.

further boosted production, and when the family switched to completely organic farming, the prices they got for their produce went up, too. The farm's most recent additions are a biogas operation that turns cow manure into fertilizer and one that uses natural gas for cooking and lighting.

Maestros of industry, Nguyen Van Dua and Huynh Thi Loan are geniuses at squeezing the most out of every resource. A pile of jackfruit peels dry on a cloth in front of their modest wooden home, soon to be ingredients for a tea they will sell. Handmade lantern-like pest traps that attract and capture insects are set out among the rows of onions, beans and bitter gourds. These traps, combined with

a diluted mixture of garlic and chiles splashed on the crops, erase any need to buy chemical pesticides.

Similar approaches are working well for other members of the group, and the \$2,500 revolving loan fund continues to help the farmers to boost productivity, and the high quality of their vegetables ensures a strong market. A few times a week, Nguyen Van Dua and Huynh Thi Loan host aspiring vegetable entrepreneurs who make a pilgrimage to see the clever planning and handy contraptions that churn out such enviable profits. The group is now working on the next step, creating a logo they can put on stickers they will use to brand their produce in the marketplace. ■

REPORTER'S NOTEBOOK: **DURIAN,** THE FRUIT YOU'LL LOVE TO HATE





To be fair, cheese smells pretty awful and Americans happily put away an average of 35 pounds of it per person per year. So please know that I mean no offense, and in fact I applaud and envy the sophisticated and healthy cuisine of Vietnam. Pho is unfailingly delicious. Fresh fish and spring rolls and tropical fruit for dessert? I'm all in.

But durian?

Most Americans have never heard of the delicacy that's so popular and revered in Southeast Asia that it's known there as "the king of fruits." It's certainly the most pungent. The smell is so distinctive, so pervasive and lingering, that durian is banned on public transportation in Singapore. In November 2018, an Indonesian plane hauling durian in the cargo hold was grounded when passengers refused to board because the stench.

Teams of scientists have devoted countless hours in the lab to figure out what biochemical compound cocktail gives durian its famous aroma. The unique fruit invites passion from both devotees and detractors. Famous fallen foodie Anthony Bourdain was a fan, although he acknowledged durian had some drawbacks. "Your breath

will smell as if you'd been French-kissing your dead grandmother."

Sound enticing? You'll find plenty of opportunity to sample durian in Vietnam on the road from Ho Chi Minh City to Can Tho City in the country's verdant, balmy South. High temperatures and humidity keep this tropical region lush and green, and roadside fruit stands are well supplied with mountains of spiky, oblong durian pods.

Friends had warned me that durian smells worse than it tastes, so I screwed up my courage as a fruit vendor sliced into two durians before finding one she deemed ripe enough. The smell was repellant, like rotten garbage soaked in fingernail polish remover, or a dumpster full of dead dogs on a hot day. The vendor chopped the durian in half, then extricated the plump yellow fruit that popped out cleanly from the pod. The texture of the fruit is custard-like, but with a smooth, dry skin.

It tastes better than it smells, it tastes better than it smells, it tastes better than it smells ... I repeated this over and over in my head as I went in for a taste. But my friends were wrong, I had been tricked and the taste was far worse than

I could have imagined. Like a putrefied, bloated organ harvested from a week-old corpse. I grabbed a banana from my photographer's hand and shoved it in my mouth in a desperate attempt to erase the flavor of death. Unable to put away any more of the durian, we accepted a Styrofoam clamshell of it to take with us. And even though we stowed it in the trunk, the smell quickly infiltrated and overwhelmed the entire car. My clothes and suitcase reeked of it for days.

Why does this fruit that's so beloved in Vietnam, Thailand, China and Indonesia remind me (and many other Westerners) of adolescent boys' sweaty tennis shoes stuffed with old coleslaw? The answer, apparently, lies in the different ways people's brains interpret olfactory sensors. Apparently, the complex components that make up durian's unique aroma are similar but not identical to noxious smells like sulfur and turpentine, so brains like mine lump durian into the do-not-eat category. Other brains, possibly more sophisticated or maybe just more practiced, interpret the aromas differently and find them pleasant and appealing.

A friend who lived in China for a year told me the trick is to keep eating durian. By the third taste, she said, you're hooked. I never made it that far, but plenty have. Durian fan clubs abound on the web, and so do opportunities to tour fecund durian farms across Southeast Asia during harvest season. Do you have what it takes? A disclaimer written in bold warns that these special tours aren't for everyone. "Prerequisite for travel: You must not dislike durian odor."

Better and Wetter in Senegal's Sahel

Daily life in the community of Nakara, Senegal, is not easy, and it takes a whole family pitching in to make it. But for thousands of families in the northeast of Senegal, finding clean water will no longer be a problem.

