



ONE ACRE FUND

2021 People  
& DEI Report



**Greetings from One Acre Fund.** I am pleased to share our first annual People and DEI Report, which outlines our goals for our staff and publicly reports on progress, in the same way **we do** in our work for farmers.

Our job is to make farmers more prosperous, and our ability to deliver on that promise depends entirely on our team. We do our best work for farmers when we bring out the best in our people.

We have the privilege and responsibility of employing more than 8,000 talented staff from 37 countries. Every member of our team — regardless of their identity or circumstances — deserves an equal chance to succeed and belong here, to show up fully and to do their best work.

Yet we have not always lived up to this vision. In our early years, we were **led** largely by Americans and Europeans. Like too many organizations, we originally had two teams — one international and one national — and we created systems that were largely separated by nationality. While we started addressing this in 2016, our progress was far too slow. It is not enough to make small changes; we must be proactively antiracist for our multicultural team to fully thrive.

We openly acknowledge and own this legacy, and the harm it has caused, and this fuels our passion for transformative change. We have top-to-bottom alignment on the moral and performance urgency of building a more diverse, equitable and inclusive One Acre Fund.

To accelerate progress, we did a comprehensive diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) review in 2020 with support from Ernst & Young (EY) and with input from more than 4,600 staff. Building from that foundation, we wholeheartedly commit to the following goals for DEI and antiracism at One Acre Fund:

- 1. Diverse leadership:** Diversity strengthens business decisions. We are stronger when our senior leadership reflects the diverse identities of our staff, with a balanced representation of genders and a mix of nationalities. We develop rising leaders in our ranks, plan for internal succession, and hire staff with a broad range of experiences and a deep understanding of the communities we serve.
- 2. Equitable advancement:** Each staff member feels like part of an equitable meritocracy. We fairly define strong performance, support career growth, and reward good work. We focus more on what gets done than on how work gets done. We regularly review pay and promotions data to ensure equity across all staff groups.
- 3. Inclusive culture:** We build on the full strengths of our talented, multicultural team. All staff feel valued and encouraged to contribute, regardless of their identity or seniority. We invite participation in decisions; provide DEI, anti-bias, and anti-racism training in our ongoing curriculum; and hold our leaders and ourselves accountable for upholding our **Culture Code** and creating a culture of belonging.

We're not there yet: we must now turn these goals into real changes in the day-to-day staff experience. We seek to approach this challenge with as much ambition and focus as we do in our field operations.

In the spirit of continual growth, we commit to sharing data on our ongoing process of transformation around these commitments in our Annual People and DEI Report. We hope this both increases transparency in our efforts and invites healthy challenge and accountability.

