

Farm Africa empowers women in coffee through gender action learning system

Impact. More women selling coffee to the cooperative due to improved access to land and financial resources.

BY PAUL MURUNGI

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Coffee is an important source of income in Kanungu District, grown by more than 35 per cent of households.

However, while women provide the majority of the labour, they earn 38 per cent less than men, according to the Uganda National Coffee Policy.

Men are primarily involved in transporting and marketing activities hence receive the majority of the income due to their presence at the point of sale.

Their role as primary land managers and household heads makes them decision-makers in terms of choosing what to produce and control of income from coffee.

Women producers on the other hand lack access to land and coffee trees, making it difficult to earn a living from coffee farming.

Although equal land rights are enshrined in law, in practice, patrilineal customary laws take precedence, implying women do not take a share of the land with their husbands.

Widows and divorcees often face eviction threats, while access to finance is an issue for both female and male smallholder farmers.

Women, in particular, suffer more due to lack of collateral.

They also have limited knowledge of financial services such as loans, semi-formal finance options, and savings associations which could help ease the cash flow difficulties.

To help women and youth realise their full potential in the coffee value chain, Farm Africa is concluding a three-year project supporting coffee farmers in Kanungu District, in western Uganda.

The project comprises two distinct parts. The first part, funded by the European Union, focuses on building capacity of Civil Society Organisations (CSO) to create employment and self-employment opportunities within the coffee value chain for 4,800 young women and men in Kanungu District.

A big number of CSOs are engaged with coffee growers' cooperatives and national stakeholder platforms representing different young farmer groups.

The second part, funded by UK Aid with a total budget of £242,000 (shs1.19 billion), started in September 2019 and is focusing on ensuring that women are empowered and able to fully benefit from the support given to coffee farmers in Kanungu, as well as benefit from their contributions to the coffee value chain.

This project supports women in Kanungu District to gain access to the coffee market, join coffee-growing cooperatives, take



Ms Grace Arineitwe, vice chairperson of Kayonza Coffee Cooperative harvests coffee with a member of the group.

COURTESY PHOTO.

COFFEE DATA

Statistics from Farm Africa show that land under coffee production for arabica coffee increased from 1.0 to 1.7 acres and robusta coffee from 1.3 to two average acre per farmer.

on leadership roles, and change decision-making dynamics within households and cooperatives.

This is accomplished through supporting households to enable women, coffee producers, to better access resources and participate in decision making over resources and expenditures at the household level, enhancing the capacity of coffee growing cooperatives to ensure women leverage from market opportunities and demonstrate to local stakeholders the benefits of recognising and rewarding female participation within the coffee value chain.

The project utilises the Gender Action Learning System (GALS), a community-led empowerment methodology that uses specific participatory processes and diagram tools aiming at giving women as well as men more control over their lives as the basis for individual household and organisational development.

The evaluation reports indicate that the the average Women's Economic Empowerment in Agriculture (WEEIA) score was 22 per cent at baseline and 85 per cent by midterm, while at the project end, it was 87 per cent. So far, more than 3,903 women have been supported.

Data from the WEEIA survey and documents review shows that the average WEEIA income score improved from 31 per cent at baseline to 94 per cent at midline and 96 per cent at end line evaluation, the average WEEIA resource score also improved from 14 per cent at baseline to 87 per cent at midline and 88 per cent at the endpoint. There was also a substantial improvement in the WEEIA score in participation and having input on productive decision making and leadership from 22 per cent at baseline to 89 per cent at midline and 92 per cent at endpoint as well as 32 per cent at baseline, 85



"Several women now permanently own land and their husbands and landlords are freely giving ownership rights,"

Mr Benjamin Okia, the project coordinator, Farm Africa.

per cent midline, and 88 per cent at endpoint respectively. These scores imply that women can now have access to resources for production and improve the welfare of the households and their personal needs without necessarily being dependent on the men.

The Empowering Women in the Coffee Value Chain (EWVC) project is UK Aid funded, working with four Coffee Growing Cooperatives (CGC) including; Kanungu CGC, Kayonza CGC, Banyankiizi CGC, and Ruyeyo CGC.

Since its inception, the project has helped cooperatives with policy reviews, leading to the participatory formulation of gender policy, human resource policy, governance policy, and disability inclusion policy.

The project formed a women's committee for each cooperative and one representative of People With Disabilities (PWDs).

The cooperatives formed 160 Village Saving and Loans Associations (VSLAs) and captured the participation of women and the use of voluntary land use agree-

ments, the women were also interested in the Gender Action Learning System pieces of training.