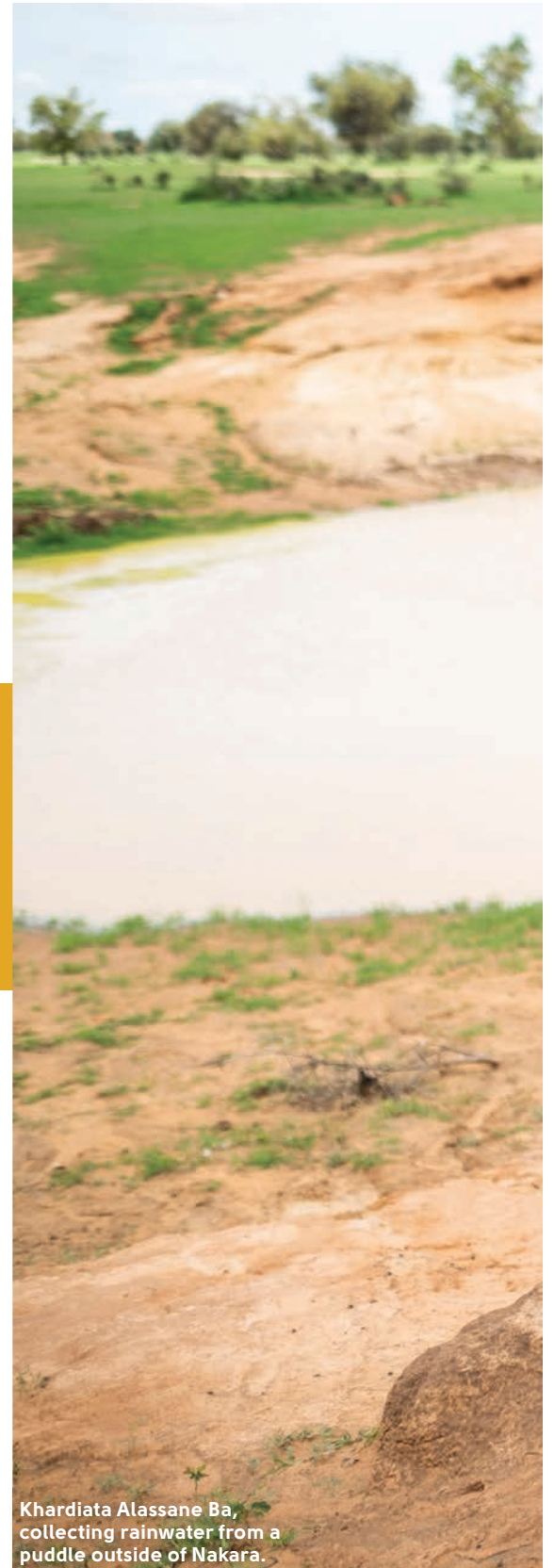
PHOTOS BY **XAUME OLLEROS**

In between two iconic landscapes, the vast Sahara Desert to the north and the tropical grasslands of the savanna in the south, sits Africa's Sahel region. Stretching from the Atlantic Ocean to the Red Sea, the Sahel is nearing a population of 100 million people.

Although life has never been easy in a place where rain isn't seen for eight months of the year, the effects of a growing human population led to increased soil erosion and desertification starting about 50 years ago.

In the community of Nakara in northeast Senegal, as in most places in the Sahel, water is a scarce commodity, and it takes a lot of time and effort to procure. Every day before and after school, 10-year-old Khardiata Alassane Ba helps her mother, Mariame Modi Sow, with the chores, which include gathering water wherever it can be found.

Heifer International is providing 3,500 people in communities like Khardiata's with year-round access to potable water for their families, animals and crops. The project will also double the incomes of 600 farming families. ■



Khardiata Alassane Ba, collecting rainwater from a puddle outside of Nakara.







Collecting water is a chore that takes up a lot of time and energy for women and girls who live in the dry Sahel region.

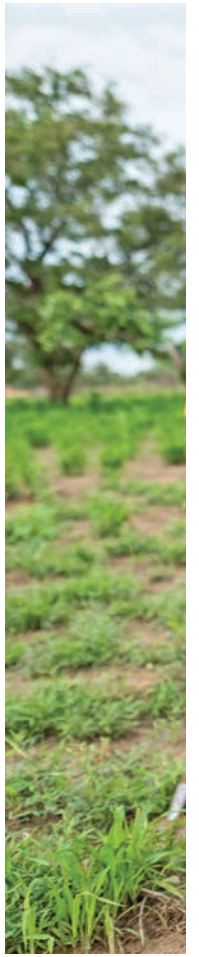
"Almost every day, you go and look for donkeys," Khardiata said. "When you come back, you take a donkey cart. If you don't have a bucket, you need to do everything to get one. Take it and go get water."

