Women Economic Empowerment through Coffee Farming in Uganda: Policy Lessons from Operation Wealth Creation

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Abstract

Women economic empowerment has become a central objective of agricultural transformation policies in Sub-Saharan Africa. This reflects the recognition that inclusive growth is essential for sustainable development. In Uganda, agriculture employs approximately 70% of the population and contributes significantly to export earnings, with coffee serving as the country's most important cash crop. Uganda is now among Africa's leading coffee exporters. The country earned approximately US$1.14 billion from 6.13 million 60-kg bags in the 2023/24 financial year[1].

Within this sector, women play a paradoxical role: they contribute the majority of labor in coffee production yet often have limited ownership of land, control over income, and participation in marketing decisions[2]. Women provide a substantial share of labor in coffee production—particularly in planting, weeding, harvesting, and post-harvest handling—while men dominate ownership and commercialization processes[3].

This paper critically examines the extent to which Uganda's OWC programme has contributed to women's economic empowerment through coffee production. Using a Gender-Responsive Policy Analysis Framework and Kabeer's empowerment model of 1999, the paper evaluates whether increased access to coffee seedlings and agricultural inputs has translated into meaningful gains in women's agency, access to resources, and control over economic benefits.

The paper argues that while OWC has significantly expanded coffee production and improved household participation in commercial agriculture, its gender outcomes remain constrained by structural inequalities in land ownership, intra-household decision-making, and limited gender mainstreaming in implementation. As a result, increased production has not automatically translated into proportional empowerment for women.

Keywords: *Women's empowerment; Coffee value chain; Operation Wealth Creation; Gender-responsive policy; Uganda agriculture; Rural livelihoods*

Introduction

Agriculture remains the backbone of Uganda's economy. It employs the majority of the labor force and serving as a primary source of export earnings and rural livelihoods. Within this sector, coffee plays a uniquely strategic role. Uganda is currently Africa's largest coffee exporter. Export volumes have risen steadily over the past decade due to expansion of production areas, improved seedlings, and favorable global prices. In the 2023/24 financial year alone, Uganda exported over 6.13 million bags of coffee valued at approximately US$1.14 billion. This marked one of the strongest performances in the country's coffee history[4]. This growth has positioned coffee not only as an economic commodity but also as a key pillar of Uganda's rural development strategy.

However, agricultural growth does not automatically translate into equitable development outcomes[5]. A growing body of gender and development literature shows that agricultural commercialization often produces uneven benefits. This is particularly where structural inequalities in land ownership, access to credit, and market participation persist[6].

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[1] UCDA (2024) Annual Coffee Report 2023/24. Kampala: Uganda Coffee Development Authority.
[2] Hill, R. and Vigneri, M. (2014) 'Mainstreaming gender sensitivity in cash crop market supply chains', Journal of Development Studies, 50(10), pp. 1–15.
[3] FAO (2023) Gender and Agricultural Value Chains in Sub-Saharan Africa. Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.
[4] UCDA (2024) Annual Coffee Report 2023/24. Kampala: Uganda Coffee Development Authority.
[5] World Bank (2022) Uganda Gender Assessment in Agriculture. Washington DC: World Bank.
[6] Doss, C. (2018) 'Women and agricultural productivity: Reframing the issues', Development Policy Review, 36(1), pp. 35–50.

In Uganda's coffee sector, women are central actors but marginal beneficiaries[7]. Women contribute between 60% and 80% of labor in coffee production activities, especially in labor-intensive stages such as weeding, harvesting, sorting, and drying[8]. Despite this, men typically control land ownership and coffee income. This reflects entrenched patriarchal land tenure systems and household power relations. It creates a critical policy paradox: women do most of the work, but men often control the income. As a result, coffee production becomes a site of both economic opportunity and gender inequality.

It is within this context that Uganda's Operation Wealth Creation (OWC) programme was introduced in 2013. OWC was designed to improve household incomes through large-scale distribution of agricultural inputs, including coffee seedlings, while promoting commercial agriculture and poverty reduction[9].

While OWC has contributed significantly to increasing coffee production and expanding acreage under cultivation, there is limited systematic evidence on whether it has transformed gender relations within coffee-producing households. Does increased access to coffee production inputs under OWC translate into women's economic empowerment, or does it reinforce existing gender inequalities? This paper addresses this question through a structured policy review grounded in gender-responsive policy analysis.

