EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Countless women around the world are building successful small businesses. But the odds against women entrepreneurs in many developing countries can be staggering. Often, they face limited access to credit and property, household obligations that consume their waking hours, and cultural standards that discriminate against them. Oxfam’s Women in Small Enterprise (WISE) celebrates those women who have defied the odds and creates partnerships that ease their pathway to further growth.

Through WISE, Oxfam serves in its convening role to support collaboration between financial institutions, nonprofit organizations, and academia working together to advance women’s economic rights in Guatemala. WISE works alongside a suite of Oxfam initiatives in Guatemala that contribute to the overall vision of achieving greater economic independence and empowerment of women.

WISE is designed for women emerging from microfinance-lending programs with businesses that show potential for further growth. These women often are not able to access growth capital as they fall into the “missing middle financing gap”: the gap for loans larger than those offered by microfinance institutions and smaller than what would be considered by mainstream banking institutions. Core components of the initiative include the WISE Fund, which supports loans to women entrepreneurs in partnership with local financial institutions, training programs for women designed to increase their economic leadership and efforts to strengthen the image of women entrepreneurs as role models and leaders in their communities. We are delighted to share developments from the beginning of 2016 with you in this report.

COVER: Ana Dominga Cuc Baquin, owner of Típica Sinaí, sells locally woven and embroidered pieces. Ana has also received a loan to invest in raw material. Ilene Perlman / Oxfam America

ABOVE: Gloria Martina Chávez Mus, a maker and seller of shoes and a WISE entrepreneur, stands in her store, Calzados Schel. Gloria has received a loan to invest in machinery that will help grow her shoe business. Ilene Perlman / Oxfam America

WISE STRATEGIC IMPACT OBJECTIVES

1. Women entrepreneurs have sustainable access to appropriate finance.
2. Women-run businesses demonstrate improved performance.
3. Women entrepreneurs feel more empowered and influential.
4. Women entrepreneurs are perceived as positive role models and leaders.
5. Women entrepreneurs benefit from a supportive policy environment.
1. The third WISE cohort, which consisted of 65 women, has completed three months of training and coaching activities in Baja Verapaz. The graduation celebration drew 300 family members and friends to celebrate the accomplishments of the women in the cohort.

2. In May, the WISE Fund signed an agreement with COOPSAMA, a cooperative bank that is part of the larger MICOOPE network. COOPSAMA has embraced the WISE program and has developed a specific loan product for women entrepreneurs called “Mujer Emprendedora” or “Woman Entrepreneur”.

3. COOPSAMA held “Mujer Emprendedora” launch events in June with the first three cohorts of WISE entrepreneurs to describe COOPSAMA’s unique offering as a credit cooperative and explain how they plan to serve the women-run business market.

4. The WISE team brought on a new Chief Investment Officer, Alicia Robinson, to work from Guatemala to increase our presence on-the-ground. We believe having a stronger presence in-country will help our team be more effective and efficient.

5. We identified a Guatemala-based research partner to join the team of Oxfam and Babson College to replicate and formalize the mystery shopping methodology that we piloted last year in WISE. This engagement will allow us to create an evidence base around the effectiveness of the tool as a method to identify unconscious bias in the banking sector.

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**IMPLEMENTATION PRINCIPLES**

1. The WISE initiative is implemented successfully and efficiently through collaboration with external partners, leveraging their unique skill sets and resources, to broaden opportunities for women entrepreneurs.

2. The WISE initiative is implemented responsibly based on excellent monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning (MEAL) systems, active budget management, sufficient funding, transparent/on-time reporting, and regular team coordination.

