

# Coffee Sector Gender Workshop

September 2014



*by*

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# Introduction

In early 2014, [The North-South Institute \(NSI\)](#) spearheaded an innovative Canadian aid project that will ultimately help improve gender equality among coffee producers in Colombia. The DFATD-funded project has already implemented a number of workshops and research activities, resulting in new data and analysis on the issues of gender and work in three coffee regions: Cauca, Huila and Nariño. A set of gender indicators and a pilot study on gender will be released based on this data in the fall, 2014. At the same time, the project seeks to increase capacity in gender analysis and raise awareness about important labour and gender issues through dialogue.

This is the second time The Institute has been awarded resources for technical assistance through the Conference Board of Canada's [Canada-Americas Trade-related Technical Assistance \(CATRTA\) program](#). NSI has partnered with the [National Coffee Federation](#) (the voice of Colombia's coffee sector since 1927), and the [Interdisciplinary Research Centre for Development Studies \(CIDER\)](#) at the Universidad de los Andes, to deliver the current project, entitled "The Capacity to Act on Gender Equality in Colombia: A Fresh Look at the Coffee Export Sector".

This report summarizes presentations made at a half-day technical workshop hosted at the National Coffee Federation (FNC) in Bogota on July 22, 2014. Four speakers participated in the workshop to examine key gender equality challenges and opportunities in Colombia and the Latin American region: Barbara MacLaren with NSI, Ana Maria Lleras with FNC, Javier Pineda with CIDER and Lina Arbelaez with Colombia's Labour Ministry.

The workshop was geared at sensitizing members of the FNC's staff about the importance of gender analysis in the coffee sector, which continues to be essential for rural livelihoods. The event provided an opportunity for the project team to present the initiative and its key activities to senior staff at the coffee association; it also provided a platform from which to exchange statistics, analysis and policy directions on advancing equal opportunities between men and women.

# Speakers' Key Points

Ana Maria Lleras, the Coordinator of FNC's program for women coffee growers, opened the workshop panel with an overview of the Federation's goals on gender equality and its work prior to the CATRTA project with The North-South Institute.

FNC represents about half a million coffee producers in Colombia, most of which are small producers. Of these, 73% are men and 27% are women. Ms. Lleras believes that in order to advance gender equality, they must not only work with the women (the 27%) - they must also redouble their efforts to increase the living standard of all coffee producers. In the context of an aging farming population (most workers are over 46 years old) and sometimes volatile global coffee market, this is challenging work. Nevertheless, the Federation has taken many measures toward this goal of empowering the "familia cafetera" in recent years.

The Federation's emphasis on empowering producer families is grounded in a number of recent institutional policies, including its Sustainability Policy and Gender Equity Policy. Three of the four areas of focus in the latter policy are being addressed by the CATRTA project: 1) the social sphere, 2) the economic sphere, and 3) the good governance sphere. (The fourth area is the environment). The following table describes the future directions that FNC aspires to in rolling out this policy (Gender equity policy components, Federación Nacional de Cafeteros, Colombia):



One key area of Ms. Lleras' work with the Federation's women's program has been ensuring higher participation levels of female members in the association at all levels (good governance). Sra. Lleras argued that more women at higher levels of the union – such as Ms. Aura Pérez de Betancourt who gained the presidency of FNC in 2007 - is a step in the right direction and has helped to substantiate the gender equality agenda within the union.<sup>1</sup> FNC recently spearheaded numerous participatory committees for women (*consejos participativos*) and has expanded its work in support of local women's associations in the sector (of which Colombia counts 86 at the time of writing).

***FNC is also making efforts to provide more women (and men) with technical training through the union's extension services, so that beans will earn more in the global market. The results are promising: there has been a rise in the number of farmers producing specialty coffee and those being certified, not only with Fair Trade USA but with a range of certification boards in North America and Europe.***

Ms. Lleras concluded by summarizing the key activities under the CATRTA project. She stressed that her collaboration with The North-South Institute and Universidad de los Andes is important to continue FNC's efforts not only to roll out their institutional goals but so as to create equal opportunities among men and women in the sector as well.

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The second speaker was Barbara MacLaren, a researcher with The North-South Institute. Ms. MacLaren gave a presentation on key opportunities and constraints facing women farmers in Latin America, drawing on innovative strategies around the Americas region. She defined gender equality vs. equity and its importance within a Canadian context, to introduce the topic. She stressed why gender equality is an important goal for private actors as well as governments, citing the tendency for women to be critical actors in reducing poverty at the local level.

While gender equality certainly isn't only about women – it very much concerns men as well – in the Americas region it is women farmers who are often the most disadvantaged. Key challenges facing women producers cited in the donor literature, according to Ms. MacLaren, include limited access to credit and productive land, unreliable information on commercial opportunities and productive technologies, among other concerns.

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<sup>1</sup> Federación Nacional de Cafeteros has a multi-tiered membership structure, at the core of which is the "cédula" – basic registration granted to growers with at least ½ Ha land dedicated solely to coffee production or growers that sell a certain volume of beans per year. While many coffee producers sell their beans to FNC across the country, only the registered producers can vote or run in FNC elections.

So how can producer communities address some of these challenges? Barb cited a number of effective strategies at the municipal, regional, national and international levels. One strategy is to secure better prices for both male and female producers, such as global certifications (Fair Trade, etc.) and agricultural cooperatives, while at the same time ensuring that more women benefit from the assistance of extension workers. She pointed to innovative examples of women-produced coffee brands in Peru and Nicaragua, which is gaining some currency in Colombia as well.