Together in Service,

**Andrew Youn, CEO**

**One Acre Fund Leadership Council**

**DEI Council**

# OUR WORKFORCE

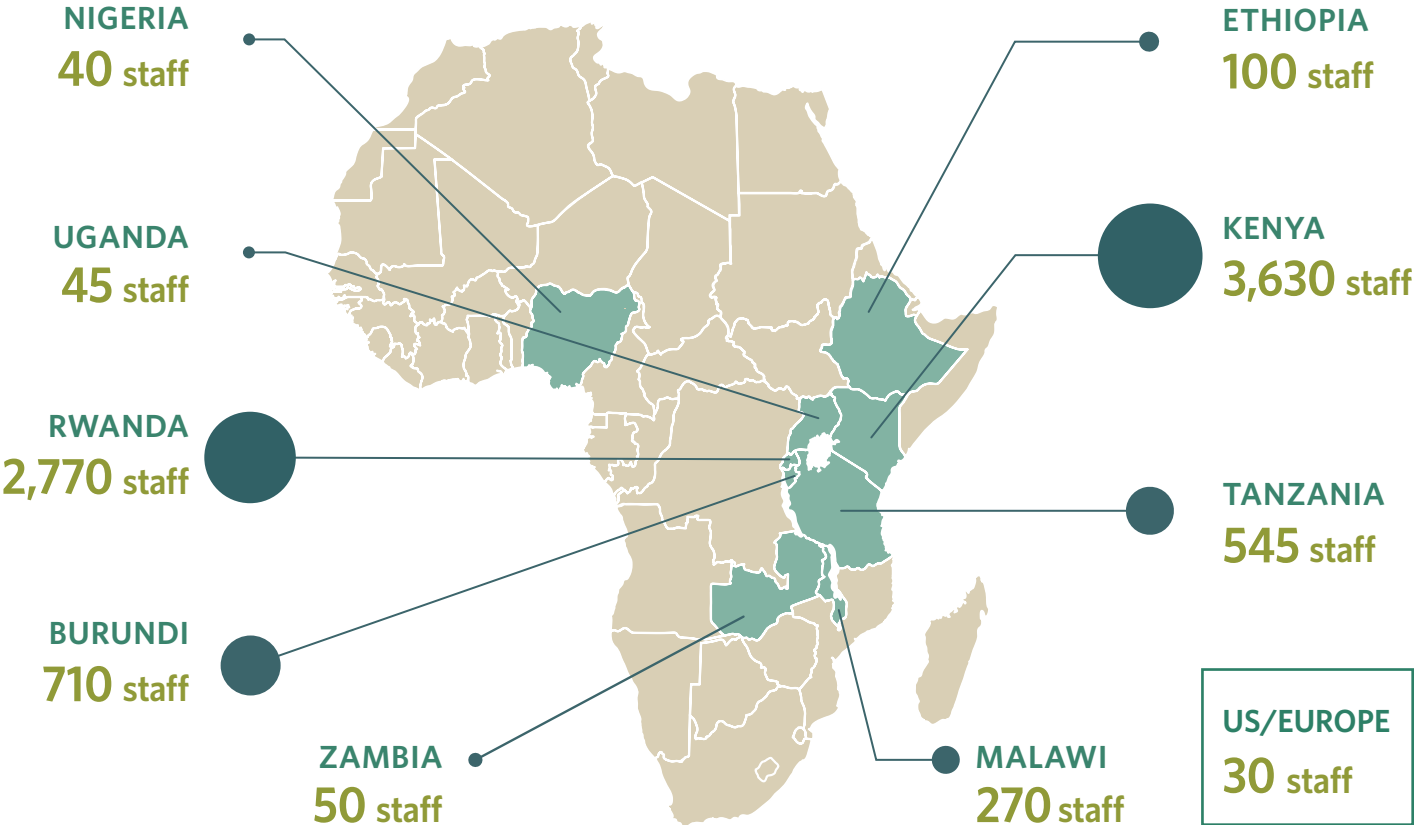
To understand our DEI priorities, it's helpful to know the structure of our workforce. More than 99% of our **8,000** employees are based in our nine countries of operation in Sub-Saharan Africa. We build our headquarters in rural areas, and 94% of our staff live in the rural communities we serve.

- **Our field-based teams** provide direct customer service to farmers. Our field-based teams, entirely country nationals, are trusted by customers as they are often neighbors and farmers themselves. Field teams earn both a salary and a commission when farmers purchase our services and repay their loans.
- **Our office-based teams** support our operations in the field. These salaried roles span seven levels of seniority, known as "job grades," ranging from a warehouse officer (job grade 1) to the CEO (job grade 7). Roles at job grades 1-4 are open to country nationals, while roles at job grades 5-7 are open to all nationalities.

Throughout this report, we review staff data in three broad groupings — field roles, office roles at job grades 1-4, and office roles at job grades 5-7 — where roles and staff demographics are directly comparable. We cut the data this way not because we value the groups differently, but rather to allow more precise comparisons of equity. For example, in job grades 5-7, where similar roles are held by staff of multiple nationalities, we can directly compare the experience of African and non-African staff.

Collectively, we are a proudly multicultural team: we represent 37 countries and 98% of us are African.

## ONE ACRE FUND STAFF IN 2021 BY LOCATION





## OUR COMMITMENTS

*We are deeply committed to building a more diverse, equitable and inclusive organization. In 2021-22, we are investing in six key areas that are most important to our team.*



### Diverse Leadership

Diversify our senior management teams and top leadership bodies, starting with balanced gender and national representation.



### Performance Management

Review the way we define strong performance and support career growth to create a more consistent and objective experience for all staff.



### Compensation Structures

Review our pay and benefits structures to ensure they're results-oriented, fair and financially sustainable.



### Staff Training

Build out a comprehensive DEI training series for all staff and incorporate it into our ongoing curriculum.



### Reporting and Mediation

Create more accessible channels for staff to share feedback and report bias, in addition to existing formal legal channels.



