



ECONOMIC  
EMPOWERMENT

# GLOBAL WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT FUND

» SEMIANNUAL REPORT: October 2018 through March 2019

*Prepared July 2019*

# ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

## VISIONFUND GLOBAL UPDATE THROUGH MARCH

**1.1 MILLION CLIENTS** provided with microloans by leveraging nearly \$143 million in equity to support \$347 million in loans disbursed.

**3.5 MILLION CHILDREN** impacted by microloans that help parents provide more income for such improvements as nutritious food, school fees, improved housing, and healthcare.

**70 PERCENT OF CLIENTS SERVED ARE WOMEN.**

**58 PERCENT OF CLIENTS SERVED LIVE IN RURAL AREAS.**

## PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Women's Empowerment Fund (WEF) aims to build the resilience of women and their families, improve gender equality, and support the development of livelihoods by increasing access to and the quality of financial services available to vulnerable women.

The fund is facilitated by VisionFund, World Vision's microfinance network.

In areas VisionFund serves like the Palorinya settlement for refugees in Uganda, the U.N. Commissioner for Refugees reports that 67% of heads of households are women.

The WEF encourages community savings groups, in which women work to provide for their families, as well as rebuild confidence in their ability

to send their children further through school than before.

The first phase of this two-phase project grew loan capital for women to invest in small businesses and farms.

In the first half of FY19, the second phase of the project launched, with the goal of strengthening services and community links to savings groups, insurance products, and financial education for women.

In 2018, SEF International, World Vision's microfinance initiative in Armenia, received the Agent of Change Award from the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development for Sustainable



*With the help of microfinance loans, this family has been able to grow their agricultural business in Sri Lanka.*

Energy Microlending. As of this May, SEF has made it to the second round of consideration for a 2019 Microfinance Award for Strengthening Resilience to Climate Change.

# GOAL AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Five-year program goal through fiscal year 2021 is to improve financial access by doubling VisionFund International's current reach to annually benefit:

2 MILLION WOMEN

6 MILLION CHILDREN

Expected outcomes:

Increase financial access for vulnerable women, particularly in rural areas

Improve quality of financial services, tailored to meet women's needs

## SEMIANNUAL HIGHLIGHTS

Improved products and relationships focus on the needs of women

In FY19, the focus of the Women's Empowerment Fund is to provide loan products and financial education to women and expand service areas in Armenia, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and Uganda.

All VisionFund microfinance institutions (MFIs) that receive money from the fund agree to track extensive social data that will enable the VisionFund network to analyze over time the combination of products and services that produce the best outcomes for women.

Following are accomplishments from this reporting period:

### Armenia

When a female business owner is supported, there is tremendous potential for continuous positive impact for her children, her employees, and her employees'

children. Financial services that ensure her business' sustainability impact her community exponentially.

Between October 2018 and March 2019, VisionFund's MFI in Armenia, SEF International, launched two new products to bolster and encourage healthy business growth for women, with a special focus on women in rural areas.

Programs launched:

- A loyalty program to reward good repayment history was launched and benefited 1,046 female clients. They received quick microloans for their business and agricultural needs. These loans have a lower interest rate than similar products from SEF or SEF's competitors.
- For International Women's Day in March, a special loan product

was launched that allowed women to take out loans up to \$2,100 for developing agricultural businesses. Tailored to each client's needs, it considers such factors as product seasonality and cash flows. This loan offers an extended term of three to 40 months, giving women more flexibility in financial planning.

- 156 women in target areas across the country received free financial consulting and business planning help as part of WEF's loan support. As a result, 485 children in their households, as well as 105 employees and their 47 children, were benefited.
- A Family Financial Management app (FFM) was launched for women entrepreneurs and those managing households.

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## SEMIANNUAL HIGHLIGHTS (CONTINUED)

The app helps users manage household finances and offers a free marketplace for buying and selling household items. Installing and registering a method of payment within the app is easy and free. For business owners, FFM can be used to connect with customers and suppliers. With more widespread use, the goal of the app is to support a woman's capacity to make decisions for herself and her family.

### Myanmar

In Myanmar, women in rural areas feel the effects of gender inequality the most. These women usually do not have permanent jobs and most are seasonal workers.

