Whole Planet Foundation® (WPF) funds microlending programs in Colombia where The Elite Flower sources Whole Trade® flowers which are sold in Whole Foods Market® (WFM) stores. WPF is a WFM non-profit whose mission is to alleviate poverty by funding microlending programs where WFM sources products as a way to alleviate poverty and give back to our global communities.

Through the WFM Team Member Volunteer Program, WFM gives Team Members the unique opportunity to travel abroad with WPF to, learn about WPF and meet microcredit clients, witness the transformative power of microcredit, see where and how WFM products are grown, provide community service, experience and learn from other cultures and challenge themselves by exploring exciting countries around the globe.
WFM TEAM MEMBER VOLUNTEER PROGRAM COLOMBIA

CULTURE AND SIGHTSEEING IN BOGOTÁ

SIGHTSEEING AND CULTURE IN CARTAGENA

COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECT WITH WFM SUPPLIER PARTNER THE ELITE FLOWER AND THE ELITE FOUNDATION AND VISIT WITH WPF MICROLENDING PARTNER CMA AVAL IN FACATATIVÁ
Eleven Whole Foods Market® Team Member Volunteers travelled to Colombia to volunteer in Facatativá at a school where they worked with the community to build a classroom for hearing impaired children. They visited with microcredit clients of CMA AVAL in Facatativá and learned about Whole Trade Guarantee flower production from The Elite Flower, whose flowers are for sale in Whole Foods Market stores. Team Members were immersed in the community where they learned about the culture of Colombia through local food, language and dance.

TEAM

Anthony Redley (Mid-Atlantic Region, Plymouth Meeting Store)
Darren Melonson (Global Office)
Ethan Lemieux (South Region, Columbia Store)
Jenna Gelgand (Global Office)
Jodi Hopper (Southwest Region, Domain Store)
Laura Hybner (Global Office)
Melanie Courey (Rocky Mountain Region, Colorado Blvd. Store)
Michelle Coleman (United Kingdom, Piccadilly Store)
Michelle Moreno (Southern Pacific, Venice Store)
Patricia Vander Mooren (Pacific Northwest, Greenway Store)
Phyllis Ogden (Midwest Region, Regency Store)

GROUP COORDINATOR
Dr. Mario Serrano

COLOMBIA GUIDES
Pure Colombia
Ricardo Torres

PROJECT COORDINATOR
Dr. Mario Serrano

PROGRAM MANAGER
Genie Bolduc
TRIP ITINERARY - 2 WEEKS

Day 1 Tuesday July 28 - Arrive in Bogotá
Day 2 Wednesday July 29 - Visit The Elite Flower school and nursery in Facatativá
Day 3 Thursday July 30 - Visit microlending partner CMA Aval in Suba
Day 4 Friday July 31 - Visit microlending partner CMA Aval in Zipaquirá
Day 5 Saturday August 1 - Visit WFM supplier partner DiBufala
Day 6 Sunday August 2 - Community service project introduction in Facatativá
Day 7 Monday August 3 - Community service project in Facatativá
Day 8 Tuesday August 4 - Community service project in Facatativá
Day 9 Wednesday August 5 - Community service project in Facatativá
Day 10 Thursday August 6 - Community service project in Facatativá
Day 11 Friday August 7 - Community service project in Facatativá
Day 12 Saturday August 8 - Tour Bogotá city center, Gold Museum, Monserrate and Botero Museum
Day 13 Sunday August 9 - Cooking class to learn how to make ajiaco, a soup created in Bogotá, fly to Cartagena
Day 14 Monday August 10 - Bazurto Market, cooking class and city tour of La Popa and Castillo San Felipe
Day 15 Tuesday August 11 - Fish from dugout canoes and cook on the beach with locals in La Boquilla
Day 16 Wednesday August 12 - Depart for home
Meeting microcredit clients of WPF microlending partner CMA Aval

THE EXPERIENCE

Canoeing in a dugout canoe  Learning about Whole Trade flowers  Riding horses into the mountains

Visiting local markets  Taking selfies at every opportunity  Learning about the Elite Foundation
Team Members were introduced to DiBufala, the makers of BUF mozzarella which is sold in Whole Foods Market stores and is made from buffalo milk. They even rode up in the mountains to see the buffalo!

They went to local markets and took a cooking class to learn how to make *ajíaco*, a traditional soup from Bogotá made from corn, potato, chicken, guascas, cream and capers. They ate pork and corn tamales made by Edouard, a microcredit client and fished out of dugout canoes in Cartagena.

