Towards Gender Equality through Fairtrade?

* A Case Study on Small-scale Tea Farmers in Nandi Hills, Kenya

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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis was to explore the gendered impacts Fairtrade has on smallholder tea producers through a case study of the Sireet cooperative in Western Kenya. While previous studies have extensively elaborated on the overall impact of Fairtrade on poverty reduction and the livelihoods of farmers, a gender differentiated impact assessment has been substantially neglected. Through an embedded mixed methods approach, the study investigated how Fairtrade directly and indirectly impacts female and male farmers on three levels: 1) the individual regarding income and employment opportunities, 2) the household in terms of intra-household gender dynamics, and 3) gendered participation at the cooperative level. The findings suggest that Fairtrade standards and mechanisms have a limited direct impact on all three levels. The cooperative’s initiatives, especially trainings, as well as gendered prioritisation and approach potentially have a greater impact on gender. The outcomes of this study indicate that while Sireet policies on gender issues are largely lacking, official cooperative membership has proven a crucial factor in generating Fairtrade benefits for both men and women. The inclusion through membership however, does little to tackle gender inequalities and embedded gender roles.

Key words: Fairtrade, Fairtrade impact, Gendered Economy, gender equality, tea sector, small-scale farmers

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CEDAW</td>
<td>Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women</td>
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<td>EPK</td>
<td>Eastern Produce Kenya Ltd.</td>
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<td>FLO</td>
<td>Fairtrade Labelling Organisation International</td>
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<td>GAM</td>
<td>Gender Analysis Matrix</td>
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<td>GDI</td>
<td>Gender-Related Development Index</td>
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<td>GEM</td>
<td>Gender Empowerment Measure</td>
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<td>HDI</td>
<td>Human Development Index</td>
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<td>ILO</td>
<td>International Labour Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>KES</td>
<td>Kenya Shilling</td>
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<td>KTDA</td>
<td>Kenya Tea Development Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>MDG</td>
<td>Millennium Development Goals</td>
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<tr>
<td>M&amp;E</td>
<td>Monitoring and Evaluation</td>
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<tr>
<td>OEP</td>
<td>Outgrowers and Empowerment Company Ltd.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USD</td>
<td>US Dollar</td>
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**Key Definitions**

**Gender:** In this study the term ‘gender’ is aligned with the definition by the United Nations, which refers to gender as the “social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relationships between women and men and girls and boys, as well as the relations between women and those between men” (United Nations 2001).

**Gender Equality/Equity:** Gender equality concerns “the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys” (United Nations 2001). The term ‘equal’ in this sense does not imply that men and women will become the same but that their opportunities and responsibilities do not depend on, nor are constrained by, being born female or male. Although often used interchangeably, we explore gender equality and not equity. Gender equity focuses more on the process of being fair to men and women, rather than on the outcomes (Facio & Morgan 2009).

**Fairtrade:** When referring to “Fairtrade” in this study, we mean the overall approach of Fairtrade International Labour Organisation (FLO), its certification and labelling system, as well as its core objectives, standards, and mechanisms.

**Fairtrade Labelling Organisation International (FLO):** FLO is a multi stakeholder, non-profit organisation. FLO’s (2011a) overall vision is to support the producers by connecting “disadvantaged producers and consumers promote fairer trading conditions and empower producers to combat poverty, strengthen their position and take more control over their lives”. It operates only directly with the small producer organisations, and is therefore not in touch with the farmers themselves. FLO is the organisation setting the standards for small producer organisations. To obtain the Fairtrade label, small producer organisations have to adhere to FLO standards. Certification and inspection are carried out by FLO-CERT, an independent body created by FLO (Sidwell 2008).

**Producer Organisation/Cooperative:** These terms are used synonymously, relating to the organised body of small-scale farmers who have joined together under formalised structures of management for various benefits including Fairtrade certification. Fairtrade interacts with the cooperative or organisation rather than directly dealing with individual farmers themselves and disperses its benefits such as premiums through this structure. Fairtrade gender based policies and requirements are applied to the cooperative. However, the cooperative is given freedom regarding how they choose to implement these directives.
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1. INTRODUCTION

In the era of trade liberalisation, smallholder farmers in the developing world have witnessed increasing vulnerability. Accessing international markets and competing against multinational estates within the agriculture industry poses a great challenge for these farmers. In this context, it is the female gender that is particularly vulnerable given the considerable challenges women are confronted with (Women Watch 2011; Ellis et al. 2007). Acting as an alternative to conventional trade, the Fairtrade movement serves as an instrument to help mitigate these vulnerabilities of women and small-scale farmers across the world.

Fairtrade is widely considered a tool for development promoting ‘trade not aid’ as it aims to reduce global inequalities by empowering marginalised small-scale producers in the Global South (Rice 2010; Hutchens 2010). It is the belief that Fairtrade can tackle imbalances through various mechanisms by shifting the interest of international trade to small-scale farmers in developing countries (Hutchens 2010). Fairtrade attempts to address gender inequalities in cooperatives and increasingly provide opportunities for women (McArdle & Thomas 2012).

