# GENDER EQUITABLE SERVICE PROVISION IN COFFEE AND COCOA: THE STATE OF THE INDUSTRY

RESEARCH REPORT
MAY 2021

Equal
Origins

INTRODUCTION

As part of Equal Origins' exploration and support of gender-equitable practices in the coffee and cocoa sectors, the organization collaborated with Women Forward International, The United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), and the Yale Jackson Institute for Global Affairs to explore and map current practices in the sector. Over a period of four months in early 2021, the team of four Yale graduate students (Abby Cohen, Diana Johnson, Maya Saint Germain, and Robin Schmid) conducted desk research and interviews with coffee and cocoa stakeholders, focusing on 22 public, private, and nonprofit extension and advisory service (EAS) providers. The team's research is summarized below, highlighting key themes, challenges, and best practices among coffee and cocoa EAS providers with respect to gender equity integration and inclusion in their approach to producer training and capacity building. The report concludes with recommendations for how EAS providers and industry allies can strengthen their approaches to gender equity as it relates to service offerings. Equal Origins also received recommendations, and the report closes with Equal Origins' further commitments to foster greater gender equity within the coffee and cocoa industries.
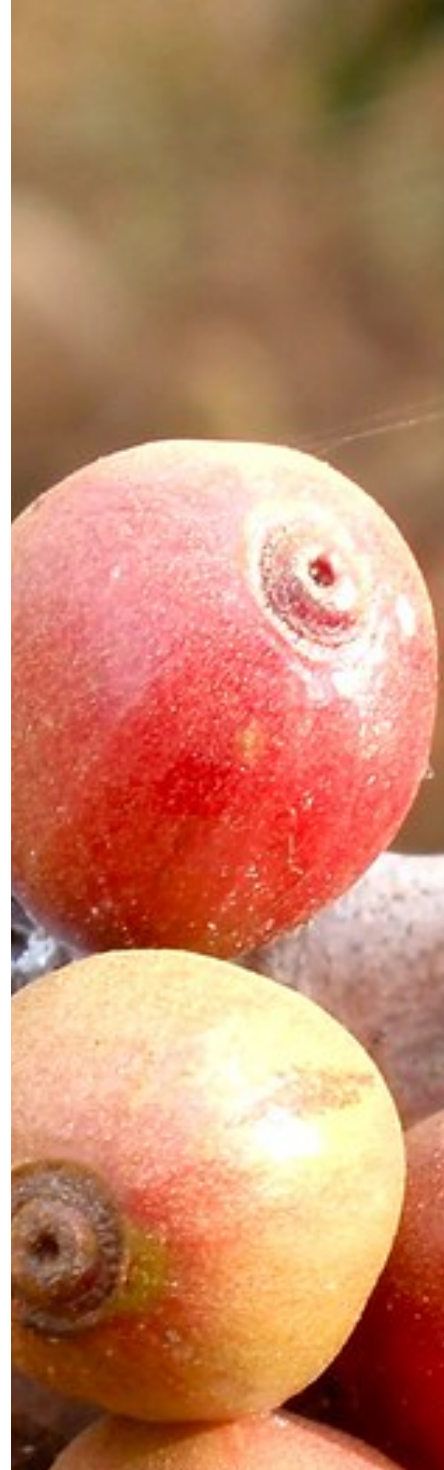
Definition of Extension and Advisory Service (EAS) Providers

Equal Origins defines EAS providers as public, private, or civil society companies, organizations, or institutions that offer technical guidance and assistance to farmers, and supply them with investments, inputs, and tools that they can leverage to increase sustainable production and income from agriculture.

KEY THEMES

This section synthesizes industry-wide themes identified through desk research and interviews related to EAS providers' common practices and motivations for incorporating gender equitable considerations in their programs.