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1 WISE is being implemented in line with recommendations suggested in the recently released article by Hughes et al., “Women’s Economic Inequality and Domestic Violence: Exploring the Links and Empowering Women”, published in the July 2015 issue of Gender & Development.
# WISE Program Milestones

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WISE Fund final close</td>
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| Coaching support (cohort 1) | | ★
| Loan application (cohort 1) | |
| Loan funding | | LOAN FUNDING
| WISE program promotion (cohort 2) | | ★
| Participant selections (cohort 2) | | ★
| Participant training (cohort 2) | | ★
| Engaging men pilot (cohort 2) | | ★
| Negotiate agreement with COOPSAMA and the WISE Fund | | ★
| Pre-WISE program promotion (cohort 3) | | ★
| Participant selection (cohort 3) | | ★
| Participant training (cohort 3) | | ★
| Junior coaches network launched | | ★
| Coaching support (cohort 3) | | ★
| Training COOPSAMA on WISE methodology and gender | | ★
| Mujer Emprendedora product launched (cohorts 1 – 3) | | ★
| First Mujer Emprendedora loans (cohort 1 – 3) | | ★
| COOPSAMA launches Mujer Emprendedora marketing campaign | | ★
| Mujer Emprendedora loan applications (cohort 4) | | ★
| Training and support of entrepreneurs (cohort 4) | | ★
| WISE Fund Annual Meeting | | ★

**Processes** ★ **Milestones**
WISE UPDATES ON PROGRAM GOALS

WISE GOAL 1: WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS HAVE SUSTAINABLE ACCESS TO APPROPRIATE FINANCE

The financial component of WISE underwent much change during the first half of this year. After reaching out to the MiCOPE cooperative banking network, the WISE team has signed a new agreement with COOPSAMA, a regional credit cooperative based in Alta Verapaz. COOPSAMA is an excellent partner for WISE because they have a demonstrated ability to grow, while maintaining solid capitalization and strong asset quality. In addition, COOPSAMA’s focus on community service is wholly aligned with Oxfam’s vision of greater financial inclusion for women entrepreneurs. As a credit union, the organization is member driven and not-for-profit with a self-sustaining mandate, all of which bodes well for sustainability and responsible lending practices.

This change is representative of a larger evolution in our thinking of how to implement the program. While we’d previously sought to scale on a national-level, we are now pursuing an approach wherein we support the development of regionally based partnerships. We believe this approach will be more feasible logistically, while leading to solutions that better suit the unique needs of the different regions in Guatemala.

The partnership with WISE is being driven by COOPSAMA’s entrepreneurial Director General Emilio Garcia, who is profiled later in this report. Under Emilio’s direction, COOPSAMA has developed the new product, titled “Mujer Emprendedora”, meaning “Women Entrepreneur”, which includes coaching support, leadership training and preferential terms to support women in building out their businesses. COOPSAMA has assigned a loan officer specifically to the WISE program and is planning for a big marketing and advertising push in July.

As a first step in our partnership, COOPSAMA made a presentation to the first three cohorts of WISE entrepreneurs in June to introduce themselves and the “Mujer Emprendedora” product. Entrepreneurs had the opportunity to consult with the management team and loan officers about their specific business needs and ask questions.
WISE GOAL 2: WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS DEMONSTRATE IMPROVED PERFORMANCE

We completed our first training of a “pre-WISE” cohort after making the strategic decision to create a new pathway to support women who had lower levels of loan readiness and education. The pre-WISE training focused on basic business and financial concepts, as well as empowerment and self-confidence. This cohort, which consisted of 65 women, has completed three months of training and coaching activities in Baja Verapaz. The graduation celebration drew 300 family members and friends to mark the women’s achievements.

Women in this cohort received support from the first ever university-based network of coaches linked to a social entrepreneurship effort like WISE. Through Rafael Landívar University, IDEA identified 18 Junior Coaches to work with this pre-WISE cohort, 9 women and 9 men. The Junior Coaches, who are students at the business school, were trained in the WISE methodology, monitoring and reporting system, as well as given an introduction to gender topics. In addition to a desire to learn new coaching skills, many of these Junior Coaches decided to join WISE so that they could share their experience with people who have had fewer opportunities. For example, Andrea M, one of the Junior Coaches, is only 26 years old. She joined the WISE program with a strong desire to understand the realities of life in rural Guatemala. Several others cited social responsibility as a key motivation for engaging with WISE, and many of the coaches felt they had learned a lot in the process and were deeply inspired by the women they set out to support.

