



FINCA®

# FINCA News

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## FINCA Ventures Invests in Opportunity for the Poor

**A**t age 54, Jane Namusisi lives with her daughter, Emily, and helps raise her three grandchildren, ages 11, 10 and three months. Like most families in Uganda, Jane’s household is not connected to the electric grid. Her family’s reliance on hazardous and expensive kerosene to light their home and to prepare meals was always a concern. However, in 2016 Jane’s worry began to subside.

A neighbor introduced Jane to FINCA’s Village Banking™ program. Small loans allowed Jane to invest in her small-scale quarrying enterprise. Using the profits from her business, Jane purchased a solar lantern through FINCA’s BrightLife program. Not only did the lantern provide safe lighting for her grandchildren to study at night, it also supplied energy to charge a mobile phone. Impressed by the positive impacts on her family’s wellbeing, Jane upgraded to a solar home system with enough lights to illuminate her two-room house. Because the system is modular, Jane can add more lights and even appliances over time.

*“With kerosene lamps, I worried the children would get burned in the house or there would be damage to my property or about getting sick. Now, my grandchildren use the solar lights at night to study.”*






For decades, FINCA has given small loans to micro-entrepreneurs around the world. To provide greater opportunity for families like Jane’s, we are also enabling access to basic services, like energy. This is achieved through FINCA Ventures, an impact investing initiative that supports the growth of early-stage social enterprises. By partnering with companies delivering essential product innovations for the poor—such as modular solar home systems—

Photo by Dawn Deeks



Jane Namusisi turns on a solar home system light in Uganda.

FINCA is taking a comprehensive approach to poverty alleviation. FINCA Ventures has partnered with five social enterprises over the past 12 months, including:

-  **Amped Innovation:** Designs affordable solar home systems and productive use appliances.
-  **BioLite:** Manufactures clean-burning, electricity generating cookstoves and solar home systems.
-  **Eneza Education:** Develops SMS-based curriculums for K-12 students and beyond.
-  **Good Nature Agro:** Links smallholder farmers to the high-profit legume seed market.
-  **Sanivation:** Provides a waste-to-energy solution turning fecal sludge into fuel.

FINCA Ventures represents an exciting initiative at the cutting-edge of impact investing. If you are interested in learning how you may support this initiative, please contact Colleen Zakrewsky, Chief Development Officer, at (202) 971-4627 or [Colleen.Zakrewsky@FINCA.org](mailto:Colleen.Zakrewsky@FINCA.org).

# Letter from the President and CEO



Dear Friends,

Consider what your life may be like if you were “unbanked.” For the 1.7 billion people around the world without access to the financial services most of us take for granted, it means living a life that’s unimaginable. In the absence

of a secure place to keep their money, the ability to save for a child’s education or access to a small loan that can grow a business, life becomes *unsafe*, *unprepared* and *unproductive*. At FINCA, we know that when people are no longer *unbanked*, they are no longer “*un*” anything, except *unstoppable*.

This summer, we’ll be highlighting the resilience of FINCA clients. Small loans and savings accounts open the door to a world of possibilities, including transformative products that raise our clients’ standard of living. By combining these life-enhancing solutions with FINCA’s finance expertise, we can get these products into the hands of those who need them most. Equipped with access to finance *and* access to basic services, our clients’ break from poverty is truly unstoppable.

Sincerely,



Rupert W. Scofield  
President and CEO, FINCA International

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## FINCA Opens a Women-Only Bank Branch in Afghanistan

**F**INCA launched microfinance services in the war-torn nation of Afghanistan in 2003. Decades of conflict caused living standards in Afghanistan to be among the lowest in the world. More than a third of the population live in poverty and 85 percent are financially excluded. FINCA aimed from the outset to meet the financial service needs of low-income Afghan women, who are especially vulnerable due to marginalization, weak economic participation and discrimination. Today, 61 percent of FINCA Afghanistan borrowers are women, and tailored loan products are made available for women-run microenterprises. To empower Afghan women to become more independent and unstoppable, FINCA Afghanistan has even opened a women-only bank branch.

This unique offering, which exclusively serves women clients, is staffed by an all-female team of financial professionals. It offers the full range of FINCA Afghanistan’s financial products, including small enterprise and agricultural loans, as well as Sharia-compliant loans for Islamic clients. Beyond access to financial services, this women-only branch serves as a space for women to share experiences,

knowledge and entrepreneurship opportunities. It gives Afghan women the freedom to express their views and ask questions, opportunities that are often restricted in public spaces.

The opening of a women-only bank branch in Afghanistan represents a significant step toward our goal of promoting gender equality. It also affirms our commitment to catalyzing women’s economic empowerment through financial inclusion.

