



FINCA®

# FINCA News

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## BrightLife Customers Report Improved Safety and Health

Off-grid families in sub-Saharan Africa burn kerosene, wood and charcoal to light their homes and prepare food. In Uganda, where 90 percent of the population is not connected to the electric grid, four out of five households use kerosene lanterns, which are hazardous and unhealthy. They are a major cause of house fires and burns, and together with cooking fires, generate vast amounts of indoor air pollution. The World Health Organization estimates the air inside a traditional African home can have the same amount of pollution as 300 city blocks. Exposure to this toxic smoke causes 4 million deaths worldwide each year. Women and girls—the primary agents of domestic activities like food preparation—are disproportionately affected. Beyond indoor air pollution, living in darkness increases vulnerability to disease-carrying pests, and the threat of intruders is a constant worry.

FINCA is addressing these problems through BrightLife, a social enterprise in Uganda, which distributes and finances solar energy and improved cookstove products for low-income, off-grid customers, especially women. FINCA's research is studying the impact that BrightLife customers attribute to their products, and initial findings indicate BrightLife products create safer and healthier homes.

The majority of BrightLife's current customers—who are also microfinance clients of FINCA Uganda—are using solar energy and clean cookstove products for domestic purposes. The typical customer is a 45-year-old married, rural woman supporting seven children. Nine out of ten BrightLife customers stated their safety was positively impacted, primarily due to a reduced risk of house fires, burns and robberies. A similar share of customers stated their health was positively impacted, supported by reports of improved eye and respiratory health, and less toxicity.

Photo by Dawn Deeks



*BrightLife customer and FINCA Uganda client, Jane Nakintu, using her clean cookstove*

Jane Nakintu's household is one example. A 65-year-old widow and farmer raising four grandchildren, Jane has been a FINCA microfinance client since 2011. Loans enabled her to purchase fertilizers and

seeds, diversify crops, care for livestock, and expand the farm. Jane's income grew, and she could pay the school fees for her grandchildren. Through BrightLife, Jane purchased a clean cookstove, which uses 60 percent less charcoal than a traditional stove, cuts meal preparation time in half and improves safety and health.

**“The smoke from the wood fire would hurt my eyes, but the new stove is very safe and there is no fire and I can use it indoors,” said Jane.**

By combining financial services and energy access, FINCA is demonstrating how microfinance can reach deeper into the bottom of the economic pyramid and help women and their families live safer and healthier lives. To request a summary of the BrightLife customer impact study, contact Bill Lane at [Bill.Lane@FINCA.org](mailto:Bill.Lane@FINCA.org) or (202) 971-4695.

# Letter from the President and CEO



Dear Friends,

The contribution of women to measured economic activity is far below its potential. Globally, just half of women participate in the labor force, compared to three quarters of men. The situation worsens in developing markets, where

up to 95 percent of women's employment is in the informal sector, and only 5 percent have jobs in the formal economy with a steady income. Consequently, women are more likely than men to live in the poorest households in 41 out of 75 countries.

At FINCA, we have long recognized the exponential benefits of empowering women and promoting gender equality through equal access to financial

services, which is key to self-employment, often their only option. Women are more likely to consider the household and communal impact of their financial decisions, and are therefore remarkable agents of economic and social transformation.

As the world celebrates International Women's Day, FINCA remains committed to advancing the dignity and welfare of women in marginalized communities. Thank you for sharing our vision of a world of equal opportunity, so all may achieve a better standard of living, under their own steam.

Sincerely,



Rupert W. Scofield  
President and CEO, FINCA International

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## Promoting Gender Equality: Women20 for the G20

*By Amanda Ellis, FINCA International Board Member*

Access to finance remains a critical barrier to women's economic empowerment. The World Bank estimates a \$300 billion annual credit deficit to women-owned businesses with 70 percent unable to access needed financing.

Despite all 193 UN member countries committing to the Sustainable Development Goals in 2015, including Goal 5 for gender equality, a staggering 91 percent of countries still have discriminatory legislation hindering women's full economic participation. Thirty-five percent of countries have legal or regulatory barriers impeding women's access to finance. In the world's largest economies, the G20, less than 40 percent of women have access to bank accounts. Yet, a gender focus is absent from their Financial Inclusion Strategies.

Microfinance fills the void in many countries, providing much needed financial access for poor women. As a board member, I am proud of FINCA's role in advocating for policy change and in providing financial access and literacy training for women.

At the inaugural Women20 for the G20 Asia-Pacific consultation, FINCA Impact Finance CEO, Andrée Simon, underscored the important linkages between financial and digital literacy, and the need

for client protection. FINCA's influencing role continues with the new G20 chair, Argentina, committed to taking up the recommendation, and meetings are being held in early 2018 to explore "Women20 for the G20" report findings at the World Economic Forum at Davos, the United Nations in Geneva, and the International Labor Organization in Bangkok.

Read the entire "Women20 for the G20" report, co-authored by Amanda Ellis, online by visiting [FINCA.org/newsroom](http://FINCA.org/newsroom), or contact Bill Lane at [Bill.Lane@FINCA.org](mailto:Bill.Lane@FINCA.org) or (202) 971-4695 to request a copy.



