



# #Powerwomen



**Fourteen stories of inspirational women**



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# Introduction

Agriterra is an agri-agency founded by the Dutch agricultural sector that aims to professionalise farmer organisations and cooperatives worldwide in order to better serve the needs and interests of their member farmers.

## GOALS

2020

50 COOPERATIVES  
SUCCESSFULLY CONNECTED TO BANKS  
AND RECEIVE WORKING CAPITAL  
(INCLUDING 25 SMOKING CHIMNEYS)



55 MILLION  
EUROS  
in loans and  
working capital  
mobilised

A total of 1 million  
(unique) farmers reached



30% INCREASE  
in members who pay



30% of the  
OPERATIONAL COSTS  
of farmers' organisations  
covered by their  
SERVICE PROVISIONS  
and private agreements

Policy proposals  
have led to the mobilisation of  
100 million  
euro in funds



50% OF THE CLIENTS  
HAVE A YOUTH COUNCIL;  
BOARDS MADE UP OF  
10% YOUNG MEMBERS



15% of board members  
of farmers' organisations  
and cooperatives are

WOMEN

[www.agriterra.org](http://www.agriterra.org)



One of the goals of Agriterra is:

15% of board members of farmers' organisations and cooperatives are women.

We want to strengthen the position of female members and leaders in farmer owned enterprises.

## Workshop Gender and Female Leadership

As most cooperatives consist of male and female members; women often form 30%-40% of the members, sometimes even more. There are business arguments justifying the inclusion of women on an equal footing in cooperatives, women form part of family businesses and take an important part in production, processing and value addition.

Although research has shown that diversity in the board provides the best business performance of enterprises, still not enough women have the possibility to get access to leadership positions for different reasons.

Therefore, women should have a better training to be prepared for leadership positions. As leaders of a cooperative, women can participate in decision-making processes. And as the inclusion of women is important for the development of farmer-led agricultural enterprises, Agriterra supports the process of building female leadership development.



***"The workshop Gender and Female Leadership creates a lot of insight of the position of men and women."***

During the training 'Gender and Female Leadership' participants get to know the current position of men and women in the value chain and learn more about their own qualities. Furthermore, they develop leadership skills by doing exercises. In the end, all cooperatives elaborate an action plan to improve the position of women in their cooperative.

Do you want more information about Agriterra's workshop 'Gender and Female Leadership'?

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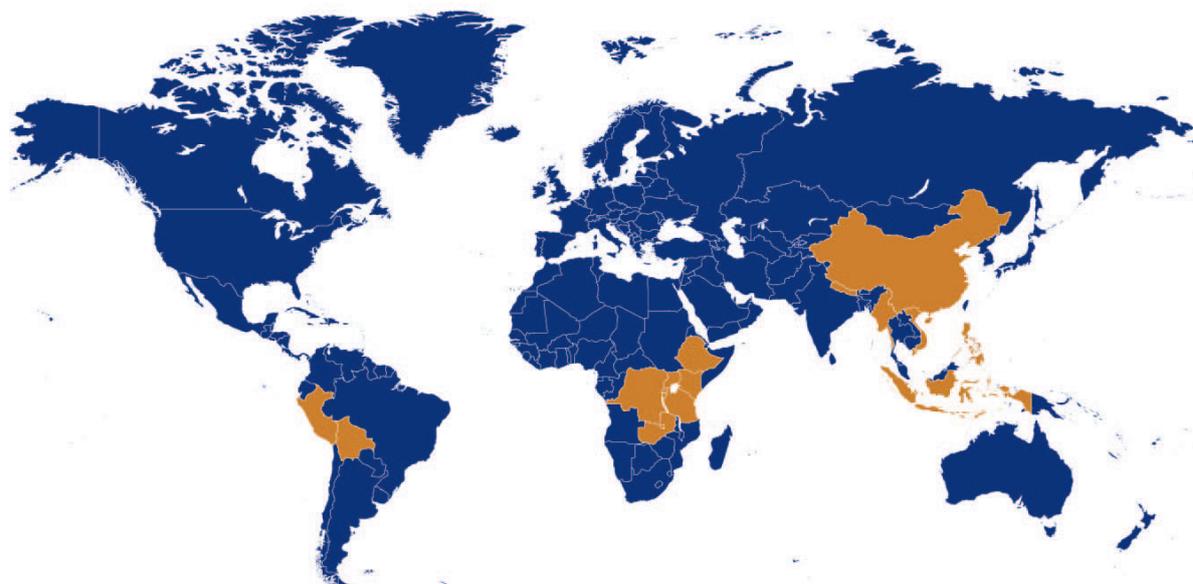