In addition to water for drinking, families must find water for cleaning, tending to animals and other activities. Khardiata and her mother also collect water to mix with cow manure to make biogas, as pictured on the bottom of the page on the left.

In the near future, families in Nakara will have a cleaner, more accessible source of water through the Heifer Senegal project. A well is under construction between Nakara and Younoufrere, another Heifer community.

Pictured above, men unload pipes, which will carry water up from a nearly 400-foot borehole. Since the well is so deep, a traditional handpump won't do at all. So a generator is brought in to pump the water up far under the ground.

The generator for the well will be solar powered. Once the well is finished, it will provide clean drinking water for two communities. The water will also be used to irrigate vegetable gardens and keep animals healthy.





Khardiata and her family also received chickens from Heifer Senegal. The eggs provide both income and valued protein in their diets.

Additionally, families in Nakara received hair sheep, which Khardiata sometimes milks with the help of her friend Aminata Harouna Sow, pictured on the bottom-right of the opposite page.

On a daily basis, Khardiata helps her mother with a variety of chores, which can include gathering firewood, cooking, cleaning or planting vegetables.





FOR MORE ON Khardiata
AND HER COMMUNITY, VISIT
[HEIFER.ORG/SENEGALWATER](https://heifer.org/senegalwater)
AND WATCH THE SHORT VIDEO,
“DREAMS FROM THE DESERT.”



Before the sun comes up, Khardiata starts her day with ablution and morning prayers. Afterward, she begins helping her mother by sweeping the ground around the house. In the afternoons, Khardiata prepares and eats lunch with other women who live in Nakara.

Some days, Khardiata uses a wooden notebook to learn the Koran during her informal religious schooling. Unfortunately, her family cannot yet afford to send her to the community’s school, pictured on the upper right.

For a child to attend primary school in Nakara, it costs the family about \$80 a month, a fee Khardiata’s family cannot currently pay. But that will change soon through the family’s involvement in the Heifer Senegal project.



Khardung La Pass and Back Again: A Biker's Tale

By Molly Mitchell, *World Ark* writer, and photos by Gunjan Mahanta

For Pranjit Talukdar, his road to working in international development and eventually Heifer India began on a motorcycle, riding the highest road in the world. Talukdar told us in his own words about the ten stops he made on his route to Khardung La Pass and back again, his misadventures along the way and how that road led him to change his life's path as well.



1 ► NEW DELHI

"I was in the banking and financial sector," Talukdar said. "I did my MBA like everybody else, and I joined the bank and started doing portfolio management, financial management and so on. So, I was doing pretty good. My dad's a doctor and my wife's a lawyer so I know how rich I could have become!" he laughed.

"Then I took a trip," he said. "What inspired me actually was that I watched *The Motorcycle Diaries* with Che Guevara, who did a trip across South America when he was turning 30. To find himself. He was a doctor, and when he came back, he became Che Guevara. I thought, I was turning 30 and that was a good idea. I was doing fine, but my boss's boss was doing exactly the same

thing, and there was nothing new."

Talukdar decided to take off on his own extreme motorcycle trip: riding Khardung La Pass, the highest motorable road in the world at 18,380 feet above sea level. He was used to riding a small motorcycle, but for this trip he needed a bigger one. He showed up at a friend's house two days before his trip with no supplies and no bike. His friend saw that



Talukdar was bound and determined to make the trip, so he was willing to lend his Royal Enfield Bullet and give Talukdar some guidance for the trip.

"He said, 'So what do you have?' I said, 'I don't know, I have nothing. But I am going to go. I will go.' He said, 'I know, I can see that.'"

"Because we were all from the army school, he knew how much I'd follow. So he drew the map of which places I must stay at night. He said to use as much of the daylight as you can. Start early in the morning, and halt before the sun sets. Do not, do not, ride at night. Because there's no road. No one will be able to find you if you get lost. He said to take enough petrol to fill your tank and an extra gallon. There's a place called Tandi, and that's the last petrol pump. There, you refill. 'Til then, there's nothing. After Tandi there is nothing. Again, refill your extra tank, and then go. Take your tent, extra tires, learn how to fix your bike. So I said okay."

Takular and the friend he took with him would end up breaking almost all the rules on their devil-may-care journey.

"I practiced one day, it went fine. I rode back to the office on his big bike. I was so thrilled. That was the night my sister-in-law threw a party. I didn't realize I was partying 'til 3 a.m.!" he laughed. "So I said, 'Oh damn, I was going to leave at 6.' So we went to sleep. At 6:37 a.m., we left.