Colombia has a rich vibrant culture. Living life to it’s fullest and dancing is part of it. Team Members took part in salsa lessons, Spanish and sign language classes and learned how to play a Colombian game called *tejo*. 
Corporación MicroCrédito AVAL (CMA) began operations in 2010 in Bogotá, the capital of Colombia, in partnership with Grameen Trust and the Luis Carlos Sarmiento Angulo Foundation. In 2013 new management took over and the name changed to the Corporación Microcrédito AVAL to promote their strong relationship with the Aval Group, the largest financial conglomerate in Colombia. Their focus is exclusively on microcredit which they loan out of a network of 7 branches in Bogota and the surrounding region. They achieved financial self-sustainability for the first time this year and are pursuing aggressive growth strategies, including opening two new branches in the beginning of 2015. CMA is unique in the Colombian microfinance industry with the introduction earlier this year of a mobile banking system that allows clients to receive loans, make payments and save money via their cellphone.

Whole Planet Foundation began funding CMA in 2011 and the total authorized grant to CMA as of 6/31/2015 is $1.2M for the Suba and Zipaquirá branches to reach 4,290 new clients.

Clients at the start of the WPF partnership: 2,000
Total WPF funds disbursed to Colombia: $850,000

By achieving financial self-sufficiency and sustained growth, CMA is now setting its sights on expansion into more rural areas of the country as well as the coastal regions. It is capitalizing on its relationship with the Aval Group to introduce insurance products to its borrowers as well as enhanced savings options.

Corporación Microcrédito Aval
CECILIA: BERRY FARMER
Cecelia grows Castilla berries on her farm and has been selling berries for 15 years. She has a stationary store where she sells school and office supplies and provides photocopy services. By word of mouth she has helped others in her area to access loans.

CAROL: SHOPKEEPER
Team Member volunteers visited with Carol and her daughter in a shop where she has sold items for children and babies for eight years. She is the leader of her microcredit group and explained the bookkeeping system used to keep track of loans and repayments to the team.

CMA AVAL
WPF’s partner in Colombia taught the TMs as much as they could in a day and a half about methodology, their personal journey, the goals of CMA and how WPF is helping them to achieve them. They met the Executive Director Gabriel Mejia and the staff of CMA, observed how CMA staff recruits microcredit clients, visited microcredit clients and learned about their businesses.

GIOVANY LEATHERWORKER
The teams met a leather worker who is in business with his father-in-law and brother-in-law. They have been leatherworkers for 3 generations. With their next loan they will purchase an additional leather stitching machine.

SUSANA: PASTRY MAKER
Team Member volunteers visited with Susana who makes Merengón de Fresas (Colombian Strawberry Meringue) that she sells to restaurants in Bogotá. She has been making and selling them for 25 years and uses her loans to purchase equipment (like a large mixer) to make her work more efficient and cost effective.

TEAM MEMBERS
This photo is of Team Members with Giovany who is delivering products that the volunteers ordered a week before. The sale of leather goods to the Team Members had a great impact on their overall sales and ability to repay their most recent loan.

CECILIA: BERRY FARMER
Cecelia grows Castilla berries on her farm and has been selling berries for 15 years. She has a stationary store where she sells school and office supplies and provides photocopy services. By word of mouth she has helped others in her area to access loans.
Information from BUF Creamery:

A farmer-owned water buffalo dairy producer that is vertically integrated: we own buffalos, refrigerated trucks and a state of the art production facility. Our buffalos are grass-fed and free range. We expect to become Certified Organic in Q1 2016.

Our buffalos are grass-fed on open range. Buffalos are highly intelligent; they will only produce milk when they are nursing a calf, well-treated, refreshed and in a natural environment.

The Andes offer the best conditions for our animals. All year round warm temperatures are where our animals thrive.

BUF is the only Colombian production facility certified by Silliker. BUF received an excellent score of 95.1%. BUF is working with EcoCert to obtain our Organic Certification.

BUF’s shelf life is 35 days once landed in Miami. We benefit from the robust refrigerated chain of custody designed to support the largest cut flower industry in the world.

Just like our cheese, cut flowers are extremely sensitive to warmth and allow no margin for error. It is only a 3.5 hour refrigerated flight from our factory to the U.S.

