

FAIRTRADE AND SUSTAINABILITY



TOWARDS GENDER EQUALITY

Fairtrade believes the role of women in agriculture needs more visibility, recognition and value, and that gender equity is important to social sustainability. Currently, [350,000 women farmers and workers](#) are part of Fairtrade, a quarter of the total.

But we know there is a significantly larger number involved in Fairtrade supply chains that are not registered as formal workers or members of co-operatives.

[New research](#) into the part women play in co-operatives found that there are barriers to their membership and leadership, such as practices creating a bias towards men, and the burden of unpaid care and domestic work women carry that limits their free time.

While this is a widespread issue, the research shows how Fairtrade co-operatives can bring about positive change – such as introducing gender strategies that promote women's involvement and activities that can develop skills and ownership. When comparing Fairtrade organisations with non-Fairtrade organisations, studies identified that in certified small producer organisations women have had higher participation.

The Fairtrade Premium is often used to support women to develop new ways of earning income or cut down on the time they spend on unpaid tasks by improving access to water, healthcare, childcare and transport – benefits that could encourage them to take a greater role in their organisations.

But there is much more to be done. Fairtrade is launching projects aimed at tackling some of the issues. For example, an 'asset-transfer' initiative in Kenya saw the women of Kabngetuny co-operative become owners of a small number of coffee bushes belonging to their husbands. They joined the formal structure of the co-operative, enjoying an independent income for the first time, and generated a 20 percent higher yield.

Gender is a highly complex issue and our research shows that we have a long way to go to directly change social and institutional norms that prevent gender equality.



THE FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS ESTIMATES THAT REMOVING GENDER INEQUALITIES IN AGRICULTURE COULD REDUCE THE NUMBER OF HUNGRY PEOPLE IN THE WORLD BY 100-150 MILLION

CASE STUDIES

TRANSFORMING GENDER RELATIONS IN UGANDA

Bukonzo Joint Co-operative Union brings together around 5,500 coffee-growing households in the Rwenzori mountains of western Uganda. Over 83 percent of its members are women due to a policy of joint membership for married couples.

The members and leaders of Bukonzo Joint have engaged in a participatory process of analysing and addressing gender inequalities in their organisation and communities. This has involved men and women farmers committing to specific actions to overcome inequalities, such as more equitable allocation of work in their households and joint decision-making on how to use household income. They keep diaries to chart progress and report back to their community groups.

At the same time co-operative staff and leaders have reflected on organisational policies and practices and taken steps to ensure women are able to participate actively in all aspects of co-operative life.

To build on its success, Bukonzo Joint is now being funded by the International Fund for Agricultural Development and Oxfam Novib to share its experiences and methodology with co-operatives in Tanzania.

IMPLEMENTING GENDER POLICIES AND ACTION PLANS IN NICARAGUA

Some Fairtrade certified producer organisations have demonstrated strong commitment and capacity in relation to the promotion of gender justice. One example is (Promotora de Desarrollo Cooperativo de Las Segovias) a second tier coffee co-operative in Nicaragua which unites around 2,300 producers from 39 primary cooperatives.

One of PRODECOOP's core objectives is 'to contribute to improvements in gender equality and equity and the socio-economic position of women.'

In 2008 it introduced a comprehensive gender policy which mainstreamed gender across all levels and activities of the organisation. This includes a 40 percent quota for women in leadership positions, allocation of a percentage of the Fairtrade Premium for implementing the gender programme and training for field staff on working with women farmers.

To create an enabling environment for change, PRODECOOP carries out awareness raising in coffee-growing communities on women's rights, including their right to participate actively in the co-operative, and encourages more equitable distribution.



Marlene Talavera Castellón, coffee farmer and member of the PRODECOOP in Nicaragua



‘It’s important to be an active member of the association because it gives women the right to vote, to participate in decision-making, the right to receive benefits and to live with dignity. It gives women the right to say “It’s MY organisation”...’ *Female producer organisation member, Dominican Republic*

‘Women are more disciplined and organised and will run these institutions better, as per plans, whereas men fight amongst themselves and let egos come in the way.’ *Male producer organisation board member, India*

WHAT’S THE LINK TO THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS?

The [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#) are a new set of global targets for future international development. They follow and expand on the Millennium Development Goals, which expire at the end of 2015. UN member states will be expected to use the SDGs to frame their agendas and policies over the next 15 years.

Fairtrade’s work on gender delivers towards the following SDGs:

- Goal 5 - achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls