



**“Definitely there is more awareness of the need to start including this kind of perspective just to get to the goals that we all want to reach...The goal is not only just to elevate women, but to make a more prosperous agricultural system for everybody.”**

**AGRI INVESTOR JANUARY, 2023**

## THOUGHT LEADER

# Leonor Gutiérrez Fernández

Leonor (Leo) Gutiérrez Fernández, Director of the Women in Agriculture Initiative (WAI) at Root Capital, is an expert in working at the intersection of gender equity, impact investing, and global development. She has been featured at conferences and events hosted by industry leaders, including [INCAE](#), [Vista Alta](#), [Business Fights Poverty](#), and [Impact Frontiers](#).

At Root Capital—a nonprofit that invests in small and growing agricultural enterprises to transform rural communities—Leo leads the organization’s strategy to advance gender equity in the impact investing space. As Director, she collaborates with Root Capital staff and partners around the world, including farmer-allied businesses, multilateral organizations, corporations, and funders. Under her leadership, Root Capital has proven that gender-inclusive businesses are:

- More stable and profitable;
- Less likely to experience significant revenue dips;
- Less likely to default; and
- More likely to secure new sources of financing

Leo’s gender equity expertise has been featured in [Agri Investor](#), [Philanthropy News Digest](#), and more.

As the Executive Director of Vital Voices Costa Rica from 2018 to 2020, she played a pivotal role in providing strategic consultancy and mentoring to local and international corporations striving for gender equality. Her work with Vital Voices Global Partnership, an international non-profit organization based in Washington, D.C., focused on empowering women leaders in the areas of economic empowerment, women’s political participation, and human rights. Her diverse leadership experience has equipped her with valuable insights and a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by women worldwide.

In addition to her professional accomplishments, Leo dedicates her time and expertise to volunteer work. Since June 2020, she has served as the Director and Volunteer Manager of a “listening brigade” for Vital Voices Costa Rica, providing psychological first aid and support to women from rural areas. Her efforts have positively impacted the lives of more than 2,000 people.



## SPEAKING EXAMPLES

- [Gender Lens Investing webinar](#)
- [Women in Agriculture \(WAI\) video](#)

## TOPICS OF INTEREST

- Finding impactful solutions to social and environmental issues
- Promoting gender equity and inclusion
- Youth empowerment and education
- Fundraising and community engagement
- Leadership development and networking

**TO BOOK LEONOR GUTIÉRREZ FERNÁNDEZ FOR A SPEAKING ENGAGEMENT OR MEDIA INTERVIEW, CONTACT [COMMUNICATIONS@ROOTCAPITAL.ORG](mailto:COMMUNICATIONS@ROOTCAPITAL.ORG)**

## ABOUT ROOT CAPITAL

[Root Capital](#) invests in the growth of agricultural enterprises so they can transform rural communities. These enterprises purchase crops such as coffee, cocoa, or grains from smallholder farmers. With growth, they become engines of impact that can raise incomes, create jobs, empower women and young people, sustain peace, and preserve vulnerable ecosystems. Root Capital supplies these enterprises with vital resources: access to capital, trade and technical partners, training on financial management, and conservation practices. To date, Root Capital has distributed \$1.85 billion to more than 768 enterprises and provided training to more than 1,800 enterprises—collectively improving the lives of 10 million people in farming communities.