



Women in Coffee Value Chain Platform

“Making Uganda’s Coffee Value Chain Work for Women”

Background

Coffee is one of Uganda’s most important agricultural commodities and a major source of export earnings, rural livelihoods, employment and economic activity. Its value extends well beyond production, supporting farmers, input suppliers, aggregators, traders, processors, exporters, service providers and a growing range of businesses.

Uganda is investing in expanding coffee production, increasing value addition, strengthening domestic consumption, growing exports and positioning the sector for greater competitiveness in regional and international markets. These developments are creating new opportunities across the coffee value chain.

Yet the growth of the coffee economy does not automatically mean that those who contribute to it benefit equally.

Women are already active across Uganda’s coffee sector. They farm, provide labour, trade, aggregate, process, provide services, run enterprises and participate in coffee-related organisations. Increasingly, women are also entering areas such as roasting, branding, digital services, specialty coffee and other emerging businesses.

Despite this participation, many women remain concentrated in the less profitable and less influential parts of the value chain. They often have limited access to finance, productive assets, markets, information, technology, business networks and decision-making spaces. Their contribution to coffee can therefore be substantial while their control

over the income, assets and opportunities generated by the sector remains limited.

This is the space occupied by the Women in Coffee Value Chain Platform.

The Platform is an existing national mechanism that brings women together with the institutions, businesses and partners that shape opportunities in Uganda’s coffee economy. It provides a collective space for women to organise, build networks, access information and opportunities, engage decision-makers and influence the policies and practices that affect their economic participation.

The Platform is grounded in a simple proposition:

Uganda’s coffee sector will only be truly transformative when the women who contribute to its growth are able to capture greater economic value from it. For women, this means moving beyond participation towards economic agency, enterprise ownership, better incomes, leadership and influence.

Why Focus on Women and Why Now?

Uganda’s coffee sector is at a critical stage of transformation. Rising production and exports, together with growing opportunities in processing, specialty coffee, branding, digital commerce, traceability and regional trade, are creating new possibilities for value addition and enterprise development across the sector.

Women are already contributing to this growth as farmers, traders, processors, aggregators, entrepreneurs, service providers and emerging

professionals. They are also an important source of entrepreneurial energy, innovation, technology and new business models for the future of coffee.

However, being part of the coffee economy does not necessarily mean benefiting from it. Many women continue to face barriers to land and other productive assets, affordable finance, profitable markets, business networks, technology and information. Their participation in cooperatives, producer organisations and sector decision-making structures also remains limited. Consequently, many are concentrated in lower-value activities, with limited control over the income and opportunities generated along the value chain.

These constraints are mutually reinforcing. Limited access to finance can prevent a promising enterprise from growing; weak market connections can keep businesses at low margins; lack of assets can restrict investment; and limited representation in decision-making can leave the underlying barriers unaddressed.

The case for focusing on women is therefore not simply about inclusion. It is about ensuring that Uganda's coffee economy is able to draw fully on the productive and entrepreneurial potential of a significant part of its current and future workforce.

The opportunity is to enable women to move beyond being contributors to becoming owners, entrepreneurs, value creators and decision-makers across the coffee value chain.

The Women in Coffee Value Chain Platform provides a mechanism for advancing this agenda. It brings together women and relevant actors in the coffee ecosystem to strengthen access to finance, markets, knowledge, technology and enterprise opportunities, while creating space for women to influence the policies, investments and institutional decisions that shape their participation in the sector.

Therefore, the focus is on making the coffee value chain work better for women and ensuring that women are better positioned to capture value from, and help shape, the future of Uganda's coffee industry.

Making the Coffee Value Chain Work for Women

The Platform approaches women's participation from a value-chain and economic-justice perspective.

Coffee can generate value at many different points, but the distribution of that value is not always equal. Those with greater access to finance, information, markets, technology, infrastructure and decision-making power are often better positioned to capture value.

The Platform seeks to strengthen women's position within this system.

This means creating pathways for women to participate not only in production, but also in the activities where greater value is generated, including:

- Aggregation and trading;
- Processing and value addition;
- Roasting;
- Branding and packaging;
- Specialty and differentiated coffee;
- Quality management and certification;
- Traceability;
- Digital commerce and technology-enabled services;
- Domestic and regional markets;
- Export-related opportunities; and
- Climate-smart and green enterprises.

Women need access to finance, productive assets, information, technology, skills, networks and supportive institutions. They need policies and market systems that recognise their contribution and respond to the realities they face.