### Field Team Inclusion

Ensure field teams are sufficiently represented in DEI initiatives and have access to core staff support.



## DIVERSITY

Diversity strengthens business decisions. One Acre Fund is committed to creating a workforce that represents the diversity of the countries where we work.

We value the full range of diverse identities and life experiences in our team. We also believe in focus, so we are initially prioritizing two elements of diversity where we've historically had under-representation: nationality and gender. In a development sector that has traditionally privileged Western and male perspectives, it's critical that we empower voices with deep understanding of the countries and communities we serve. As this work progresses, we expect to expand our focus to include more country-specific elements of diversity.

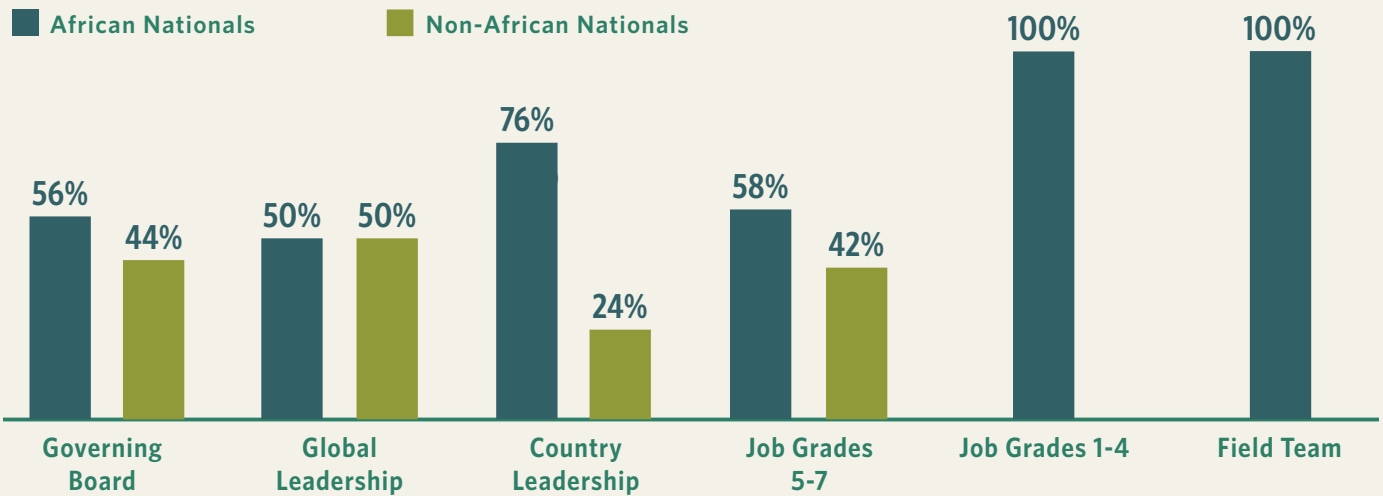
**National representation** is particularly important in our most senior roles, which in the past have been held largely by American or European staff. While 58% of job grade 5-7 roles are now held by African nationals, that narrows for our most senior manager (job grade 6) and director (job grade 7) roles. In 2016, just 5% of these manager and director roles were held by African nationals; in 2021, we are now at 32% representation within these roles, but we know this is still not enough. To accelerate our progress, we are actively developing rising leaders as well as hiring externally.

**Gender** is a particular priority in more junior office roles as well as in field positions. While we have a reasonably strong gender balance overall, we struggle to attract talented female applicants in roles like warehouse managers, data entry clerks, and call center operators. Female participation in the formal labor market at these levels is slightly lower. We aim to both attract more women and also ensure that we are proactively building an inclusive environment for women in these roles.