Finally, Barb highlighted the need to address gendered constraints alongside respect for human rights, and cultural and environmental values. She concluded by stressing the importance of monitoring and evaluation and by asking participants how they would better integrate a gender perspective into their activities with farmers in Colombia.

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The third speaker, Dr. Javier Pineda, presented joint comments prepared by himself, Maricel Piniero and Anayatzin Ramirez with Universidad de los Andes/ CIDER. His presentation answered the questions: What is his team setting out to do in terms of the research aspects of the CATRTA project? What will the new gender indicators look like? and finally Why is this work important?

Empowerment is a key concept guiding Javier's research. Recent academic theories (by Sen, Rowlands and Schuler, among others) help us understand the notion of empowerment and its three dimensions: personal, collective and relational. These three dimensions are crucial entry points governing one's ability to gain control of decision making processes.

To achieve gender equality, Dr. Pineda argued, we need to: 1) to understand the underlying causes of injustice or disadvantages facing women; and 2) to point to options (such as empowerment strategies) to overcome these obstacles. This is what the CATRTA project team is setting out to do.

The project's research in Huila, Cauca and Nariño involves four steps: First, the Universidad de los Andes team put together a matrix of ten gender dimensions to be evaluated in the coffee growing sector, based on academic theory and the FNC's policy areas. Second, these dimensions were refined using the following research methods:

- Interviews with members of the regional and municipal FNC committees and key technical staff.
- Consultation/training workshops with female and male producers from a range of municipalities.
- Focus groups - one with female producers and another with male producers.

- One-on-one interviews with different household members on coffee farms.

In addition to providing a space for communities to discuss equality issues and learn from each other, these trainings provided useful information with which to create gender indicators for each of the three dimensions (the third step). The fourth step is to carry out surveys in target regions based on the new indicators; it will be representative and results will be reliable with a margin of error of 5%.

***In this way, the CATRA project will measure levels of equality – or a lack thereof - in an important subsector of the country’s agricultural community.***

Dr. Pineda concluded by highlighting how the FNC can use the new analysis and replicable gender indicators to empower small farmers - especially women. For instance, FNC can add the indicators to its statistical information program, which regularly collects data sets from growers. By improving its social monitoring, existing gender-oriented and technical programs could become better targeted. FNC can also learn more about rural groups for which they lack data (i.e. the wives of male growers registered with the Federation).

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Lina Arbelaez, Ministerial Advisor and Coordinator of the Labour Equity Division at the Ministry of Labour, concluded the proceedings of the gender workshop. She presented an overview of the Colombian government’s Labour Equity Policy from a gender perspective, which is [available online](#) (Spanish only).

This presentation stressed the many challenges facing workers in Colombia – especially women. Unremunerated work, “double burdens” (Colombian women work between 21 to 42 hours more than men each week) and workplace abuse, figure among the top challenges facing women. The income gap between men and women is another key problem, according to Ms. Arbelaez. In many regions in Colombia (such as Tolima, Meta and La Guajira), on average men earn over 30% more than women.

The picture painted by the final panelist wasn’t entirely bleak, however. There are some positive trends emerging from the Ministry of Labour’s most recent statistical analysis. For example, the unemployment gap between female and male rural workers dropped to 6.8%, from 13.2% in 2010.

In the coffee sector, the Ministry is working in a number of different areas to empower small producers. Lina Arbelaez’ Labour Equity team is collaborating with the UNDP to

launch a seal for women-produced coffee (“Equipares”). The idea is that the prices paid to female coffee producers will increase owing to a premium for women’s labour. Another interesting example provided during the presentation was a recognition program for firms that have policies to close the earnings gender gap among their female and male employees. As part of the pilot initiative, 20 firms benefited from recognition in 2013; the Colombian government wants to double that number this year.

Finally, Ms. Arbelaez mentioned pension reforms that her Ministry is rolling out in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, benefiting female and male workers in the rural sector. All of these initiatives have a gender focus, without being labeled as such.

## Common themes

While the four presentations covered a range of different topics, there was some common ground. The panelists’ analyses raised a vision as to what high impact gender interventions might look like, to be successful in a rural context:

- Stakeholders need to collect up-to-date gender-disaggregated data and information. For example, the FNC has made headway in gathering economic and social data sets in over 20 Colombian regions, via their statistical information program (SICE). The Colombian government has recently included additional questions on gender in its household surveys. The next step is to organize and utilize these data sets in ways that benefit local communities.
- It is important to harness partnerships (such as with local producer cooperatives, associations or government staff, i.e. SENA) to roll out effective technical training interventions from a gender perspective.
- Private firms have high potential to advance equality, by way of their commercial power (buying fair trade/speciality coffees, etc.) as well as their internal policies (compensation and hiring practices).
- While equity challenges on the ground are complex, gender interventions must necessarily be results-driven and as simple as possible.
- While some speakers felt that the participation of men and boys in gender interventions was of equal importance than women’s participation, others stressed the need for women-specific interventions. All speakers, however, avoided painting work on gender as a “women’s only” domain.

Additional reports on gender equality issues are available on the Institute’s website at [www.nsi-ins.ca](http://www.nsi-ins.ca).