## Fourteen inspirational stories

In order to bring awareness to the importance of women in the agricultural sector, Agriterra wants to share fourteen stories of inspirational women. We would like to show women's roles in building and strengthening cooperatives, to encourage and support women who are already active in cooperatives and to empower other women to also engage with cooperatives.

The stories are collected from women that work in cooperatives and unions, which are clients of Agriterra.

If you became curious about the stories of our strong women working in the cooperatives, how they got involved with the cooperatives, what challenges they face and what dreams they have then read their inspiring stories on the following pages.



# Ayeleche Mulugeta Rarso

## Ethiopia

"Since 2005 I joined the Lume Adama Farmers' Cooperative Union. Joining Lume Adama gave me easy access to agricultural inputs and fertilizers for farming.

Working through a cooperation has many benefits. I became an active member in the cooperative to give better service for households and farmers, as many have a disadvantage due to mistreatment in assets of farmers. I try to find solutions for these problems. As a woman it is not easy to get a share. My father was member of a cooperative and when he passed away, the officials prohibited me to take the share of my father. I decided to join the cooperative and tried to change the bylaw of demise.

Currently, I am the executive secretary of Board and member of the Steering committee. The role is really difficult and needs more time and commitment of others, but I want to be a role model for other women to join the cooperatives and be part of the decision-making. It would be good to have more female leaders as women are more careful on corruption and addiction. They see all people equal and have the capacity for open discussion. Never say women can't do something, rather give them the opportunity.

***"Never say women can't do something, rather give them the opportunity."***

In general more women, especially young women, should have a farm land and be able to join a cooperative as it gives benefits for them. Therefore awareness should be created of working in cooperatives: working together for change and improvement. The cooperative should create awareness on gender equality, as women can do what men do. Trainings should be given on female leadership, preparing experience sharing or visiting sessions on women participation and results.

At the moment I have 2.5 acres of farm land and I am a dedicated woman that likes to work hard for the cooperative. However, my biggest wish for the future is to have a hotel! Preferably in the area where I grew up in order to develop this area more."



*Ayeleche Mulugeta Rarso (38),  
Lume Adama Farmers' Cooperative  
Union, Oromia region,  
East Shewa Modjo, Ethiopia*

# Celia Arcayne Mamani

## Bolivia

"When I started in the cooperative, I was afraid to talk. This happens a lot, women often are afraid to talk. But now I'm not afraid anymore, I'm like a stone." These are the words of Celia Arcayne Mamani, chairwoman of the Supervisory Board (control of economic and financial activities) at Asociación Nacional de Productores de Quinoa (ANAPQUI). ANAPQUI works in 15 regions in Bolivia.

Celia has been a member since 1990. She joined ANAPQUI because the organisation brings together many producers, which is beneficial. "My husband and I are producers of quinoa. We decided to join the organisation and not to work individually. Before we joined ANAPQUI, we had bad prices for our quinoa production. Sometimes a middle-man came and deceived us by giving us 3 quintals of sugar for 1 quintal quinoa. Thanks to ANAPQUI they raised the prices and we reach more markets."

