EQUAL HARVEST
REMOVING THE BARRIERS TO WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN SMALLHOLDER AGRICULTURE
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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GLOSSARY

AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SERVICES
Originally, extension was largely understood as the transfer of research-based knowledge, focusing on increasing production. Today, the understanding of extension is wider and includes broader dimensions such as facilitation, learning and assistance to farmers’ groups.

FAIRTRADE
Fairtrade refers to all or any part of the activities of FLO eV, FLO-CERT GmbH, Fairtrade producer networks, national Fairtrade organisations and Fairtrade marketing organisations. Fairtrade is used to denote the product certification system operated by Fairtrade International.

FAIRTRADE PREMIUM
An amount paid to producers in addition to the payment for their products. The use of the Fairtrade Premium is restricted to investment in the producers’ business, livelihood and community (for a Small Producer Organisation or contract production set-up) or to the socio-economic development of the workers and their community (for a hired labour situation). Its specific use is democratically decided by the producers.

FAIR TRADE
The term fair trade defines a trading partnership, based on dialogue, transparency and respect that seeks greater equity in international trade. It contributes to sustainable development by offering better trading conditions to, and securing the rights of, marginalised producers and workers – especially in developing countries.

GENDER EQUALITY
Gender equality entails the concept that all human beings, both men and women, are free to develop their personal abilities and make choices without the limitations set by stereotypes, rigid gender roles, or prejudices. Gender equality means that the different behaviours, aspirations and needs of women and men are considered, valued and favoured equally. It does not mean that women and men have to become the same, but that their rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female.

GENDER GAP
Differences or inequalities between men and woman, based on factors such as social and cultural factors.

SMALL PRODUCER ORGANISATION (SPO)
Legally registered groups whose members are primarily small producers/small-scale producers able to engage in commercial activities.
Recognition of the role of women farmers in agriculture is fast rising up the policy and business agendas, including a growing commitment from companies and donors to invest further in empowering women in agricultural supply chains.³

Women, on average, comprise 43 percent of the agricultural labour force in developing countries but own far less land and livestock than men, have less access to agricultural credit and are rarely targeted for extension services.⁴ The cost of ignoring this situation could be high, as highlighted in a recent World Bank report:

‘It is clear that we ignore this gender gap at our peril and ultimately at great cost. It is a real injustice to Africa’s women farmers and their families that women make up nearly half of the labour force in agriculture but, on average, produce less per hectare than men. This absurd gender gap driven by women’s disadvantages in securing their land rights, accessing labour, and other factors, further undermines the sector’s potential to drive inclusive economic growth, improve food security and create employment and business opportunities for millions of young Africans entering the job market every year’.⁵

At the field level, one of the main obstacles to empowering women in agriculture continues to be the limited participation of women farmers within co-operatives and other structures of collective enterprise. The most recent Fairtrade International data shows that women’s membership of Fairtrade Small Producer Organisations (SPOs) around the world is just 22 percent. There is therefore a need to address structural barriers to women’s membership and participation as well as ensuring the activities of the producer organisation are more inclusive and that the benefits are more equitably shared.

This report summarises research commissioned by the Fairtrade Foundation to explore potential barriers to women’s involvement as members, leaders and employees of Fairtrade certified SPOs. Case studies were carried out with six SPOs in the Dominican Republic (bananas), India (cotton) and Kenya (tea), and a workshop was held with representatives from Fairtrade organisations, supply chain businesses and development agencies, in a joint effort to understand barriers in different contexts, and to identify steps which could be taken to overcome them.

Three main barriers to women’s active participation as members, leaders and employees emerged from the case studies:

- **Producer organisation rules, structures and practices:** Membership which is linked to ownership or registration of land or crops creates a bias in favour of men. This is perpetuated at the leadership level, as leaders are drawn from the membership. In addition, a lack of gender awareness in SPOs means women’s needs and interests, and constraints on their participation, are not sufficiently taken into consideration in planning and policymaking or in recruitment.

- **Sociocultural norms and practices:** Local norms, attitudes and customs related to the role of men and women in society often create barriers to women’s participation in SPOs. This includes time poverty resulting from expectations that women should perform the majority of unpaid care work, which often limits their availability for active participation. Attitudes regarding women’s suitability for leadership and technical roles are also common barriers.

- **Women’s individual circumstances and choices:** Women’s age, marital status, education, wealth, degree of support from relatives and experience in other organisations can all affect their freedom to participate in SPOs, and their decision-making around whether to do so. If they see sufficient benefits associated with participation, they are more likely to accept any trade-offs involved (such as an increased workload or disapproval from members of their households or communities).