Gender Strategy

Although gender equity is not often part of EAS providers' overall strategies, almost all providers acknowledged the importance of women in coffee and cocoa production and their current marginalization in the industry. When EAS providers address gender, it often falls under the purview of the sustainability department, even though gender is not commonly written into sustainability strategies as a standalone pillar or priority. Since gender is just one component of the sustainability division, many organizations lack gender specialists on staff. And, as a subsection of a larger sustainability strategy, gender integration is frequently addressed in conjunction with a discussion of other marginalized groups, such as youth. **The lack of a separate area of focus or independent strategy for gender integration may suggest that gender is still not viewed as a fundamental priority for many of these providers but rather as a small part of the sustainability challenge.**

Most gender programs (and gender strategies and/or policies, if articulated) are relatively new, often fewer than ten years old. Providers consistently spoke to the long timeline for achieving gender transformative programming, since providing gender-equitable programs and services often requires challenging cultural barriers and stereotypes.

Motivating Factors

EAS providers with similar missions had corresponding similarities in their stated motivations to integrate gender equity into operations, projects, and programs. These motivations differed along lines of service provider type (organization, public institution, company). For example, companies were most often motivated by profit, while public institutions and nonprofit organizations prioritized alignment with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Beyond awareness of social and economic inequity, several providers stated the need to include women in coffee and cocoa production - and in agri-food systems more broadly - to meet growing consumer demand. Additionally, EAS providers frequently consider the triple bottom line of sustainability - environmental, economic, and social - in a way that often directly references gender equity.

Donor-funded organizations commonly noted that the inclusion of a gender component in programs is largely client-led; gender is often only a focal point of programs if a client or donor requests it. Similarly, organizations noted the role of the consumer in motivating gender equitable programming; consumer demand often determines how organizations design their programs. However, smaller, national, or regional public institutions may not feel the same pressure to prove to funders or consumers that gender is a core consideration, and may, therefore, be less likely to make a business case for gender integration.

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Frequently Noted Motivators

- Consumer demand
- Client/donor/key partner demand
- Funding and profit margins
- Branding and marketing
- Sustainable development

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Additionally, partnerships between EAS providers incentivize the adoption of improved gender equity strategies. Competition between providers also encourages better gender integration as many EAS providers acknowledge the profitability gains from supporting gender equitable initiatives.

Building Will

Cultivating the will among EAS providers to enact gender equity work is realized on several different levels. **Consumers are increasingly aware of how ethically sourced (or not) their coffee is, driving demand for specialty women's coffee and putting pressure on coffee traders to consider this as well.** At the community/beneficiary level, some EAS providers see a trade-off between focusing on gender issues and infringing upon community relations with coffee- or cocoa-producing communities where cultural norms make gender a sensitive issue. However, where gender initiatives emerge successfully, it is often in response to the needs of community level groups. Lastly, at the corporate level, ambitious, executive commitments are considered necessary to get at the root of structural inequities. Consistent and strong motivation from EAS provider leadership is needed to drive change and to systematize gender equity throughout producer service provision. In the absence of a formal, high-level strategy, a grassroots approach to gender-focused work misses opportunities for sustainable change and proactivity.

Mainstreaming of Gender Programming

Gender mainstreaming includes taking into account the different needs of women and men, considering intersectionality, like race and social class, and consistently integrating a gender perspective across all areas of work. The team found that **nearly all EAS providers lack consistent gender mainstreaming efforts** and that EAS providers are not considering gender in all projects and activities.

Gender programs vary by region, by sector, and by project, and a given provider's portfolio often lacks consistency. While providers may prioritize gender programming for specific projects, gender is almost never highlighted as a key priority across all services or all sectors.

Data Capture and Reporting

A cross-cutting theme across many organizations, public institutions, and companies studied was the lack of available gender-disaggregated data. Although many of the EAS providers publish annual reports and highlight impact data on their websites, quantitative and qualitative gender-disaggregated data is largely only referenced in case studies. Beyond attendance measurement, gender-specific indicators and outcomes are only available when referenced as part of specific gender projects and in case studies. However, when gender is a mainstreamed consideration, gender equity efforts are integrated into all projects and require more intentional data collection. The current lack of data makes it difficult to determine if EAS providers are proactively differentiating between gender-focused projects and the integration of gender equity into all projects and activities. **Without available data and clarity around the differentiation between targeted interventions and gender mainstreaming, it is largely unfeasible to assess what percentage of resources are allocated to EAS provider gender-focused work.**

Impact Measurement and Continuous Learning

While at smaller organizations data capture is limited to tracking attendance against gender quotas for trainings, interviewees expressed an understanding that **attendance alone does not measure impact.** However, current gender programming is largely focused on encouraging women's participation, without further investigation of impact or long-term outcomes.