The Platform therefore works across both sides of the equation: strengthening women's capacity to access economic opportunities while influencing the policy, institutional and market environment that determines whether those opportunities are available to them.

The Platform's Strategic Role

The Platform occupies a distinctive position within Uganda's coffee ecosystem. It functions as:

- A Voice: enabling women to articulate shared priorities and interests.
- A Connector: linking women to finance,

markets, technology, information, networks and opportunities.

- A Convenor: bringing government, private sector, financial institutions, development partners, civil society and women together around shared challenges.
- A Policy Influencer: translating evidence and lived experiences into policy recommendations and advocacy.
- A Knowledge and Learning Platform: generating and sharing evidence, lessons and practical knowledge.
- An Accountability Mechanism: tracking commitments, policies and investments affecting women.
- A Catalyst: mobilising partnerships and resources around women's economic participation.

Vision

A Ugandan coffee economy in which women have the agency, resources, opportunities and voice to participate meaningfully in and shape the future of the coffee value chain.

Mission

To organise, connect and amplify women in Uganda's coffee economy while influencing policies, markets, investments and partnerships that enable them to access greater economic opportunities, capture more value and participate in decision-making.

Goal

The overall goal is to advance the economic empowerment, leadership and meaningful participation of women across Uganda's coffee value chain.

The Platform addresses both the opportunity side focusing on access to finance, markets, technology, enterprise opportunities and networks and the enabling environment, including policies, institutions, investment decisions and sector practices.

The Strategic Focus

The Platform's work is centred on five interconnected areas:

1. Economic Empowerment and Enterprise Development

The Platform supports women to strengthen their economic position and develop viable enterprises across the coffee value chain. This includes entrepreneurship, business development, financial capability, value addition, mentorship, peer learning and access to business networks.

The emphasis is on sustainable economic outcomes rather than participation for its own sake.

2. Finance and Investment

Access to finance is a major constraint for many women entrepreneurs.

The Platform works both to strengthen the financial readiness of women and to engage financial institutions and investors around financing approaches that better reflect their realities.

This includes financial literacy, savings and investment, credit readiness, digital financial services, supply-chain finance and gender-responsive financing.

3. Markets, Value Addition and Trade

The Platform seeks to strengthen women's access to markets and their participation in higher-value activities.

This includes processing, roasting, branding, specialty coffee, quality management, certification, traceability, digital commerce and domestic, regional and international trade.

4. Leadership, Policy and Voice

The Platform strengthens the ability of women to engage with and influence the institutions that shape the coffee economy.

This includes engagement with government, coffee-sector institutions, cooperatives, farmer organisations, financial institutions, private-sector actors and relevant regional and continental policy processes.

5. Innovation, Climate and the Future of Coffee

The coffee sector is changing in response to climate pressures, technology, sustainability

requirements and changing consumer markets.

The Platform seeks to ensure that women are positioned to participate in these emerging opportunities and to contribute to shaping the future of the sector.

The Role of SEATINI

SEATINI serves as the Secretariat of the Women in Coffee Value Chain Platform.

The Platform builds on SEATINI's mandate and experience in advancing equitable economic development through work on trade, investment, policy, agricultural transformation, women's economic empowerment, research, advocacy and stakeholder engagement.

Within this broader mandate, SEATINI has worked extensively on issues affecting women, young people, smallholder farmers, entrepreneurs and other groups whose participation in economic development is constrained by structural barriers.

The Change We Want to See

The ultimate ambition of the **Women in Coffee Value Chain Platform** is a coffee economy in which women are recognised not simply as workers or beneficiaries, but as economic actors with the capacity to **own, invest, innovate, lead and influence**.

Success will be reflected in women:

- Owning and growing viable coffee-related businesses;
- Accessing appropriate finance and investment;
- Participating in higher-value activities;
- Connecting to better markets;
- Using technology and innovation to grow their businesses;
- Taking leadership positions within coffee organisations;
- Influencing policies and decisions affecting the sector; and
- Capturing a greater share of the value generated by coffee.

This is ultimately about making Uganda's coffee value chain work better for women and enabling women to play a greater role in shaping the future of Uganda's coffee economy.

For more information please contact
Southern and Eastern Africa Trade Information and
Negotiations Institute (SEATINI) Africa Secretariat



Plot 806, Block 213, BukotoDKisaasi Road
P.O. Box 3138, Kampala, Uganda

☎ : +256 414 540856

✉ : info@seatiniuganda.org 🌐 : www.seatiniuganda.org

Follow SEATINI