Photo by FINCA Staff



Inside FINCA Afghanistan’s women-only bank branch

# BrightLife Introduces Products for Income Generation

**A**cross sub-Saharan Africa, 590 million people live without electricity. Grid expansion has struggled to keep pace with population growth. In the absence of reliable energy, people's health, safety and productivity suffer. FINCA's BrightLife is launching new and innovative products in 2018 to accelerate progress in off-grid energy and help customers increase opportunities to earn an income.

In the first half of the year, BrightLife introduced new solar home systems that offer upgradable home lighting and appliance solutions. This means customers can add additional lights, a radio and even a television without having to purchase a new system. This revolutionary, modular design makes it possible for poor families to climb the energy ladder. An updated electricity-generating cookstove was also released, offering greater cooking efficiency and smoke reduction.

But that's not all. In the second half of 2018, BrightLife is partnering with FINCA Uganda to test ultra-affordable solar-powered productive use assets

for agricultural loan clients. These products, which include water pumps and maize grinders, are designed for income-generation. It is expected that the income gains will offset product costs within the first year. Then, 100 percent of the profits may be invested into the customer's business and her family.



*Clean-burning, electricity-generating cookstove, modular solar home system with radio and solar-powered maize grinder*

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# FINCA Georgia Bundles Agro Loans with Crop Insurance

**F**INCA serves 110,000 clients in the country of Georgia. Sixty-two percent of these borrowers live in rural areas, and many work in agriculture to earn a living and provide for their families. Recently, FINCA Bank Georgia partnered with a local insurance company to enable smallholder farmers to simultaneously obtain special terms on agricultural ("agro") loans and crop insurance.

This partnership tackles three challenges faced by smallholders. First, a farmer in Georgia previously had to apply for agro loans and crop insurance at separate points in time and with separate institutions. Those with limited means were often financially excluded. Second, farming is seasonal by nature. This puts strain on farmers working to pay off debt prior to harvest. Third, agricultural activities rely on favorable weather. This creates risk beyond a farmer's control.



Photo by FINCA Staff

*Lala Yiochieva, a FINCA client in Georgia.*

By offering a one-stop solution that is designed for smallholders, does not require repayments until the agricultural business generates an income, and bundles agro loans with crop insurance for risk mitigation, FINCA is helping Georgian farmers become unstoppable.

# Loyal Supporters Introduced to the FINCA Advisory Council

FINCA International is proud to have many passionate and generous donors who support market-based solutions to poverty in developing countries. Two such supporters are Libby and Edward Goff in Phoenix, Arizona. Together, Libby and Edward have supported FINCA for nearly twenty years. Most recently, Libby attended an intimate reception at the home of one of FINCA International's Board Members to introduce the FINCA Advisory Council, a global network of individuals and institutions working together to accelerate progress out of poverty in a sustainable way. At the event, Libby had the chance to hear from Amped Innovations and to interact with some of the solar energy products used by off-grid families. Amped Innovations is a partner of FINCA Ventures.

"We support FINCA because from the beginning we recognized that FINCA implements great ideas and creative approaches to microfinance. FINCA continues to look at novel ways to help people help themselves."

In addition to their fervent support of FINCA, Libby volunteers with the Entrepreneurial Mothers Association, and Libby and Edward support Save Our Schools, which focuses on K-12 education to provide sustainable, permanent and equitable funding for public schools.



Edward and Libby Goff

FINCA is grateful to have the support of Libby and Ed as we continue to expand our programs to unlock the potential of entrepreneurs and break down the cycle of poverty globally. If you are interested in learning more about the FINCA Advisory Council, please contact Colleen Zakrewsky, Chief Development Officer, at (202) 971-4627 or [Colleen.Zakrewsky@FINCA.org](mailto:Colleen.Zakrewsky@FINCA.org).

## Help FINCA Clients Be Unstoppable and Take the Unbanked Challenge

Find out what it's like for the nearly two billion people around the world who live "unbanked." Commit to seeing things from their vantage point by taking the **Unbanked Challenge**. For even just one day, live as if you didn't have access to financial services. Then, tell us about your experience on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook using **#IamUnbanked**. Here are some tips to help you survive the Unbanked Challenge:

- You can only spend the cash on hand.
- Leave credit and debit cards at home.
- No mobile payments or online banking.

Visit [IamUnbanked.org](http://IamUnbanked.org) to learn more.

## Leaving a Gift of Hope

Florence Seberg Morford was born in Portland, Oregon in 1927 of Swedish immigrant parents. She taught elementary and special education for 30 years, and married John Morford, the principal of one of the schools where she taught. They enjoyed 25 years together before John's passing in 2004. Florence would follow 13 years later. Someone who loved to debate the "big issues," Florence took significant interests in politics, current events and business. In her will, Florence left a generous estate gift, or bequest, to FINCA International. This contribution reflects her belief in the strength of the human spirit to prosper in even the direst circumstances if hope is nurtured.

For information on planned giving, please contact Bill Lane at [Bill.Lane@FINCA.org](mailto:Bill.Lane@FINCA.org) or (202) 971-4695.



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