***"As a woman, it has not been easy to get a leadership position."***

Celia worked from 2005 to 2010 as an executive of the Bartolina Sisa Indigenous Peasant Women's organisation in her province. In the following, she held a position in the Control Committee in the municipality. After this, she was elected to become the chairwoman of the directory of quinoa producers in her region, where she stayed for two years. "Now I have been elected by the General Assembly as ANAPQUI Supervisory Board. I believe that they have seen my capacity, my work. What women can do, because we work with transparency, we take our responsibility, we bring development in the organisation with our work"

It is for the first time that a woman reaches a high position in ANAPQUI, but it was difficult for Celia. "As a woman, it has not been easy to get a leadership position. The story is very sad. It has cost me a lot. When I started as an executive at Bartolina, we were mistreated by men. With Bartolina we had improved many things, but men told lies about me. They said that I was not going to do anything, that I had to resign and that I did bad management. It is not fair, I worked well, hard, transparent and the organisation made profit. There is always discrimination against women, not all men discriminate, but there are many doing this." For Celia, the important skills that a woman should possess when she want to be in a leader position are: no fear, self-esteem, good communication

skills to express what she thinks, and to demonstrate that she can achieve results and take responsibility.

"In the ANAPQUI statute we have managed to get women represented in the directories. I think that having female leaders in the organisation will bring many advantages. We work hard, we always want to improve and a woman controls the economy. We know how to save, starting at home and plan the economy."

Celia still wants to develop herself further and learn more. She wants to learn how to work with a computer. "As presidenta de fiscalización I am in charge of the economic management, the directory, the marketer, the production, and all the activities that are in ANAPQUI. I must do the inspection so that there is no bad expense and to ensure that work is done transparently. Now that I am having this position, I see that I still can learn a lot. I have learned to make control in written documents, but nowadays it's all in the computer, in a system. I lack knowledge about this, but I will learn!"

Celia is unstoppable. Eventhough she learned a lot already, she is still eager to learn and ready to make a change. "First I will learn all about computers and the system, bring the organisation further and then my wish is to get in the government."



*Celia Arcayne Mamani (48),  
Asociación Nacional de Productores de  
Quinoa (ANAPQUI), Bolivia*

# Fátima Ismael Espinoza

## Nicaragua

"I graduated as an agronomist and for 34 years I worked in the cooperative sector in my country. In the years of the revolution I worked for the Ministry of Agricultural Development. Since 1999 I began my work in the Union SOPPEXCCA RL, where I am a manager. I advise the board of directors, the planning, the evaluation and monitoring processes as well as the promotion and marketing of coffee to international markets. Also I take care of the management of economic resources.

Eighteen years ago, we started with 68 associates. In 2004 we formed a Union of Agricultural Cooperatives, which implies a cooperative model that guarantees the equity and ownership of assets and heritage for families. I got inspired to work and fight for the union so that it would become an organisation that will represent the interest of small coffee producers, as for the small producers the marginalisation of access to credit and marketing is a daily challenge.

Joining the organisation was not easy for me as a woman. Many distrusted the abilities of us women. Before I became a manager, two other women were trying to lead but they retired. Still, they supported me to take the lead. Whenever we have support, we can achieve it.

***"Being a woman with a leadership position is hard."***

We started to work on sensitising the gender perspective in the organisation and raised awareness for the integration of women in the cooperative life in an active way: with ownership on land and resources, but also the position level in the Councils of Administration, Monitoring Board and General Assembly. Key to this was that men gave support in defining the gender policy and strategy in the organisation.

Still, being a woman with a leadership position is hard. We have to endure smear campaigns, offenses and threats among many other things. The charge for a woman represents more risks, because in a sexist world, many offenses against a woman are made, but would no one would dare to offend a man. We are aware of this and we live with these human failures."



*Fátima Ismael Espinoza (56),  
Unión de Cooperativas Agropecuarias y  
Servicios SOPPEXCCA R.L.,  
Jinotega, Nicaragua*

# Gabriela Inuma Tangoa

## Peru

In 2015, Gabriela Inuma Tangoa started as a volunteer at the cooperative Agroindustrial del Palmito APROPAL Ltda and is nowadays a sector delegate. Gabriela thinks that the cooperative has a lot of potential to develop in the coming years and is even proficient enough to become a leader in the production of their quality products, both in Peru and in the world. "The development of the cooperative will increase the quality of life for many."

***"Women are as important as men in the society, we must not forget this!"***

Working in the cooperative, she learned a lot and is now able to share her knowledge with other members. Gabriela represents her members in the agricultural sector when practicing gender equity.

