Participants:

Anthony Marten (A), Kimberly Easson (K), Xiomara Paredes (X) and Ginet Vargas (G).

A: Thank you for tuning in to SAFE’s platform podcast. My name is Anthony Marten, I’m part of the Sustainable Agriculture, Food, and Environment, or SAFE, Platform’s communications team. SAFE is a multi-stakeholder platform co-financed by the MIF/IDB and co-managed by Hivos. It works to transform coffee and cocoa landscapes by including Latin American small-holder farmers in global value chains and to strengthen their capacity to adapt to climate change. Joining me on today’s podcast we have Kimberly Easson, who is the gender advisor for the Coffee Quality Institute, where she is spearheading the Partnership for Gender Equity. We also have Xiomara Paredes, who is the CEO of the CLAC, which is the Latin American and Caribbean network that gathers and represents all Fair Trade Certified small producer organizations and worker associations. And we also have Ginet Vargas, who is the Women’s Empowerment Program Development Manager for Hivos in Latin America.

For this English version of the podcast, we have dubbed Xiomara and Ginet’s interventions. You can hear their voice on our Spanish version of this podcast.

I would like to thank all three of you for joining me today on our podcast that covers gender and coffee production and processing.

K: Thank you, great to be here.

G: Yeah, thank you.

X: Thank you.
A: To begin, I would like to ask Ginet to briefly explain why it is important to promote gender equality practices in our organizations.

G: Well, thank you very much for listening to me. Thank you for inviting me, Anthony. That question is very important because we have always thought that gender equality is a goal in itself, and we should promote it because women are half of humanity and we have the same rights. However, every day it’s more important that the production companies, businesses, and the market in general, get involved in everything related to gender equality practices, because on top of that, it has been proven that women contribute in a very significant way within companies, and that those companies which promote equality produce bigger earnings. Women always represent a support that contributes to the producers’ incomes, even when they aren’t recognized nor receive payment. They do this as wives, partners, mothers, and even as friends and neighbors. There’s no doubt about the fact that unpaid women’s work benefits and promotes earnings in a company. Now, let’s imagine women being empowered and involved in a more active way within these companies, with all of their abilities, be it big corporations or small production businesses... There’s precisely an article by Gema Sacristán, published in March of 2017, which is called Empower Women and Investors Will Follow. So, we already know that investing in female economic empowerment contributes directly to gender equality, but in her article, she proposes that those companies that have a more diverse workforce, in which there are women, tend to be better equipped for innovation in product development, taking advantage of new business opportunities, and including the female market. Furthermore, she mentions that there are different indexes used for measuring this gender equality, which are now being employed by a lot of investors to help decide where they invest. So, these indexes include everything related to compensation, unequal salaries, the number of women in leadership positions, personnel policies, the ability to create products and services, etc. Therefore, gender equality promotes this good economy. SAFE is an initiative, just as Anthony mentioned, which is currently led by Hivos, and it’s a multi-party initiative, where gender equality is one of its core values. Thus, we have several initiatives which we are supporting, and amongst which we have included the initiative that Kimberly Easson will mention to you regarding coffee’s value chains and also Xiomara Paredes will talk about Gender Mainstreaming in production organizations. So, I would now like for us to listen to them instead, about how they are working towards gender equality through their projects.

A: Thank you very much, Ginet. And to kick off this next question, I would like to ask both Kimberly and Xiomara what does the phrase “equality means business” mean to you and why is it important?
K: Thanks Anthony and Ginet and Xiomara, and thanks to SAFE for having us here today for this critical conversation. “Equality means business”. It’s clear that when men and women have access to equal resources and opportunities and a seat at the table where decisions are made, that there are all kinds of things that improve. Business outcomes improve, as Ginet pointed too, and also development outcomes improve. So, there’s a lot of data, 30 years of data to back up that gender equity is actually good for business as well as good for people. When you have more diversity of perspectives around a decision making table, it actually makes for better decisions and there is research to back that up. When we look at coffee, and the world at large, there are many, many issues, many challenges that we’re facing. In terms of helping to ensure the long-term sustainability of the coffee value chain, it is critical for us to look at how to move the conversation about gender in the coffee sector from only a women’s issue or a nice thing to do and actually start to look at it as a critical lever for the long-term well-being of the sector. Gender equity really should be considered a cornerstone of a sustainable coffee sector and helping businesses get more of what they’re looking for in terms of a consistent supply of quality coffee into the long run and an assurance that there’s going to be more resilience in the value chain for now and for future generations.

A: Perfect! Thank you very much, Xiomara?

