

Asset Factsheet

Inclusive model: Export promotion with a focus on women producers and youth in Honduras



CONTEXT

The *Café Inclusivo* project emerges in a challenging socio-economic context in Honduras, with high unemployment and an economy dependent on agriculture, mainly coffee. At the end of 2019, the country faced large gaps in competitiveness and limited inclusive growth, with a challenging business environment and a small domestic market. The project aims to strengthen the competitiveness of small coffee producers and cooperatives, promoting their access to niche international markets and supporting environmental sustainability and gender equity. To this end, the project seeks to improve producers' marketing and management capacities.

DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES

Several major challenges are faced: firstly, difficulties in ensuring the equitable participation of women and youth (SDG5) in export processes due to lack of resources and training (SDG4), as well as lack of business contacts and strict regulations (SDG1, SDG17). In addition, the volatility of international coffee prices (SDG8), climate change (SDG13) affecting the production and quality of coffee beans.

The model of the project *Inclusive Coffee* promotes the inclusion of women producers and young coffee farmers in the Honduran coffee value chain, focusing on active participation in international markets and fairs to improve the competitiveness of producers, promoting sustainable practices that ensure the sector's resilience in the face of climate change.

Trade fairs such as Café Show, Specialty Coffee Expo or World of Coffee have been instrumental in raising the visibility of coffee produced by women and youth. At these fairs, events were organized in specific cupping rooms where international buyers were able to taste and learn the stories behind inclusive Honduran coffees. This was in response to market research in which roasters and importers themselves indicated an interest in social sustainability and producers' stories. Through these interventions, Honduran producers have been able to establish direct contacts with international buyers, improving their incomes and reducing dependence on middlemen.

INCLUSIVE COFFEE - PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE MARKETS

Implemented by: Swisscontact

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BRIEF DESCRIPTION

The project aims to create resilient livelihoods for sustainable smallholder coffee farmers, foster economic growth - particularly for women in coffee - and participation in global value chains, and contribute to a healthier environment.

COUNTRY/PROVINCE

Honduras

IMPACT

- 10 local business support organisations (BSOs) have been trained.
- 48 companies focused on sustainable coffee have had access to specialised export promotion services provided by the BSOs.
- 1 370 small sustainable producers (28% women) have increased their income and generated a higher price per unit for their sustainable coffee.

WHAT MAKES THE ASSET UNIQUE?

The project is unique in its inclusive and equitable approach, focusing on the promotion of coffee produced by women and youth. This approach not only promotes social and environmental sustainability but also offers a differentiating value in international markets that demand fair trade products.

Specific cupping rooms at trade fairs have improved the visibility and competitiveness of Honduran coffee at global events, positioning coffees produced under inclusive criteria, allowing producers to negotiate better prices.

PARTNERS

Business support organizations have been key in export promotion activities in the inclusive model, targeting women and youth. The work in particular with the Alliance of Women in Coffee (AMUCAFE), and the coffee that has the 'Con Manos de Mujer' certification seal has been crucial, but also other institutions such as the Honduran Coffee Institute (IHCAFE), the Honduran Association of Coffee Producers (AHPROCAFE), the National Association of Coffee Growers of Honduras (ANACAFEH), the National Coffee Council (CONACAFE), the Secretariat of Economic Development (SDE), the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (SRECI), the National Investment Council (CNI), the Secretariat of Agriculture and Livestock (SAG), and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Cortés (CCIC).

POTENTIAL FOR REPLICATION

The model of inclusion of women and youth in the coffee value chain, implemented by the Inclusive Coffee project, has a high potential for replication in other agricultural sectors in Honduras and Latin America. The promotion of inclusive products, together with the organization of cupping rooms at international trade fairs, allows the work of traditionally marginalized communities to be made visible, opening up new commercial opportunities. This approach can easily be adapted to products such as cocoa, bananas or honey, where women and youth also play key roles. In addition to responding to international market trends that are increasingly interested in the origins and stories behind the products they consume, the promotion of gender equity and the inclusion of youth ensures social sustainability, a key factor in many rural economies.

TARGET GROUPS

A total of 48 companies focused on sustainable coffee have had access to specialized export promotion services provided by business support organizations. These services have been key to strengthening their presence in international markets, facilitating their competitiveness and growth within the global coffee sector. These include the members of AMUCAFE, the Asociación de Mujeres Procesadoras de Café La Labor (AMPROCAL), as well as numerous cooperatives that are made up of young coffee producers such as Comercial Exportadora San Vicente, COCAMOL and CAFESMO, among others.