Methodology

The aim is to critically review the contribution of OWC coffee production intervention to women economic empowerment in Uganda. The objectives are to examine the gender responsiveness of OWC coffee policy design; assess the contribution of OWC to women economic empowerment in coffee farming; analyze structural and institutional barriers affecting women participation and benefits; and generate policy lessons for strengthening gender-responsive agricultural interventions in Uganda.

This review adopts a gender-responsive policy analysis framework to evaluate the extent to which OWC has contributed to women economic empowerment through coffee production in Uganda. It is guided by Naila Kabeer's empowerment model.

The review relies on both primary and secondary data, as well as qualitative and quantitative data. Primary data was collected through interviews with key respondents, especially OWC officer and beneficiaries in Busoga, Bugisu, and Ankole regions in Uganda. Secondary data was collected by reviewing the various government of Uganda reports and strategies on OWC. Earlier reports by independent and institutional authors were reviewed as well. A list of references used for this review is provided as an annex.

Background and Context

Uganda Coffee Economy

Coffee is Uganda's most important export commodity and a central pillar of its agricultural economy. The sector supports over 1.8 million households. This makes it one of the most widely distributed cash crops in the country[10]. Uganda produces both Robusta and Arabica coffee. Robusta accounts for the majority of production due to favorable climatic conditions in central and eastern regions. Export markets are primarily located in Europe, Asia, and North America, with Italy, Germany, and Sudan among the leading importers. Data shows growth trends of 6.13 million bags exported in 2023/24, valued at US$1.14 billion. The longer-term trend shows a rise toward 7–8 million bags annually[11].

[7] FAO (2023) Gender and Agricultural Value Chains in Sub-Saharan Africa. Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

[8] Hill, R. and Vigneri, M. (2014) 'Mainstreaming gender sensitivity in cash crop market supply chains', Journal of Development Studies, 50(10), pp. 1–15.

[9] Government of Uganda (2013) Operation Wealth Creation Programme Framework. Kampala: State House.

[10] UCDA (2024) Annual Coffee Report 2023/24. Kampala: Uganda Coffee Development Authority.

[11] MAAIF (2024) Statistical Abstract: Agriculture Sector Performance. Kampala: Government of Uganda.

Women in Uganda Coffee Value Chain

Despite their central role in production, women remain structurally disadvantaged within the coffee value chain. Gender-disaggregated agricultural studies consistently show three key patterns. Labor contribution without ownership, where women provide the majority of labor in coffee production but rarely own the land on which coffee is grown[12]. Limited control over income, where coffee sales are frequently controlled by male household heads, even in cases where women perform most of the production labor[13]. And, restricted access to productive resources, where women face barriers in accessing land ownership, agricultural credit, extension services, and market information[14].

A well-documented illustration comes from eastern Uganda, where women coffee farmers reported that income from coffee sales is often controlled by men. This was reported to lead to intra-household conflicts during harvest seasons. This has been linked to gender-based tensions and reduced bargaining power for women in household economic decisions[15]. At the same time, emerging women-led coffee enterprises—such as women-focused cooperatives and specialty coffee initiatives—demonstrate that when women gain direct market access and control over sales, their income and household bargaining power increase significantly[16].

Operation Wealth Creation and Coffee Expansion

OWC was launched in 2013 as a national programme aimed at increasing household incomes through improved agricultural input distribution and commercial farming. Within the coffee sector, OWC has focused on distribution of coffee seedlings, expansion of coffee-growing areas, farmer mobilization, and promotion of commercial agriculture. The programme has contributed to Uganda's rapid expansion in coffee production and exports, with the country now ranking as Africa's largest coffee exporter[17]. However, the policy design of OWC largely measures success in terms of number of seedlings distributed, production volumes, and export earnings.

Less attention has been given to gendered control of coffee income, women's land ownership, or intra-household decision-making dynamics. This creates a gap between production success and empowerment outcomes, which this paper critically examines.

Gender-Responsive Policy Framework Analysis of Coffee and Operation Wealth Creation

Analytical Approach

This review adopts a gender-responsive policy analysis framework to evaluate the extent to which OWC has contributed to women's economic empowerment through coffee production in Uganda. Unlike conventional policy reviews that focus on outputs such as seedlings distributed or export volumes, this gender-responsive approach interrogates how policies redistribute power, resources, and decision-making authority between women and men.

