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THE FUTURE OF COFFEE

Coffee farming is generally a family business. Women form the majority of the estimated 2.3 million coffee farmers in the East African region, and crucially, they do most of the productive work within the coffee value chain. Men, however, enjoy most of the benefits derived from coffee sales. For women, there is hardly an incentive to improve the quantity and quality of their coffee beans.

The same counts for youth; many young people leave the countryside to find a better-paid job. They have seen their parents struggle to survive in the coffee sector and aspire to another future. This leaves not only the coffee producing communities, but also the coffee buyers, roasters and consumers with a huge problem: the future of coffee is at stake.

SWEET SOLUTIONS
Hivos has been working to improve smallholders’ position in the coffee value chain for almost twenty years. Together with local partners, we have developed support programmes that have helped tens of thousands of coffee smallholders to improve their coffee yields and overall farm sustainability and viability.

Hivos always aimed to have more youth and women involved in various aspects of coffee production. Our approach was tested in a pilot which shows that involving youth and women pays off for farmers and coffee companies. While households involved in a regular coffee support programme increased their income by 24% over a five year period, those involved in an additional gender programme gained another 44%. Through capacity building and specific training modules, we ensured that both men and women participate fully and equally in coffee-related activities at the household, cooperative and support structure level.

RESULTS AND EXPANSION
As we have built up the necessary evidence for ‘gender as a business case’ and promoted this in relevant coffee fora, key actors in the coffee sector – roasters, traders and others – now recognise the benefits of involving women and youth. Based on their demand for further support, the CoFFEE programme was designed in order to promote the gender mainstreaming tools and farmer support programmes which Hivos has developed over the years across key actors in the coffee sector in Africa.

Hivos’ objective in this CoFFEE programme expansion is to increase the market share of good quality African coffee by specifically integrating gender and youth in the coffee sector in 135 ‘standard’ training programmes, setting up coaching trajectories for coffee-related companies and their staff, and promoting women and youth entrepreneurship through awareness and grants.

We are currently looking for partners interested in cooperating with us in this ambitious programme.

STRATEGIC PARTNERS
Hivos is pleased to work with experienced partners like the African Fine Coffee Association, IWCA, 4C Association and the International Trade Centre.