X: First of all, thank you to everyone. For CLAC, one way of looking at things is to see it in an integral way: men and women complement each other and the results of this complement are visible in the producer organizations where both men and women work, contribute ideas and build development together. In my case, I have been able to show that the organizations that also involve women in the productive part, in their governance structures and in all spaces, are organizations that show a higher level of development. And this includes, of course, a greater capacity to do business. So I have no doubt that equity is synonymous with doing better business.

A: Thank you very much, Xiomara. I would also like to dive right into your projects. Kimberly, can you please explain a bit about your project with SAFE, called Accelerating Gender Equity and about how this project is working to incorporate a gender perspective in small-holder coffee farmers?

K: Sure, so. The focus of the partnership for gender equity is first to unlock the potential of coffee farming women, youth and their families. Secondly, to promote equitable opportunities for those communities to thrive, and to be successful. And then thirdly, looking from
the industry point of view, to catalyze bold industry action towards a supply chain that works for everyone. We have a theory of change for the partnership for gender equity that says if we were to work at these three levels of the value chains and the end market, those companies, roasters, traitors and retailers in consuming countries, working also with producer organizations and other types of entities on the ground, catalyst entities that bring together farmers and supply and also households, that if we work at these three levels, we can actually create essentially a virtuous circle of everyone in the value chain getting more of what they need. And as a result, working in this way, we can move the needle on gender equity more quickly, essentially catalyzing change that doesn’t take generations to take root. As we know, given the critical nature of the challenges that we’re facing in this sector, we don’t really have time, so things that we can do to act boldly and in an innovative way are going to be key. So for the SAFE project, specifically, we’re creating two tools for companies in particular and other actors in the sector, to improve their supply chain outcomes with a basis in gender methodology. So, a project methodology is one tool that we’re coming away with, so that those companies that are already investing in the value chain, maybe more with a focus of good agricultural practices or climate change, that they can actually integrate gender methodologies to improve the outcomes of those projects. And then, linked to that, indicators that can help track the impact of those projects. So the tools that we’re designing for SAFE are linked to a field-level project that we have funded in Nicaragua by UTZ and its sector partnership program, and the measurement framework that we’re designing is linked to the work we’ve been doing with Global Coffee Platform to develop a common measurement framework for gender in coffee. So, the idea is that the tools that we’re designing together with SAFE can be used and taken up by other SAFE platform members and other companies throughout the sector.

K: So, specifically the project called Accelerating Gender Equity, how we’re working is as a priority at the household level, so we developed workshops with male and female farmers that really serve to break open preconceived notions about roles and responsibilities at the household level and at the farm level, and even without using the word gender because it’s often a very nebulous concept, that male and female farmers of all different ages design visions for their farm and household for the future. And there, by applying a set of tools, through that process that help them see how issues related to gender are often barriers for them to achieve their vision for their future, which many times has to do with well-being of their families and greater productivity on their farm, greater income from their farm, more food on the table, better access to education for their children, so that there are gender issues that do serve as barriers for them to achieve those visions. And that, through the workshop, by seeing for themselves new ways of working together and
how to remove those barriers, that they can work together with share decision making, household planning, farm planning, sharing of resources, sharing potentially of household chores, looking at expenses, expense flows, everyone can benefit. This isn’t just about women being better off, but it’s actually about the whole family being better off. And then, as Xiomara pointed out, many farm organizations have very good gender policies in place that they developed over time. But it’s often hard for them to really take those policies and practices live for many reasons: resource constraints, time constraints, other priorities, and have those policies have a real impact on the ground. And so, the idea is that by combining the shifts that happen with the household level training, at the same time having improved policies and practices at the organization level, you can start to create a piece of that virtuous circle and gain momentum. And then finally, with the end market; farmers have told us that if they know that industries care about this issue, if they care about the issue of gender equity, that they’ll take it into account in a more proactive way in their work. So what we’re doing is also working with the end market actors to raise awareness and encourage them to ask questions and then also potentially reward farmer organizations for having more active gender equity methodologies and policies and practices in place.

A: Well, thank you very much Kimberly for that explanation about your project and exactly how you’re reaching out to smallholder coffee farmers. Something that you said is that you’re really focusing on developing innovative tools that can be implemented both by SAFE partners and other organizations and that’s something that we focus on through SAFE: providing opportunities, not just for our partner organizations, but for other organizations to come up with ideas of how to innovate within coffee value chains. And so, that’s why we developed a new project format called Learning Initiatives. Xiomara is going to explain a bit more about one of these Learning Initiatives which is called Gender Mainstreaming within Producer Organizations. So, Xiomara if you would like to go ahead and explain a bit about this how you are working to incorporate a gender perspective in small-holder coffee farmers.