"I went with my brother's friend. I should not have been travelling with a pillion, because the roads are really steep. But I did not have an option. He said, 'I can go with you, but I do not know how to ride a bike. I can only hang on to you. If we go down, we go down together. Let's go!'"

They started on their carefree

way out from New Delhi on a hot July day. After the first leg of the trip, they were already sunburned. "So, we tried to cover ourselves because after that first part it was getting colder," Talukdar said.

2 ► MANALI

"When we reached Manali, we were very happy. We had covered halfway. We were so thrilled we stayed overnight. And the next morning we shopped. Because apparently my brother's friend was not carrying warm clothes. He was not prepared! He was playing video games when I pulled him out!" Talukdar laughed. "So we shopped for warm clothes. While we were doing that, we started eating. We're both foodies, so we got some good food."

Talukdar had planned to leave

early in the morning, but at 2 p.m. he and his friend were still enjoying the food scene in Manali. But they learned that major construction was scheduled to start that very day on the road they needed to take.

"And I said, 'No! We cannot stay! We have to go!' So we went. In the rush we forgot to fill our petrol tank. And we went up.

"When we climbed up the mountain, we realized our petrol had gone into reserve. There was no petrol and we were in reserve already. So we [found a shop] and we figured out that we could buy petrol on the black market. Which is in those bottles you can get which are not very good petrol but at least it will last. We bought about four bottles which could take us to Tandi. So we got happy again!"



Sharp switchbacks and narrow roads are part of what makes the journey to Khardung La Pass a treacherous challenge.



In between Rohtang Pass and Kehlong, the bikers hit snow and extremely cold temperatures.

3 ► ROHTANG PASS

"After that we crossed Rohtang Pass, which is where the most tourists go. After that there is nothing. The moment we crossed Rohtang Pass, the snow started. It was freezing cold. It was bone-chilling. We put on everything we were carrying. I put on, I think, three jackets, and [my friend] also started putting on jackets.

"Then, we wanted to have a cigarette. The Zippo would not light because our hands were frozen. The cigarette was in my mouth, [my friend] was trying to light it and I was trying to pour the gas from the top. The gas fell on my hand and lit a fire there! He said, 'It lit your hand!' I said, 'I cannot feel it!' It was so cold!

"I lit my cigarette, and we filled our Zippo. So we went.

"Then we got very hungry. We stopped in one small bar and asked for some food. *Chapati roti* and mutton. It was so ... it was the tastiest mutton I ever had in my life. Man, we ate. You're told not to eat so much because it will not digest because the air is going to be thin, but we were starving and got such good food! We ate. We did not realize by the time we finished it was about 7:30 in the evening, and it was dark. So, we thought, can we stay here? They said, 'No no no, you have to go.'

"We were told not to drive at night. But then, we had nowhere to stay. So, we started riding at night. And there were times when we did not know which way to go, because we [couldn't see in the] fog. So I said, 'You know what, I think you should

go and try the top [route] first.' He got off and went to go check if there was a road there. He came running down! He said he was walking, and he could see that there was some water, there must be a water flow. He thought it was small enough to ride through. When he was about to step, he saw a big tree flowing by. He said if the current was so strong that it could take a tree, then we'll be caught! He said, 'Hell no! Take the other one!' So, the other way we went and kept going."

4 ► KEYLONG

"We kept riding at night. We had no option. If something had happened to us, no one would find us. We were so happy to reach Keylong. Not only did we reach Keylong, we found a hotel and there is a wine shop near it. Can you imagine? So I said, 'I think we have earned ourselves a drink.' And it was so cold. So we got rum. We had to! We lived! We thought we would not make it!

"So, we lived, and we had our share [of rum] and we had some good food. We went to check our bike, and we realized the shocker was broken. We found a guy who knew how to make bikes, and he had a whole bike. We bought his shocker from his bike and changed out the old one for the new one. So we got our petrol filled, and this time we had our extra gallon filled. And we rode."

5 ► SARCHU

"This ride was long. Very long. We kept going. And we reached a place called Sarchu. There you have to [camp]. Sarchu is like a valley. It's surrounded by mountains. It's ... it's very cold. It's," Talukar laughed, "It's killing. It's pretty cold. And



the good part is, there is one wine shop there. They know the truckers and the army guys, they need that. So did we. We had Maggi [instant noodles], and for the night we had some rum. And we spent the night."

