At GFI we believe that women represent the greatest potential for putting an end to the cycle of poverty that undermines development around the globe. GFI programs work with women agricultural and textile producers to remove the economic, technical and public policy barriers that prevent women from bringing their goods to sustainable markets at a fair price.

The Challenge

Women account for 70% of the world’s population living in poverty. Agricultural and textile production, carried out primarily by women, is the foundation of most developing country economies. In many developing economies as much as 80% of women are employed full or part time as small-scale producers in the agricultural sector and account for the majority of food security production for both their families and the communities where they live. Despite carrying such a heavy burden of the productive work, women are often marginalized to the informal sector of developing and even established economies where they find themselves ineligible for social services and social protections afforded the formal sector. The result is a deep cycle of poverty and social inequality experienced by women producers that keeps them isolated from mainstream capital markets and government social programs.

How is GFI making a difference

At GFI we see a deep and sustained investment in women producers as one of the single most effective strategies to break the cycle of poverty in the developing world. Empowering women farmers and textile workers requires a multi-faceted, multi-stakeholder engagement process aimed at creating opportunities for improved input, access to credit, removal of institutional and supply chain barriers, access high-value markets and policy reform targeted at enabling women to sustain real economic growth and improve livelihoods.

GFI brings a core set of tools to our programs aimed at improving livelihoods for woman producers and we follow a process that targets barriers and creates opportunity through the following steps:

1) Building Local Capacity

The implementation of GFI programs is based on local input and agreement on the design of the project. Once a coalition and consensus is built we then tailor each
activity according to our strength or engage key GFI partners to implement strategies outside of our expertise. Activities both target specific obstacles identified during the design phase as well as work cross-functionally on interrelated strategies. GFI uses a multi-stakeholder engagement to bring together a core group of local actors committed to advancing project goals and activities. The group will include actors such as producer and related business representatives, government officials and community leaders.

2) Technical Assistance

In collaboration with GFI partners and appropriate local organizations we develop a program for providing technical assistance on issues such as enhancing production, meeting industry quality and packaging requirements and the development of sales strategies. Private sector partners offer expertise and client networks to help construct more effective and profitable supply chains with a focus on the use of technical assistance overall to enhance production, quality, sales strategies, and supply chain management. Because women entrepreneurs tend to be relegated from the mainstream business world, GFI focuses on increased production and quality as well as helping them adapt best business practices for sales and supply chain management. We empower women to adopt improved business practices and innovative technologies.

3) Market Analysis

GFI market analysis strategies include a range of activities such as determining market demand and working with local officials to incentivize production of strategic products and promote coordination of rural distribution networks. This is done in parallel with multi-stakeholder activities that are helping producers to understand their role in the supply chain, as well as maximizing their leverage in local and global markets.

4) Policy Evaluation

GFI works to identify and prioritize the policy challenges being face by small producers. Counter-productive international policies are also examined and reform recommendations are developed and highlighted. Additionally, GFI works with local research organizations to help develop lessons and to build capacity. The overall goal is to improve policies that effect poor women producers throughout the developing world to inform a large educational campaign or support broader recommendations.

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