*Amanda Ellis, FINCA International Board Member*

# Tablet-Based Lending Connects Clients to the Cloud

Financial exclusion underpins most challenges faced by low-income people in underserved markets, and women are the most likely to be left out. FINCA is using tablet-based lending to reach, serve, and empower more female clients.

In Kosovo, FINCA is the first financial institution to utilize tablets in the field. Because of cloud-based tablet software, credit officers can review loan applications and disburse funds more quickly. In fact, tablets have doubled the number of loans processed daily. For rural clients, GPS is used to pinpoint business locations, and cameras help document changes in clients' business assets over time. Combined, these efficiencies decrease costs, increase productivity, and grow the number of clients served.

**“We want to put technology into our DNA. FINCA is taking an active role and helping to shape the market. We do this to serve as many clients as we can so they have access to finance and can improve their lives.”**

**Ardian Kastrati, CEO of FINCA Kosovo**



Photo by Dawn Deeks

*Credit officer, Carlos Tiño, with FINCA Guatemala client, Engracia Rivera Campos*

The use of tablets to deliver financial service innovation is not limited to Kosovo. In Guatemala, where 82 percent of loan clients are women, FINCA is using digital field automation, including data intake on tablets, to streamline loan processes. FINCA Afghanistan, where 61 percent of borrowers are women, received a USAID grant to pilot tablet-lending for agricultural clients. This will shorten loan processing time, reduce operational costs, and improve accuracy and security.

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## Closing the Gender Gap Faster

Global progress towards gender parity has slowed in many places. The World Economic Forum predicted in 2014 it would take until 2095 to achieve global gender parity. They have since revised this estimate, saying it would now take until 2133 to close the gender gap entirely. Women's empowerment has always been a core pillar of FINCA's mission, but clearly, we need to accelerate change in gender equality.

March 8th marked International Women's Day, and for the third year in a row, FINCA hosted a special event bringing together thought leaders in financial inclusion to tackle pressing questions on gender parity. This year, panelists discussed: *How can we close the gender gap faster?*

Andrée Simon, CEO of FINCA Impact Finance, moderated a discussion with Diana Biggs, Head of Digital Innovation at HSBC Retail Banking and Wealth Management, Laura Foose, Executive Director of the Social Performance Task Force, and Momina Aijazuddin, Global Head of Microfinance for the IFC, among others. Panelists touched on the role of blockchain technology in financial inclusion, social performance management with a gender lens, and responsible financial services linked with women's empowerment. Visit [FINCA.org/newsroom](https://www.fanca.org/newsroom) to learn more.

# Legacy Gift to Scale the Reach of FINCA Ventures

**S**teadfast FINCA supporter and Legacy Society member, Catherine H. “Cat” Anderson, an avid birder, art patron and lifelong horsewoman, passed away in 2016 at her home in Colorado. A champion of financial access for the poor, women’s empowerment, and environmental sustainability, Cat brought a pioneering determination to every facet of her life.

As part of her legacy, Cat made a generous bequest to FINCA that will provide significant support to FINCA Ventures, an investment platform that leverages FINCA’s on-the-ground presence and know-how to scale early-stage social enterprises to reach millions of impoverished families responsibly. To date, the FINCA Ventures program has invested in two innovative social enterprises serving people who make \$4 or less a day, greatly improving their safety and health, and creating new opportunities for income generation. Through Cat’s legacy gift, FINCA Ventures is expected to close two additional partnerships in the coming year.

“Among many other interests, Cat was committed to fostering financial inclusion for those with the least access, especially women, in developing countries. Recognizing her as a Founding Member of FINCA Ventures honors her pioneering spirit,” says Catherine Anderson’s son, Stephen Fitzpatrick.



Photo by Carole Fitzpatrick

Cat Anderson with Molly, her Labrador.

To learn more about FINCA Ventures, please contact Collen Zakrewsky, Chief Development Officer, at (202) 971-4627 or [Colleen.Zakrewsky@FINCA.org](mailto:Colleen.Zakrewsky@FINCA.org).



**Provide a Legacy Supporting FINCA Clients for Generations**

- **Stocks, Bonds or Mutual Funds**—Support FINCA with a gift of securities.
- **Bequest**—Include FINCA in your will or living trust.
- **Retirement Plan**—Make a qualified charitable distribution from a traditional or rollover individual retirement account (IRA) to FINCA.

**For more information about any of these gift opportunities, please contact Bill Lane at [Bill.Lane@FINCA.org](mailto:Bill.Lane@FINCA.org) or (202) 971-4695.**

**Creating Lasting Impact with a Charitable Distribution**

More than sixty years ago, Dr. Harold Bornstein founded a tuberculosis clinic and still sees patients several times a month. This year, Dr. Bornstein selected FINCA as the recipient of a qualified charitable distribution from his IRA.

Dr. Bornstein chose FINCA because he is impressed with how FINCA provides access to finance for women entrepreneurs that helps them to become independent and create better opportunities for their children.

**Consider making an impactful gift today with a qualified charitable distribution from a traditional or rollover IRA to FINCA (tax ID: 13-3240109).**

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