6 ► GATA LOOPS

"Next morning. The Bullet that I borrowed from my friend, it was an old Bullet with the old system. Since it was so cold, it wouldn't start. I had to kick it about a hundred times to start it, and finally it got warm and it started. The moment it started, I said let's go on. We found roads ... small and narrow, but roads you have to take [Gata Loops – a road famous for its 21 switchbacks] to go up. I said we'll stop at 21 loops. The moment we started climbing, my friend had nature's call. I said, 'I cannot stop.' He said, 'You know I have to go.' I said,

'I don't know. I am not stopping this bike until 21 loops. Do you realize [how hard it is to] kick start? You do not even know how to ride a bike?'

"At one point [a truck pushed us] and we skidded and we fell. We fell towards the hill. But the moment we fell, as if he was waiting for this moment, he grabbed the bottle and ran into the forest!" Talukdar laughed.

"The truck drove off, and I got up and pulled up my bike. He came back and afterwards we climbed. 'Til then we were complaining about the gravel and how the road's not good. But then suddenly the bike went into sand. And I realized it was the desert. It was a river bed. It was a huge stretch of land. Then we looked for gravel, because [on gravel] we could ride the bike. We could not ride the bike anymore because there it has to be pushed through the sand."

Talukdar sighed heavily. "We thought we'd die. We pushed the bike across that part. There was no other way.

"Then, when we came to a little steady part, then we realized that my bike was actually broken [from when it fell]. I could only go in first gear. So I said, 'We are dead. What do we do?'"

Talukdar figured out a work-around for manipulating the gears on the bike and pressed on.

"Suddenly," said Talukdar, "The road finished. There was no road after that. After that what happened was, there was a riverbed where I got stuck. There was water which falls, and they had cut out a road there. But when [the water] keeps falling, it becomes too deep. So my bike was too heavy to come out. It got stuck.

"There were a lot of bikers during that time. They were waiting because they were also stuck one by one, and they pulled themselves out and somebody else helped them out. They saw us, and they helped us out. So, we learned how to come out of a waterfall if you get stuck," Pranjit laughed. "Next day we got stuck alone! So we had to get off the bike and put a stone underneath. We did not stop the bike. If the ignition stopped, then it would be very difficult to start again. Twice we got stuck and came out."



The view of Tanglang La Pass showcases the stark landscape in the Himalayas. It is imperative to be prepared, because populated places to stop are few and far between.



Pangong Lake was a highlight of Talukdar's trip.



**7 ► TANGLANG LA PASS:
17,480 FEET ABOVE SEA LEVEL**

"After that, the road suddenly finished. There was no road after that. Just trodden path, and it was climbing up. That was the toughest climb. And when we reached the top, it was Tanglang La Pass. It was the second-highest motorcycle road in the world. So, we climbed it. When we reached it, we saw there were other bikers who were finding it difficult to breathe because it was so high. We were so happy reaching there, we stood there, and we smoked again. We celebrated! We had to do something! We carried medicines to get us acclimated. But then our journey was so troublesome," Talukdar laughed. "We did not get to use them! I said forget about getting acclimated, we have to reach there somehow! So, we reached there, we smoked and we were happy for some time. We helped some other people who were trying to get acclimated — helping them breathe, sharing medicine and water, stuff like that. We thought that we had climbed up so high, that going down would be easier. We were on the bike but there were times you had to push, pedal through it because we were so high. So, we thought going down would be much easier. But then, it was not easy."

8 ► KHardung LA PASS

"There was no road even while going down. So now we had to hold on to our brakes very hard. The road was quite curvy, so we took many steep, blind turns. When we came down that hill, after that it was easy. There were good roads entering into Leh. So we reached Leh, where we would stay until the next morning



Talukdar and friends spent a day at Pangong Lake, which lies at 14,270 feet.

to go to Khardung La Pass.

"Before we could go to a hotel, we went to a garage. We said, 'Can you fix our bike please? Because we have been pulling our bike!' To climb up was okay — first or second gear. To climb down you have to get into neutral or do something because you cannot be in second gear to come down. And on the plain, you have to do something about it. He said that when we fell, the pedal on which the foot rests has bent, so it was stopping the gear. So he fixed it. We were all set to go for Khardung La Pass. We found a hotel, we stayed at the hotel for the night. Next morning, we went to Khardung La Pass. So there we were. We had our own time, and we celebrated there.

9 ► PANGONG LAKE

"[We heard] that there was a lake. If you do not go to this lake, your trip is not complete. So the next day we

went to Pangong Lake. There we met my friend Victoria from Boston and her brother Steve. They were also there, but they were in a car. So we took a dip there. We took a picture in the Chang La Pass, which is the third-highest motorcycle road. We went to Pangong Lake and spent the night, we had fun."