"Women are as important as men in the society, we must not forget this! With more proactive female leaders in cooperatives, gender equity in the society could be improved." To get more female leaders, she argues that training courses must be executed on leadership, but as well on the issues of leadership and the importance of women in the society. Gabriela hopes for the future that more young women will become member of the cooperative, work together and develop themselves further.

Gabriela's biggest wish for the coming years is to become a leading woman and have the capacity to take on great challenges in order to develop the cooperative. "In five years I am leading the destiny of my cooperative." Finally, Gabriela wants to greet all women for the International Day of Rural Women, since women are indispensable in the agricultural sector and a very important part in the society.



*Gabriela Inuma Tangoa (23),  
Agroindustrial del Palmito APROPAL Ltda,  
San Martin, Peru*

# Graciela Urrutia Becerra

## Peru

"I decided to join a cooperative as it gives me a lot of advantages. I have a safe market where I can sell my products and the benefits are for me." In 2016, Graciela joined the cooperative Agroindustrial del Palmito APROPAL Ltda. It was easy for her to get involved as women get the same opportunities as men to become a member of the cooperative.

***"Informational meetings should be held to encourage women and to explain their importance within a cooperative."***

Within the cooperative she is a sector delegate, 'davicillo', and is the communication link between the cooperative and its members.

Graciela has a lot of responsibilities in her management function, but she enjoys it. "In the cooperative I am responsible and have strong convincing skills. I am also concerned about gender and the issues around it. I hope to see in time that more female members are convinced and reach for higher positions in my cooperative, because women also CAN!"

Graciela argues that informational meetings should be held to encourage women and to explain their importance within a cooperative. Furthermore, trainings and workshops on leadership should be given so that women gain knowledge and can get better positions. "Rural women are important, as leaders in cooperatives and also in the society."

In the next few years, Graciela wishes to see the cooperative grow and bring more benefits to the society. She hopes that it will become more productive and sustainable over time. But as said before, rural women are essential in the production as well as in the whole community. Therefore, Graciela hopes that in the coming years there will be more focus on including women. Her personal wish for the next years is short and clear: "In five years I will lead the cooperative and be a woman in leadership that is able to face new challenges!"



*Graciela Urrutia Becerra (30),  
Agroindustrial del Palmito APROPAL Ltda,  
San Martin, Peru*

# Jhanett Jaqueline Paredes Vargas

## Bolivia

Jhanett Jaqueline Paredes Vargas has been with Asociación Integral Multiactiva Pachamama for 8 years. The organisation has 25 members of which 95% are women. She was the president of the organisation in 2009 and 2010.

"In my organisation we are almost only women. There is great participation and no fear to speak. We listen and discuss what would be the best options and solutions to problems. It is easy to become a member as it is written in our statutes, the organisation encourages women to join and become leaders. We also are trying to get scholarships for the daughters of the affiliates so that they can manage the organisation in the future."

***"They do not listen to you, they laugh at you or intimidate you."***

Economic empowerment is for Jhanett the key to encourage female leadership. "Space where women can generate their own money is important to encourage female leadership. Women should generate almost the same amount of money as men to have equity, so men cannot say, 'I am the one who brings the wage, you only cook'. In Pachamama we encourage leadership by making women feel that they are empowered. Some people expect leaders to make decisions, but I want that everyone is involved and has their own voice." Jhanett argues that the equality between men and women should start at home.

From her experiences in the organisation, Jhanett believes that women have a developed mind: "Women deal with a lot of things. We are thinking about food, taking care of the children, looking after the house. We are multitasking. Women can decide to work and do other things as well without neglecting our duty as a mother." But fulfilling the potential is not easy. "People think that when a woman is a leader, she is not doing her tasks at home. Sometimes men make fun of her, as they don't expect a woman to be able to combine being a leader and do the tasks that are designated to women." Jhanett had learnt this directly from her experience.

In the beginning, it was easy for her to join the organisation. Her father was a leader in the organisation and he involved Jhanett because there was support from Caritas Coroico project that trained women on

how to improve the cultivation of coffee. As a single mother, she needed a channel to sell her products, thus she chose to become an active member. Because of her active involvement, she was appointed as Secretary of Records in the Central Agraria Tunquini. Later, she was encouraged to be a park guard, the first woman to ever guard the National Park Cotapata. This was a typical job for men, so she got discriminated during her job. But Jhanett didn't give up, she was able to give her opinion and later she became the chairwoman of the organisation.

Jhanett argues that it is very difficult for women to become a leader. "They do not listen to you, they laugh at you or intimidate you. To improve the possibilities for women to become a leader, there must be more respect for women."

In the coming years, Jhanett wants to improve gender equality within the organisation. "I want to work with women, make them feel capable, create self-esteem, teach them to value themselves and others. I want to help young generations to have principles, integrity and to show them that women leadership is possible"



*Jhanett Jaqueline Paredes Vargas (35),  
Asociación Integral Multiactiva Pachamama,  
Coroico, Bolivia*

# Jumuriah

## Indonesia

"I am a farmer's daughter and since I love nature, I always had passion to increase production by fighting pests and diseases. So in 2005, when I was still a field school trainer of Agrifoca, I joined Amanah (previously a farmer organisation) and today I am the Treasurer of the cooperative KSU Amanah.

As one of the cooperative leaders, I think I sometimes put my feelings first before logic and I often have pity. But I also see this as strength, as a leader should possess empathy, in order to understand and share the feelings of another. And also, there are other qualities that most women possess: women work more detailed, we organise activities better and are very good in controlling the budget of the activities. Therefore I think that having female leaders in organisations will be advantageous for the organisations.

***"I always say that women should have their own income and their own autonomy."***

But my involvement in organisation was not easy at first. My family did not support me back then, but after I explained what I do, they support me now. Negative views also come from other people, especially when I go to the field on a motorcycle with a male colleague. Despite the challenges I face, I always say that women should have their own income and their own autonomy. My experiences showed me that women can indeed increase their knowledge and income. Women's ideas and opinions are as good as those of men.

I do hope in the next five years, I can retire and other young women will succeed me. This is also why I currently train several female teams. I think training on women empowerment can encourage female leadership at the cooperative, also with having affirmative regulation that 40% of Board of Director should consist of female and a working environment that can accept women leaders.

At last, my wish is that the Government of Indonesia keeps promoting women's position in the society, no more discrimination and violence towards children and women. And to all women, don't be afraid to do something. Women deserve to get what they should get. Women should not

always be behind men. Women can also become the shield of their families!"



*Jumuriah (40),  
KSU Amanah, Polewali-Mandar,  
West Sulawesi, Indonesia*

# Kahumbu Buyingo Benigne

## DR Congo

Since 1988 Kahumbu is member of the cooperative 'Association des Producteurs Agricole de Vuhimba'. She became a member of the cooperative in order to solve jointly the problem of poor nutrition. By paying the member fees, she could easily join the cooperative and became very active. In previous years, Kahumbu has been in charge of the control commission, but she left this position as she got a new position which she executes until today: she is the president at LOFEPACO (Ligue des Organisations des Femmes Paysannes du Congo).

***"A good education is necessary."***

As president of LOFEPACO, Kahumbu sees many challenges that women face as female leaders, often women are underestimated by men and a collaboration is difficult. "Some women are severe and proud", which is as well a challenge. Moreover, illiteracy among the elderly remains a problem. A lot could be done at the cooperative level to encourage women to become leaders. "A good education is necessary: girls must be encouraged to attend school and education for the elder women to become literate." Furthermore, she argues that organisations should do more to meet the needs of the members.

"Women are necessary for organisations. Women are good leaders. They are honest and firm in their decisions. They care for others and they make themselves strong for the interests of others." Therefore, including women as leaders is beneficial for the cooperatives. "Female leaders are good in teamwork and there will be no mismanagement. Therefore Kahumbu argues that it is important to focus on involving young women in agricultural cooperatives for the coming years. They are strong and needed for the coming years."

In the future, Kahumbu hopes to see that the cooperative develop more and more. She wants to focus on producing quantity and quality. "New techniques are essential to be developed, as well as to overcome the climatic hazards." She wants the cooperative to develop further and increase the income, as "cooperatives are key to improve life conditions for many".