While the body of research on Fairtrade’s impact on farmers’ livelihoods in developing countries is continuously growing, little empirical evidence of Fairtrade’s approach on gender inequalities exists (Hutchens 2010; Ruben 2009; Rice 2010; Nelson & Pound 2009). This is a troubling observation given gender equality’s relevance for sustainable development and the gender inequalities found in agricultural production and international trade (Busse & Spielmann 2006; Johnsson-Latham 2007; Kibere et al. 2013; Freidenberg 2013). The few scholars who have addressed gender inequalities among Fairtrade farmers, emphasise a lack of explicit Fairtrade gender policies in producer organisations. Instead, it is claimed that Fairtrade merely addresses gender issues under the ‘umbrella’ term of non-discrimination (Hutchens 2010). In that sense, it is commonly argued that the Fairtrade system does not challenge gender power structures or entrenched inequalities (Smith 2013; Hutchens 2010; Rice 2010). If not maintained as a key aspect of Fairtrade’s mission, the neglect of gender equality risks deteriorating conditions for rural women (Lyon 2008).
1.1 Research Purpose and Questions

On the grounds of this research gap and its relevance for development, the purpose of this study is to explore the indirect and direct gender impacts of Fairtrade on smallholder tea farmers. The paper is a case study focusing on Sireet Outgrowers and Empowerment Company Limited (OEP), a tea smallholder cooperative in Nandi Hills, Western Kenya, which has been Fairtrade certified since 2006.

Through an embedded mixed methods design, the study provides an in-depth exploration of Fairtrade’s gendered impacts and its changes on three dimensions. The individual level focuses on female and male farmers’ income and employment opportunities. The household level looks at intra-household gender dynamics, and lastly, the cooperative level outlines the gendered participation of farmers in Sireet OEP. The analytical Gendered Economy model developed by Smith (2013) and complemented with influential scholars, substantiate these areas as encompassing the main spheres of Fairtrade impact when highlighting gender inequalities.

Specifically, the study explores the ways in which Fairtrade directly and indirectly influences gender within Sireet OEP by answering the following research questions:

**RQ1**: How does Fairtrade impact income and employment opportunities for female and male farmers at the individual level?

**RQ2**: How does Fairtrade impact intra-household gender dynamics at the household level?

**RQ3**: How does Fairtrade impact gendered participation in the producer organisation at the cooperative level?

All levels of analysis will be carried out from a gender perspective. To provide a comprehensive understanding of gender in Sireet, this perspective does not only focus on differential opportunities between men and women, but also on the relationships and inequalities between them (Suda 2002). It draws attention to both women’s and men’s experiences within tea production, while avoiding using the gender term interchangeably with the term ‘women.’ The approach also makes an attempt to adopt a reflective stance on the ‘Western concept’ of gender in its application in our context.
This study contributes to a comprehensive understanding of Fairtrade’s gender impact and how these relate to the larger debate of gender equality. The concept of Fairtrade is surrounded by controversy over whether it is really fair at all. We recognise all sides of the argument, however due to the focus of the study we critically concentrate on specific Fairtrade mechanisms and how these challenge gender equalities, rather than the general Fairtrade critique. We do not seek to generalise our findings to other Fairtrade cooperatives or regions, but rather highly acknowledge the producer organisation’s contextual setting.

1.2 Research Outline

The study commences with an overview of observed gender norms to help contextualise gender inequalities in the Kenyan tea sector and the setting in which Fairtrade operates. This is followed by an outline of Fairtrade’s standards that can potentially tackle these inequalities. In section three, we review the literature on Fairtrade and gender and discuss the perspective that underpins this paper. This aims to provide an overview of our point of departure in critically thinking about gender issues and Fairtrade. In the following section the analytical Gendered Economy model for the analysis is presented. The methodology chapter outlines our research design, data sources, process and analysis. The subsequent analytical section is dedicated to answering our research questions through critical discussion of our findings and theoretical issues while adhering to the analytical model. A discussion on our findings and concluding remarks is captured in the final section.

2. SETTING THE SCOPE: GENDER INEQUALITIES AND THE FAIRTRADE SYSTEM

Agriculture serves as the backbone of the Kenyan economy and is paramount to millions of farmers in the country (Kabukuru 2013; Kibere et al. 2013). The tea sector in particular is a vital component of the Kenyan agricultural sector, providing employment to around three million people both directly and indirectly, as well as considerably contributing to overall export earnings (KHRC 2008:4; van der Wal 2008:7). Although women provide the largest share of agricultural labour in rural Kenya, as well as domestic duties, they are continuously
discriminated against in access to and control over agricultural benefits (Kibere et al. 2013; Freidenberg 2013). Due to this ‘double burden’ regarding both productive and reproductive work, women are significantly time poor, tending to work longer hours than men. Since women’s domestic working hours are not remunerated, men frequently receive higher earnings (Ellis et al. 2007). This results in women’s contribution in agriculture being ‘invisible’ and thereby overlooked (Kibere et al. 2013).

Extreme gender imbalance in access to and control over resources and land ownership are additionally hindering women’s economic development in Kenya (Ibid). The fact that women are sometimes denied titles of land ownership increases their dependability upon men in the household (Freidenberg 2013). Especially in tea production, men control the cash crop since they are, traditionally, the head of the household, while women are identified with household duties and food production (Ongile 1999:30).

The production of tea is hard work. The most labour-intensive activities include plucking, fertilising, weeding, soil conservation and the control of diseases. Women are mostly involved in tea plucking where they spend many hours, outside, on their feet (Koshy & Tiwary 2011:5). One possible explanation for the predominance of women in plucking is that women are found to have rather low literacy rates and are therefore mostly found in positions requiring fewer skills and qualifications (van der Wal 2009). Women’s lower level of education and skills again limit their access to resources and negatively affect their incentive to become increasingly involved in the agricultural production and receive benefits from it (Suda 2002).