10 ► BACK AGAIN

"The problem was when we came back, we had missed one day. We had to stay one day extra to go to Pangong Lake. Those days I was in the bank, and we could not get such easy holidays. I had just 10 days, I had to get back. So ... now I had wasted one day, and I had two days left. "And I said, 'There is a problem. We'll have to drive overnight.' We had to drive through. We could not stop anywhere. Because what will you do? We had no other option.

"I would never advise anyone to



Gunjan Mahanta (far left), Pranjit Talukdar (middle left), and friends Victoria and Steve at Pangong Lake.



Talukdar and friends also visited Chang La Pass, the third-highest motorable road in the world.

do that again. No one should ever do that. But we did. And now I find myself so foolish. I was taking a chance for what, for a day in the bank? So, we drove overnight. We drove the entire trip. And it was scary. That trip was quite scary.

"When I reached Rohtang Pass, we were dog tired. We could not have driven anymore. And it started to drizzle. We parked the bike, and we slept. Right there, sitting and sleeping the way we could make ourselves comfortable. We slept for some time, got up and we went to freshen up. We were so dirty and ugly looking! We were in bad shape.

"So we came again through and stopped again in Chandigarh. When we reached Chandigarh, we stopped in the same hotel. We had some chicken soup. We felt good. I don't know why — I should not have thought like that — but I thought 'Why wait? Let's save this day. Let's

reach home, and then we will rest.'

"It was the wrong decision. The moment we got onto the highway, we were so tired I was not able to keep my eyes open. We would ride for 10 minutes, smoke, if we could get tea we would have tea, wake up, have some water, ride another ten minutes. That's how we came. When I finally got home, it was 4 a.m. My wife opened the door, and she could not recognize me for some time. When she finally recognized me, she said '... I think you need a shower. Let's talk after that.'

"But then, it was quite amazing. The places that you saw — it was so beautiful. There are places where you can just sit on the bike while riding, and you can just open your hand and you are able to touch ice on both sides of the road. You just open your hand, and you can touch ice. It's beautiful. It's clean, it's so clean, it's so fresh, it's so beautiful. It's worth taking a risk. But you should not do it alone. It was quite an experience. Now I know the tracks, now I know the mistakes.

Talukdar said this trip affected his life and choice of profession in a profound way.

"After I came back from that after about five or six months, I left my job and came into the development sector. I joined Save the Children.

"You spend so much time with you. [When] you work in a corporate land, you do not spend time with yourself, do you realize that? You follow a timetable, you do not spend time with yourself. I spent a lot of time with myself; I did not want to give it away again. I wanted to keep that with me.

"Yes, I think it did [affect his decision to leave banking]. I think

it did because ... I don't know if it makes sense, but it helped me to see. My life was mostly doing Excel sheets then. And numbers and portfolios and shares, which will make money and investments, which will make money. I do not know why, I do not know how, I do not have a specific answer. But then when you give so much time — you have nothing else to do, all you can do is just ride," he laughed.

"And I also ... the thing is, when I moved from the banking sector from the position I was pretty good at, it was a risk. I got a little brave to take risks. I think it is worth taking a risk, and I got a chance from Save the Children doing the same thing. I could use my expertise.

"First thing they did, they sent us to Rajasthan to the hottest place. They work for child rights. And we were a bunch of guys who came from corporations. And we were complaining all day about the AC. How come the AC is not strong enough, the hotel is not good enough. And we went there where there was no light, no current, no system of AC. And those children were so happy! Their happiness was infectious. You cannot complain, sit there and say that it's hot. We used to complain about everything in life. But then we see their houses, and they are so happy. And living better than us.

"So, the paradigm shift happens, but it happens gradually. You see that you are making people happy. What you were doing earlier, your clients used to shout that the profit could have been more. Now these people are happy. It makes you feel good. It's kind of addictive. So you stay. So I stay." ■



How a Heifer Project Prevents Migration

By Veasna Prom, Heifer Cambodia communication and networking manager



PHOTOS BY PHILLIP DAVIS

Meout Ya holds chicks given to his family by Heifer Cambodia.

More than a million Cambodians have migrated to find work abroad, most often in Thailand. Around 53 percent are undocumented migrant workers. As a result, they face many challenges, including staying in low-quality shelters, enduring poor working conditions and receiving lower pay than other workers. Many live in fear of being arrested

and deported back to Cambodia and losing all of their savings.

Chea Kimshour and her husband, Meout Ya, live with their three children in Rolea B'ier district, Kampong Chhnang province. Before joining a Heifer Cambodia project, Chea Kimshour's husband migrated to work in Thailand because of the lack of job opportunities in Cambodia. He needed to earn some money to support the family and

pay off their debts, and that left Chea Kimshour alone to care for their children and manage the farm.