There are many connections and interdependencies between the different barriers and they are in turn linked to the wider context in which women and SPOs are situated. This context includes national laws and government policy (eg governing distribution of land and membership of co-operatives) and local institutions such as the justice system, religious bodies and popular culture, as well as international standards, conventions and market dynamics (including those related to Fairtrade).
Participants in the case studies identified a range of positive outcomes which they felt would result from enabling women to engage actively in SPOs. These include practical benefits such as increased productivity of farms and a source of income for single mothers, and more strategic gains such as greater economic independence, rights and influence for women, plus improved leadership and governance of producer organisations. But they also recognised the risks, which include adding to women’s workload and creating tension by challenging sociocultural norms.

There was widespread agreement that removing barriers to women’s participation requires action by multiple parties. SPOs are central to the process and need to analyse the barriers to women’s participation in their specific context, then design and implement gender equality policies and action plans to address them. But they need support to do so, as well as incentives, both of which are largely absent at present. Businesses along the supply chain, particularly brands and retailers, as well as standards systems such as Fairtrade, are well placed to influence the rules and practices of SPOs. But this should not be reduced to targets for women’s participation without acknowledging the complexity and risks involved. Supply chain businesses and standards systems therefore need to develop their own gender policies and action plans based on a thorough understanding of the issues.6

Crucially, it must be recognised that there are limits to what SPOs, supply chain businesses and standards systems can achieve individually, particularly in terms of addressing deeply rooted behaviours and attitudes. Bringing about significant, lasting change requires partnership and collaboration at various levels: between SPOs, women’s organisations, government bodies and development agencies nationally; between businesses and others at the sector level; and between Fairtrade, other standards systems, NGOs, donors and intergovernmental agencies globally.

Underlying all efforts must be a focus on women’s perspectives and choices: creating opportunities for women to fulfil their potential and live their lives as they wish to, and avoiding the assumption that involvement in producer organisations is the best way to do that. Bringing men on board with the process is also vital for mitigating risks and for achieving broad-based change.
Against the backdrop of a new wave of private sector development, making women’s participation and inclusion a reality requires taking a series of complex steps together with partnership and collaboration at various levels of the supply chain. Below, we offer some suggestions on how these actors can work to sustainably improve women’s participation in SPOs including, where relevant, existing examples of good practice from other Fairtrade certified SPOs and fair trade producer organisations7 which can be learnt from. It should be noted that while this report focused on SPOs, many recommendations are also applicable to hired labour situations.

**Recommendations for supply chain businesses**

1. **Invest in gender analysis of supply chains** to firstly establish where women are in their value chains and secondly, where barriers to women’s participation exist and the business case for addressing them. This can be done collaboratively with other businesses, or with other actors such as Fairtrade to reduce costs and duplication.

   This could include, for example, a gendered analysis of members’ total work hours and work day to see where investments could be made to reduce difficult, arduous tasks, whether in production or care work, or to reduce limitations on mobility such as by advocating for childcare services.

2. **On the basis of this analysis, develop gender equality policies and action plans**, and secure resources for implementation either internally or through co-funding arrangements (eg with other businesses in the supply chain or with donor funding).

3. **Develop internal capacity and responsibility on gender**, especially among staff involved in buying, producer support and corporate responsibility and sustainability.

   * Share expertise and knowledge on gender and diversity already in the organisation (eg around company employees) to support this internal capacity building.

   * Allocate overall responsibility for ensuring gender equity in supply chains to a senior manager or managers (depending on the size of the company).

4. **Support SPOs to develop and implement their own gender equality action plans**. Provide financial and technical support to SPOs or facilitate access to third party support. Facilitate exchange visits and information sharing between SPO representatives (especially women) so they can learn from each other. Again, this can be done collaboratively with other businesses and third parties to reduce costs.

5. **Develop appropriate indicators and processes for monitoring progress internally, and explore how the business can support the UN Global Compact Women's Empowerment Principles** in the supply chain. Businesses should seek support from organisations with relevant expertise to determine the most appropriate indicators to use (eg UN Women, NGOs and gender specialists).

6. **Collaborate with other businesses, women’s organisations and development agencies** to work collectively to address barriers to women’s inclusion, access to wider benefits and participation in supply chains. This is particularly important for addressing barriers which exist at a national level, or where businesses have limited influence over the practices of SPOs.