Her personal wish is to become specialised in the cultivation of rice and other crop rotation crops, breed chickens and contribute to the strengthening of entrepreneurial activities.



*Kahumbu Buyingo Benigne (50),  
Association des Producteurs Agricole de  
Vuhimba,  
Bunyuka, Butembo,  
Democratic Republic of Congo*

# Kamala Lalchan Adhikari

## Nepal

At present, approximately 85% of the members in Marfa Small Farmer Agro Cooperative are women. Despite the fact that 85% is already an incredible achievement, manager Kamala Lalchan Adhikari wishes to see the number to increase up to 95 % within the next 5 years. Kamala argues that a cooperative is the best place to empower women.

"In our community, women are dominated by men and don't have much power. Women are underprivileged, so I want to encourage them. Then I want to improve their abilities and capacities so that they are capable to fight for their rights. Because I was involved in many women groups, I have a close-up view on the problems of women. At the same time, I know about the cooperative and its concept, and I find a cooperation is the best place to do something for women."

Before working at the cooperative, Kamala worked for an international non-profit organisation for 13 years as health supervisor, where she taught several women and mother groups. Afterwards, she began her own hotel business. For the past 3 years she manages the cooperative, while also taking care of her apple and apricot farm.

***"Your dreams should be big, but you should always have the power to start with small things."***

"As a woman, it is quite easy to gain other women's trust and convince them to join a cooperative. I understand the problems of women. For this reason, I can have 85% female members." As a leader of the cooperative, Kamala wants to be an example for other women and motivate them. "I want to motivate them to do farming as business and to be actively involved in the cooperative. Motivating women to become active is not an easy task. Some women in our community are not getting the full family support to do something by themselves."

But Kamala does not give up, she keeps trying to motivate them. Her motto is: your dreams should be big, but you should always have the power to start with small things. To increase women's participation, Kamala invites them to community meetings. "They discuss their problems and solve their issues. Women used to be victim of domestic abuse." Once women are motivated to be



*Kamala Lalchan Adhikari (52),  
Marfa Small farmer Agro Cooperative Ltd.,  
Mustang district, Nepal*

active, the cooperative can give trainings on practical skills and give the women opportunities to work with other male and female leaders. These are possibilities, according to Kamala, to encourage female leadership.

There are also other challenges. "The first priority of a woman is the family. So she has to manage her time between family and her leadership role. That is a challenge in my point of view." And because of this, a community that support female leadership is necessary to encourage more women into leading positions. With women empowerment on her mind Kamala wishes to see more and more women in her area joining the cooperative and many of them to become skillful in the future.

# Kavira Mandiki Alexandrine

## DR Congo

This is Kavira Mandiki Alexandrine, who is with 60 years the oldest of our inspiring women. But despite her age, she is still very active within her cooperative.

***"The strength of women in leadership positions are their commitment to goals."***

For almost 18 years, Kavira is a member of the cooperative. Her membership started as Kavira attended meetings in her neighbourhood that were frequently organised by IFED (Intégration de la Femmes au Développement). IFED is connected to the organisation LOFEPACO (Ligue des Organisations des Femmes Paysanne du Congo). After a short time, she got inspired by the others who attended the meetings and decided to become a member of the organisation LOFEPACO as well.

From the very beginning, Kavira acknowledges the importance of the agricultural sector and the importance of women in this sector. Therefore, she is working hard in the organisation and believes that more awareness should be created on the importance of women in agriculture. In the organisation she works in the control commission.

Kavira argues that the strength of women in leadership positions are their commitment to goals. Women are dedicated to reach goals which have been set. Moreover, women are better in the financial sector of cooperatives. A cooperative should stimulate this by putting the principles of good governance into practice. For the future, she hopes that more young women get involved in agricultural organisations.



*Kavira Mandiki Alexandrine (60),  
LOFEPACO,  
Democratic Republic of Congo*

# Liliana Vélez Quintero

## Colombia

"I joined the cooperative 10 years ago" says Liliana Vélez Quintero, a manager of Cooperativa San Bartolo in Antioquia, Colombia. She got inspired to work in the cooperative as she likes to work with small producers. At the same time, she was as well a Technical Assistant. "Then I was elected as manager. Two years later I also became a partner."