In 2004, Meout Ya was able to migrate to Thailand through a broker as an undocumented migrant worker. Chea Kimshour borrowed \$500 from a middleman with an interest rate of 20 percent per month. In Thailand, Meout Ya worked as a construction worker for a small company and sent



Meout Ya and Chea Kimshour earn \$300 a month selling chicks.



Thanks to the family's poultry business, Meout Ya no longer needs to find work outside of Cambodia.

home only about \$50 per month to support his family. He rarely went outside his room and workplace because he was afraid of the police.

"I never slept well," Chea Kimshour said. "I always thought about my husband. When my children got sick, it was so hard for me to take care of them alone."

In January 2018, a Heifer project was introduced in her community, and Chea Kimshour joined the project's self-help group as well as an associated agricultural cooperative. Through the project, she received training that included business planning,



Chea Kimshour convinced her husband, Meout Ya, to return from Thailand to start a poultry business together.



Meout Ya tends to the chickens in the coop.



Chea Kimshour and Meout Ya hold a carton of eggs from their chickens.

chicken and garden management, leadership, microfinance and the 12 Cornerstones. Chea Kimshour gained a strong sense of confidence, and she saw the benefits of owning a business. She convinced her husband to return home to run a chicken operation together.

Upon his return, Meout Ya attended the training on chicken management with his wife. Together, they borrowed \$500 from the cooperative to start their poultry business.

At first, they were worried about the investment due to a previous bad experience where they tried to raise 15 chickens; most of the

animals died, and they lost money. After joining the project, the couple has successfully raised more than 180 hens with two incubators, and they produce at least 500 chicks per month. Now, they can earn more than \$300 per month selling chicks.

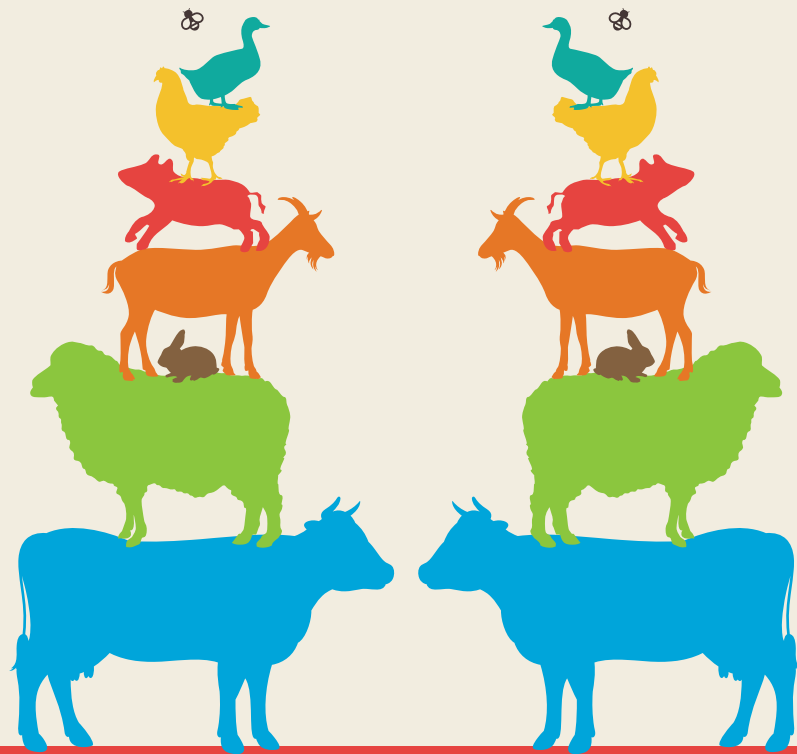
Chea Kimshour said they no longer have challenges selling their chickens since the cooperative connected them to local markets. With their success, Chea Kimshour and Meout Ya are sharing their knowledge and experiences with other self-help group members who are interested in raising chickens.

"I don't think I could raise hundreds of chickens without

disaster ... before receiving the training," Meout Ya said. "Moreover, I am no longer living with fear as I was in Thailand. [Now] I see my wife and children's smile every day."