Gender-responsive policy analysis is grounded in the understanding that policies are not neutral. They operate within existing social structures—particularly patriarchal norms governing land ownership, labor division, and income control.

[12] FAO (2023) Gender and Agricultural Value Chains in Sub-Saharan Africa. Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.
[13] Hill, R. and Vigneri, M. (2014) 'Mainstreaming gender sensitivity in cash crop market supply chains', Journal of Development Studies, 50(10), pp. 1–15.
[14] World Bank (2022) Uganda Gender Assessment in Agriculture. Washington DC: World Bank.
[15] International Women's Coffee Alliance Uganda (2021) Farmer Profiling and Gender Assessment Report. Kampala: IWCA Uganda.
[16] Doss, C. (2018) 'Women and agricultural productivity: Reframing the issues', Development Policy Review, 36(1), pp. 35–50.
[17] Rupiny, D. (2025) Uganda now leading coffee exporter in Africa. Kampala: Uganda Investment Authority. Available at: Uganda Investment Authority article (Accessed: 2 July 2026).

As such, agricultural interventions may increase production without necessarily transforming gender relations[18]. This framework therefore shifts the review question from, *has coffee production increased under OWC?* to, *who benefits from increased coffee production, and how are those benefits distributed between women and men?*

Kabeer's Empowerment Framework

This review is primarily guided by Naila Kabeer's widely used empowerment model, which defines empowerment as: *the process by which those who have been denied the ability to make strategic life choices acquire such ability*[19]. Kabeer identifies three interrelated dimensions: *Resources* – material, human, and social assets (land, credit, inputs, extension services); *Agency* – ability to define goals and act upon them (decision-making, bargaining power); and *Achievements* – outcomes of exercising agency (income control, wellbeing, autonomy). In Uganda's coffee sector, this framework is particularly relevant because women often have labor contribution (high) but resource ownership (low) and decision-making power (limited)

Gender and Agricultural Value Chain Theory

Gender analysis of agricultural value chains highlights how value is distributed unevenly across production, processing, marketing, and consumption stages. In Sub-Saharan Africa women are concentrated in low-value, labor-intensive nodes, while men dominate high-value nodes such as trading, export negotiation, and price control[20]. In coffee specifically women dominate production and post-harvest labor, men dominate marketing and income control. This structural segmentation is central to understanding why increased production does not automatically translate into empowerment.

Application of the Kabeer Framework to Operation Wealth Creation

Resources: Access to Coffee Inputs and Productive Assets

OWC primary intervention is the distribution of agricultural inputs—especially coffee seedlings. At face value, this improves access to productive resources. Uganda has experienced a rapid expansion in coffee acreage, partly driven by large-scale seedling distribution under OWC.

However, gender analysis reveals that seedlings are typically distributed to household heads, who are predominantly male; women rarely receive seedlings in their own names or as independent farmers; land ownership remains heavily skewed. Indeed, national surveys show that women are far less likely than men to own or control agricultural land[21]. As a result, even when women provide labor for coffee production, they often lack formal claims over the crop itself. Thus, OWC increases access to inputs, but not necessarily to ownership of productive systems.

Agency: Decision-Making and Control over Coffee Production

Agency refers to the ability to make meaningful decisions about production, labor allocation, and income use. Field-based studies in Uganda's coffee-growing regions (Busoga, Bugisu, and Ankole) show that men typically decide when coffee is sold; men negotiate prices with traders; men control income from bulk coffee sales; and women mainly manage field-level labor and post-harvest tasks[22].

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[18] Kabeer, N. (1999) 'Resources, agency, achievements: Reflections on the measurement of women's empowerment', Development and Change, 30(3), pp. 435–464.

[19] Kabeer, N. (1999) 'Resources, agency, achievements: Reflections on the measurement of women's empowerment', Development and Change, 30(3), pp. 435–464.

[20] FAO (2023) Gender and Agricultural Value Chains in Sub-Saharan Africa. Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

[21] UBOS (2022) Uganda National Household Survey 2019/20. Kampala: Uganda Bureau of Statistics.

[22] Mugisha, J. and Njuki, J. (2017) 'Gender and agricultural value chains in Uganda', African Journal of Agricultural Economics, 12(2), pp. 45–63.