Because gender integration is decentralized, it is often hard to share lessons learned across different regions, sectors, and programs within organizations and between organizations. When lessons learned and best practices are disseminated throughout an organization, by a knowledge management team, for example, staff often fail to productively apply this knowledge. This is often due to a lack of meaningful engagement with projects outside of their own area of expertise, a lack of time that would allow for application of lessons to their current work, or a belief that contextual differences make application of cross-regional learning too challenging.

DID YOU KNOW? | Multiple EAS providers reinvest profits from agricultural projects and programming into gender equity work.

CHALLENGES

In addition to identifying common themes regarding gender strategies and gender programming across EAS providers, the research team also recognizes key challenges with EAS provider's internal capacity to promote proactive gender programming and comprehensive data collection, as well as the difficulties of garnering community buy-in for gender initiatives.

Reactive Instead of Proactive

Strategies for gender equity have largely been implemented as a reaction to the demands of consumers in a market that increasingly values sustainability. This reactive approach to adopting gender as a priority area, which is particularly notable amongst public and private providers as opposed to donor-funded organizations, has led to ad hoc gender-focused programming. This results in:

- EAS providers lacking gender-focused staff and sufficient financial resources to design and scale long-term gender-responsive programming
- Inconsistent implementation of gender programming that varies greatly by regional office and local context
- Inconsistent definitions of gender equity and gender inclusion that are not mainstreamed internally, preventing staff from understanding their individual responsibility to support gender efforts
- Gender strategy not yet being institutionalized or operationalized

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

One company has a platform through which it invests in the inclusion of women within both its corporate structure and within the communities they serve.

Multiple EAS providers reinvest profits from their programming and agriculture projects into gender equity work.

Lack of Data Collection Resources

Although EAS providers recognize the importance of data collection and impact evaluation for carrying out gender inclusive programming, many report the inability to enact a robust monitoring system that captures gender equitable outcomes and indicators. This results in:

- EAS providers lacking the ability to measure the mid- or long-term impact on gender outcomes at the individual, community, or market levels in continuous learning and evaluation cycles, despite seeking to prioritize smallholder women farmers for short-term interventions
- Attendance of women at EAS provider trainings and women's membership in cooperatives being used as a baseline for effective gender programming without considering that women's participation is only the first step towards gender equitable outcomes
- The inability to conduct comprehensive gender analyses before beginning project implementation
- Continued difficulty in securing investment for learning and evaluation
- A lack of evidence-based literature to allow for sharing best practices to promote gender equity in the sector.

Community Context and Relations

There is a perceived trade-off between maintaining trust and a positive working relationship with members of coffee- and cocoa-growing communities and working to transform local attitudes about gender. Furthermore, land rights and financial access remain barriers for women's participation and leadership in farming communities. The challenges of community context and ensuring community buy-in result in:

- The need for long-term investment and collaboration with communities, allowing for patriarchal structures and gender stereotypes to be adequately addressed
- The need for men to be included in community programming aimed at women's empowerment, particularly through sensitivity trainings
- Difficulties in scaling gender-responsive program design, given such divergent local contexts

BEST PRACTICES

This section highlights existing best practices among EAS providers as related to gender equity work and gender mainstreaming in farmer-facing programming. The best practices are organized by key lessons learned.

Leveraging Partnerships

Partnerships within the sector with capable organizations and knowledgeable parties make gender work more likely to be implemented. There are several ways in which partnerships may be utilized by industry actors for success in gender equity. Some EAS service providers work with local organizations, public sector officials, private sector actors, and even social movements. Many others collaborate with fellow industry partners to share resources and knowledge. They stated that multi-sectoral partnerships are often the most effective in gender work.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

One organization has developed an institution-wide platform and resource hub for gender inclusivity. Through this hub, they share gender knowledge across their network and have created a gender readiness tool that staff and partners can access in order to assess gender mainstreaming impacts in projects, programs, and evaluation and learning systems.