The project utilises GALS methodology to emphasise gender in coffee-growing cooperative and promote equality at the households and group levels.

Key achievements

Mr Benjamin Okia, the project coordinator says although the period is short to determine the long-term impact of the project, it remains clear that it has changed farmers' lives for the better much more than was intended.

He says that key among the impacts realised by the project include improved ownership of land for both youth and women, access to agro-inputs, attraction of other coffee players in the district, diversification of investments, and improved gender equity in the coffee value chain. Since the project targeted women, Mr Okia says there has been improved ownership of land by women. The land intervention aimed at signing voluntary land-use agreements between the household heads and landowners to free up some land for coffee farming.

A total of 1,266 voluntary land use agreements were signed by household heads to women and youth. "Several women now use the land freely with their husbands and landlords at least for a duration of five years as provided in the land use agreements," Mr Okia says.

Among other key successes has been engaging in alternative sources of income. Across the project, many women mentioned diversification into other sources of income resulting from the project.

The majority of households in Kanungu District are predominantly subsistence farmers, mainly growing bananas (matooke), coffee, Irish potatoes, and tea.

However, with improved access to financial resources through the VSLA groups, many women have started small businesses and increased their asset base.

Key among the alternative sources of income include rearing animal such as goats, cows, pigs and operating retail shops. This has resulted in additional household incomes to meet domestic needs. "No woman can afford to be extravagant using the money we have earned from the sale of our coffee," Ms Turyamusiima Hilder, a member of the Rwamanyonyi Coffee Farmers Group in Kambuga Town Council says.

Ms Twongirwe Grace, a member of the Bwindi Women Initiative also commented: "Women now earn some money and do not have to rely on men all the time."

Improved gender equity

Improved access to land and financial resources has seen several women get involved in the higher-level coffee value chain.

More women than men are visibly selling coffee to the cooperative.

More women than men are members of all groups and have taken up leadership positions in these organizations including the cooperatives and the groups.

On average, Kanungu has reported an increase in coffee production over the last three years.

Statistics from Farm Africa show that land under coffee production for arabica coffee increased from 1.0 to 1.7 acres and robusta coffee from 1.3 to two average acre per farmer.

However, it is important to note that women holding land for coffee production increased twofold than that of the youth and there was a slight reduction in the land-holding under men attributed to men giving away land for coffee to both women and youth under voluntary land use agreements.

Success. Acquisition of a coffee hulling machine is part of the success registered by the cooperatives.

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In the misty hills of Kayonza Sub-county in Kanungu District lies Kayonza Coffee Growers' Cooperative Society. The cooperative has more than 1,500 members, and more than half are women.

Daily Monitor recently visited the cooperative and discovered that farmers had acquired a shs 44.9m dry coffee processing machine with capacity to process Fair Average Quality (FAQ) coffee of 30 tonnes per day.

Mr Xavier Safari, the chairperson of the cooperative describes the processing plant as a game-changer and centre for learning.

"The machine will help farmers produce quality coffee," he says.

Previously, the cooperative members walked miles to Butogota trading centre to process coffee at shs150 charge. However, with this machine, the cost is likely to reduce to shs100.

Mr Safari expects the machine to generate two million shillings per day from coffee processing.

The processing machine is a big boost to many Kanungu coffee farmers, processing both arabica and robusta coffee.

The plant is also expected to help farmers tap into the lucrative coffee industry that remains Uganda's leading commodity export.

To support effective use of the processing machine, Mr Xavier says, the cooperative will create collecting centres around Sub-counties to gather coffee for processing.

According to the June 2020 coffee export figures, Uganda's coffee export performance in the 2019/2020 financial year set a record of 84 per cent increase over the first decade of vision 2040.

Export earnings also hit \$494m, representing an increase of 88 per cent over the same period.

The acquisition of the machine is part of the achievements of the Coffee Growing cooperatives (CGCs).

CGCs are part of the Farm Af-



Mr Samuel Arop, programmes manager (R) hands over a hulling machine to women from Bwindi Initiative of Coffee Producers.

PHOTO BY PAUL MURUNGI.

Cooperatives boost coffee farmers' income in Kanungu

rica project in Kanungu and are entry points into the market for producers, who sell the majority of their coffee to the cooperatives.

The project embedded technical assistance to support four coffee-growing cooperatives in conducting a comprehensive review of internal policies focusing on how to improve gender equity for improved institutional equality.

