

# CLIENT PROTECTION PRINCIPLES



*Opportunity Loan Officer Buenaventura Tapias Alvarez (left) leads financial literacy training for the Progress Trust Group of entrepreneurial artisans in San Jacinto, Colombia. These women are working to rebuild their lives following the violence and displacement that have plagued their homeland for decades.*

At Opportunity International, we are committed to treating our clients as equal partners, recognizing their wisdom, ingenuity, dignity and courage.

Opportunity understands that not every impoverished person needs a loan. Our broad-based approach includes providing access to short- and long-term savings, insurance, training, and business-specific financing in agriculture, commerce and small manufacturing.

Providing effective microfinance services for people living in poverty is a complex undertaking. At Opportunity International, we have spent 40 years developing financial products, all the while insisting on transparency and results to protect our clients, who are among the most vulnerable people in the world.

## LISTENING TO OUR CLIENTS

Opportunity believes in the importance of investing in research to give voice to our clients, and to make sure that our tools are having a positive impact on their lives. Over the last decade, we have conducted more than 50,000 face-to-face surveys with clients in Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe and Latin America. The research has led us to carefully tailor loan products to fit the needs of specific groups and help them avoid problems of over-indebtedness. It has also shown us that there is a much greater need for savings and other financial services than for loans, and our growth has reflected that shift. Finally, we have learned that financial literacy is one of the most important client protection measures we can provide. When a client understands her own financial needs better, she is empowered to look out for her family's own best interests.

## PARTNERING WITH INDUSTRY LEADERS

As part of our commitment to meeting the needs of the poor, Opportunity shares best practices through industry organizations such as CGAP, SEEP, MFTransparency and the Smart Campaign. We work side-by-side with leading microfinance providers to develop client protection principles including:

- avoidance of over-indebtedness
- transparent and responsible pricing
- appropriate collections practices
- ethical staff behavior
- mechanisms for redress of grievances
- privacy of client data