



OXFAM
America



OXFAM AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR

THE POWER OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

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.

But what if these same women could apply their energy and entrepreneurial instincts free of the barriers that block their progress? What if they could get the financing they need to expand a small shop, broaden the reach of a rice-milling service, or upgrade equipment for a dairy cooperative? What if women had access to workshops in small-business planning, to mentors through whom they could network, to markets for their goods? What if women entrepreneurs could come together and work to change the rules that hold them back?

Through a new program—Women in Small Enterprise, or WISE—Oxfam and its partners aim to help women in Latin America

and the Caribbean reach these goals and realize their full economic potential. Core components of the initiative include the newly created WISE Fund and a training program for women designed to increase their economic leadership.

The WISE Fund will reach deep into communities where growth-oriented enterprises led by women will benefit enormously from having access to capital.

- The fund will work through local financial institutions.
- Businesses owned by women, either individually or as cooperatives, will be eligible for financing.

- Most loans will be in the range of \$5,000 to \$20,000, with the maximum being \$50,000.
- Loans will be offered in installments, with continuing distributions based on successful repayment by the business owner.



WISE provides a unique platform for women entrepreneurs to connect, prosper, and thrive.

—Lynda Applegate, Sarofim-Rock Professor of Business Administration and head of the Entrepreneurial Management Unit, Harvard Business School

WOMEN'S ECONOMIC LEADERSHIP TRAINING

In 2009, Oxfam began developing a new training method for women to help ensure their economic leadership in agricultural markets. Known as Women's Economic Leadership, or WEL, the approach combines business tools with a sophisticated look at the roles and responsibilities men and women bear in their households. Built around a series of workshops, the training is highly participatory, includes follow-up coaching, and is designed to allow women to develop their own solutions to their particular business needs. Oxfam is continuing to refine the method to suit the demands of the WISE program.

WISE PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Oxfam and its partners believe that by empowering women entrepreneurs, they can begin to change a system that denies many other women in developing countries fair access to financial resources.



Oxfam fills a critical space in the area of market-based approaches to poverty alleviation, bringing concrete solutions to impact investors who care deeply about human rights and justice.

—Randall Kempner, executive director of the Aspen Network of Development Entrepreneurs

The WISE program brings together experts in small-enterprise finance, gender justice, community development, market access, and advocacy to offer a package of services for women and their businesses that include:

- Financing for women-owned small enterprises
- Gender-specific training for entrepreneurs and financial institutions
- Access to coaching networks
- Development of links to new markets
- Advocacy and strategies to address gender stereotyping
- Engagement of women entrepreneurs in changing regulations that limit their economic potential

OXFAM'S PARTNERS IN WISE

Oxfam is working with a host of partners in carrying out this initiative. Among them are:

- Private investors
- Global and local nongovernmental organizations
- Global and local financial institutions
- Local leadership trainers
- Local women's coaching networks



LEARN MORE

For more information please email Mara Bolis, Oxfam's senior adviser for market systems, at mbolis@oxfamamerica.org or phone her at (617) 517-9400. Or visit our website at www.oxfamamerica.org/private-sector.

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Oxfam America is an international relief and development organization that creates lasting solutions to poverty, hunger, and injustice. Together with individuals and local groups around the world, Oxfam saves lives, helps people overcome poverty, and fights for social justice.

COVER: Seamstress Orbelina Alberto was among a group of women who formed workshops to bid on a project to make school uniforms in El Salvador. Women-owned businesses across Latin America could benefit from Oxfam's new initiative to support their enterprises. *Percy Ramirez / Oxfam America* ABOVE: At the Mistura food festival in Peru, small producers sell their wares. If women in Latin America had better access to financing and training, they could grow their small businesses more easily. *Percy Ramirez / Oxfam*

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