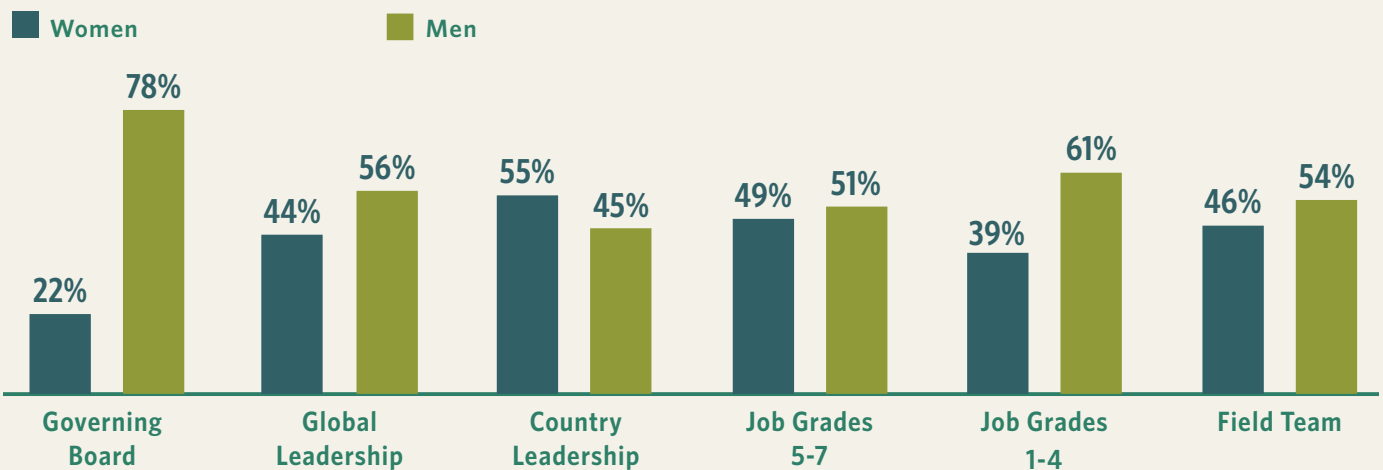


# LEADERSHIP

## Nationality



## Gender



- **Governing Board** — Our 9-person Board ensures that our activities advance our mission in an ethical and financially sustainable manner. Our priority is to increase female membership.
- **Global Leadership** — Our 18-person Leadership Council aligns on broad strategic goals for the organization. In 2021, we redesigned this group; half the seats are now held by African nationals.
- **Country Leadership** — Our Steering Committees, usually eight leaders per country, guide operations in each market. We've made progress on African national representation in leadership overall, but we still need to diversify Country Director roles.
- **Job Grades 5-7** — This set of office-based roles, about 4% of positions overall, is open to all nationalities. We aim to continue increasing African representation, particularly for the most senior positions.
- **Job Grades 1-4** — This set of office-based roles, about 30% of positions overall, are only open to country nationals. Our priority is to increase the number of women and support staff growth into senior roles.
- **Field Team** — Staff in our field-based roles, about 65% of positions, provide daily support for farmers. Our priority is to increase the number of women in field leadership and support staff growth into senior roles.

## HIRING

Hiring is an important way we add diversity to our team. Each year, One Acre Fund hires roughly 850 staff into field-based roles and around 230 staff into office-based roles.

At all levels, we track both nationality and gender. Women are slightly underrepresented in our hiring pool, making up 41% of our hires for office-based roles between 2019 and 2021. Gaps are largest in entry-level office roles — in 2020, only 35% of our applicants for roles at job grades 1-3 were women — which we are working to counter.

For job grades 5-7, where some jobs are open to all nationalities, nationals of African countries make up a significant and growing portion of our new hires. In 2018 and 2019, 65% of hires at job grades 5-7 were from the African continent; from 2020 through the first half of 2021, this figure rose to 85%. While the exact number will vary over time, hiring the top talent from our countries of operation helps us build a more diverse senior team.

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### % Of Hires in Job Grades 5-7 who are African Nationals

65%

2018 - 2019

85%

2020 - 2021\*

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\* Data for January - August 2021

## RETENTION

We hope our talented team will build satisfying, long-term careers with One Acre Fund. Almost 2,900 staff members have been with One Acre Fund for 5 or more years, and 370 for more than 10 years. On average, we retain about 85% of our team each year, which is solid relative to global non-profit averages.

We retain 85% of staff each year in field-based roles, a rate that partly reflects the job market in rural areas. We offer meaningful full-time employment in areas where these opportunities are often scarce, and we serve as a career launching point for many field staffers' first formal employment.

In our office-based roles, we retain about 83% of staff each year at job grades 1-4 and 78% of staff at job grades 5-7. While we would like our retention levels at senior roles (job grades 5-7) to be a bit higher, we have also intentionally based many roles in our rural offices, which can make long-term retention more challenging. We are looking into country-specific options to increase retention in our senior teams.