The Kenyan government has recognised the marginalisation of rural women and the pressing issue of gender inequalities on a national level and attempted to tackle these by adopting a National Commission on Gender and Development in 2004, along with ‘Gender Desks’ across many of its ministries (Ellis et al. 2007). While the constitution recognises customary law, it prohibits gender discrimination and recently removed exemption from non-discrimination that was previously granted to customary family and inheritance law (WDR 2012:166,309). Despite the attempt to institutionalise such specialised initiatives, gender inequalities remain, leaving women vulnerable as smallholder farmers with no legal protection within agricultural production, and little ability to compete in the international market (Freidenberg 2013). Missing
legal protection, outdated labour laws and unequal access to resources are still negatively affecting women’s ability to profit from agricultural benefits and operate on an equal level with their male counterparts (Ellis et al. 2007).

The Fairtrade Labelling Organisation International (FLO) seeks to tackle inequalities as they arise in Kenyan agriculture. Navigating these gender norms is a challenging undertaking for Fairtrade (Hutchens 2010), which they try to address through various channels. In fact, the FLO emphasises the empowerment of women as one of ten areas of impact and gives strong consideration to gender equality in their new global strategy¹ (Hutchens 2010; Terstappen et al. 2012). Specifically the FLO (2011b) aims to promote women’s empowerment and gender equality by protecting them from discrimination under the ILO Convention No. 111. The FLO (2011b:32) states in its standards for small producer organisations that “[...] you must not discriminate regarding participation, voting rights, the right to be elected, access to markets, or access to training, technical support or any other benefit of membership”.

In addition to this rather broad principle, every cooperative must identify disadvantaged or minority groups within their organisation. For such disadvantaged groups the producer organisation is required to set in place programmes to improve their social and economic situation. In that respect, the FLO (2011:b) expects these organisations to support disadvantaged members, as well as focus on the participation of female members. Overall, FLO (2012:28) acknowledges the central role of women in agricultural production around the world, and recognises that there is “greater scope for supporting women to benefit more equitably from Fairtrade.”

A number of other FLO standards have the potential of tackling gender imbalances besides the specific gender initiatives. These include:

- A fair, minimum price
- Long term trade relationships

¹ FLO’s new global strategy notes its commitment to maximising the impact of Fairtrade by “improv(ing) our understanding of the particular contexts in which different groups of people experience hardship. This will include strengthening our policies on equality and diversity within organisations in respect of issues such as gender” (FLO 2009).
Equal employment opportunities, in particular for the most disadvantaged

Freedom of association

Provision of technical and financial assistance

No child (below 15 years of age) or forced labour (FLO 2011b; Becchetti & Costantino 2008)

Among these standards, the Fairtrade minimum price is commonly argued to have the biggest potential impact. Fairtrade tea buyers (e.g. Lipton, Finlays) must pay this minimum rate when acquiring tea from a Fairtrade certified producer organisation. In 2010, this price was set at US$1.40 to $1.50/kg for Fairtrade tea in East Africa (Fairtrade Foundation 2010). Generally, it is set high enough to cover production costs, the producer’s costs of living and additional costs of certification by the FLO inspection body (Nelson & Smith 2011:41).

Besides these standards, the so-called Fairtrade premium, which buyers of Fairtrade certified products pay on top of the defined minimum price, is considered a benefit to small-scale producers. Premiums are designated for the use of social projects geared towards the overall benefit of the community. Such development projects are decided democratically by cooperative members and typically involve the construction of local schools, infrastructure, health centres, and bursaries for families in the community (Dolan 2008:307). They are not intended specifically for the use of production needs, i.e. the tea industry itself. Whether and how these standards have shown to affect gender issues among farmers is reviewed in the following chapter.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Due to the centrality of gender equality in our study, it is key as part of understanding the impact of Fairtrade, specifically how it is assessed. It serves to support the analytical framework by highlighting indicators upon which gender inequalities are assessed. The gender impact component of this section is essential to ground our findings, particularly in relation to other bodies of work. However, there are few studies which explore how Fairtrade has specifically impacted gender inequalities among smallholder farmers. We incorporated these and other central authors that included a slim gender dimension in their findings to inform our discussion.
3.1 (Re)Considering and Assessing Gender Equality

The construct of gender equality is increasingly recognised as a central component of sustainable development (Busse & Spielmann 2006; Johnsson-Latham 2007). It has been acknowledged in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and even as a ‘goal in its own right’ in the third Millennium Development Goal. Despite its international recognition, critical voices have emphasised its controversy, especially when applied in Africa (Omoyibo & Ajayi 2011). The gender approach has often failed to incorporate the voices of African women as well as men and to provide a comprehensive understanding of women’s and men’s day-to-day realities and experiences (Miers 2011). Miers (2011) states that due to the misconception, the stereotype is nowhere more prevalent of poverty ‘having a female face’ and women being an icon of poverty and oppression than in Africa. Instead of thinking within these rigid concepts, Miers (2011) argues that one should assess the realities of men and women. As such, gender should be seen as an overarching variable such as ethnicity, class and age in determining what is expected and valued in a woman or man in their socio cultural contexts.