At first, it was not easy for Liliana to get involved, "in the beginning there was a certain fear because I am a woman. People thought that I could not carry out my job properly, because I had to travel all over the area and especially through places which have a difficult access. When I was starting as manager, there was a sector of the council that doubted my abilities. But the reason for this could be that I am a very young woman, maybe too young in their eyes, to hold a management position."

"There are some challenges that women in leadership positions face. Mainly, people do not acknowledge and recognise the importance of their work. So, a woman should be clear about her abilities and potential and above all, have confidence to do her job. Therefore, I think the key to female leadership is to lose fear, have self-knowledge of individual abilities, and to do things with love."

***"For organisations, having women as leader can bring order and greater organisational harmony."***

According to Liliana, the advantages of female leadership and women's roles are more visible nowadays. "Women can contribute a lot within organisations and the society. Men begin to recognise that we are more orderly, there is more accuracy in the processes and we bring more transparency. For organisations, having women as leader can bring order and greater organisational harmony. Women naturally have the ability to manage resources and create harmonious relationships." Involvement of young women in cooperatives is also important, "a young woman has more confidence in herself and wants to develop this further, which enables her to take leadership positions."

It is essential to create a supportive working environment in order to strengthen female leadership and to encourage more (young) women to get involved in cooperatives. "An environment



*Liliana Vélez Quintero (32),  
Cooperativa San Bartolo,  
Antioquia, Colombia*

is needed where confidence is given in the skills of women. Cooperatives could contribute to this by, for example, making women's work visible whether they are leaders or members. In addition to this, requirements could be developed for including female members in administrative and control functions. As well, cooperatives could give trainings and educate women to empower them."

Nowadays Liliana is very confident with her role, despite her challenging start and has a strong vision for her cooperative. "My role is fundamental for the development and sustainability of the organisation. In my role as manager, I try to empower the members in their roles as this is the fundamental axis of the growth of the company. And in the coming years, I think the cooperative will be recognised as a commercially successful organisation, that provides its partners with quality services and benefits to improve their living conditions. With taking into account a social and environmental responsibility."

In the coming years, Liliana hopes she will be able to help thousands of rural people to have a good quality of life by improving their agricultural productivity.

# Ruth Namaganda

## Uganda

Ruth Namaganda is 29 years old, from the Kibinge Coffee Farmers' Co-operative Society Ltd. in Bukomansimbi district, Uganda. In 2015, she joined the cooperative after they offered trainings for the youth to get involved in agriculture. Nowadays, she is a volunteer and a youth trainer. Within the cooperative she has a leading role, which brings her economic independence and employment. Additionally, being a woman with a voice gives other women the feeling to be represented and motivation. "We feel we have the power."

Being a woman with a leadership position has also its challenges. "Men have an undermining attitude and think they perform better than women." Also, "women have a lot of roles to play, both at home and at the cooperative". In order to give women the opportunity to be empowered, it is important to value women the same as men. According to Ruth, to be a leader you must be hard-working, trustworthy and risk taking.

Other necessary capacities are being able to listen to feedback, even if it is criticism, and most importantly: be able to motivate others. A woman as a female leader in the cooperative is important for younger women, they feel represented as "these leaders are our role models". Furthermore, Ruth emphasizes that female leadership in the cooperatives can be encouraged by training more women. "A training for only women could help them to open up and so they will get encouraged."

***"To be a leader you must be hard-working, trustworthy and risk taking."***

In the following years, Ruth expects that there will be an increased membership of women in the cooperative and that women will take up important leadership roles within the cooperatives. In order to achieve this, more awareness should be created and women should be encouraged that they can have a voice. "Girls' education, sensitisation and giving more training", are key to get more young women involved. Nowadays, more and more women are employed in the cooperative and they take up leadership roles. For the future, Ruth hopes to see even more women getting involved in the agriculture sector.