The cooperatives are viewed as crucial tools in promoting the sustainability of actions once the im-

plementation of the project ceases.

Farm Africa works with four Coffee Growing Cooperatives (CGC) including Kanungu CGC, Kayonza CGC, Banyankiizi CGC, and Rugyeyo CGC.

Each cooperative has a well-functioning system that has incorporated policies such as lending, gender inclusion, governance, human resource, standard operating procedures, disability inclusion, as well as finance and accounting. The system was built over

the last three years.

Women in leadership

Ms Asiimwe Innocent, the board chairperson, Kanungu Coffee Farmers' Cooperative Ltd, says she leads a team of 2,000 coffee farmers in five Sub-counties with whom she works closely to buy coffee. The team also has 500 youths involved through land-use agreements.

"I am also a beneficiary of the land use agreement with my husband and I have 10 acres of coffee trees," she says.

She adds: "The farmers I lead supply 50 tonnes of coffee to our cooperative every month during a bumper harvest season. The farmers are also organised in groups of VSLA to help them access credit at a two per cent interest to inject into their coffee farms.

She says they allow VSLA members to save up to shs5,000 for a share in her VSLA group, and so far they have shs2.5m saved.

"Our team is built on good accounting systems, marketing and we made sure we employ people who understand the business. We focus on giving bonuses and commissions to our workers, who buy extra kilogrammes from the farmers," she says.

They also formed loans and procurement sub-committees that sit every month to evalu-

ate the performance.

The cooperative recently got a boost of shs30m from Farm Africa EU funded project that was utilised to buy coffee from farmers. They have so far raised shs18 million as gross profit.

In addition, the cooperative organised exchange visits and went to Bukonzo Organic Cooperative Union to learn better agronomic and financial practises in managing coffee.

In the last three years, the cooperative has accumulated a net worth of shs350 million with an asset portfolio of trucks, tractors, and hulling machines.

"Our network has grown tremendously through support from Farm Africa, and grants that we apply for through foreign donations," she says.

Multiplication

Mr Godfrey Arineitwe, an extension officer, Rugyeyo Farmers Organic Cooperative Society in Nyakabungo Town Council, Kanungu District says the cooperative is involved in post-harvest handling and environmental conservation.

Before Farm Africa, the cooperative operated a cash round system.

However, Farm Africa turned around the fortunes of the cooperatives with support from the Gender Action Learning System. For instance, in a group of 30 members, at least 17 are women.

SHS163M
COOPERATIVE SAVINGS SINCE 2018



Ms Hildar Turyamusiima, treasurer of the Banyankiizi Coffee Producers and Processors Cooperative Society chairs a VSLA meeting. COURTESY PHOTO.

Women reap big from coffee farming



Ms Gillian Kembabazi stands in front of her new house acquired with support from Farm Africa.

Support. Several women have acquired assets from coffee farming with support from Farm Africa in Kanungu District.

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Coffee is a cash crop perceived as a crop grown by men in Kanungu District. This perception has affected women's roles in coffee production, management, and distribution.

A recent study by Farm Africa shows that men dominate this segment because they make decisions on land and inputs to use.

However, three years ago, this perception has started changing due Farm Africa intervention with several developmental projects implemented in the district.

The projects include Catalysing CSO-led Inclusive Green Growth' (CCIGG) and 'Empowering Women in the Coffee Value Chain (EWCVC)

The projects have enabled many women succeed in the coffee farming.

Youth empowerment

Ms Hilda Tulyamusiima, the Trainer of Trainees (ToT), and treasurer of Banyakinkizi Coffee Farmers and Processors Cooperative Society says: "I have been in the coffee business for the last six years, however, women have not been given priority in the coffee sector in terms of accessing credit in banks.

She adds: "It is not until Farm Africa started cooperatives where families were encouraged to include women in the coffee business through voluntary land use agreements."

In 2019, according to Ms Tulyamusiima, she got two acres of land from her family to start coffee planting.

"The last two years, I have been able to raise two million shillings which I have invested in my coffee

"We will boost livelihoods in several core value chains such as coffee, aquaculture, oilseeds, and livestock, and increase farmers' participation in market systems while applying nature-based solutions that promote responsible environmental stewardship,"

Ms Petronella Halwiindi, country director, Farm Africa says.



fee, rental business, and managed to open other retail shops with my husband," she says.

She says Farm Africa has enrolled at least 660 youths and women in their cooperative who are already enjoying the benefits of coffee farming.

