LESSONS LEARNED FROM ASSESSMENT

STUDY ON COFFEE-BASED DIVERSIFICATION AND GENDER ROLES IN COFFEE PRODUCTION IN YAYU COFFEE FOREST BIOSPHERE RESERVE (YCFBR)

Lessons Learned from the Study on Coffee-Based Diversification and Gender Roles in Coffee Production in Yayu Coffee Forest Biosphere Reserve (YCFBR)

01 Executive Summary

This study on Coffee-Based Diversification and Gender Roles in Coffee Production in the Yayu Coffee Forest Biosphere Reserve (YCFBR) highlights key findings on gender dynamics, agricultural diversification, and the socioeconomic challenges faced by local communities engaged in coffee production. It underscores the need for more inclusive participation, improved access to resources for women, and diversification strategies to mitigate economic vulnerabilities. This document summarizes the lessons learned from the study, with a focus on gender equality, sustainable agricultural practices, and institutional support.

02 Introduction

The Yayu Coffee Forest Biosphere Reserve (YCFBR) in southwestern Ethiopia is a globally recognized biodiversity hotspot, primarily known for its wild populations of Coffea arabica. Coffee production plays a critical role in the livelihoods of local households, accounting for 70% of income. Women contribute significantly to labor in coffee production, yet they face gender-based disparities in decision-making, resource access, and economic empowerment.

The study aimed to:

- Explore coffee-based diversification practices in YCFBR.
- Identify the gender gaps in coffee production and diversification in YCFBR districts.

03 Findings

3.1. Gender Gaps in Coffee Production

- **Limited Decision-Making and Resource Access:** Despite significant contributions to coffee production, women—particularly in male-headed households—face restricted access to land, credit, and other resources. Decision-making is largely dominated by men, affecting women's ability to participate fully in productive activities.
- **High Burden of Reproductive Work**: Women are primarily responsible for reproductive tasks such as water fetching, firewood collection, and child care. These responsibilities limit their capacity to engage in more profitable activities like coffee marketing and management.

3.2. Barriers to Women's Engagement in Non-Farm and Off-Farm Activities

- Women in female-headed households are more dependent on farm activities and have limited participation in off-farm and non-farm income-generating activities. This reduces income diversification, leaving households vulnerable to agricultural shocks.

3.3. Coffee-Based Diversification

- Limited Crop Diversification: Households rely heavily on coffee production, with little diversification into other crops. This increases the vulnerability of households to fluctuations in coffee production due to diseases and market challenges.

3.4. Institutional and Market Constraints

- Limited Access to Credit and Extension Services: Both male- and female-headed households face challenges in accessing credit services and agricultural extension. Female-headed households, in particular, are disadvantaged in receiving extension services, which limits their productivity and knowledge of improved agricultural practices.

3.5. Environmental and Productivity Concerns

- Distance as a Barrier: Coffee plots located far from homes are poorly managed and harvested, leading to reduced productivity. Households with more accessible coffee plots manage and harvest them better, ensuring higher yields.

04 Lessons Learned

4.1. Gender Gaps in Decision-Making and Resource Control

- Women's limited access to decision-making roles and resources like land and credit hinders their ability to improve productivity and income. This structural imbalance calls for policies and interventions to increase women's control over resources and decision-making processes.

4.2. Challenges in Income Diversification

- The reliance on coffee as a primary income source without adequate diversification into other crops or off-farm activities poses a significant risk. Promoting diversification strategies such as root crops, fruits, and non-farm enterprises would reduce vulnerability and increase household resilience.

4.3. Need for Inclusive Extension Services

- Women's limited access to extension services is a critical barrier to adopting improved coffee farming technologies. There is an urgent need for extension programs that specifically target women, ensuring they receive the training and support necessary to improve productivity.

4.4. Impact of Distance and Accessibility

- The distance of coffee plots from homes negatively impacts farm management and productivity. Improving infrastructure, such as access to markets and roads, and encouraging closer coffee plantations could mitigate this challenge.

05 Recommendations

5.1. Promote Gender Equality in Resource Access and Decision-Making

- Develop programs that address the gender disparities in decision-making and resource access by providing women with better access to land, credit, and training on agricultural technologies.

5.2. Enhance Crop Diversification

- Encourage the diversification of income sources through the promotion of other cash and subsistence crops, such as root crops and spices, as well as non-farm activities to enhance economic resilience.

5.3. Improve Access to Credit and Markets

- Establish better market linkages and credit services for smallholder farmers, particularly for female-headed households, to improve their economic opportunities and bargaining power.

5.4. Strengthen Agricultural Extension Services

- Ensure equitable access to agricultural extension services for both men and women, with a focus on increasing women's participation in training and technical assistance programs related to coffee production and diversification.

5.5. Implement Infrastructure Improvements

- Develop strategies to improve access to markets, transportation, and infrastructure in the region to reduce the distance and barriers that prevent proper management of coffee plots and market access.

06 Conclusion

- The study on Coffee-Based Diversification and Gender Roles in YCFBR reveals significant gender disparities in coffee production, with women bearing the brunt of reproductive labor while having limited access to decision-making and resources. These gender gaps, coupled with limited income diversification and access to credit and markets, reduce the resilience of coffee-farming households. Addressing these issues through targeted interventions on gender equality, diversification, and improved access to extension services and infrastructure will significantly enhance the livelihoods of communities in YCFBR.

07 Next Steps

- **Policy Development:** Work with local governments and NGOs to develop policies that promote gender equality in agriculture and improve access to resources for women.
- **Capacity Building:** Design and implement capacity-building programs aimed at increasing women's participation in agricultural decision-making and enhancing their knowledge of improved coffee farming techniques.
- **Infrastructure Investments:** Advocate for investments in rural infrastructure to reduce barriers to market access and improve the overall productivity of coffee farms in the biosphere reserve.