Even in households where women contribute most labor, coffee is often treated as a "male cash crop", while women are expected to prioritize food crops. A commonly reported pattern in eastern Uganda is that during harvest season, women participate heavily in picking and processing coffee, but the final sale decision is made by male household heads[23]. This creates intra-household tensions, particularly when income is used for non-household purposes. There is no concrete evidence that OWC has systematically altered such intra-household power relations, which are central to empowerment outcomes.

Achievements: Income Control and Welfare Outcomes

Achievements refer to the final outcomes of empowerment—income control, improved welfare, and enhanced autonomy. The Uganda coffee sector has experienced significant growth. Over 6 million bags exported annually, and over US$1 billion in annual earnings[24]. However, the distribution of these gains is highly unequal at household level. Women's labor contribution is high (often majority share), but women's direct control over coffee income is significantly lower. Indeed, men are more likely to control cash from sales, even in female-dominated labor contexts[25].

This creates a paradox of labor without proportional benefit. A real-life example is seen in cooperative-based coffee models in eastern Uganda, where women who sell coffee collectively through women-led groups (such as specialty coffee initiatives) report higher personal income retention; increased household bargaining power; reduced conflict over coffee earnings[26]. This suggests that empowerment is more closely linked to market access and institutional control than mere production expansion. OWC has improved national-level achievements (exports, GDP contribution) but has weaker evidence of transforming women's individual-level achievements.

Gender Blind Spots in Operation Wealth Creation Design

Despite its developmental intentions, OWC exhibits several structural gender limitations. Inputs are distributed at household level rather than individual level. This may reinforce male control over productive resources. OWC monitoring focuses on seedlings distributed, acreage planted, and production levels. It does not allow for systematic tracking of women's ownership of coffee trees, women's income control, and gendered access to markets. Women's limited access to extension services reduces their ability to improve productivity, access market information, and negotiate prices. Customary land systems in many regions restrict women's land ownership, limiting their ability to independently benefit from OWC inputs.

Emerging Counterexamples: Where Women Gain Power

Despite structural constraints, some positive deviations exist: women-led coffee cooperatives in eastern Uganda; specialty coffee initiatives that pay women directly for quality coffee, and NGO-supported gender-inclusive value chain projects. These cases show that when women control marketing channels, receive direct payments, and participate in cooperatives, and their empowerment outcomes improve. The Gender-Responsive Policy Analysis reveals a clear pattern: increased access to seedlings but limited ownership, minimal change in household decision-making structures, and strong national gains, weak individual-level empowerment. Thus, OWC has proved to be productive but it is yet to prove transformative from a gender perspective.

[23] International Women's Coffee Alliance Uganda (2021) Farmer Profiling and Gender Assessment Report. Kampala: IWCA Uganda.
[24] UCDA (2024) Annual Coffee Report 2023/24. Kampala: Uganda Coffee Development Authority.
[25] FAO (2023) Gender and Agricultural Value Chains in Sub-Saharan Africa. Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.
[26] FAO (2023) Gender and Agricultural Value Chains in Sub-Saharan Africa. Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

Uganda Coffee Value Chain and the Gender Paradox

Structure of Uganda's Coffee Value Chain

The Uganda coffee sector operates through a multi-stage value chain consisting of input supply (seedlings, fertilizers, nurseries); production (planting, weeding, pruning, harvesting); primary processing (drying, washing, sorting); bulking and trading (middlemen, cooperatives); and export and international trade[27]. Although coffee is Uganda's leading export crop, the value chain is highly uneven in terms of gender participation and benefit distribution.

Women are heavily concentrated in the lower-value, labor-intensive stages, while men dominate higher-value commercial and marketing nodes[28]. This pattern is consistent across East African coffee systems and is well pronounced in Uganda's smallholder-dominated production structure.

Gendered Labor Distribution in Coffee Production

Women perform a large share of weeding, mulching, harvesting, drying, and sorting. Men are more involved in land ownership decisions, pesticide purchasing, and coffee sales negotiations. Women can contribute 60–80% of labor inputs in coffee production, particularly during peak agricultural seasons[29]. Despite this, they rarely retain proportional control over outputs. This creates a gender labor-value mismatch, where labor input does not correspond to income control.

Real-life pattern from rural Uganda

In Busoga and Bugisu, women pick and process coffee, men transport and sell it, and men decide how income is used (school fees, livestock, alcohol, investment, or savings)[30]. This is not uniform across all households, but it is a recurring structural pattern in smallholder coffee systems.

