



WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE INITIATIVE

ANNUAL REPORT 2018

Overview

Root Capital supports the advancement of rural women, whether they work on the farm or in the boardroom. Our lending to gender-inclusive businesses enables women farmers to sell their crops at higher prices. Our advisory services help women technicians, accountants, and managers develop a range of important skills. Our investments in women-led businesses unlock new opportunities for female entrepreneurs.

This holistic impact is possible because of our Women in Agriculture Initiative (WAI), through which we've been transforming the lives of rural women since its launch in 2012. Our average outstanding balance to gender-inclusive businesses in 2018 was \$22.8 million, representing an all-time high of 48 percent of our total portfolio. In the last five years, we've more than doubled the number of women farmers reached via our lending, from 117,000 in 2014 to a record 246,000 last year. But it's not just about reaching greater numbers of women—in 2018, we introduced gender sensitivity trainings into our advisory services, adopted a comprehensive Gender Action Plan to build inclusion in both our client-facing and internal practices, and addressed new

and diverse challenges faced by rural women. [Read our 2018 mid-year WAI report to learn more.](#)

Expanding the Impact of Gender Equity Grants

In our [2017 Women in Agriculture Initiative report](#), we highlighted the successful implementation of our first round of Gender Equity Grants (GEGs) in Kenya. In the initial pilot, we disbursed grants to three agricultural businesses undertaking projects to advance women's participation, skills, and leadership.

The first GEGs were a [resounding success](#). In 2018, we expanded the GEG program to three additional clients in Kenya and six in Peru. Once again, we worked closely with managers, employees, and farmers to conduct a diagnostic of barriers and challenges for women associated with the business. Each client then proposed one or more context-specific projects they could undertake utilizing the \$20,000 grant in addition to their own cost-sharing funds. In Kenya, these projects ranged from supporting women-led crop collection centers to promoting income diversification activities. In Peru, clients focused primarily on strengthening the participation of women in management and decision making within the business.



Expanding the GEG program was not without its challenges. Our staff learned important lessons about how the program must be adapted to different contexts. During the first round of GEGs in Kenya, we supported agro-processing businesses where the majority female staff engages with the business onsite on a daily basis. For coffee cooperatives in Peru, the GEGs targeted women farmers, who make up a smaller proportion of the cooperatives' members and are more geographically dispersed. We also learned that our clients in Peru had less baseline knowledge of gender equity. As a result, the proposal development process required more time, during which we conducted gender sensitivity trainings to help these enterprises understand how best to improve gender equity within their business and the local farming communities.

In 2019, Root Capital will implement another round of grants in Kenya, Rwanda, and Uganda. We are also launching [a round of GEGs](#) in Central America that will be our first grants to focus on building women's resilience to climate change.

Sharing Our Expertise on Gender Inclusion

While evaluating and measuring our impact has always been crucial, in 2018 Root Capital also prioritized sharing those lessons within the broader field. In November, our Women in Agriculture Initiative Lead, Katie Naeve, spoke at the Gender-Smart Investing Summit in London. On [her panel](#), Katie talked about how investors can address the smallholder financing gap while advancing women's participation all along the value chain.

We also published an essay in [Girls Leading: From Rural Economies to Global Solutions](#), a report by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs. In it, Root Capital's Founder and CEO, Willy Foote, made the case that women and girls are the

backbone of rural communities, and highlighted our efforts to support them through the WAI. And finally, Root Capital's approach to gender analysis was spotlighted in a [case study](#) by the Gender and the Economy program at the University of Toronto. Collectively, these demonstrate our growing position as go-to experts in the area of gender-inclusive solutions for smallholder farmers.

Looking Forward

Over the last several years, Root Capital has solidified our commitment to improving the lives of women in rural communities. Our Women in Agriculture Initiative continues to grow stronger and smarter, thanks to our partnerships with gender-focused funders, investors, experts, and, of course, gender-inclusive agricultural enterprises. In 2019, with your support, we will continue to expand and refine the WAI to reach more women in more places and address more of the barriers that hold rural women back from reaching their full potential.