X: That's right, Tony. As you mentioned, we want to promote a gender discussion committee through this Learning Initiative, where different actors in the coffee value chain and actors within the SAFE platform, can discuss and exchange on best practices for gender mainstreaming. This is, methodologies and tools that allow us to promote the inclusion and participation of women in the life of these producer organizations. An example of what we want to share in this discussion committee is our gender mainstreaming route that we have tried for 3 years and which is also the product of a joint work with our ally TRIAS. This
route includes 3 axes: one is the institutionality of the gender approach. Here, for example, we contemplate the creation and adoption of gender policies by producer organizations, of which Kimberly gave an example. The second axis is the empowerment of women. That is, investing to strengthen their capabilities. The third is the construction of fairer relations between men and women and in this axis we are raising awareness and are working with our allies as well, men. Also, I wanted to tell you that as a result of this gender mainstreaming, we are now seeing some results. We are already seeing that cooperatives and/or associations have now incorporated women and youth on their boards. There are organizations where we had never seen women participating and now we actually see it. This also goes hand in hand with those gender policies that have been tested by their assemblies and for this, there has been a whole previous moment of preparation, as well as part of their budgets from Fair Trade being destined to the training of women, for the implementation of these policies. We are also witnessing creations of inclusion committees that ensure that these actions occur.

A: Thank you very much Xiomara! It’s great to see that we already have a few results. Like you said, more female board members and more youth participation in spaces where they can actually have a voice and make decisions. I was wondering, other than supporting each one of these projects and initiatives, what are a few tips or actions that we can use to introduce these practices in our own businesses and projects that will help us contribute to gender equality. Let’s start with Ginet.

G: Well, I think to summarize what both have said, some tips that I think have already been mentioned are: implementing policies, not only having them; analyze the value chains in which you work, whether it is coffee, cocoa, honey, in any of the chains in which women are involved and detect where they are most visible, where they have the most capacity and train them more to be competent or more competent, but also encourage them to reach the end of the chain, that is, that they can reach the commercialization part to be able to guarantee that women will have an income and work on the economic empowerment of women. Then, following what Xiomara has said, ensure that the benefits offered by companies or cooperatives where women are, are also destined for women and not only for men, especially training, field visits, trips to congresses, conferences, etc., where women can also be trained and can develop more skills. And then invest in women being in decision-making positions. Definitely when the Steering committees or the boards of directors are also integrated by women or have a female presence, there is a diversity of opinions, there is another point of view, and this benefits companies.
A: Thank you very much Ginet. Kimberly? A few tips?

K: Sure. I think first and foremost for everyone to start to understand the issue better, it is a complex issue but it’s also something that can be very simple to understand the importance of it. So we have, through the CQI partnership for gender equity, we did a year-long research and we had The Way forward report, there are many other resources that people can access to educate themselves. And then, I think also too asking questions from a business view, asking questions of your suppliers: are they tracking sex to segregate the data, are there gender policies in place, looking at the farm or producer organization, is there diversity in decision making... So, even just asking those questions of suppliers is an important step. Also, considering investing in research as well as on the ground projects. We’re working hard to try to understand the issue but also what has the greatest impact on moving the needle on the issue of gender equity. And advocating for gender equity throughout the coffee value chain. Of course I think we’re all on the same page that the greatest impact can be made in coffee farming communities, but really there is a gender gap in every country in the world and still inside most businesses. We’re really looking at how we close the gender gap that exists. And finally, as all organizations, setting our own goals, what is it that we aspire to, once we understand the issue, how can we actually improve and track progress over time in our own businesses and in the places where we can have an impact and an influence.

A: Thank you very much Kimberly. And last but not least, Xiomara?

X: Yes, I believe there are many actions that we can promote from our different organizations, companies, or work areas. One of them is to encourage the involvement of women in all project activities that we are going to execute and also encourage participation quotas. If we do not establish how many women should participate, we probably will not get any to participate. I think that also, and my colleagues said it before, we need to invest in preparing, in training women. This is so that they can have better self-esteem, so they can improve their leadership and, in general, so that they can have better capacities to participate in different spaces. For example, we have promoted schools for women, where women can receive courses about self-esteem, leadership, economic empowerment... And we have heard testimonies from women saying "as a child I could never attend a school", and it is a reality that in many countries of our continent we have women who have not gone to school; in some countries, men are sent to school but not the women. I also believe that we should encourage the creation of inclusion committees in organizations, and raise awareness. That part is very important. For example, the masculinity workshops
are an action that must be done in hand with the training of women.

A: I would like to thank all three of you for these excellent tips. We’ll hopefully be able to include a list of them later on, after we publish the podcast. And also, I wish we had more time, but unfortunately that’s all the time we have for today. I thank all three of you for your participation today and throughout the planning process. You can find links to each one of these projects and initiatives in the publications of the podcast, and also we’ll be sharing this information through social media. So once again, thanks to all three of you, and thank you everyone who tuned in to this podcast.

G: Okay, thank you Anthony

X: Thank you to everyone.