Another organization, as part of its strategy to systematize innovative gender approaches into their work and into the sector at large, utilizes a toolbox for cocoa farming representatives and suppliers. The tools detail how gender equity can be implemented and measured in various aspects of service provision and programming.

Engaging Meaningfully with the Community

Many organizations regularly consult directly with community members, especially women, to give the local community a voice in decision making and program creation. Others tailor-make their programs to be relevant for the perceived or understood needs of selected communities.

EAS providers also empower community members to function as leaders and role models for gender equity.

Community engagement by many EAS providers is long-term and sustained rather than one-off trainings.

Prioritizing Gender Equity

Some EAS providers work internally through human resource departments to improve gender equity. This includes instituting corporate program structures to train and encourage women to take on senior roles.

These internal programs are implemented in addition to farmer training initiatives and in-country gender projects. Organizations recognize that trainers, agronomists, and other farmer-facing individuals should have at least a basic understanding of gender equity work because trainers often hold the same gender beliefs/stereotypes as community members.

Training Accessibility

Many organizations successfully prioritize the inclusion of women in their programming and training. This is achieved by giving women priority access into programs, scheduling trainings during times that don't interfere with women's other commitments, offering on-site childcare to ensure women are fully present for trainings, and developing and tracking targets for women attendees and participants. In addition, some providers tailor trainings to every education level and utilize a female facilitator to increase accessibility.

Thinking Holistically

Some EAS providers supplement technical agricultural skill development with services focusing on social issues and tangential skills that feed into women's success as growers such as providing general education, improving literacy, and building leadership skills and confidence. Strengthening women's capacity can have a greater impact than services that just aim to boost their participation.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

An organization headed a project in Nicaragua and El Salvador which provided coffee farmers with training in agricultural and climate-resilient practices. Though the main goal of the project was not increased gender equity, the organization recognized its importance and included gender-focused indicators in the project's evaluation scheme to ensure the project targeted women and prioritized their integration.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research conducted, the Yale team proposes the following recommendations for Equal Origins, or any third-party provider, as well as recommendations for EAS providers and the coffee and cocoa industry as a whole:

Recommendations for a Third-Party

Technical Assistance

- **Support EAS providers as gender specialists** in integrating gender into action plans, business strategy, sustainability strategies, and organizational structures that include a gender-focused division.

- **Assist EAS providers** through trainings, workshops, and written materials in improving data collection procedures, developing reliable monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) tools, and synthesizing data through transparent, comprehensive reporting to ensure efficient gender mainstreaming.

- **Support EAS providers in prioritizing gender equitable practices** at all levels of industry.

- **Support EAS providers** with regional, fit for purpose, gender analyses of farm level organizational structures, attitudes, and practices, prioritizing input from participating beneficiaries and stakeholders

- **Apply an individualized approach when working with EAS providers that aligns with the wide range of gender integration capacities that exist in the sector.**

Learning

- **Publish an annual industry report** with best practices, recommendations, and resources that hold EAS providers accountable and provide them with constructive feedback and a roadmap for improvement. Similarly, update and circulate the Gender Equity Index (GEI) annually.

- **Ensure that solutions are context-specific and honor community interests through a process of consultation and local ownership.**

Alliances

- **Encourage EAS providers to engage in competitive collaboration** to push the industry forward on themes of gender equity integration.

- **Build partnerships** with EAS providers that already have successful gender strategies by expanding on existing gender equity resources, alliances, and tools.

Enabling Environment

- **Highlight the business case for gender equity** to advocate for internal consideration of gender and encourage buy-in.

- **Propose and pilot innovative solutions** that respond to the needs of women produces, women farm workers, and particularly to the "invisible" workforce of unpaid female family members.

For the Industry

To Establish

- **Articulate and publish a gender strategy**, both a global and cross-sectoral gender strategy as well as context sensitive strategies that take into account particular regional considerations.