Coffee Income Control and Intra-Household Power

A central issue in gender analysis is not only who produces coffee, but who controls the income. Men are more likely to control cash income from coffee sales, women often lack independent bargaining power over proceeds, income from coffee is frequently treated as *male income*, even when women contribute most labor[31].

The above leads to three important outcomes: reduced reinvestment in women's priorities, intra-household tension, and hidden female subsidy of agriculture. Women tend to prioritize food security, school fees, and household health. Men may allocate income more broadly, including non-household expenditures. During peak coffee seasons, disputes often arise over timing of sales, control of proceeds, and allocation of income. Women's unpaid or underpaid labor effectively subsidizes household cash crop production.

Regional Variation in Uganda's Coffee-Gender Dynamics

Gender dynamics vary across coffee-growing regions. Busoga region with high expansion of coffee under government programmes, women provide major labor input, land ownership remains predominantly male-controlled, and women often depend on husbands for access to coffee income. Bugisu region with strong cooperative traditions, has slightly higher female participation in collective marketing. However, men still dominate cooperative leadership structures. Ankole with more mixed farming

[27] UCDA (2023) Annual Coffee Report. Kampala: Uganda Coffee Development Authority.
[28] World Bank (2022) Uganda Gender Assessment in Agriculture. Washington DC: World Bank.
[29] Hill, R. and Vigneri, M. (2014) 'Mainstreaming gender sensitivity in cash crop market supply chains', Journal of Development Studies, 50(10), pp. 1–15.
[30] World Bank (2023) Agriculture in Africa: Tapping the Potential for Growth and Poverty Reduction. Washington DC: World Bank.
[31] FAO (2023) Gender and Agricultural Value Chains in Sub-Saharan Africa. Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

systems, women often combine coffee with banana farming, and cash control still largely male-dominated. While regional differences exist, structural gender inequality is consistent across systems.

Discussion

The preceding analysis demonstrates a central contradiction in Uganda's coffee transformation agenda. On one hand, OWC has contributed to a remarkable expansion in coffee production. This has positioned Uganda as Africa's leading coffee exporter with earnings exceeding US$1.1 billion annually. On the other hand, this production success has not translated into proportional women's economic empowerment.

This disconnect reflects a deeper structural issue in agricultural policy design: the assumption that increasing production automatically improves welfare outcomes. However, gender-responsive development theory shows that economic growth is not inherently gender-neutral[32]. Instead, it is mediated through existing social relations, particularly land ownership, labor hierarchies, and control over income. OWC therefore may be seen to represent a case of (unintentional) gender-blind agricultural modernization. It can be seen by some as a programme that expands production but not systematically transforming power relations within production systems.

What Changes?

OWC intervention in coffee has primarily focused on distribution of seedlings, expansion of acreage, and mobilization of farmers into commercial agriculture. This has produced measurable outcomes, Uganda is now Africa's largest coffee exporter, Annual exports exceed 6 million bags, and Export earnings exceed US$1 billion annually[33]. However, the critical question is whether these gains have altered gender relations at household level.

There is mixed outcome including, increased household participation in coffee farming, expansion of coffee-growing households into new districts, and some women benefit indirectly through household income increases. There is no systematic shift in land ownership patterns. There is weak change in women's control over income, and there is limited targeting of women as independent beneficiaries.

Structural Constraints Limiting Women Empowerment

Customary land ownership systems in many rural areas limit women's independent ownership of coffee land. Without land rights, women cannot fully control coffee production systems even when they provide labor. OWC largely treats households as single units. This masks internal gender inequalities by assuming equal benefit distribution. Women have lower access to agricultural training, input information, and market intelligence. Coffee marketing remains dominated by male traders, male cooperative leaders, and male household heads.

Household-Level Targeting and the "Invisible Woman" Issue

OWC operates on a household-based delivery model, where inputs such as coffee seedlings are distributed to households rather than individuals. While administratively efficient, this approach has unintended gender consequences. It assumes equal benefit sharing within households. It obscures intra-household power relations. It reinforces the assumption that the "household head" represents all members. In Uganda, household heads are predominantly male, meaning that women are structurally under-recognized as independent economic actors. The policy implication is that gender inequality becomes invisible in programme design, even when women are heavily involved in production.