7. **Seek opportunities to raise awareness of women’s contribution to production**, for example through communications materials and marketing. Depending on the sector, it may be possible to market products produced by women which earn an additional Premium to be used according to the priorities of women. This will help increase awareness of the role of women in farming and create an enabling environment for gender-sensitive practices in supply chains.

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**HELPING SPOs TO ADDRESS GENDER INEQUALITY**

Various Fairtrade buyers have provided support to SPOs they trade with to implement gender-related work, including provision of technical advice, facilitation of third party support, and direct financing of SPO-initiated activities. One example is Twin Trading, and its sister non-profit organisation Twin, which for many years have worked with coffee and cocoa co-operatives in Africa and Latin America to improve gender outcomes. Building on this work, Twin recently secured funding from Comic Relief to roll out the Gender Action Learning Systems (GALS) methodology with co-operatives in Tanzania, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Another recent innovation is the development of products which promote and reward women's involvement in Fairtrade production, such as the Grown by Women products marketed by Fairtrade brand Equal Exchange, and Café Femenino coffees developed by the US importer Organic Products Trading Company. These initiatives serve as examples of how supply chain businesses can engage constructively with SPOs on gender.9
Recommendations for governments in producer countries

1. Respond to the specific challenges that women farmers face through orienting spending and policy towards targeted programmes, including extension, finance, research and subsidy programmes. This includes, for example, training more women to become agronomists who can deliver targeted extension training to women farmers.

2. Review existing policies and strategies related to support for agriculture and agricultural producers and workers to ensure they adequately take into account the gender issues and influences on women's participation in SPOs covered in this report.

3. Ensure laws and policies governing membership of co-operatives and farmer associations do not create barriers to women's participation in SPOs. For example, co-operative laws should not require members of agricultural co-operatives to own land. Governments should also take action to reach out to rural women and inform them of their rights, including rights to land inheritance.

4. Allocate more land and facilitate low interest agricultural loans for women, especially single mothers. Gender affirmative action in land reform and agriculture is called for to correct historical biases towards men.

5. Extend government support to farmers beyond technical land ownership. Government support for farmers, such as loans, training and extension, tools and inputs, often only reaches farmers with land titles, which often excludes women, tenant farmers and sharecroppers. Government support should focus instead on people who spend the most time on agricultural production, who are often not land owners.

6. Invest more resources in infrastructure and services which reduce hours required for care work. Examples include piped water and concrete flooring in homes, gas cylinders for cooking (instead of wood-burning stoves) and village level childcare, healthcare and/or eldercare services.

Recommendations for governments, donors, intergovernmental agencies and NGOs

1. Develop/fund coordinated programmes involving multiple strategies to address the barriers to women's participation in SPOs. Programmes should be based on thorough, contextualised gender analysis which identifies the most effective ways to address different types of barriers in a systematic way. This could involve a combination of working through intergovernmental forums to put pressure on national governments, influencing business agendas through campaigning on gender justice, providing co-funding to businesses and/or standards systems to implement gender strategies, and supporting women farmers to organise and connect with others in national, regional and international platforms. Different actors can take on different roles, depending on their positioning, but coordinating action across different spheres will increase the likelihood of success.

2. Develop a business case for increasing women's participation in producer organisations, based on benefits such as those outlined in this report and assessment of the risks associated with not taking action.

3. Ensure the UN Open Working Group-proposed Sustainable Development Goal (Goal 5) to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls is adopted, as well as gender mainstreaming across the other goals, targets and indicators.

4. Ensure programme design takes into account the views and opinions of women and men farmers, and involves SPOs as key agents of change in farming communities. This includes providing technical and financial support to producer organisations to develop and implement their own gender policies and action plans in a participatory way.

Teresa Kurgat, 47, Sireet OEP member and tea farmer who has directly benefited from a water tank project in Kenya.
There are many examples of the Fairtrade Premium being used in ways which benefit women (and girls). This includes the case study SPOs in Kenya and India in this report which have used Premium funds to help women develop new income earning activities. Use of the Premium to improve access to water, healthcare, childcare facilities and transport, and for communal food processing equipment (eg mills for grinding corn, maize and other staples) and household domestic goods (eg stoves, water storage and fridges) can all reduce the time women spend on unpaid care work. This frees up their time to focus on other activities such as paid work, education and training, and organisational life. Positive gender impacts can also occur as unintended side effects of Fairtrade Premium investments. For example, electrification of a village in Malawi resulted in private owners installing hammer mills, which reduced the time women dedicate to getting maize milled as they previously had to walk 5 kilometres to do so. If women see the Fairtrade Premium being used in ways such as these, bringing them both direct and indirect benefits, it should incentivise them to participate more actively in SPOs, particularly if they believe they will be able to influence decision-making around Premium use.