Special thanks to our dedicated WAI philanthropic partners:

- IKEA Foundation
- Investing in Women
- Landry Family Foundation
- Wagner Foundation

CLIENT PROFILE

Elizabeth Garzon Piamba

Agricultural technician, ASPROSI farmer association; member of CoSurCa cooperative

LOCATION: COLOMBIA / PRODUCT: COFFEE



Rich mountain soil and plentiful rainfall have made the province of Cauca one of Colombia's most important centers for agriculture. But decades of civil war stymied the region's economic development. Today, the coffee farmers of Root Capital client CoSurCa are determined to build a better future—for women and men alike.

Founded in 1993, CoSurCa is what's known as a secondary cooperative. The business aggregates 12 different small farmer associations that collectively serve 1,500 farming families. By bringing these smaller enterprises together into one larger cooperative, CoSurCa provides farmers with a more reliable market, while guaranteeing a steady supply of coffee beans for its exporting arm. Root Capital has supported the collective business with on-site advisory trainings and more than \$11 million in credit since 2005.

One of CoSurCa's member farmer associations is Asociación de Productores Orgánicos de La Sierra, or ASPROSI. ASPROSI trains members to adopt organic farming practices that will help them increase yields and incomes. Importantly, its technical staff is 75 percent women—something that is extremely rare among coffee cooperatives in Colombia. This allows ASPROSI to better meet the needs of its women farmers, who otherwise would have far less access to training,

inputs, and resources than their male counterparts.

Elizabeth Garzon Piamba is one of ASPROSI's *tecnicas* (agricultural technicians). And she recognizes the difference it makes to have a woman training other women. "Only as a woman do I understand that women are first up to prepare breakfast, they're awake at 3am to turn on the oven and the last to sleep at night," she says. Elizabeth is all too aware of the double burden these women face, because she herself has a 4,000-tree coffee farm and a family to care for. Drawing on her own experience, Elizabeth thinks about her role holistically. It's not only about training women farmers in technical skills. As she puts it, "It's about accompanying them." When one woman needed a doctor's appointment for her child, Elizabeth—who lives closer to town—set it up for her.

Elizabeth is an example of a "hidden influencer": a role that is highly influential, though less visible than a

business' top-tier leadership. When women fill these vital roles—for example, as agronomists, field officers, or accountants—they can have a ripple effect on other women throughout the business. Elizabeth herself recognizes the demonstration effect she has, noting that her example gives other women farmers confidence that they can adopt new practices that might otherwise seem daunting.

Enterprises like ASPROSI and CoSurCa play a critical part in unlocking opportunities for women throughout the value chain. It starts with their commitment to supporting the whole community. As Elizabeth puts it: "It's not just about producing organic coffee. It's more. It's about my kids, my livelihood."

BY THE NUMBERS

48%

Percentage of Outstanding Balance to Gender-Inclusive Clients

\$22.8M

Outstanding Balance to Gender-Inclusive Clients

45%

Percentage of Gender-Inclusive Clients

39%

Percentage of Women Farmers

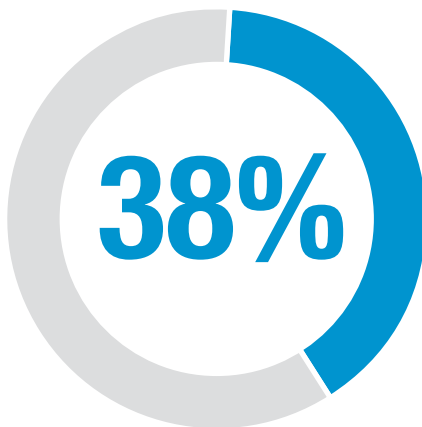
246K

Number of Women Farmers Reached

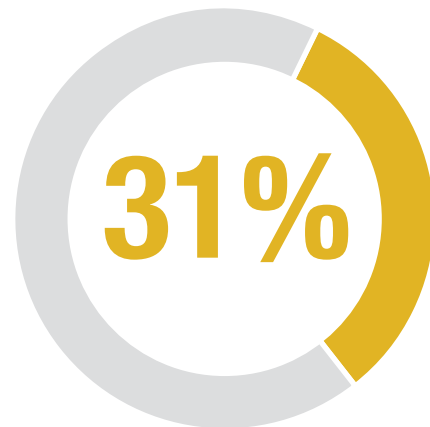
15%

Percentage of Women-Led Businesses

Percentage of gender-inclusive businesses providing loans for on-farm and personal investments



Percentage of all Root Capital clients with programs specifically designed to support women



Average Participation of Women Producers in Each Region



Participation of Women Producers in Main Industries