While grasping the gender construct in its full complexity is challenging, evidence on existing gender inequalities can help support serious consideration for gender issues on a larger scale, transcending into developing appropriate gender equal policies or adjusting related programmes or activities (OECD 2009). The most frequently discussed gender indicators found in literature dealing with this issue are the Gender-Related Development Index (GDI) and the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) (Permanyer 2010). While the GDI adjusts the Human Development Index (HDI) to account for gender gaps, the GEM focuses on political and economic differentials between men and women (Leung 2011:32). Although the suggested criteria to select indicators vary, gender equality is typically measured along the lines of economic participation and opportunities, political empowerment, educational attainment, health, and well-being (Hausmann et al. 2008; Kabeer 2003; OECD 2009). In relevance to our study, these criteria are recognised as essential components in exploring Fairtrade’s impact on gender.

From several standpoints, the use of composite indicators in equality assessment frameworks has been criticised for being rather limiting in assessing gender equality. This is because these indicators are generally too broad to reflect the complexities of understanding the multiple
dimensions of gender relations (Dijkstra 2006; Agarwal 1997). As Agarwal (1997) argues, the nature of gender dynamics is especially challenging to assess. They are composed of more than the division of labour or resources but entail ideas and representations of attitudes, abilities and behaviour. To provide a precise outline of a setting, literature emphasises that any gender index has to be adapted to a particular context while balancing practical aspects within the limits of the organisation or policy assessed, which is of considerable importance for this study (Leung 2011:30f.; Smith 2013).

3.2 Fairtrade’s Impact on Gender

As aforementioned, empirical evidence on Fairtrade’s impact is scarce. Amidst the Fairtrade debate, scholars argue it to be somewhat out-of-date and anecdotal (Sidwell 2008; Leung 2011). Nonetheless, several factors appeared to be promising indicators to investigate gender inequalities.

A predominant factor within producer organisations is female membership rate, which is generally much lower than those of men (Leung 2011:20). While this is a common indicator for assessment, it is also arguably insufficient in providing a precise measurement. Terstappen et al. (2012) argue that the level of women’s participation is generally not defined and it can therefore be difficult to establish whether women are actually active within the organisation and to what degree, or whether they are merely fulfilling a role or position superficially. Literature has begun to look critically at the mixed benefits of participation and question what assumptions can be drawn from increasing women’s participation (Lyon et al. 2009; Mayoux 2000). On the one hand it can be seen as a movement towards women’s empowerment and representation (Leung 2011), or an indication of the feminisation of agriculture, where women occupy low paying farm work while the men migrate to higher paying labour (Chant 2008). Le Mare (2008:1935) further highlights that despite the concentration on participation, increasing the number of women involved in Fairtrade producer organisations will not necessarily achieve changing gender roles.

Van Dooren’s (2009) study on rice production exemplifies that involvement in Fairtrade can be a ‘mixed blessing’ for women. This ‘mixed blessing’ refers to women being involved in Fairtrade but at the same time not being exempt from existing household responsibilities (Redfern &
Snedker 2002). Van Dooren (2009) extends his argument stating that besides women’s involvement in both areas, he found little consideration given to women’s additional household and reproductive responsibilities or their role in production and group decision-making.

It is further argued that Fairtrade impact is limited to the more ‘elite’ groups of farmers, benefiting small-scale farmers in poor countries, rather than benefiting the poor per se (Terstappen et al. 2012:33; Dolan 2008; Lyon 2008). Dolan (2008) argues in her study on Kenyan tea farming that factors such as time, labour inputs, costs, and in particular, land ownership which often excludes women outright, are limiting farmers in participating in Fairtrade. Furthermore, Fairtrade “risks creating a privileged space, where only certain concerns are aired, legitimised and addressed” (Dolan 2008:312). Not only is this limiting Fairtrade impact and generating a bias towards farmers in possession of these components, but it is also indirectly edging out women who are largely not in ownership of these factors.

Fairtrade premiums are highlighted as a known positive impact on female and male producers which are welcomed by recipient communities (Nelson & Smith 2011:127; Nelson & Pound 2009). Though expenditure of premiums is decided democratically and on the basis of need, the process is criticised as being potentially disadvantaging for women due to limited influence over the investment of the premiums as a result of paternalistic land ownership patterns (Hutchens 2010). This can again facilitate men’s overrepresentation in decision-making structures. Yet, Fairtrade premiums have shown to be one of the direct mechanisms directly impacting the farmer community through investments in infrastructure, schools and health facilities (Nelson & Smith 2011).

Along with the Fairtrade premium, literature indicates the direct benefit of increased income through the Fairtrade minimum price as Fairtrade mechanisms (McArdle & Thomas 2012; Nelson & Pound 2009; Smith 2013). The Fairtrade minimum price has received considerable attention due its relevance for poverty reduction (Murray et al. 2003; Raynolds 2002; Taylor 2002). It is commonly argued to be the most direct impact on producers’ lives (Nelson & Pound 2009). Hutchens (2010:452) however, found that payments generally go to the male head of household, which reflects that it cannot be assumed that such payments trickle down to benefit all household members. This is examined along with our empirical findings in our analysis.
4. THE ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

Smith’s (2013) conceptual framework, the so-called Gendered Economy, serves as a guideline for a contextual analysis of direct and indirect avenues of these Fairtrade gender impacts. Since the study has been designed to specifically explore Fairtrade’s gender impact, the Gendered Economy is not testing correlation or a pre-existing theory (Creswell 2012), but rather guiding a critical and context based analytical discussion on Fairtrade gender impacts (Smith 2011). The model has been selected based on its suitability to incorporate the complex dynamics that surround gender issues from the overarching Fairtrade system down to the local level of the small-scale producers. It identifies substantial areas of impacts and incorporates the main indicators found in many of the internationally and regionally implemented gender indices. Nevertheless, we have adapted the model to fit the study’s needs by remodelling the areas of impact and by incorporating components of widely recognised and applied theorists to present a more holistic approach on gendered issues. As Smith (2011) suggests, it is applied in combination with additional literature to interpret the analytical data since it helps to establish different mechanisms that influence gender outcomes.