Types of water buffalo products made at BUF Creamery:
- Mozzarella
- Burrata
- Ricotta
- Yoghurt
- Ice Cream
- Dulce de Leche

www.bufcreamery.com/
LEARNING ABOUT BUFFALO MOZZARELLA

Roberto Herrera Lara introduced the team to BUF Creamery where water buffalo mozzarella that is sold in WFM stores in produced. The team rode up into the mountains to see the water buffalo that produce the milk that is made into delicious BUF Creamery cheeses. They were then taken on a tour of the creamery where they learned about cheese production and when finished were treated to a fantastic meal in the adjacent restaurant where the creamery owner’s mother prepares all sorts of delicious dishes featuring BUF Creamery cheeses.
Information from WFM website:

In 1999, Elite Flower created the Fernando Borrero Caicedo Foundation (Elite Foundation) to improve the lives of farmworkers. In 2000, the foundation opened a day care center for babies three months and up. Two years later, the foundation opened an elementary school for children of farmworkers. This summer — thanks in part to your purchases of Whole Trade® flowers — the foundation will open a combined facility that can accommodate even more nursery school, preschool and elementary school students.

Each time you buy a Whole Trade product, a portion of what you paid goes into a development fund for the community that produced it. When you buy Whole Trade flowers from Colombia, those funds help support students like Juan Fernando, who enrolled in the foundation’s daycare when he was ten months old. Now, as an elementary school student, Juan Fernando has won many academic prizes, including a national math contest!

Juan Fernando’s father, Guilivaldo, has worked for Elite Flower for nineteen years. With the opening of the new center, Guilivaldo hopes that more children will have access to the academic and social advantages that were available to Juan Fernando:

"May this be the opportunity to thank you for all you have done for my son and to wish that you may continue with this beautiful work, especially now that with the new facilities you are building, you will open more positions so, as Juan Fernando has had this opportunity, many more children will be at the foundation."

The new facility is closer to Elite’s headquarters, so children spend less time in transport and working parents can meet with teachers and participate in their children’s schooling.
When Team Member volunteers visited Colombia they were welcomed into the communities where The Elite Flower has built relationships. This provided the volunteers with the opportunity for total immersion, spending their waking hours working with members of the communities where The Elite Flower and Elite Foundation works and participating in building a classroom for hearing impaired children, a project co-funded by Elite’s Foundation and Whole Foods Market.
Volunteers learned about the positive effect of the social premiums generated by sales of Whole Trade flowers:

**Schools:**
The Fernando Borrero Caicedo Foundation (Elite Foundation) that the Whole Trade Guarantee premium supports has funded nursery, preschool and elementary education facilities for the children in their community from 3 months to eleven years old. Their hours of operation match the flower workers schedules, from 7 am to 4 pm, providing transportation for the children and good nutrition.

**Helping the Hearing Impaired:**
The Elite Foundation also funds a classes at the local public school for hearing impaired children school in the community of Facatativá. Their goal is to help by offering these children with the opportunity for education and independence and the necessary tools for success in life.

**Affordable housing:**
No interest loans are given to flower workers to purchase a home. The first and second floors are built and over time the loan recipient can “finish” the interior and if they want, over time they can add a third floor. More than 384 families have had access to these housing loans.

**20/20 Woman Program:**
This program was created with an intervention focus on at-risk adolescents and to help adolescent girls to enhance their skills and academic achievement. It also provides female high school students at a local public school opportunities and strategies to enhance academic skills as well as to develop their skills in sports and arts to help them in goal achievement and the satisfaction of success for their futures.

**Adult education:**
Flower workers are offered the opportunity for further education, including elementary through high school. This is meant to put them in a better position for personal and family development. A worker said that seeking her degree encouraged her son to stay in school, a benefit she did not imagine until it happened.

Whole Trade Flowers Help Real People: [https://youtu.be/UrJoT7vNIQo](https://youtu.be/UrJoT7vNIQo)
The Elite Flower and Whole Foods Market: [https://youtu.be/EADmLhnyYkk](https://youtu.be/EADmLhnyYkk)
NURSERY AND PRESCHOOL
Chappala School, a nursery and pre-school, supports children under the age of five who would otherwise be left at home. The school offers a full service program of transportation, healthy meals, art and education, as well as nursery services for their youngest members. It is situated on property located along a river that was the childhood home of the owner of Elite.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
Team Members had the opportunity to see the elementary school funded by the Elite Foundation and the Whole Trade premium generated by sales of Whole Trade flowers from The Elite Flower and meet the teachers and children.

