

SUCCESS STORY

Women learn new skills to support their families

More than 146,781 women have benefitted from the USAID Agribusiness and Trade Expansion Program (USAID-ATEP) in Ethiopia. Since its inception in 2006 the project has worked to increase women's participation because empowering women through agriculture enhances the lives of everyone in rural households.

Women in Ethiopia are traditionally limited to positions of day labor and few hold positions of leadership. As part of its overall gender mainstreaming policy to promote gender equality, USAID-ATEP actively encourages women to establish their own farms and participate in farmer cooperatives. Since the beginning of USAID-ATEP, women have received training in everything from horticulture production and postharvest handling to market information and business development.

Agriculture Production Training

USAID-ATEP reaches thousands of women by holding on-farm demonstration trainings. Program agronomists have held 326 on-farm trainings throughout the country where hundreds come out to attend. The program also has 25 lead clients who are women. These clients receive direct technical assistance through weekly visits from the program's agronomists.

In addition to on-farm training, program growers receive training from USAID-ATEP's Business Development Unit (BDU) in farm recordkeeping, tracking costs of production and marketing.

Postharvest Handling Training

USAID-ATEP focuses postharvest training activities on women farmers and women working at commercial farms. Training women in postharvest handling of fruit and vegetables not only increases farm incomes but also helps promote women to leadership roles.

The project employs a qualified technical team of field agronomists and specialists in marketing and logistics, postharvest handling, farm certification, and business skills who support women smallholders through targeted interventions. The experience of USAID-ATEP has shown that the challenges facing women in agriculture are unique, and while gender-sensitive consideration is incorporated into all activities, the program emphasizes training for women farmers in packhouse operations, business development skills and health.

USAID-ATEP also trains commercial farm clients to meet GLOBALGAP export standards. GLOBALGAP-certified farms have packhouses that generate jobs for women. Women trained in GLOBALGAP standards learn valuable skills that can lead to promotions within the packhouse or to other jobs. USAID-ATEP has provided GLOBALGAP training to five commercial farm managers, equipping about 150 women in GLOBALGAP standards. One of these women is Asrat Nega, who started as a packer at the Omega Farms packhouse in Holet. Because of skills she learned through program training, she was promoted to packhouse supervisor and now earns 50 percent more. "I am proud because I worked hard and earned this job," Nega said.

USAID-ATEP is a five year initiative supporting four major industry sectors—horticulture; coffee; hides, skins and leather; and oilseeds and pulses. The program is improving productivity and competitiveness for thousands of Ethiopian farmers, processors and exporters, resulting in increased sales, investments, employment and incomes.



Photo by Fintrac Inc/Ian Chesterman

A woman harvests grapes for lead client Luna Farm. A majority of the farm's employees are women.