

# Sowing Resilience: Empowering Rural Women Entrepreneurs in Colombia



## MFI: Banco Contactar

Founded in 2001 as a non-profit and converted into a fully licensed bank in 2022, Banco Contactar is one of Colombia’s leading microfinance institutions, dedicated to expanding financial inclusion among low-income microentrepreneurs in rural and semi-urban areas. Operating through more than 70 branches and serving over 250,000 active clients, nearly 60% of whom are women, Contactar combines productive microcredit with financial education, green credit lines, and women’s empowerment programs, maintaining its founding social mission of “Crecer con la gente” (“Growing with the people”) while broadening its funding base and services as a regulated institution under the Financial Superintendence of Colombia.

## MSME: María Esther Chalacamá

At 70 years old, María Esther Chalacamá embodies resilience. Born in Guachucal, Nariño, she was displaced by conflict as a child, orphaned, and later widowed. Her husband was also a victim of Colombia’s violence. Despite these hardships, she returned to her birthplace and transformed a two-hectare plot of rough terrain into a productive farm, growing potatoes, onions, and corn, and raising guinea pigs, chickens, and cows.

Today, she shares her home with her grandson, a child with cognitive difficulties, and works tirelessly to secure his future.

Her relationship with Banco Contactar began in 2016 with a loan of USD 870 to purchase livestock and improve her land. At the time, she had no bed, blankets, or proper roof. Over nine loan cycles totaling approximately USD 5,640, she has steadily expanded her farm, increased productivity, and built a stable home with access to water, electricity, and a connecting road.

María Esther’s diversified farm not only sustains her household but also contributes to her local community’s food supply. Her story reflects how trust and access to credit can transform lives, and how investing in rural women entrepreneurs generates lasting economic and social value. “The service is excellent, the people are kind, they’re always willing to listen, and thanks to the loans, you can work,” she says. A model client and a living symbol of hope, María Esther dreams of expanding her farm and passing on the land she has nurtured to future generations.

## Colombia Key Figures



Population	52.9 M
GDP per Capita	\$7,914
Human Development Rank	83/191
Annual GDP Growth	1.7%

Sources: UNDP (2024); The World Bank (2023).