APPROACHES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

The *Inclusive Coffee* project has played a crucial facilitating role in the promotion of women producers and young coffee farmers in international markets, through the organization of and participation in global trade fairs. The creation of cupping rooms has been one of the most outstanding achievements, facilitating the direct promotion of Honduran coffee at international fairs. This has allowed producers to establish stronger commercial relationships with international buyers, improving their income. Some highlights are:

- During 2021, at the *Coffee Expo* in New Orleans, 10 cooperatives and 7 BSOs participated in inclusive coffee tastings, resulting in 9 high potential business contacts. The *Coffee Show* in Seoul in November of the same year generated 33 new contacts, highlighting the relevance of the Asian market for Honduran coffee.
- In 2022, the *Coffee Expo* in Boston and the *World of Coffee* in Milan enabled participating cooperatives to generate 18 and 23 new business contacts, respectively, while promoting coffee produced by women and youth in exclusive cupping sessions. These events made the inclusive work of Honduran producers visible in the US and European markets.
- In 2023, the *Specialty Coffee Expo* in Portland facilitated the creation of 61 new business contacts for 19 cooperatives.

Over the course of the project, a total of more than 147 business contacts were generated at major trade fairs in the sector, consolidating Honduran inclusive coffee in international markets and strengthening export opportunities for women and youth. As some beneficiaries pointed out, the project "really lives up to the term 'inclusive'; it includes all of us". The empowerment of these groups has not only contributed to social equity but has also improved the competitiveness of Honduran coffee in international markets.

LESSONS LEARNED

One of the main lessons of the *Inclusive Coffee* project has been the importance of creating specific promotional spaces for women producers and youth at international trade fairs. The visibility of these groups has not only improved their business opportunities but also strengthened the image of Honduras as a producer committed to gender equity and inclusion.

However, in order to stand out in such a competitive market, technical training in business management and coffee quality has been essential. The training has enabled the cooperatives to improve their products, meet international standards and establish stronger business relationships. The women recognised that it was essential first and foremost to have quality coffee in order to be able to compete in the markets, as the simple fact of 'being a coffee produced by women' was not enough, but an added or differentiating value.

Active participation in these events has shown that, with the right tools, women and youth can compete effectively in global markets. However, the need has been identified to ensure greater financial sustainability and the incorporation of trade promotion activities into budgets linked to export plans, in the form of co-financing, so that cooperatives can participate in fairs without relying entirely on external support. In the long term, strengthening partnerships with local institutions, such as IHCAFE, will be key to ensure the continuity of the project's positive impact. Ultimately, the inclusion of women and youth not only strengthens the social fabric of communities, but also improves business outcomes by tapping into the growing interest of markets in fair trade and sustainable products.

A key lesson is the need to ensure that the focus on women and youth is understood at all levels of the production chain. Although the leaders of the organizations understood the importance of this inclusive approach, this vision did not always reach the producers. It is essential to clearly communicate the value of this approach in international markets and the benefits it offers. To maximize the impact of the project, everyone, from leaders to producers, must be informed and actively participate in the opportunities generated.

HISTORY OF THE BENEFICIARY



Evelyn Tábor is a coffee farmer from the Santa Rosa de Copán sector in the Copán region of Honduras. Coming from a family of coffee growers, she represents the third generation of her family in this activity. After graduating from university, she and her husband decided to plant their first coffee plots. However, they soon realised that the profits they earned were not enough to cover their basic needs and ensure their children's education, and they had to look

for other ways to improve the situation.

In her search for alternatives, Evelyn approached the coffee institute IHCAFÉ and later met the Alliance of Women in Coffee (AMUCAFÉ), where she began to receive training and support. Through Swisscontact's "Inclusive Coffee" project, she received training on topics such as coffee quality, cupping and marketing. This experience allowed her to better understand the value of her product on the international market and how to position it to obtain better prices. "One of the key moments in her career was when she participated in the Cup of Excellence competition, where her coffee was recognised nationally. In addition, through her participation in international fairs, such as the Specialty Coffee Expo, she had the opportunity to establish direct business relationships with buyers. "All I asked for was a buyer who valued our context, and I found one. My first buyer asked me for 50 pounds of coffee, and this year I am already exporting five bags. "Thanks to Café Inclusivo, I have learned to recognise and improve the quality of my coffee". Evelyn hosted the women's cupping room "[Femme Fiesta](#)" during the Chicago fair, where a [youth cupping room](#) was organised too.



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