Ruth's wish is to build a youth learning centre on her own piece of land. She is very ambitious and wants to become a role model herself in her community.



*Ruth Namaganda (29),  
Kibinge Coffee Farmers' Co-operative  
Society,  
Bukomansimbi, Uganda*

# Susma Bastola

## Nepal

"The Tinjure Tea Farmer Cooperative is the first tea cooperative in Nepal, located in the remote area of Ilam. Despite its remote location, it is producing high quality tea and exports tea to both domestic and the international market."

With a Bachelor in Tea Technology and Management, Susma Bastola got inspired to work for the cooperatives that are related to tea. In October 2016, she became a marketing and business development coordinator for the Tinjure cooperative while working for MAAS International. She mainly does field work, where she visits the cooperative and the factory regularly.

***"Women who are capable are still lagging behind because of culture and the old orthodox way of seeing women in the society"***

Susma is a project leader within the cooperative, where she manages a women group. She provides suitable trainings for women of the tea cooperative. "Recently I have provided a training to women on hand made tea packaging, which are also sold in the international market. Being a woman in leadership there are much more opportunities available." Unfortunately, there are still a lot of challenges for being a woman in a leadership position. "Being a woman it was challenging to stay away from my family and work in the field. Women have to take both the responsibility at home and on the fields. This can make time management a challenge!"

Moreover, Susma states that "women should be included in cooperatives. They are honest in financial work which contributes to the maintenance of transparency in any organisation. Different from men, women have an inspiring and problem solving nature, they motivate other people to work efficiently and effectively in the organisation and are good in problem solving." In order to encourage female leadership within the organisations, an awareness program must be done to get women to take the lead in any organisation or society. "Women are shy and feel awkward from the inside to take such roles". Therefore, the goal is to strengthen the confidence and give inspiration to women who are capable to take the lead. "Women who are capable are still lagging behind because of culture and the old orthodox way of seeing women in the

society. Initiation from each family and individual is of importance to encourage women".

For the coming years, Susma hopes that in the Tinjure Tea Cooperative women empowerment will be promoted and that there will be a balance between male and female leaders. "Especially young women should not be confined within the four walls of a room, they should be able to take the next level to the height of civilisation and development. There should not be any discrimination among boys and girls, equal participation is essential."

Susma works with full dedication and enthusiasm. Also, she will extend the program further in order to provide more opportunities for many young women and create more job openings, which focus on rural women.



*Susma Bastola (24),  
Tinjure Tea Cooperative,  
Ilam, Nepal*

# Zenebech Bayissa Gebremedhin

## Ethiopia

Since 2007, Zenebech Bayissa Gebremedhin is the General Manager on Primary Arib Gebeya Cooperative, as well as the member of Board on Becho Woliso Multi-Purpose Farmers' Cooperative Union. Zenebech has been asked to participate on social activities within her area, as she is a well-educated woman. Furthermore, she received a training on improved seed multiplication, which she successfully completed. Consequently, she joined the cooperative and wanted to share her experience. There were still problems that were not solved yet. "I decided to be part of the solution and a voice for farmers."

Zenebech really enjoys her work as a general manager at the cooperative, although it is sometimes tough. "There are community attitudes towards women, a heavy workload in social responsibility, travelling a lot and sometimes you spent long days away from home". Having influential women in the cooperative is key, as they promote gender equality and are an example to other women. Besides, she argues that women are often more transparent, determined to achieve goals and have an internal interest. In order to encourage female leadership, a cooperative should give trainings and create awareness for gender equality. "Women who are leaders should get some more benefits or honour."

***"Women should be taught that they are equal to men."***

In the coming years, Zenebech hopes the cooperative will develop to become more profitable and that more women will be included, "but this needs more time and commitment." To increase the number of active women in the cooperatives, women should become aware of the benefits of a cooperative. "They should be taught that they are equal to men and an experience sharing program should be arranged."

In the future, Zenebech hopes to see a lot more young women as members as well as leaders in cooperatives. She is committed to give full time to women and female members and to share her experience. Her personal wish is to have a happy family and to open a shop.



*Zenebech Bayissa Gebremedhin (37),  
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