4.1 The Gendered Economy Model

The Gendered Economy is devised from intensive examination of previous research dealing with the gender impacts of Fairtrade. The model signifies that participation and benefits derived from economic activities are severely influenced by gender. It identifies different pathways through which Fairtrade can indirectly or directly impact gender (Smith 2013).
Figure 1 shows the Gendered Economy as it has been adapted from Smith’s original model to fit our case. The three boxes at the top of the figure represent the forces capable of impacting (directly or indirectly as detailed by the downward arrows) the three categories highlighted underneath. Direct impacts stem directly from the Fairtrade system, which can include specific strategies, such as the minimum price, the use of premiums, or compliance with non-discrimination standards (Smith 2013:116). Next to the Fairtrade system, there are other influential factors that can impact gender outcomes. The double headed arrows connecting the ‘Fairtrade System’ with ‘Producer Organisations Policies and Activities’ and ‘Other Standards and Development Interventions’ demonstrate they are interlinked, with the potential of affecting one another. Smith emphasises that many Fairtrade impacts are, however, indirect (or secondary), contingent on Fairtrade’s supporting role for producer organisations. Such secondary
gendered impacts are also likely to emanate from Fairtrade’s direct impacts but are more dependent on the producer organisation’s gender policies and initiatives (Smith 2011). Considering the freedom producer organisations have in the implementation of Fairtrade standards and regulations, this level can be of significance especially in affecting gender. Furthermore, other development activities external to Fairtrade must not be neglected, such as additional certification bodies, NGO or private sector initiatives in the region. Given the producer organisation in our case had no additional certifications at the time of our research, we didn’t have the exhaustive difficulties of disentangling impacts from Fairtrade and other initiatives, and therefore ‘other standards and development interventions’ proves to be a less influential aspect in the model. It is still included in the model for us to keep in mind throughout the research process in the chance that through our exploratory methods we found impact attributable to this area. The analytical model captures the difficulty attributing the roots of gender outcomes by illustrating this two-way relationship which can bring about direct and indirect gender impacts (Smith 2011:12).

The figure (Figure 1) shows three areas in which Fairtrade may have gendered impacts; 1) income and employment opportunities 2) intra-household gender dynamics, and 3) participation in producer organisation. These areas are tightly linked and interdependent within a non-linear process which Fairtrade may influence at any stage and in a multitude of ways (Smith 2013:117). This is demonstrated by the arrows between the different components. We found that each of these categories corresponds to a particular level of analysis, from individual, household and cooperative which we have incorporated into the model. While interlinked, this helps differentiate the level on which we are examining Fairtrade impact on gender roles.

The basis of the Gendered Economy is the contextual setting which has to be investigated in order to determine Fairtrade’s impacts (Smith 2013:104). In Smith’s original model the context follows the changes in norms and attitudes towards issues such as women’s participation in public arenas, women’s engagement in the political sphere, and in changes in laws regarding women’s rights (Smith 2013:117). The context was adjusted because we found it so pervasive throughout our research and impossible to differentiate from Smith’s other categories in our case. A contextual understanding of the Gendered Economy is critical when exploring gender impacts of Fairtrade, since previous studies have found that significant differences exist between regions
based on the contextual setting of cooperatives (Smith 2011; Nelson & Smith 2011; Terstappen et al. 2012). Therefore, we decided to amend this aspect of her model so that the context serves as the backdrop to the entire framework. Acting as a basis from the Gendered Economy, it lets us ground our findings in the local context.

4.2 Fairtrade Impact Areas

Smith’s first category refers to income and employment opportunities as changes in a gender-based access to resources such as land, labour or capital, as well as services and markets (Smith 2013:117). This area of the model directly relates to the first research question regarding how Fairtrade impacts income and employment opportunities for female and male farmers in Sireet cooperative. Since this category corresponds to the individual level, we have expanded Smith’s elaboration of this category to first of all elucidate the roles men and women have as individuals. This is crucial to assess Fairtrade’s impact variations among gender at the individual level. In other gender analysis frameworks such as the Gender Analysis Matrix (GAM) or Moser’s Framework, scholars have referred to this as ‘gender roles’ (Moser 1993; March et al. 1999). For a basic gender analysis gender roles are of crucial importance to shed light on who does what, who has what, and therefore generate an understanding of women’s and men’s responsibilities (March et al 1999:23). At this point it is not yet necessary to examine how power is structured or negotiated (March et al. 1999:24; Kabeer 1994). First, it is essential to give a clear picture of gendered labour division to make women’s, as well as men’s work visible and thereby show first differences in workload, access and control of resources (March et al. 1999:48).

The intra-household gender dynamics explores changes in men’s and women’s control and attitude over household resources and applies to the second research question on the ways in which Fairtrade impacts gender dynamics in the household (Smith 2013:117). This area comprises the gender dynamics between women and men, for example, in household decision-making on resources and income, and power dynamics in the household. As the influential bargaining theory suggests, decision-making in the household is dependent on the contributions of each household member which can proportionally increase their bargaining position (Manser & Brown 1980). Agarwal (1997:2) highlights that intra-household dynamics are often assumed to exist in isolation although they are largely embedded to interlinked arenas such as the market,
community and state. The model acknowledges this by referring to the three different levels and highlighting their interconnectedness (Smith 2013:115).

