



August 2017

Dear Friend,

I hope the relaxing days of summer are treating you well. I just returned from Guatemala, and as always, it was exciting to see firsthand the progress and expansion of our *Microcredit Plus* program. The team is working hard on numerous exciting initiatives, and in the enclosed 2016 Annual Report, you will find wonderful information and stories about our accomplishments. Last year was the third and final year of our 2014-2016 strategic plan, *Expanding the Bridge*, and the results of our work will be shared in our Client Outcomes Report, which will be ready for distribution later this summer.

This year, one of our most exciting accomplishments so far is achieving the *Leader Milestone* by Truelift; a global initiative that provides an identification called a 'trust mark' in microfinance and other forms of social business to signify commitment to positive and enduring change for people affected by conditions of poverty. Friendship Bridge is only the 4th organization in the world to reach *Leader* status and the 3rd in Latin America. This recognition is further proof that our commitment to social performance management and our Client Continuum strategy is proving successful. Our 2017-2019 Strategic Plan theme, *A Path for Every Client*, will guide our journey.

We continue to focus on our clients by providing the best possible products and services tailored to each client's level of development to further her growth along a path of empowerment. Most recently, we launched our *Women's Agriculture Credit & Training* program in partnership with the InterAmerican Development Bank in the department of Quiché. Through this program, we provide access to new markets through technical training and credit products that meet the unique needs in the agriculture sector. This empowers women to be more involved in the family agriculture business and it eliminates middlemen since clients directly access buyers of their products. Through one-on-one training, group workshops, and product growth demonstrations plots, the agriculture team has quickly grown this program to include 469 clients. Now we are expanding to the department of Sololá.

Along with organizational growth, we are also experiencing change. Our Country Director Astrid Cardona will be leaving Friendship Bridge as she has decided it is time for a change and to focus on personal matters. I will miss working with Astrid, however, Heidi Garrido, Director of People Services, has agreed to step in as interim Country Director while we search for a new country leader. With the exceptional leadership of the Board of Directors and our amazing team of professionals in Guatemala and the United States, I am confident we will continue to bring transformational change to women in rural Guatemala.

Part of the transformational change our clients experience comes from accessing our *Health for Life* program which provides preventive health services through mobile clinics led by nurses who speak the clients' indigenous languages. This reduces the high rates of preventable diseases that rural, indigenous women face. This September you can take on a health challenge to raise awareness and funds to expand this important program. Visit friendshipbridge.org/events to learn how you can choose health and alleviate poverty.

Thank you for joining us on this exciting journey!

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "K Larson".

Karen Larson
President & CEO