From interactions with VisionFund Myanmar (VFM) clients, we know that when they are able to develop their own livelihoods for a steady source of reliable income, they gain a sense of independence and accomplishment as they are able to provide for their children's needs.

#### Highlights:

- WEF provides funding to five branches, which serve 22,145 women total. Many of them are women with children living in rural areas.
- We've learned that trading is the most popular business among these women, with 57% of WEF clients running grocery stores, tailoring, trading animals and fuel or charcoal, and selling meat and vegetables. Fishing is also a popular industry in the Irrawaddy River delta region.
- By the end of March 2019, 153 clients in the delta region received WEF funds, a positive impact that carries a ripple effect for 226 children.

### Sri Lanka

In March, a new WEF product was launched in VisionFund's Nikawaretiya branch exclusively for widows, single mothers, and women with disabilities.

#### Features of this product:

- This microloan is capped at \$275.
- VisionFund plans to roll out this product to the other branches in the upcoming quarters. In the rest of the fiscal year, training programs for clients will be introduced.
- Because this loan focuses on the most vulnerable, these loans may be disbursed slower than other loan products.

### Uganda

For the first half of FY19, the MFI has focused on hiring and training new field officers and finishing development of the Savings Group Linkage Loan, available to established savings groups.

Savings groups forge community, which is especially important for refugees in the Palorinya resettlement camp where this project is working. This helps these women regain a sense of stability and serves as a good entry point for women's economic development.

New field officers were hired to serve savings groups with the new loan product. Women who come from the communities they serve are well-connected, trusted by their neighbors, and understand the needs and constraints of women and members of savings groups.



*The Moyo branch of VisionFund celebrates its grand opening. Moyo lies close to the northern border of Uganda where it meets South Sudan.*

#### Highlights:

- Eight new field officers were hired and trained, five of whom are women.
- A new branch was opened in Moyo (pictured above), near the Palorinya refugee settlement. The main product offered will be the Savings Group Linkage Loan for the rest of FY19.
- While the Savings Group Linkage Loan was the primary initiative for the Moyo branch's opening, the branch already has garnered strong interest in different types of lending from the settlement and from women's business groups in town.
- Mobile money disbursements will be used to reach faraway groups. Field officers can now review loan applications remotely, so group members no longer have to travel one to two hours to the branch.



## REACHING THE GREATEST NEEDS

*Tehmine Margaryan (age 36) lives with her husband and children in Margahovit, a major village in the Lori province of northern Armenia. As her husband often must leave the family farm for work, it's on Tehmine's shoulders to care for their five children and make financial decisions.*

To provide for their family, Tehmine's husband works in construction, but often has to leave for other regions of Armenia for the job.

Tehmine is taking the lead in raising their five children, caring for the household, and directing the farm's business.

In Armenia, many areas are routinely subject to climate shocks. This winter lasted all the way to the beginning of April. In recent years, this kind of extreme weather has become frequent.

The Women's Empowerment Fund enables VisionFund's microfinance initiative in Armenia, SEF International, to grant loans to families like Tehmine's.

Through SEF, Tehmine received a loan equivalent to \$1,092. These funds ensured forage for her animals that lasted them through the end of the harsh extended winter.

With support to sustain the family farm, Tehmine is able to continue to provide for her children.



I can rely on SEF's quick support any time and in any difficult situation ... This allows me to plan and move forward step by step and ensure a better life for my kids."

—Tehmine

## FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Project-to-date spending expressed as a percentage of project-to-date budget

Loan capital and operations

**\$2,722,473 spent** **55%**

## PROGRAM SPENDING

Summary	Program-to-Date Spending	Program-to-Date Funding Released to Project	Program-to-Date Spending Rate
Loan Capital	\$ 1,974,300	\$ 3,350,195	59%
Operating Costs	\$ 67,555	\$ 384,861	18%
Management and Fundraising	\$ 680,618	\$ 1,245,019	55%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 2,722,473</b>	<b>\$ 4,980,075</b>	<b>55%</b>

Fiscal year 2019 is from October 2018 through September 2019.



World Vision is a Christian humanitarian organization dedicated to working with children, families, and their communities worldwide to reach their full potential by tackling the causes of poverty and injustice. Motivated by our faith in Jesus Christ, we serve alongside the poor and oppressed as a demonstration of God's unconditional love for all people. World Vision serves all people, regardless of religion, race, ethnicity, or gender.

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