The participation in the producer organisation level scrutinises changes in gender differences in the level and type of participation in organisations, as well as leadership positions and organisational activities (Smith 2013:117). This aspect of the Gendered Economy links to the third question, looking at how Fairtrade impacts gendered participation in the Sireet cooperative level. Forming networks and organisation at the community level area is especially relevant since it enables producers to play an active role in Fairtrade governance, facilitating knowledge exchange, cooperation and alliance building (Smith 2013:114). The emphasis is on the changes that come about within the producer organisation and how Fairtrade can have an impact on the management and policies of the cooperative. This is an essential level for the impact analysis since Fairtrade gives the cooperatives themselves significant freedom in how vulnerable groups are identified and activities appointed. This relative amount of control and influence of Fairtrade over the cooperatives’ policies and initiatives is acknowledged through the model (Smith 2013). Thereby impacts Fairtrade can have on women and men in the same community can, according to Smith’s framework vary significantly depending on the community’s and organisation’s activities (Ibid). Further, the involvement in community activities is of considerable importance since men and women undertake different roles in community work which can provoke changes that might affect participation in the cooperative (Moser 1989:1801).

5. METHODOLOGY

5.1 Research Design

The research takes a case study approach, warranting an in-depth investigation of our unit of analysis, the Sireet OEP cooperative (Yin 2009; Creswell 2012:97f.). Within a specific time and place, it allows exploration of the Sireet farmers’ realities as they are influenced within their context (Baxter & Jack 2008:556). On this basis, the investigation was inspired by a constructivist approach, where we attempt to let our participants outline their view of reality, enabling us as researchers to understand their experiences and perceptions (Baxter & Jack
The research process was informed by deductive and inductive reasoning. The initial stages were characterised by induction to explore the realities of Sireet farmers. At a later stage, when the Gendered Economy was found suitable for our case, the study evolved into a more deductive nature. This can limit the study’s ability to investigate aspects that are not covered in the theoretical framework. However, an iterative shuffling between both reasonings enabled us to minimise this shortcoming.

To add depth to the findings, we chose an embedded mixed methods design. The supplemental quantitative strand was embedded within the larger qualitative design, in a supportive secondary role (Creswell & Clark 2007:68; De Lisle 2011:94). Although the exploration of gender roles is predestined to primarily qualitative methods due to its nature of exploring relations and experiences, it is as relevant for an embedded mixed methods approach. It brings together a more comprehensive account of potential factors that affect gender in the producer organisation (Yin 2009:63; Creswell 2012:62; Bryman 2008:53f.). Survey responses further allowed us to gain material from a larger sample size and compare answers between men and women, adding a ‘measurable’ component to our results. Additionally, since our time to conduct interviews was rather short, the mSurvey\(^2\) mobile phone based survey tool allowed us to follow up with questions over a longer period of time.

The qualitative component is prioritised in this case due to the exploratory nature of the study in investigating participants’ realities within the Fairtrade system (Creswell 2012). This combination can provide a more holistic picture of our case, since interviews allowed us to gather more in-depth qualitative data, where wives of male Sireet members (non-Sireet members)\(^3\) could be interviewed as well. Quantitative methods were thus embedded to help enhance our qualitative findings (Morse 1991; Yin 2009:62f.). On the basis of this approach, we focused our data collection on qualitative methods and prioritised these. This procedure is illustrated in Figure 2.

\(^2\) mSurvey is a mobile surveys company operating in Kenya. It uses SMS mobile surveys and ‘interactive mobile applications’ to collect, visualise, and represent data for easy feedback to users (see www.msurvey.co.ke).

\(^3\) This is essential to investigate whether benefits trickle down to spouses and other household members.
5.2 Data Collection

We selected the cooperative through purposeful sampling based on the fact that it is one of few cooperatives in Kenya that was not under the umbrella of the Kenya Tea Development Agency (KTDA), a management agency for small-scale farmers in Kenya, which would make it extremely hard to get research access to. Also, Sireet was one of very few cooperatives that was not multiply certified by other certification schemes, ie. Rainforest Alliance or UTZ, who employ their own (gender) standards for farmers. Multiple certifications would have made
attribution to specific Fairtrade mechanisms more difficult (Smith 2011:12). Although the size of Sireet limits the ability to draw conclusions about the producer organisation, it reduces the chances of reaching research fatigue of cooperatives that have been previously researched extensively.

Before the fieldwork in Nandi Hills, a pilot study was carried out in rural Githunguri, just North of Nairobi to test methods which served as a preparation for the later fieldwork. We conducted two focus groups and three interviews with smallholder (non-Fairtrade) tea farmers. From this trip we concluded that focus groups were not the most appropriate method to utilise given the interactions between farmers did not raise any particular insights and participants were reserved speaking in such a setting. Therefore, we decided that semi-structured interviews with individuals would be more valuable.

While the initial groundwork began in December 2013, the actual data collection process took place over the months of January and February 2014, consisting of field observations, individual (expert, semi-structured and informal) interviews, narrative walks and surveys. Prior to interviewing farmers at Sireet, we carried out desk research on the structure of cooperatives and Fairtrade’s impacts avenues, to gain understanding of how Fairtrade impacts its producers. The fieldwork at Sireet OEP in Nandi Hills was eventually conducted over an intensive week in mid-January, based on the brief availability of the cooperative, while the survey compilation lasted until the end of February. Research access was gained through Fairtrade Africa who supported us during the identification process of a suitable producer organisation. During our fieldwork, Sireet provided us the support of their extension officer who served as our gatekeeper.