- **Seek support from third-party gender experts as needed, through trainings, workshops, and consultative services, to create or improve gender strategies, programming, key performance indicator development, and data collection procedures**

- **Clearly and comprehensively communicate ongoing gender work, gender inclusion goals, and progress on achieving the gender strategy in annual and quarterly reporting, case studies, and blogs available to interested parties.**

- **Develop a comprehensive and systematized MEL approach**, collect gender disaggregated data consistently, employ impact measurement and evaluation, and systematize reporting.

- **To expand upon or enact new gender equity work and programming,** seek to discover and build partnerships with other industry actors that have successful gender strategies and approaches
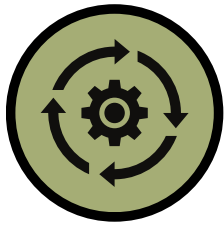
To Implement

- **Design and deliver gender sensitive trainings** and/or gender focused trainings for staff and producers.

- **Construct and implement action plans** to address gender disparities, rather than simply observing gender disparities.

- **Develop a strong and agile feedback loop** amongst staff and between staff and beneficiaries to allow for a self-aware and evolving strategy towards gender equity.

To Mainstream

- **Mainstream gender initiatives throughout projects and activities**. EAS providers should make gender work a priority that is woven into and measured in all aspects of programming.

- **Make gender work a priority** that is woven into and measured in all aspects of programming (eg. develop indicators, target goals, and future vision).

- **Improve consistency across sectors and services** (i.e. replicating success in one area and applying learnings from various sectors to coffee and cocoa specifically).

- **Establish better knowledge sharing practices** internally and externally to disseminate lessons learned and best practices across a company and between companies.

- **Reevaluate and redesign current programming** to embed gender equity goals at a base level. Effective and sustainable gender programming should feature a bottom-up approach that instills measurable and culturally appropriate gender equity initiatives across programs and across regions.

- **Include metrics** that ensure the presence of gender-related goals in all EAS provider projects and programming, even when gender outcomes are not the project focus.

For Allies and Industry
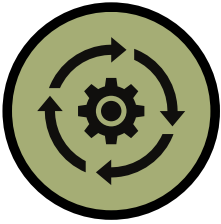
To Implement

- **Highlight the business case among partners,** advocating for their broader consideration of gender equity, and to encourage more industry-wide buy-in

- **Propose and support the piloting of innovative solutions** that respond to gender inequities

- **Request gender analysis as a prerequisite** for all sustainability and capacity building efforts

- **Continually engage with industry-wide reports** about gender to increase awareness of best practices and current progress

EQUAL ORIGINS' COMMITMENT & AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

To support the continual development of the coffee and cocoa sectors, Equal Origins commits to developing new opportunities, services, and convenings for industry actors and EAS providers around the topic of gender equity.

To create the most relevant gender-related opportunities and services, Equal Origins recognizes the need to promote and spearhead more research on the ways in which industry members can take action and increase gender equitable outcomes (see list on next page).

In addition to committing to the promotion of this research and the development of new programs and service offerings, Equal Orgins also commits to celebrating success.

Through the Gender Equity Index, EAS providers can answer questions to understand their own progress toward gender equity in programming and organization-wide, learn how to communicate this progress with a broader audience, gain partnerships and resources to take action and make even greater progress in the years to come.

Areas for further research include the following:

- How can the industry best make the business case for the importance of EAS providers to prioritize gender equity considerations?
- How can the industry best understand and leverage conditions for success?
- What are the methodologies for scaling both centralized and decentralized approaches to gender equity in service provision?
- How can the industry integrate more intersectional strategies (race, generational, class, etc) and regional strategies based on pressing needs like gender based violence?
- How are gender equity considerations integrated differently (or similarly) across different regions?
- What practices make particular interventions and industry partnerships successful (or unsuccessful)?
- What should be the role/responsibility of large coffee traders in applying gender equity frameworks for independent coffee exporters on the ground?
- How is responsibility for gender equitable practices spread across the supply chain (and how should it be)?
- What is the relationship between gender and youth as cross-cutting themes in the coffee and cocoa sectors?

Photo References

Acknowledgements

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