Recommendations for Fairtrade

1. Ensure clear and sustainable financing, complemented by third party finance, for implementation of Fairtrade International’s gender strategy. Bringing about widespread change will require significant resources to be invested over a period of time. This includes building internal capacity on gender, supporting certified SPOs to develop and implement gender action plans, and funding cross-country initiatives.

2. Engage the support of external partners to advise and inform implementation of the gender strategy.

3. Actively seek gender disaggregated findings within Fairtrade’s Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning programme and any external commissioning of impact assessment to support Fairtrade’s work on gender equality.

4. Develop and communicate the business case for increasing women’s participation in SPOs, based on benefits such as those outlined in this report, and assessment of the risks associated with not taking action. Work with business partners to identify how they might add value in their supply chains in relation to gender equity.

5. Support the formation of networks of women Fairtrade producers and workers at national and regional levels. These networks will provide a platform for women to collectively agree priorities and advocate on behalf of all women producers and workers.

“Programmes should be based on thorough, contextualised gender analysis which identifies the most effective ways to address different types of barriers.”
6. **Build alliances with NGOs, donors and intergovernmental agencies** with a strong commitment to gender justice to identify areas where we can commonly influence the agendas of policymakers and businesses, in line with the findings of this report.

7. **Introduce a gender bonus or annual awards** for SPOs which are systematically addressing gender issues. This would reward organisations which are spearheading work on gender justice, and incentivise others to do the same. It would also facilitate sharing of good practice between Fairtrade certified SPOs (see below).

8. **Develop knowledge sharing systems and processes** which will enable SPOs, supply chain businesses and Fairtrade staff to access relevant resources on gender and to learn from each other. This should include opportunities for face-to-face knowledge sharing which can be linked to other events in the Fairtrade system's calendar (eg AGMs of Fairtrade producer networks) to minimise costs and maximise women's participation in both events.

9. **Ensure reviews of Fairtrade Standards include analysis through a gender lens** and invite stakeholder feedback on how gender perspectives might be strengthened.

10. **Do more to encourage SPOs to use the Fairtrade Premium in ways which benefit women** and other disadvantaged groups. Possible actions include revising guidance materials and training to provide gendered examples, and introducing annual awards to recognise SPOs that have used the Premium in line with women's priorities.

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**Recommendations for SPOs**

1. **Develop a gender policy and action plan.** A systematic approach needs to be taken based on analysis of the reasons why women don't participate as much as men and should include a range of actions to bring about change.12 The policy and plan should be developed through a participatory process involving men and women from producer communities. At minimum the policy and plan should include the elements listed below.

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**IMPLEMENTING GENDER POLICIES AND ACTION PLANS IN NICARAGUA**

Formed in 1987, UCA SOPPEXCCA is a Fairtrade certified union of 18 co-operatives which serves around 650 farmers in Nicaragua – 32 percent are women. Its first gender policy was introduced in 2003 which mandated the formation of Gender Committees in the organisation itself and in each member co-operative, and outlined responsibilities for gender-related activities. The second gender policy was developed in 2011 through a process of reflection, analysis, discussion and negotiation across different parts of the organisation. It outlines five strategic areas for mainstreaming gender, including sensitisation at the level of primary societies, promotion of women's right to benefit economically from their productive work and encouraging co-operative staff and members to act as role models of equal treatment in their communities. Activities include facilitating women to obtain land and capital for coffee production, supporting women's education and skills development, and marketing coffee grown by women under the Las Hermanas brand.13

2. **Assign an annual budget for implementation** of the gender action plan. This should be part of the organisational budget, but could be funded using the Fairtrade Premium, or the Premium could be used as seed money to attract further funding for agreed projects.

3. **Extend government support for membership of producer organisations beyond land or crop ownership.** Wherever possible under law, producer organisation statutes or byelaws should decouple membership from land ownership, recognising 'operators' of land/crops instead. They should allow for family membership with wives automatically becoming members when their husbands join the organisation and vice versa.

4. **Guarantee proportional representation of women on the board.** Seats should be reserved for women proportional to their contribution to production rather than proportional to their involvement as members. A rotational system of leadership should be used for both men and women to build leadership skills and improve accountability.
5. Create a Women’s Directorate or Gender Committee. This will create a space for women to meet, collectively identify their priorities and promote their interests within the organisation. It will also develop women’s leadership skills.