Additionally, the WISE team has continued building out our state-of-the-art monitoring platform to increase transparency and real-time information sharing. The system, known as WISEDOM, was created in partnership with the data analytics platform TaroWorks and will provide accessible information on the program to partners in Guatemala, fund investors, program donors and the entrepreneurs themselves. The coaches from our training partner have access to the system and are able to directly input data into the system after their meetings with the entrepreneurs through tablets they can take out on loan from our office. We are continuously working to improve the interface for the coaches to ensure they are capturing the most meaningful metrics to allow us to monitor business growth. The system also generates weekly and monthly reports for each coach and their manager summarizing, for example, each coaching session, which reduces internal reporting requirements. Dashboards have been developed to summarize key metrics...
which will be used as a basis for discussing the progress of the entrepreneurs, their businesses, and loan repayments during monthly partner meetings.

WISE GOAL 3: WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS FEEL MORE EMPOWERED AND INFLUENTIAL

In April, Oxfam’s partner Value for Women facilitated a workshop for a small group of WISE participants focusing on household dynamics, family support and the participation of men in the success of women’s businesses. Traditionally, women’s economic empowerment interventions have failed to contemplate the role of men in work that, at its core, is about shifting gender roles. This pilot workshop was meant to investigate how WISE could be developed in a more holistic fashion. The pilot is a three-part series that builds skills for both men and women separately and allows for testing these skills together as a couple. The training was supported by the National Network of Men who aims to “build new approaches of masculinities, with cultural relevance, to promote active and committed participation of men in the country’s development”. A representative of the group attended the training to underscore the importance of men supporting their wives and families, equality and equity, responsible parenthood, communication, and more. For more details, please see the following page. Going forward, we will investigate how to bring activities from the pilot into the formal WISE training curriculum.

WISE GOAL 4: WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS ARE PERCEIVED AS POSITIVE ROLE MODELS AND LEADERS

Related to the pilot described in WISE Goal 3, WISE has been engaged in a learning-exchange with Agora Partners, based in Nicaragua, Crea Comunidades de Emprendedores Sociales, based in Mexico, and Aspen Network of Development Entrepreneurs’ Central America & Mexico Chapter to seek how to best support women in the context of entrepreneurship business training programs. In addition to learning from each other, this learning exchange involved a presentation from a WISE entrepreneur, Elvira Yolanda Raldia Vasquez, owner of Marranería Centenario, a butcher store. Elvira spoke about how her role as head of her business was repeatedly challenged by her brothers and her father, who doubted her abilities. After Elvira won the WISE graduation ceremony business competition, her father, who came as her guest, was so impressed that he registered the business formally in her name. Stories such as Elvira’s demonstrate the crucial role that men play in enabling women to become role models in their communities.

Coming out of these learning exchange activities, Value for Women is crafting a paper on effectively engaging men to encourage leadership and autonomous decision-making among women business-owners, based on many experiences in WISE. This paper will be published in the next reporting period.

WISE GOAL 5: WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS BENEFIT FROM A SUPPORTIVE POLICY ENVIRONMENT

The final pillar of WISE looks to create a supportive policy environment for women. Our current focus in this work is investigating unconscious bias in the banking system and the extent to which banks offer different terms and conditions for male- versus female- entrepreneurs. During the period, we identified the research-lead in Guatemala: Consult-Centroamericana run by Dr. Edgar Balsells. Consult-Centroamericana has completed extensive field work in the areas of rural development and micro-finance. In addition, Dr. Balsells brings strong academic experience as a lecturer as well as a researcher. His publications include work looking at the Guatemalan banking sector regulations. We are working closely with the Center for Women’s Entrepreneurial Leadership at Babson College and Consult-Centroamericana to design the study, which we expect to complete in early 2017.