TEAM MEMBER VOLUNTEERS AND THE CHILDREN
The volunteers had fun at the schools with the children and worked with the hearing impaired students where the volunteers performed community service by building a new classroom and guinea pig house with them.
A rewarding part of the Whole Foods Market Team Member Volunteer Program is the community service work that the volunteers do, as well as the relationships created while doing that work. Friendships are formed between people of different nationalities and cultures, WFM Team Members from a variety of regions, facilities, stores and positions, and between Team Members and suppliers whose products are sold in WFM stores.

Together with Elite Foundation, Whole Foods Market funded and Team Members helped to build a pre-fabricated classroom specifically for hearing impaired students attending the school, and also helped build a guinea pig house for the students’ agricultural project.
The work that they do in and with the community is impactful and its effect will last a period of time but the relationships that they form with members of the community can last a lifetime.

The community wanted to replace a classroom specifically for the hearing impaired children. The project took six days to complete. Not only did the volunteers work hard on it but the students, members of the community, hosts, guides and driver all pitched in to help make the project successful. The team mixed cement, dug with pick axes, erected a classroom, painted walls, dug a garden, roofed and finished the classroom. Completing their original project, they then helped build a livestock house to house the hearing impaired children’s agricultural project, something each class has at this agricultural trade school.
LAURA
“Regardless of any communication barrier, there was the connection of being there for each other and helping one another for the common goal to have a space for the deaf community. It was amazing to help build and laugh with them and our team and it made the overall project that much more meaningful for all of us. I also loved that we worked cohesively as a family through struggles and wins- where we saw an opportunity to be better we tried to show up and make it the best.”

PHYLIS
“This trip has forever changed the way I look at the products I buy, the things I create, and the items that I suggest to other people. Seeing first hand the impact of something simple like buying a Whole Trade flower and how much of a difference a dollar donation can make makes me want to find other ways in my life to give back.”

MICHELLE
“The WFM TM Volunteer Program experience changed my life. I learned that small change can make a huge difference. We were able to physically see how microloans changed the lives of people through helping them in their businesses. To hear their stories and see what they have done was truly inspirational. I think everyone should go on a TMVP Trip. Its difficult to put into words how much the experience means and how it impacts you. Everyday on the trip is better than the last and is an amazing opportunity to learn and share. My advice to any Team Member would be to not be afraid, its an awesome experience!”

ANTHONY
“When purchasing items at WFM, its hard to make the connection of what is really going on with the money but visiting Elite changed that perspective. There is a ton going on with the money and thousands of people are hired because of it. The community is getting stronger and individuals have hope, and once there’s hope there’s life.”

JODI
“Life changing, participating in a small project that has a huge impact, taking a few days to step out of my comfort zone and help a community in another part of the world.”

JENNA
“WOW! What an amazing experience. I loved every minute of it. I learned so much on this trip. The friends, the partnerships, the impact will stick with me the rest of my life and change how I look at the world in only the best ways possible.”

DARREN
“My favorite part of the trip was interacting with the deaf students before, during, and after project work. I have no words that describe the emotion and pride from all involved when working together on a common cause. At the dedication, all were in tears – the students, the teacher, the parents, WFM Team Members, the project leader Mario Serrano, even the tradesmen. It was a proud moment for us all. I am extremely grateful to have made deep personal connections with the people in Colombia while working with them side-by-side, playing and laughing together and sharing tears of happiness, pride and joy.”

TRISH
“It was awesome to walk with the AVAL staff in the field and great to get a firsthand look at how they connect with the community and identify those that may be in need of capital. The connection with my group was great, all sharing the same vision for this community and love for what we do and for our company.”
2015 COLOMBIA WFM TMVP IMPACT

- 11 TEAM MEMBERS
- 5 MICROCREDIT CLIENTS AND 9 STAFF MET
- CLASSROOM BUILT FOR HEARING IMPAIRED CHILDREN
- 1 GUINEA PIG HOUSE CONSTRUCTED FOR CHILDREN’S PROJECT
- TEAM MEMBERS WITNESSED WHOLE TRADE PREMIUM $ AT WORK
- 1 COMMUNITY FOREVER BONDED WITH WFM TMS

Team Members with Dr Mario Serrano who leads the Elite Foundation’s initiatives and hosted the team in Colombia.