Annual Staff Retention,  
2018-20

85%

Field Team

83%

Office Job Grades 1-4

78%

Office Job Grades 5-7

# EQUITY

## PROMOTIONS

We have a strong culture of constant learning and staff development, offering more than 12,000 hours of staff training each year. One way we recognize growth is through promotions.

Promotion opportunities vary by role and individual performance. Promotions are less frequent in the field, where staff can increase their compensation through commissions rather than through promotion, and in our most senior roles (job grades 6-7), where staff naturally reach the most senior available positions.

However, at all levels we should see a comparable promotion rate by gender or nationality in a given time period — and we do. At all job levels, men and women are consistently promoted at similar rates.

### Promotion rates by gender, August 2019 - 2021

	Women (% of Staff)	Women (% of Promotions)
Field	48%	48%
Job Grades 1 - 4	39%	41%
Job Grades 5 - 7	48%	53%

For roles in job grades 5-7 held by staff of many nationalities, we also see eligible African and non-African staff promoted at similar rates. This assumes staff generally first become “eligible” for promotion at about nine months of tenure at the organization. With each passing year, as our senior team diversifies, more African nationals are eligible for promotion.

### Promotion rates by nationality in job grades 5-7, August 2019 - 2021

	African Nationals (% of Eligible Staff)	African Nationals (% of Eligible Promotions)
August 2019-2020	35%	37%
August 2020-2021	46%	54%

*Note: Promotion eligibility is calculated as staff with at least nine months of tenure at One Acre Fund.*

This data does not minimize the frustrations that staff can experience personally. In the past, our standards for performance have felt too vague and open to interpretation, and have been applied by managers without enough oversight. The promotion process itself was unnecessarily bureaucratic and often slow. Earning promotions from roles in job grade 4 (open to country nationals) to roles in job grades 5 (open to staff of all nationalities) has felt particularly challenging.

This is why we’re doing a comprehensive refresh of the way we do performance reviews and promotions. We’re both simplifying the process and — critically — the way we hold managers accountable for using the new tools in a fair and unbiased way. We’re also building out a leadership development program that is tailored to staff in job grade 4 roles who are on promotion plans to roles in job grade 5.



## INCLUSION

We work to build an inclusive culture that brings out the best in our talented, multicultural team. All staff should feel valued and encouraged to contribute, regardless of their identity or seniority.

To build this culture, we first defined our **Culture Code** with input from more than 5,000 staff, which captures the way we act when we're at our best. It's our touchpoint for what makes working here unique, like our passion for **learning from farmers** and delivering impact.

To track progress, we run an annual Culture & Inclusion survey. In 2021, fully 94% of us reported feeling positive about One Acre Fund's mission, the importance of the work we do, and the quality of the services we provide, with no major variation by gender, nationality, or job level. We also saw solid and consistent scores on engagement and belonging, and recommending One Acre Fund as a great place to work.

At the same time, African staff reported that they were less likely to feel included in decisions (particularly in junior roles) or feel like their voice was valued (particularly in senior roles). Staff cited both American-style English and non-inclusive practices in meetings as barriers to participation.

To address this, we are strengthening anti-bias and anti-racism training, building inclusion into one of our four core pillars of performance, and holding leaders accountable. We also set a goal to increase inclusion among our field team specifically. In the video below, a member of our Rwanda team shares how elevating field voices in decision-making substantially improved our work for farmers.

(Video [here](#))

### 2021 Culture & Inclusion Survey

84%

*"I feel like I belong at One Acre Fund"*

83%

*"I can be my authentic and true self at work"*

60%

*"When I share my opinion, it is valued"*

## CONCLUSION

We hope that this People and DEI Report will advance a critical conversation on how to build a more diverse, equitable and inclusive One Acre Fund. Data alone can't capture full staff experience, but it can help us focus on what matters most to our team. We believe that what gets measured gets done, and that transparency is a key ingredient for change.

There is undoubtedly critical work still to be done to translate our DEI goals into a daily reality for more than 8,000 staff in nine countries. However, we're more aligned than ever before on the moral and business imperative of this work, and wholeheartedly committed to continuous improvement. To encourage conversation and accountability, we will publish this report annually, and share updates **on our blog**. Thank you for joining us on this journey.