**REASONS GIVEN BY JUNIOR COACHES FOR JOINING THE WISE INITIATIVE:**

- Explore a different personal and professional experience which also contributes to my country
- My personal and professional growth since I can learn a lot from these women
- Desire to help Guatemalan women get ahead
- Working with brave women to improve their quality of life
- Social responsibility
- Gain experience and see the reality of life in the rural areas
- Develop as a coach and help guide people towards their goals
- Being able to volunteer and share my knowledge to people who have not had the same opportunity
- Providing support and knowledge with women entrepreneurs
- Opportunity to promote change in Guatemala
PILOT WORKSHOP: ENGAGING MEN IN WISE

MODULE I: SOFT-SKILLS
Women Only
Leadership and soft-skills training has been identified as critically important aspects of business training programs such as the one offered by Crea in Mexico. The goals of improved self-esteem, confidence, and self-perception are sought through exercises focused on communication and negotiation. Negotiation skills are important not only to enable women to negotiate effectively in their business contexts, but also to get the support they need from their families to run their businesses successfully. Soft-skills training does not need to be isolated, and should, if possible, be incorporated into the entirety of the business development training program for women.

MODULE II: GENDER ROLES
Men Only
The second module is intended for the male-counterparts of the women business owners. This module presents the business case and benefits of women’s entrepreneurship and economic empowerment and its impacts on both men and women. This portion of the training also provides men with a space to think critically about gender, traditional gender roles, and equity. Designed with male learners in mind, it focuses on promoting self-interest (versus altruism), in order to effectively engage participants.

MODULE III: “MODERN FAMILY”
Women and Men
The last module brings men and women back together to share their learnings from the previous sessions and to participate in joint business and household planning. The concept of accountability is the most important to this module. Coming out of relatively safe spaces in modules one and two, it is important, especially for men, to confirm their newfound skills in front of their partners. Oxfam’s experience with the pilot program in Guatemala showed that while it was easy for men to speak as champions of gender equality in the men-only module, they were hesitant to express these opinions as vociferously in front of their wives. Sharing these learnings as partners is essential in keeping both parties accountable to the progress made in the first two modules.
THE WISE ECOSYSTEM

The WISE Ecosystem is a critical element of WISE implementation. The partnerships that make up the WISE Ecosystem allow us to leverage the competencies and networks of our partner organizations, enabling us to do far more than we could ever do on our own. We are pleased to have attracted COOPSAMA as our newest ecosystem partner, a financial service provider that is as committed to the principles of community development and strengthening of individuals through financial inclusion as we are.

COOPSAMA was founded in 1967 and has over 13,000 members. COOPSAMA offers a variety of financial services including various savings products, differentiated loan products, remittance services, insurance and credit cards. COOPSAMA has experienced strong growth recently, increasing its loan portfolio by 40 percent in the past year. COOPSAMA’s management and staff see it as their role to invest in their community with frequent community service offerings, strong local presence, and innovations beyond financial inclusion, such as links to affordable healthcare.

COOPSAMA is part of the MICOPE network. MICOPE is a network of 25 cooperative savings and loan institutions with 1.6 million members and 237 agency locations across Guatemala.

OXFAM CONVENES DIVERSE INSTITUTIONS WITH A COMMON GOAL OF SUPPORTING WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS
Emilio Garcia, Director General of COOPSAMA, is guided by COOPSAMA’s guiding principle: “Cero excusas” or “No excuses”. To Emilio, this expression encapsulates a drive to excellence and a rejection of mediocrity. He lives by this principle, seeking to be better every day in his work, providing excellent customer service and, more broadly, to be seen as an example in his home, his community, and his country.

Emilio made his commitment to community service clear through his career change 2 ½ years ago moving to Alta Verapaz to take over management of COOPSAMA, leaving behind his life in Guatemala City and his work in the formal banking sector. He was motivated to work for COOPSAMA because he sees the cooperative banking model as a vehicle to create positive social change. Emilio says that a cooperative is fundamentally different from a bank. “A bank is only a business; a cooperative is shared support.” In Emilio’s view, cooperatives help people grow not only financially but also as people in their societies.

