

## BLOG ARTICLE

### Empowering Women in the Coffee Value Chain: Unlocking Opportunities for Greater Benefits

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#### Introduction:

Coffee, one of the world's most beloved beverages, has been a significant contributor to Ethiopia's agricultural and economic development. Within the coffee value chain, women play a pivotal role, contributing tirelessly at various stages of production. However, despite their substantial presence and invaluable contributions, women in Ethiopia's coffee industry continue to face significant challenges that limit their access to benefits and opportunities. In this blog article, we will explore the critical role of women in the coffee value chain, highlight the disparities they face, and propose recommendations to empower and uplift women in this vital sector.

## Women's Work in the Coffee Value Chain:



Numerical data reveals the extent of women's work and participation at different stages of the coffee value chain in Ethiopia. Studies have shown that women contribute around 70% of the labor force in the coffee sector. At the farm level, women are actively involved in planting, nurturing, and harvesting coffee cherries. They also play a crucial role in post-harvest processes such as sorting, drying, and processing. In local

markets, women are often responsible for selling coffee, ensuring its availability to the wider market.

### Challenges and Disparities:

Despite their significant presence and contributions, women in the coffee value chain face numerous challenges that hinder their access to benefits and limit their economic empowerment. These challenges include:

1. **Limited Access to Resources:** Women often have limited access to credit, land ownership, and modern farming technologies. This restricts their ability to improve productivity, employ sustainable practices, and ultimately increase their income.
2. **Inequality in Decision-making:** Women's participation in decision-making processes within the coffee industry is limited. Their voices and perspectives are often excluded, preventing them from actively shaping policies and strategies that could benefit their livelihoods.
3. **Gender-Based Discrimination:** Women face gender-based discrimination, both within their communities and in the broader coffee industry. They encounter unequal pay, limited opportunities for skill development and leadership roles, and barriers to accessing markets and information.

### Recommendations for Empowerment:

To address these challenges and empower women in the coffee value chain, concerted efforts are needed from multiple stakeholders. Here are some recommendations for policy makers, NGOs, women associations, the private sector, and the international market:

## I. Policy Makers:

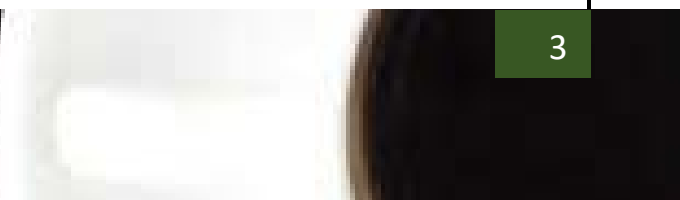
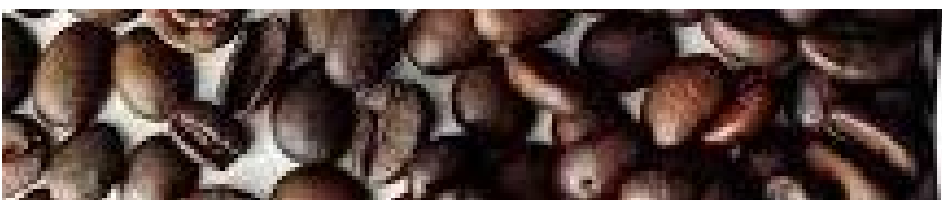
- a) Conduct a thorough review of the gender strategy document developed by the Ethiopian Coffee and Tea Authority, taking into consideration the experiences and feedback from the coffee producing community, particularly women, and provide practical recommendations for its effective implementation, operationalization, and alignment with industry practices.
- b) Develop and enact gender-responsive policies that address the specific needs and challenges faced by women in the coffee sector, aligning with the objectives outlined in the gender strategy.
- c) Establish a space similar to a town hall format platform for listening to the coffee producing community, with a particular focus on women, to understand their challenges, needs, and aspirations.
- d) Allocate a budget in the respective regions of coffee growers to support initiatives that provide basic life, financial, and coffee skills training for women producers and their families, aiming to enhance their economic empowerment and improve livelihoods
- e) Ensure equal access to resources, such as credit, land, and extension services, by implementing gender-inclusive programs in accordance with the gender strategy's provisions.
- f) Collaborate with leading institutions and private sector actors to create partnerships that work towards sustainable livelihoods for coffee producing women and their families, promoting inclusive practices and long-term support.

## II. NGOs and Women Associations:

- a) Strengthen the financial, technical, and administrative capacity of Women in Coffee Ethiopia, the association for women in the coffee industry, through increased support and resources.
- b) Collaborate with Women in Coffee Ethiopia to develop and deliver targeted training and capacity-building programs that enhance women's skills in coffee production, processing, and entrepreneurship.
- c) Facilitate the establishment of networks and platforms that enable women in the coffee industry to share experiences, exchange knowledge, and access support services, with a particular focus on strengthening the role and reach of Women in Coffee Ethiopia.
- d) Advocate for funding and resources from relevant stakeholders to ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of Women in Coffee Ethiopia and similar women associations in the coffee sector.

## III. Private Sector:

- a) Foster inclusive business practices by promoting gender equality within coffee companies and cooperatives.



- b) Support initiatives that provide fair prices, financial services, and market access to women coffee farmers.

#### **IV. International Market:**

- a) Encourage responsible sourcing practices that prioritize gender equality, ensuring fair prices and long-term partnerships with women coffee producers.
- b) Support certification programs that promote gender equity, such as Women in Coffee programs.

#### **Conclusion:**

Empowering women in the coffee value chain is not just a matter of justice; it is an essential step towards sustainable and inclusive development. By recognizing and addressing the challenges faced by women in Ethiopia's coffee industry, we can unlock their potential, increase their economic benefits, and promote gender equality. It is the collective responsibility of policy makers, NGOs, women associations, the private sector, and the international market to work together and implement the recommended strategies. Let us seize this opportunity to create a thriving coffee industry that truly benefits all, and uplift the women who form its backbone.

Together, we can cultivate a future where women in the coffee value chain flourish, contributing to their communities, and inspiring generations to come.