5.2.1 Qualitative Methodology

The qualitative part of our approach is comprised largely of semi-structured interviews, narrative walks, and observations. Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted with key informants including male and female Fairtrade farmers, management staff from Sireet OEP and a Monitoring and Evaluation expert at Fairtrade Africa. We designed a set of predetermined open-ended questions used to guide the interviews (Appendix II), allowing us to delve deeper into insightful matters as the interview progressed (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree 2006:315). Interviews lasted between 20 to 90 minutes. A total of 13 semi-structured interviews were
conducted specifically with farmers, eight male, five female, combining nine households in total. In cases in which participants could easily express themselves in English and seemed comfortable with the language, we carried out interviews in English. Nonetheless, a translator was present in case clarifications were necessary. Furthermore, all interviews were administered with the full consent of the respondents and an understanding of research objectives and purpose of conducting our study.

Observation was an additional pivotal tool for our data collection. In situations where information was withheld by ‘silences’ and ‘absences’ of the interviewees, this was a useful complementary tool of investigation (Kabeer 1994:134). Through observation at different farm sites we witnessed various practices and behaviours which were captured as notes as part of our observational protocol. In the data analysis, these were essential in enriching other empirical findings.

While the semi-structured interviews resulted more in a question-and-answer type arrangement (Hollway & Jefferson 2008:302), narrative walks enabled us to create a setting that encouraged and stimulated the interviewees to tell their own story in a contextual setting (Jovchelovitch & Bauer 2000). This qualitative research method is considered ‘beyond the question-answer scheme’ as it enables unstructured, in-depth interviewing by minimising our influence as interviewers (Ibid). Outside this framework, farmers opened up in their role of narrators telling us about their lives and experiences while guiding us around their grounds (Hollway & Jefferson 208:302). Although most semi-structured interviews started off in a more formal ‘question-answer’ atmosphere in the farmers’ homes, the majority continued with a narrative walk through the farms, which allowed for more fluid discussion and exchange of topics that might not have been presented in the interviews. These also contextualised our interviews and gave increased insight into changes farmers are experiencing due to Fairtrade certification.

**Sampling**

Sireet farmer interviewees were selected from a variety of the six tea producing zones\(^4\) through a purposeful sampling strategy, which enabled us to obtain maximum variation and represent a

\(^4\) Sireet OEP is divided into six different zones due to the extensive size of the cooperative. These are Kapsumbeiwa, Kepchomo, Sireet, Chemomi, Kibwari and Savani.
diverse range of farmers with ranging economic status. This was to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the different experiences of cooperative members across differing localities (Creswell 2012:155). Since gender was a pivotal factor throughout participant selection, and most men hold the membership position in the household, we wanted to include the wives of Sireet farmers in particular. It is essential for the study to include the spouses of members as they are often as involved in agricultural production. It is also part of Fairtrade’s intent to extend impact beyond purely membership, incorporating the wider community and households. However, gaining access to wives of male members proved especially challenging, since women were often too busy in the household or engaged in activities on the farm. Ethnicity was not considered, a decision which was made given the sensitivity towards the topic of tribal groups in Kenya. In addition, the dominant ethnic group in Nandi Hills is Kalenjin with the majority of inhabitants in this area belonging to this tribe. Experts within the Sireet cooperative as well as Fairtrade Africa were chosen due to their expert knowledge on cooperative and Fairtrade specifics that were not retrievable in literature.

5.2.2 Quantitative Methodology

The quantitative approach, based on Fairtrade farmer surveys, serves as a supplement to the interviews. We carried out a 24-question survey (n=74) with Fairtrade farmer members of the Sireet cooperative over a two month period. As noted previously, the surveys were conducted using mSurvey. Sireet members received survey questions via text message in Swahili\(^5\) and were then able to respond through text message at no personal cost. A brief introductory text message outlined that every respondent would receive an incentive of KES 100 (USD 1.15) upon completion of the survey.

In total 256 surveys were sent out to Sireet members. While the majority of respondents started the survey, a total of 74 were fully completed by 26 female and 48 male members. The mSurvey tool enabled us to disseminate and conduct surveys while not physically being present and we could gain access to farmers who would otherwise have been geographically inaccessible. In addition, we were able to obtain information from a larger number of respondents, as well as

\(^5\) Surveys were administered in Swahili after conducting our pilot study and receiving recommendations from Sireet management and Fairtrade Africa. While both Swahili and English are the lingua franca and the working languages in Kenya, not everyone, particularly those living in rural areas, are literate and able to communicate in English.
conveniently compiling the data online for direct analysis. This tool was especially suitable given the high rate of mobile phone ownership and usage among Kenyans, however, we realise the possibility of excluding farmers who are not acquainted with (this) technology. To guarantee the confidentiality of participants, we created anonymous user IDs. The mSurvey tool was entirely voluntary and there was no pressure to answer the questionnaire, or the questions one way or another.

