

This provides an update on World Vision's efforts to end extreme poverty by 2030 through Economic Empowerment.



DECEMBER 2017

Greetings!

World Vision is delighted to send you our Executive Briefing for Economic Empowerment. You are an integral part of our work to end extreme poverty by 2030, so we want to keep you updated on our progress!

In this issue, you will find:

- Myanmar Vision Trip Experience
  - Update on the Women's Empowerment Fund
  - Vision Trips Available to You
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## A Trip to Myanmar

By Steve Waters, World Vision Major Donor Representative

In October, I got the opportunity to travel to Myanmar to visit the work of VisionFund in the field and to see how it has become integrated into the World Vision community development model. World Vision has been working in Myanmar since the late 1990's, and has been working on providing sustainable access to financial services from the very beginning of our work.

As most people know, after many decades Myanmar is emerging from military rule to a government with much more civilian leadership - but still having strong military involvement. Freedom of political expression has grown significantly, and along with it there is a huge amount of economic freedom and economic movement.

According to UN statistics, 70% of the adult population lack access to the formal financial sector. The majority (60%) of people rely on agriculture for their income and use traditional techniques to service their land. As international sanctions have lifted, opportunities have been created for Myanmar's people, but at times this has meant certain groups are vulnerable to exploitation. The recent refugee crisis has displaced thousands, and continues to impact the community. The need in Myanmar is immense, but the potential of its gentle, determined, spiritual people is greater.

Our microfinance institution (MFI) in Myanmar serves a staggering 173,000 borrowers with a portfolio in excess of \$28 million. This is an increase from 48,000 clients in 2015, when World Vision registered the MFI. That is an impressive 360% increase in 2 years!

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On our trip, I was able to see not only World Vision's community development work, but also our work in economic development and the linkages with VisionFund Myanmar. VisionFund's economic impact was dramatically felt during several field visits.

In Mandalay, I met a young mother who had been struggling to provide for her young family. Unable to find regular employment, she used her sewing skills to start a business making monks' robes. Unfortunately, these robes only produced about \$.75 each in profit. She needed to find other types of clothing to make but didn't have the necessary sewing machine.

Working alongside VisionFund Myanmar, she was able to take a small loan to buy a used sewing machine. This purchase has opened-up a new world for her and for her family. She is now able to make clothes to order and has dramatically increased the family income. Her income from sewing also has a smoothing effect on the family's income. As a day laborer, her husband's income is not always steady.

Now she has dreams of expanding her sewing business and is able to pay the necessary school fees so that her children can attend school. She ultimately plans on rebuilding her home to improve the lives of the entire family.



In rural Myanmar, VisionFund is integrating micro-lending with our smallholder farming efforts. The woman above on the left grows peanuts as one of her major crops and has been able to diversify her farming by adding livestock.

It was such a pleasure to meet her and to see the joy and dignity in her face as she described the success that she is having. She also feels empowered as she has now become a major contributor to the family income, especially from the money earned by breeding cows.

The woman pictured above on the right has benefited by being both a member of a community savings group and a VisionFund client. Her savings group could only take her so far. She needed more capital to expand her farm and VisionFund became the source of that capital. Her family is very proud of her accomplishments as a farmer.

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## Women's Empowerment Fund Update





At the recent Strong Women Strong World event in New York on the 1<sup>st</sup> of December, World Vision hosted a breakout session which dealt with the Women's Empowerment Fund. The session, led by Gina Buser, CEO of Traveling Coaches, featured a panel of successful women leaders whose lives and experience show how access to education, mentoring, business advice, and finance is to business and career success. The meeting went on to introduce the critical need faced by women in the developing world for access to financial services, and how World Vision is responding to this need and is aiming to provide 2 million more women with this critical aspect of economic empowerment.

Announced in March, 2017 the Women's Empowerment Fund addresses a critical need in the fight against extreme poverty – access to the financial services women need to build and grow their farms and businesses. The World Vision Women's Empowerment Fund is now up and running, and is about to cross the \$1.5 million mark in funding in its push towards \$25 million.

Most of us reading this update have had a job which provides for our material and financial needs. However, a very large portion of the people living in extreme poverty today are not so fortunate – there is no one who will give them a job. They have to create their own job by running their own farm or small business. One critical resource that any business needs – from General Motors or Microsoft to Maria's taco stand or Peter's onion farm – is access to the financial services needed to grow and manage their business (credit, savings, and insurance).



Unfortunately, there are still 2 billion people on our planet who lack access to formal financial services, of which 1.3 billion are women. 65% of the extreme poor today are smallholder farmers, most of whom have no access to financial services, and in sub-Saharan Africa about half of the farmers are women.

When women are able to improve their farms and businesses, we consistently see them use



their additional income to feed their families more and better food, send their children to school, and improve the quality of their housing. As a child-focused organization, these results are what we strive for.

The funds flowing into the Women's Empowerment Fund will be prioritized first to expanding the amount of capital available for lending to women in Malawi, Senegal and Myanmar. Strategically, Malawi is a critical need, since we have already launched our THRIVE program there, and our microfinance institution is too small to either meet the need for microfinance or cover all its costs through its lending activities (operational sustainability). For Senegal and Myanmar, if by expanding the amount of lending activity to women we can get the microfinance institutions to sustainability, World Vision will begin the process of bringing the THRIVE model to the people of those countries.

World Vision believes that no child should grow up in extreme poverty. Empowering women economically is not only critical to ending extreme poverty, it is central part of the pathway to lifting children towards life in all its fullness. The Women's Empowerment Fund is a foundational part of how World Vision plans to achieve our vision. Our vision for every child, life in all its fullness. Our prayer for every heart, the will to make it so.

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## Vision Trips

Vision Trips are a great way to see the impact of our work and the transition from poverty to prosperity. We invite you to join our staff and beneficiaries in the field on the following trips!



Join our Chief Development Officer, Christopher Shore, on one of three trips coming up this Spring/Summer:

1. May 4-12 2018 (dates tentative at this time) - Zambia
2. June 25-29 2018 (dates tentative at this time) - Honduras



For more information regarding one of these three trips, please click here:

[More Information about one of the Vision Trips](#)



Each year, God brings together over 300 like-minded women and men from all over the United States who share the desire to learn more, to do more, and to be more for the Kingdom. Join us **February 23-24, 2018 in Carlsbad, CA** as we gather to learn about what World Vision is doing to lead the way in the global effort to end extreme poverty and to reach the world's most vulnerable, especially children. You'll be inspired and challenged by stories of need, transformation, and triumph. You'll have the chance to ask questions, connect with a room full of people a lot like you, and experience hope as we unite to pray, to praise God for what he has enabled us to do, and to boldly seek his favor as we forge ahead to reach every last one.

[More Information about the Every Last One Conference](#)

# Prayer Requests

## PRAISE

- For the very well attended break-out session on the Women's Empowerment Fund at the Strong Women Strong World event in New York on December 1.

## REQUESTS

- For the healing and reconciliation in the country of Honduras, which is experiencing great post-election turmoil. While this is not directly affecting most of the areas where World Vision works, it is disrupting the lives of people in the largest cities and is affecting our staff and their ability to easily do their work.
- For the upcoming tour of the United States by the incoming CEO of VisionFund International, Michael Mithika. That God would open doors for many individuals and foundations to hear of the amazing breakthroughs that VisionFund is making now in terms of expanding rural and agricultural lending.
- For breakthroughs in funding for THRIVE with some key US foundations.



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