[32] Kabeer, N. (2005) Gender Mainstreaming in Poverty Eradication and the Millennium Development Goals. London: Commonwealth Secretariat.

[33] UCDA (2024) Annual Coffee Report 2023/24. Kampala: Uganda Coffee Development Authority.

Land Tenure Constraints and Structural Exclusion

Land remains the most critical productive asset in coffee farming. Yet in Uganda, land ownership is heavily gendered. Women are significantly less likely than men to own land outright, control inherited land, and make independent land-use decisions[34]. Without secure land rights, women cannot independently benefit from coffee trees, access agricultural credit (which often requires collateral), and fully control production decisions. The policy implication is that OWC increases access to seedlings, but not to the underlying asset that determines long-term benefit—land.

Gender-Neutral Extension Services

Agricultural extension services under OWC and related systems remain largely gender-neutral in design. However, "gender-neutral" in unequal contexts often produces gendered outcomes, training sessions are held at times inconvenient for women, male farmers dominate participation in demonstrations, and women have lower access to technical advisory services. As a result, productivity gains tend to favor those with greater access to information—typically men. The policy implication is that neutral delivery systems reinforce existing inequalities.

Market Control and Value Chain Power Asymmetry

Even when women participate in production, control over coffee markets remains male-dominated. Men typically negotiate prices with buyers, transport coffee to markets, control bulk sales, and manage income distribution decisions. Women participation is concentrated in harvesting, sorting, drying, and field labor. This creates a structural separation between "those who produce" and "those who profit". The policy implication is that without intervention in marketing systems, production-focused policies cannot deliver empowerment.

Gains Under Operation Wealth Creation

Although still limited in gender transformation, OWC has produced important indirect benefits.

Expansion of Coffee-Based Livelihoods - OWC has contributed to expansion of coffee-growing households, increased acreage under coffee cultivation, improved access to planting materials in rural areas. This has broadened the base of rural households engaged in commercial agriculture.

Increased Household Income Opportunities - at macro level, coffee earnings have increased, creating potential spillover effects at household level. In some households, women benefit indirectly through improved school attendance for children, access to better healthcare, and increased household consumption. However, these benefits depend heavily on household power relations.

Emergence of Women-Led Alternatives - Outside OWC structures, women-led initiatives have demonstrated stronger empowerment outcomes. Examples include women's coffee cooperatives, specialty coffee value chains, and direct trade models that pay women farmers directly. These models show that when women control sales, their bargaining power and income retention improve significantly.

Policy Lessons and Recommendations

- *Agricultural input distribution is not empowerment* - OWC shows that distributing seedlings increases production but does not guarantee ownership, income control, and decision-making power. Empowerment requires control over resources, not just access to inputs.

[34] UBOS (2022) Uganda National Household Survey 2019/20. Kampala: Uganda Bureau of Statistics.

- *Gender outcomes must be explicitly designed, not assumed* - gender equality cannot be achieved through indirect benefits. Programmes must include women-specific targeting mechanisms sex-disaggregated monitoring indicators, and explicit empowerment objectives
- *Land reform is central to women's empowerment in coffee* - without addressing land tenure inequality women remain dependent laborers not independent producers. Land is the foundational constraint in Uganda's coffee gender system.
- *Market access determines empowerment more than production* - women who control marketing channels gain more empowerment than those who only farm coffee. Thus, policy must shift from production-centric to market-centric empowerment strategies
- *Household models mask inequality* - treating households as equal units in policy design hides intra-household inequality, reinforces male control over resources, and weakens gender accountability mechanisms

Conclusion

This policy review has demonstrated that Uganda's Operation Wealth Creation programme has significantly contributed to the expansion of coffee production and export earnings, positioning the country as a leading global coffee exporter. However, when assessed through a gender-responsive policy lens, its contribution to women's economic empowerment is limited and uneven. The central finding is that production growth has not automatically translated into empowerment gains for women. Structural constraints—particularly land inequality, household power asymmetries, and market control dynamics—continue to shape outcomes in ways that favor men. The implication is clear: future agricultural transformation in Uganda must move beyond input distribution and production metrics toward transformative gender-responsive policy design that explicitly addresses power, ownership, and control within agricultural systems. Only then can coffee production become not just a driver of economic growth, but a genuine pathway to women's empowerment.

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