

Ensuring Equitable Benefits in Service Provision for Cocoa Farmers



A global leader in trading and processing coffee, cocoa, and cotton, ECOM pioneers sustainable and equitable supply chains to elevate farming communities.

THE COMPANY

ECOM excels in the sourcing, trading, and processing of cocoa, promoting transparent and responsible practices to bridge the gap between producers and the global market. Operating in numerous countries, ECOM provides comprehensive services across the entire supply chain, including financing, agricultural support, and quality enhancement. Deeply committed to sustainability, the company focuses on initiatives designed to bolster the welfare of agricultural communities and reduce environmental impact, ensuring the resilience and prosperity of the sectors it serves.

THE IMPACTS

ECOM's Nigeria and Cameroon teams participated in Equal Origins' Better Together Workshop (BTW) to strengthen the shared understanding of gender concepts and practice within the teams, and to identify opportunities to integrate gender equity in their current programs. Each team built a targeted Gender Equity Development Plan (GEDP), sharing their reflections and insights, guided by the group tasks during the workshop period. This shared process helped to lay a strong foundation for ownership of the workshop outputs, and engagement in implementing the GEDPs. Both teams highlighted areas of common interest and key differences, including identifying the need to review and strengthen their gender policies and engage in gender analysis.

At a Glance

THE CHALLENGE: Recognizing the critical role of women as both a workforce and a resource for innovative solutions, ECOM faces the challenge of dismantling systemic barriers to their full participation and empowerment.

THE SOLUTION: Apply the Gender Equity Index approach in Cameroon and Nigeria to guide activities and investments that advance women's empowerment.

THE IMPACT:
Prioritization of needs: Country roadmaps detail gender-responsive actions and investments.

Engaged teams: A common understanding of needs and opportunities builds motivation and action on gender integration.

Integrated global to local approach: Local results inform global sustainability investments and plans.

BACKGROUND

In Nigeria and Cameroon, ECOM confronts the complexities of integrating sustainability and equality within the coffee and cocoa sectors. Recognizing the critical role of women as both a workforce and a resource for innovative solutions, ECOM faces the challenge of dismantling systemic barriers to their full participation and empowerment. The company is dedicated to creating more inclusive opportunities for these groups, ensuring access to resources, training, and support that are on par with their male counterparts. A significant hurdle is fostering an environment where gender equity and sustainability principles are not only understood across the organization and its partners, but are actively implemented and championed. ECOM strives to align its efforts with global standards and stakeholder expectations to achieve meaningful progress in these areas.

THE SOLUTIONS

In 2022, through its Smarter Cocoa strategy, ECOM committed the company to using the Gender Equity Index (GEI) to better tackle gender inequalities in its supply chains. To advance this commitment, ECOM's Nigeria and Cameroon country teams participated in Equal Origins' Better Together Workshop (BTW), acquiring essential gender equity knowledge tailored to their roles. The country teams completed the GEI assessment, which provided them with insights and recommendations for improving gender equity. They reflected on these insights, developed strategic visions and Theories of Change to strengthen their gender approach. This process culminated in the creation of Gender Equity Development Plans (GEDP) which highlight priority activities and resource needs, providing a clear roadmap for action at the country level. Additionally, the information gathered through these assessments and plans provided valuable guidance for the global cocoa sustainability team, aiding the company's sustainability investments and ensuring that gender equity is integrated into its overall strategy.

THE HIGHLIGHTS

Through the workshop process, the Nigeria team highlighted the cross-cutting threat of hegemonic social and gender norms and the potential of men's opposition and backlash to gender equity initiatives. The team was able to explore potential strategies for addressing this, exploring Gender Transformative Approaches such as work on masculinities, and couples' approaches; they also considered how their team can mitigate the risk of backlash or opposition, for example by engaging in communication and awareness raising, training leaders and creating forums for dialogue with norm holders. To lay the foundation for this deeper work, the objectives of their GEDP over the next 1-2 years are to carry out participatory gender analysis in cocoa communities and develop gender policies for both their internal functioning and the provision of services to farmers.

In Cameroon, the team highlighted several interrelated strengths and weaknesses. While there is a good level of commitment and general awareness of gender equity in the team, and a strong track record on recruitment of women and engaging with women through IGAs, the team identified the need to deepen and better structure their gender approach. Their GEDP focuses on increasing in-house expertise on gender, and conducting gender analysis in cocoa communities to ensure that program and project design are informed by an understanding of gendered opportunities and constraints.



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The highlight of the Better Together Workshop was the tools that were introduced, including the Gender Equity Index which helped us to understand where we were with our work on gender equity and opened our eyes to areas where we can do better. Now, we are better positioned to implement gender equity activities and incorporate them into our workflow.

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