As a leader in the cooperative, Ms Tulyamusiima says she trains fellow youths in record keeping, accessing credit in Village Saving and Loan Association (VSLA), post-harvest handling, and increasing profits through cutting production costs.

Farm Africa has played a big role in helping Ms Tulyamusiima understand the role of coffee in household development.

Kembabazi's vision journey

Ms Gillian Kembabazi's success story begun to unfold in 2018 when she joined Rugyeyo Farmers' Organic Cooperative Society.

Ms Kembabazi, a resident of Rweibare in Rugyeyo Sub-county was introduced to VSLA that required her to come up with a plan.

Her plan was to own a banana and coffee plantation that could help sustain her income, raise a healthy family and ultimately have a roof over her head.

Ms Kembabazi was living in a single room mud house with no income-generating activity, and neither did she have any development plans.

of shs800,000 loan from a VSLA.

Her husband helped in acquiring one acre of land through a voluntary land use agreement. The acre of land she acquired was part of the larger three acres of coffee land that the family owns.

From the proceeds of coffee, chicken, and earning as a ToT, Ms Kembabazi managed to save four million shillings. The money was used to roof the four-roomed brick house, set up a shop, and acquire a banana plantation.

She is now planning to re-vamp the house by painting, install a ceiling and tiles to have a modern appearance.

With multiple sources of income at her disposal, Ms Kembabazi rakes shs500,000 per month owning it all to EWCVC project.

Vision

According to Ms Petronella Halwiindi, country director Farm Africa, the organisation has reached more than one million people across eastern Africa in 2020 with support needed now more than ever. In the face of climate change, the pandemic, civil unrest, and commodity price fluctuations, farmers and rural businesses lack the safety nets and resilience to bounce back from shocks.

Farm Africa has just launched its new 2021/2025 strategy, which aims to build the resilience of rural communities in eastern Africa using an approach based on three thematic pillars including agriculture. By 2025, Farm Africa will support one million smallholder farmers and agro-pastoralists per year to increase their productivity, household incomes, and resilience.

"We will boost livelihoods in several core value chains such as coffee, aquaculture, oilseeds, and livestock, and increase farmers' participation in market systems while applying nature-based solutions that promote responsible environmental stewardship," she says.

Another strategy is market engagement. Farm Africa will support at least 200 farmer groups and cooperatives and Small and Growing Businesses (SGBs) to grow sustainably, and support 12 private sector leads firms to transition to sustainable supply chains.

Finally is the environment. Farm Africa will implement integrated landscape management projects in all countries of operation, supporting the sustainable management of 12 priority landscapes, including forests, range-

lands, and coastal ecosystems.

The three pillars will be underpinned by five cross-cutting themes including climate action, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and strengthen the resilience and adaptive capacity of communities to climate change. Gender equality involving designing gender-sensitive projects for meaningful outcomes for women's economic empowerment.

Youth employment. Here, emphasis will be on creation of job opportunities for young people throughout the value chain. Resilience; to enhance communities' and enterprises' ability to mitigate and adapt to shocks, and agri-tech to embrace the use of technology across all stages of the value chain.

This year with support and collaboration from the European Union and UCDA, Farm Africa is supporting UGACOF in the implementation of the "Increasing Market-Oriented Production for Arabica Coffee Together" (IMPACT) Project.

The project is dedicated to empowering coffee farmers, boosting farm productivity, reducing post-harvest handling losses, and expanding market opportunities for over 40,000 beneficiaries across the Rwenzori and Kigezi regions.



Ms Ada Asimwe displays some of their coffee products.



Ms Moreen Asimwe stands in shop she opened using proceeds from coffee. PHOTOS BY PAUL MURUNGI.

REACTIONS FROM LEADERS ON FARM AFRICA INITIATIVES



"Our objectives were achieved especially in removing barriers to women and youth participation in the coffee value chain activities such as increasing access to land for coffee production and income generation. Farmers will continue leveraging on the structures,"

Mr Samuel Arop, programme manager, Farm Africa Uganda, Uganda



"Farm Africa has helped in organising farmers into coffee groups, resulting to coffee cooperatives. Farm Africa has covered a big part in terms of coffee extension services. We offer supervisory role and capacity building where there is a gap,"

Mr Nkwasi Godwin- district production officer in Kanungu District.



"Our focus has been mobilisation and organising young farmers with each group having 20 members. Our association engages landlords, individuals and parents of the youth to increase access to land,"

Mr Martin Atukwase, secretary, Kanungu District Young Farmers Association.

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