Emilio has invested considerable time and effort to co-develop the “Mujer Emprendedora” initiative with the WISE team and has embeded an urgency around serving women entrepreneurs into his team. He also sees participation in WISE as enabling COOPSAMA to differentiate itself. Emilio says, “The WISE program interested me because it is a well structured project with clearly defined objectives targetting a segment of the population (women) that is not valued in our country.” He also adds that it is goal of WISE to “produce progress and that is what my country needs.”

Attracting more women to COOPSAMA is a major motivator for Emilio’s participation in WISE. This is not only good business but Emilio sees it as good for the women in his region. “I hope that we develop successful women who can fend for themselves and as providers of welfare for their families. As members of the cooperative (or “cooperatistas”), they can improve their living conditions.”
CONCLUSION

WISE is an innovations project in which we seek to learn, adapt and implement strategy revisions in order to find the most effective and efficient way of providing support to women entrepreneurs in Guatemala. This period marks an important evolution: a partnership with a different type of financial institution. COOPSAMA, as a cooperative lending institution, shares the values of the WISE initiative while having the core competencies necessary to efficiently assess and manage loans to small businesses.

With COOPSAMA, we are on the cusp of facilitating a huge change. As Emilio Garcia stated recently, “Nothing like this exists in Guatemala.” We on the WISE team are so proud to have sparked this innovation and the enthusiasm that COOPSAMA has brought to it makes us confident that it will take off.
APPENDIX

WISE PARTNERS AND INSTITUTIONAL ROLES

OUR LOCAL/NATIONAL PARTNERS IN GUATEMALA

• Asociación de Emprendedoras Mayas. A private, apolitical association integrated by altruistic women entrepreneurs that promotes and coordinates collective and individual development opportunities that generate productive business, cultural, and social activities under the Mayan perspective.

• COOPSAMA. A cooperative bank belonging to the MICOPE cooperative banking system.

• Gremial de Mujeres Empresarias, Cámara de Comercio Filial Quetzaltenango. An organization that develops and implements learning spaces and monthly meetings designed to strengthen and support business women to improve their business results.

• IDEA. An innovative organization that provides support for entrepreneurs to strengthen their personal and business successes, by creating continual and sustainable improvements in their lives and their work.

• Rafael Landívar University. A private Jesuit university in Guatemala City helping WISE with its feasibility study and providing Junior Coaches.

• UN Women. A UN organization dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and women’s empowerment and committed to assisting efforts to increase women’s security, prevent gender-based violence and promote women’s economic empowerment.

OUR GLOBAL PARTNERS

• Argidius. A foundation that provides financial support to organizations for projects focusing on accelerating small- and medium-size business growth.

• CapPLUS. A global industry-building initiative that exists to expand the capacity, competency, and willingness of financial institutions to serve small and growing businesses.

• Center for Women’s Entrepreneurial Leadership. Part of Babson College that aims to educate, inspire, and empower women entrepreneurial leaders to reach their full potential to create economic and social value for themselves, their organization, and society.

• Crea Comunidades de Emprendedores Sociales. A civil society organization based out of Mexico that develops and implements unique programs to encourage entrepreneurs from marginalized areas.

• Foley Hoag. A Boston-based law firm offering pro bono legal support to the WISE initiative.

• Pomona Impact. An impact investing firm that invests in small growing businesses, particularly those with a social mission. These businesses contribute significant benefits to people and communities at the bottom of the economic pyramid. Pomona Impact works closely with portfolio companies to identify and create value and positive impact.

• TaroWorks. An affiliate of the Grameen Foundation that provides a suite of mobile data collection and analytical tools.

• Value for Women. A social enterprise aimed at generating transformational social change and increasing the active participation of women in enterprise development.