



EXPANDING WOMEN'S ACCESS TO COMMERCIAL CAPITAL

Fostering women’s economic empowerment through access to commercial financing, incorporating gender smart practices and mobilizing key stakeholders.

DESCRIPTION

“Expanding Women's Access to Commercial Capital” is an initiative created by USAID/Colombia and USAID’s Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment Hub (USAID/GenDev) designed to break down existing barriers in laws, regulations, policies, administrative practices, and social norms that prevent Colombian women – and especially those living in rural areas affected by the armed conflict – from accessing commercial financing on equal terms with men. Aiming to address the urgent need to close the widespread gender gaps in financial inclusion, USAID launched this initiative in Colombia in August 2020. After an analysis conducted by DesignThinkers Group and Pro Mujer in April - May 2021, Antioquia was selected as the most suitable location for this effort. Since November 2021, this initiative has been implemented through USAID’s INVEST mechanism in partnership with two multi-stakeholder consortiums led by Fundación Capital and Microempresas de Colombia. It is expected that in the coming months more organizations will contribute to creating a more inclusive financial system for women.

COMPONENTS

INCREASE ACCESS TO FINANCING FOR WOMEN AND WOMEN-LED BUSINESSES

The first component is focused on improving existing Colombian credit products to adapt them to women's needs, thus facilitating the expansion of formal commercial financing possibilities both for them and for their businesses and/or companies. Adapted financial credit products will be complemented with financial education activities that will allow participating women to acquire the necessary technical knowledge to make better economic decisions at an individual and collective level.

INCORPORATE GENDER SMART POLICIES AND PRACTICES.

This initiative will also provide tailored technical assistance so that financial institutions incorporate a gender perspective into their strategies, policies, practices, and internal processes. This will contribute to overcoming the internal and external gender inequalities that persist in the Colombian financial system and guaranteeing the availability of appropriate financial products for women.

MOBILIZE KEY STAKEHOLDERS TO CREATE JOINT ACTIONS, POLICIES AND/OR SOLUTIONS THAT EMPOWER WOMEN.

The third and final component will be focused on working with the actors that have a direct impact on women's economic empowerment, to overcome the region's structural barriers at the social, cultural, educational, institutional, family and political level that prevent their full economic autonomy. Different groups of actors (families, communities, public institutions, the financial sector, NGOs and other entities of the third sector) will co-design and deliver solutions that will contribute to sustainable medium and long term systemic changes.

EXPECTED RESULTS

- Increased access to commercial financing for women and especially of those who reside in remote, rural municipalities and/or affected by the armed conflict.
- Development and/or adaptation of financial products focused on the needs of women, especially those who reside in remote areas of Colombia.
- Reduction of the conscious and unconscious gender biases that impede the economic empowerment of women, through improving collaboration among the actors with the greatest likelihood of resolving this problem.
- Strengthening women's business leadership skills and companies primarily composed of women.
- Building a knowledge base on topics including but not limited to gender-smart businesses and financial education with a gender perspective that can be shared with relevant actors.
- Disseminating that knowledge and case studies to promote a more inclusive financial system in Colombia.