

JULY 2022

G-SEARCH CASE STUDY

Nova Coffee

INVESTOR: Root Capital

SECTOR: Food and Agriculture

REGION: Sub-Saharan Africa (Rwanda)

GENDER-SMART TECHNICAL

ASSISTANCE: Training stakeholders

SAMPLE SURVEYED: 120 women
coffee farmers

Introduction

Based in northern Rwanda and established in 2015, **Nova Coffee** is a coffee enterprise led by a Rwandan woman. With nine permanent (33% women) and 100-120 temporary employees (98% women), the company sources from more than 2500 small-scale coffee farmers. Nova Coffee is committed to gender equality, education, and the health of its community. Women coffee farmers participate in all coffee farming activities with men, such as land preparation, fertilizer application, planting, mulching, and harvesting.

Gender-smart technical assistance (TA) activity: Training women coffee farmers on practices to mitigate/ adapt to climate change effects

Nova Coffee implemented an 11-month training program from July 2020 to May 2021 for coffee farmers to change their farming practices to mitigate or adapt to the adverse effects of climate change and increase the participation of women and youth farmers. In addition, they provided various high-quality inputs such as seedlings and fertilizers to the farmers to increase the uptake of new skills.

The TA was selected based on a two-step Root Capital **Gender Equity Grant** (GEG) process to test gender inclusion strategies in agribusinesses. In the first step, Root Capital conducted a participatory diagnostic exercise with Nova Coffee leadership, managers, employees, and farmers. In the second step, Root Capital led an action-planning workshop with all these stakeholders to share findings and co-design an evidence-based TA engagement, co-funded by Root Capital and Nova Coffee. [Click here](#) to learn more.

CONSORTIUM MEMBERS



alphamundi



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Methodology

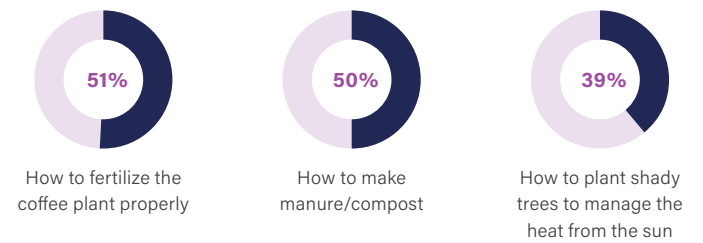
The [William Davidson Institute at the University of Michigan](#) (WDI) measured the business and social outcomes of the training program in January 2022, as part of the [G-SEARCH](#) research. The sample consisted of 120 women coffee farmers (89% over 35 years old; 80% with more than five years of coffee farming experience). WDI, in collaboration with [Dalberg Research](#), administered one face-to-face survey to respondents that included questions on the period before (baseline) and after (endline) the program. To learn more about the methodology and access the surveys, please [click here](#).

Results: Social outcomes

93% and 97% of respondents gained access to such training and agricultural inputs, respectively, through the program

- The program taught the farmers critical farming skills, educated the farmers on the effects of climate change, and helped them adjust their farming practices accordingly.
- Before the program, 49% of respondents thought climate change¹ had a *low or very low* effect on their coffee farm, and 77% had *not changed* their farming practices. 70% confirmed they did not have the knowledge to grow good coffee, and 73% thought their yield was very low.
 - After the program, 70% of respondents changed their farming practices *enormously*, and 26% changed them *slightly* to mitigate/adapt to climate change.
 - 90% of respondents *often or always* applied the knowledge gained from the training.

Respondents shared the following three most critical skills gained from the training:



1 During the interview, this term was defined as: "Higher than normal temperatures, higher than normal rainfall or rainfall occurring at the unexpected time, increased pest, diseases, etc."



"To help women farmers is to help the nation because women are detail-oriented in their business; they take care of their children and community, and more so than the men. When you give the money to women, they will use it on their families and help their families to be resilient. This is the experience we have at Nova Coffee." —NOVA COFFEE

Respondents shared the following three most helpful adaptations from Nova Coffee specifically in response to the negative effects of climate change:



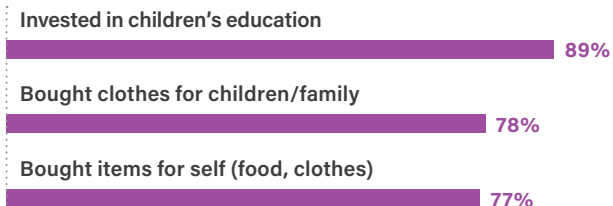
The program improved self-confidence, gender perceptions, and aspirations for the future among respondents. Furthermore, the training helped reduce respondents' work stress and household food insecurity:

	Baseline	Endline
More farmers felt confident about their knowledge to prepare for/adapt to climate change	3%	99%
More farmers agreed that men farmers saw women as capable of growing coffee	3%	100%
More farmers were hopeful they could increase coffee production in the future	4%	100%
More farmers shared that their work stress was low or very low	3%	95%
More farmers shared that their family was never or rarely food insecure ²	17%	95%

2 Defined as: "Eat less food (food portions or number of meals per day or both) than your family should have because there wasn't enough money for food"

80% and 88% of respondents shared that their savings and financial stability,³ respectively, increased *a lot* since participating in the program

- With those additional savings, respondents:



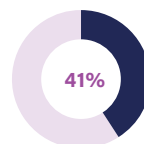
Among other outcomes gained, **88%** of respondents shared they were happy to be part of a co-operative through working with Nova Coffee, and **61%** shared that “men in the household saw that women had power”.

Results: Business outcomes

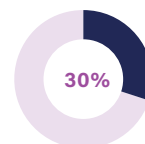
- This research was conducted before the coffee harvest season (typically from March to June in this zone). Hence, it was too early to determine the business and financial outcomes of the program, such as improvements in yield, coffee quality, and the return on investment.
- However, Nova Coffee confirmed that relationships with farmers had strengthened, the company now sourced from higher-skilled women farmers, and farmers themselves had confidence in Nova Coffee (corroborated by the finding that 91% of respondents felt greater loyalty to the company after the program).

Strengthening future iterations of the program

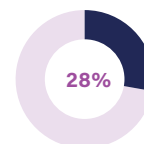
Respondents shared the following requests for additional training and resources:



More hands-on training (especially to tackle the excess heat)



More irrigation equipment



Better pricing for their coffee crop from Nova Coffee

Conclusion

The TA engagement had positive social outcomes for women coffee farmers. While it was still too early to identify all business and financial outcomes, Nova Coffee confirmed improved relationships with the farmers.

Nova Coffee is continuing the program and expanding it to include childcare at the coffee washing station such that farmers with children can come to work and attend the training.

³ Defined as: “Your ability to meet the money needs and expenses of your household consistently (“consistently” means that it does not change with time)”

For more information, please contact Yaquta Fatehi (Email: WDI-PerformanceMeasurement@umich.edu)



▶ [Click here to listen to two respondents share their experience about the training.](#)