6. Take action to employ and retain more women at senior levels and in field-based positions. This may entail additional costs (salaries, training) that have to be planned for.

7. Build links with local women’s organisations and networks to learn from their experiences, gain access to gender expertise, and open up new spaces and opportunities for women to participate in the producer organisation.

8. Facilitate women’s participation in meetings, training and decision-making. The location and timing of meetings and other activities should be adapted to meet women’s practical needs, eg hold board meetings on a rotational basis in villages where women board members live; time meetings for periods of the day/week/year when women have less work; make use of existing spaces where women meet such as self-help groups; solicit and document women’s views separately from men.
9. **Involve men in the process of building capacity and sensitisation on gender issues.** Gender training and sensitisation is needed at all levels, from senior management through to community members. This should include sensitising men to traditional roles and responsibilities and how they may be more equitably shared.

**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. Through using the GALS methodology, 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 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 the GALS methodology with co-operatives in Tanzania.

10. **Explore how to alleviate the burden of other work to facilitate women’s participation and inclusion (for example through a Gender Committee) and allocate a share of the Fairtrade Premium to be used according to women’s priorities.** Examples include: support to develop new income generating activities; literacy and numeracy training; loans to buy land; investment in labour saving technology (including community infrastructure); and investment in childcare facilities.

11. **Provide targeted training and sensitisation for women.** Women should be provided with training on themes such as leadership, institutional structures and governance, business management and agricultural practices. Awareness-raising events should be held with members and non-members to increase women’s understanding of the benefits of active participation.

12. **Provide targeted support for single mothers,** including loans, training and employment.

**WORKING FOR GENDER JUSTICE IN NICARAGUA**

Some Fairtrade certified SPOs have demonstrated strong commitment and capacity in relation to the promotion of gender justice. One example is PRODECOOP (Promotora de Desarrollo Cooperativo de Las Segovias), a second tier coffee co-operative in Nicaragua which unites around 2,300 producers from 39 primary co-operatives. 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 of resources and work between men and women.
REFERENCES


5 O’Sullivan, Michael; Rao, Arathi; Banerjee, Raka; Gulati, Kajal; Vinez, Margaux. 2014. Levelling the field: improving opportunities for women farmers in Africa. Washington DC; World Bank Group – Foreword by Sipho Moyo, Africa Director – ONE Campaign.

6 Fairtrade International has begun this process, with a gender strategy developed through a multi-stakeholder process and signed off by the Board. Implementation of the strategy began in late 2014.

7 See Glossary for the distinction between Fairtrade and Fair Trade.


10 Studies which have documented use of the Premium in areas such as these include: CEval 2012 (http://www.fairtrade.net/fileadmin/user_upload/content/2009/resources/2012_Fairtrade_Impact_Study.pdf); Nelson and Smith 2011 http://www.fairtrade.net/fileadmin/user_upload/content/2009/resources/2011_Fairtrade_Cotton_Assessing_Impact_in_Mali__Senegal__Cameroon_and_India__main_report.pdf; Pound and Phiri 2011 (http://www.fairtrade.net/fileadmin/user_upload/content/2009/resources/2011_Taking_Root_Fairtrade_in_Malawi.pdf)

11 For more information: http://www.kuapakokoo.com/subcatelect.cfm?article_maincatid=96&article_subcatid=144; http://wiego.org/wee/about-kuapa-kokoo

12 This is in line with requirements in the Fairtrade Standards, as set out in section 2.2, box 1.

13 For more information: http://www.soppexcca.org/en/participation.html

14 This training programme is being coordinated by the network WIEGO (Women in the Informal Economy: Globalising and Organising), with funding from the Dutch government. See: http://wiego.org/wee/fair-trade. Kuapa Kokoo has also benefited from support on gender from the Fairtrade buyer Twin as part of its Producer Support and Development programme, which is in turn funded by the Fairtrade chocolate brand ‘Divine’ which is part-owned by Kuapa Kokoo.

15 For more information: http://www.kuapakokoo.com/subcatelect.cfm?article_maincatid=96&article_subcatid=144; http://wiego.org/wee/about-kuapa-kokoo

16 The Gender Action Learning Systems (GALS) methodology was developed by Bukonzo Joint and other organisations in Uganda, Sudan, India, Pakistan and the US, with support from Oxfam Novib. For more information on the GALS methodology and tools, see: http://www.wemanglobal.org/2_GenderActionLearning.asp