"There's no greater happiness than having family members living together," Chea Kimshour said. "I will not allow my husband to migrate to Thailand anymore. Our chicken business is going very well, and we plan to expand our chicken pen and increase to 500 hens next year. I am so grateful that the project is implemented in my community and gives my family the opportunity to change our living conditions and to be together." ■

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The power of female friendship prevails in *Girls Burn Brighter*

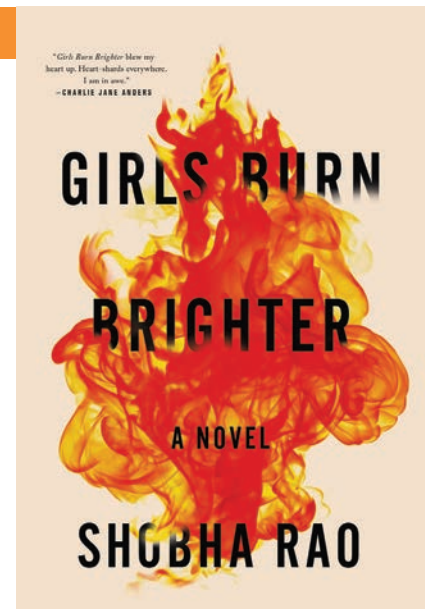
By **Molly Mitchell**, *World Ark* writer

Girls *Burn Brighter* is a love story about two girls who grow up together in a small village called Indravalli in Karnataka, India, and their epic quest to find each other after tragic circumstances separate them. The imaginative and confident Savitha and the sweet, chronically incredulous Poornima discover something startling together. They learn early that something is more important than marriage and more powerful than the burdens and expectations placed on them by the men in their lives: their friendship.

The love they share for each other is, as Savitha considers at one point in the book, the only relationship she ever had that was not tangled up in fear. As women living in poverty in India, Savitha and Poornima are abused at every turn in every way possible. The novel is a painful, frustrating read as these two guileless young women discover and strive against some of the ugliest forces this world has to offer – poverty, disease, misogyny and generalized cruelty.

It is heartbreaking to hear their inner thoughts, picking through thoughts and memories for anything remotely valuable, much as Savitha spent her girlhood picking through garbage heaps for scraps that might be valuable enough to sell. Savitha thinks often of a scrap of indigo fabric she wove for Poornima, and Poornima holds precious a memory of her late mother brushing her hair. They come to recognize that their friendship is the only thing bringing color and vitality to lives sapped of joy by poverty. As a reader, one groans to watch the girls fall victim to those who would (and do) make them slaves.

Even though the novel is fictional, the horrible things that happen to Savitha and Poornima are all too real for thousands of girls around the world. Human trafficking is alive and well in India, preying on young girls seeking to escape poverty and abuse at home or from forced marriages. Lured by promises of jobs, these girls are forced to disappear into the black hole of the sex trade. Fearing physical punishment, rape and



***Girls Burn Brighter*
By Shobha Rao
Hardcover \$25.99
paperback \$17.99
416 pages**

harm to their families, escaping these situations alone is nigh-on impossible, and corruption in law enforcement leaves little hope for help or conviction of these crimes. In 2015, almost 7,000 cases of human trafficking were recorded, according to the United Nations



Office on Drugs and Crime. Of course, human trafficking is a notoriously difficult crime to track, so these numbers are in all likelihood only the tip of the iceberg. According to John Winterdyk, professor of criminology at the Canadian Mount Royal University, via *Asia Times*, "Estimates point to about 200,000 victims in India but there could be more. It is one of the fastest growing and most profitable crimes. About 90 percent of the girls trafficked here are for the domestic sex trade."

Sex trafficking may be the most extreme expression of misogyny

Poornima and Savitha experience, but the universal hatred of women both girls experience from almost every man they encounter in their lives — not only pimps, but fathers, romantic partners, husbands, brothers — is crazy-making and maddeningly realistic. Poornima is attacked with hot oil by her husband, permanently disfiguring her face. No one she encounters after the fact is surprised by this. They know it was her husband and are only idly curious whether he used oil or acid. This practice is alarmingly common in India and

throughout Southeast Asia today.

While starting off at something of a slow burn, *Girls Burn Brighter* catches fire as you become desperate to find out whether Savitha and Poornima are reunited at last. Savitha and Poornima's friendship and love for each other, "burning brighter" than their grief and anger and pain, would be impossible with a man in their lives' context. It is only with a fellow woman that it would be possible, and is perhaps powerful enough to help them survive the unrelenting horror of being born a girl into poverty in India. ■

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“I want to study to be a teacher
and teach boys and girls.
Then I’ll send the money home
and tell my mom, ‘Take this and
share it between you and Dad.’”

– 10-year-old Khardiata Alassane Ba

In Nakara, Senegal, harsh conditions and a lack of opportunities make it hard to turn dreams into realities. Things in the community are starting to change through a Heifer Senegal project. A solar-powered well means convenient access to clean water, and Khardiata’s family is earning more income through the chickens and sheep they were given. Soon Khardiata will be able to attend school so that, down the road, she can both become a professional and support her family.

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