**Sampling**

Based on the attendance of meetings, trainings and workshops, Sireet had gathered extensive contact information of its members. From this ‘active list’, our survey participants were chosen through random sampling. This was identified as the most appropriate method in order to get various farmers from different economic backgrounds and locations and thereby increase the representativeness of Sireet members (Creswell 2009:155). Nevertheless, we are aware that conducting a survey with only members minimises our study’s potential of exploring Fairtrade’s impact on non-members.

**5.3 Data Analysis**

The qualitative data was analysed by reading through field notes and interview transcriptions, whilst initial codes based on themes were developed. The main codes were then divided into more detailed sub categories so that the richness and variety of the qualitative data was reflected. In order to organise the data, we used thematic coding to further recognise patterns in the data and start thinking in terms of concepts that might possess relevant information (Mikkelsen 2005:181). In order to ensure anonymity, we are referring to our participants with fake names and their interview code (see Appendix I).

The quantitative data was uploaded, and analysed in IBM SPSS Statistics 20. We ran descriptives from our survey questions, as well as bivariate crosstabs in order to find relationships between gender (V1) and dependent variables of relevance to the investigation (Appendix V, VI; Pallant 2009). Since all our survey participants were members, we are only triangulating our quantitative data with qualitative interviews with members. This cannot be done for surveys and qualitative data with non-members due to the different sampling. Therefore
we use the quantitative data not in comparison with the qualitative strand but to find Fairtrade impact, particularly in terms of membership. To a certain extent, the embedded mixed methods strategy therefore allowed us to compare findings with one another, allowing two different pictures to provide an overall composite assessment of the problem (Creswell 2009:214). Nonetheless, we are aware that discrepancies are more likely to occur when interpreting the data of two different data sets (Creswell 2009:215). At the same time we are convinced that data from multiple angles provides a more comprehensive account of the studied phenomenon than just relying on one research method.

5.4 Limitations

Given the restricted possibility of conducting research among Fairtrade farms, this research has several notable limitations. First, the given time frame by the cooperative and Fairtrade Africa for our data collection was rather short. Due to the huge size of the cooperative we are aware that a level of representativeness and therefore general conclusions about the cooperative cannot be drawn. Additionally, we relied heavily on the male extension officer who was responsible for guiding us to the farmers we interviewed. It was challenging to ask him to leave the interview situations since he introduced us to the farmers and granted us access to very remote areas. When interacting with the interviewees, it was hence important for us to detach ourselves from the gatekeeper, to not give him control of to whom or what to speak about (Scheyvens & Storey 2003:153). Nonetheless, we found that his presence and that of the female translator helped us build what Dewalt (2008:268f.) defines as ‘rapport’ with the participants. Both already had well developed relationships with interviewees which helped generate a comfortable atmosphere. The use of a translator with the few interviewees who were not conversant in English however, also meant that we cannot ensure meanings were fully captured and conveyed. Yet, the majority of interviews were conducted in English, helping to verify the information that was communicated during translated interviews.

The fact that an assessment of Fairtrade impacts on hired workers\(^6\) was not possible within this project size is a considerable limitation of this investigation. Research on hired labour on

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\(^6\) This refers to labourers hired to work on Fairtrade certified farms, generally on a temporary or seasonal basis, and not to the Fairtrade certified farmers themselves.
Fairtrade farms is highly valuable given the fact that there is far less research evidence to draw on Fairtrade’s labour system (Smith 2013:118). Especially since studies have shown that mostly women perform much of the labour on Fairtrade farms, gendered implications are highly plausible in this case (Smith 2013:106) which, due to the time limitation of this study, could not be included.

5.5 Credibility and Validity

Various research methods were applied in triangulation from multiple sources in order to ensure credibility (trustworthiness and validity) of the data, including a thorough literature review to strengthen the theoretical and empirical base of the research (Creswell 2009). By engaging different actors and multiple research methods on our topic, while meticulously keeping track of notes and documenting observations, we sought to produce a valid in-depth description of our case.

Since the research was conducted together, rather than individually, this allowed us to continuously challenge methods, findings, and interpretations. We believe such consistent critique and query helped strengthen the study overall. The use of multiple qualitative methods within the design further increased the ability to reveal contradictions and paradoxes, therefore enhancing the validity of collected data (De Lisle 2011:101). Additionally, an expert consultation from Fairtrade Africa on preliminary results helped us ensure that the study is based on well-founded arguments given the reality in the field. Discussions with the Sireet extension officer were also used to corroborate information gathered.

There are some notable challenges to the credibility of the quantitative data. Despite the fact that mSurvey was of considerable advantage in gaining access to other Fairtrade farmers, the tool also had a shortcoming which became apparent during the process of acquiring surveys. In the late stages of gathering data and trying to meet our set number of surveys, we found that several respondents were not those from our list of farmers we had sent to and had possibly been given access to the questionnaire from farmers who had already completed the survey. While we cleaned the data to remove such respondents from our sample, we need to acknowledge that given that the surveys were administered via mobile phone and not answered in our presence we
cannot fully guarantee that the surveys were completed by the intended recipient.

5.6 Ethical Considerations and Positionality

During our fieldwork period we were particularly preoccupied with ethical considerations which had a gendered dimension. Implicit in conducting research with women in the developing world is the need for critical reflection (Scheyvens & Leslie 2000:119). We were aware that it could be difficult to gain access to women because they are extremely busy and rarely given the position as an official spokesperson for the community or household (Ibid). To respect the cultural context, we initiated contact through the male head of the household. Thereby we ensured that participation in our study was voluntary and interviews only conducted with informed consent (Scheyvens & Storey 2003:142). In our attempt to minimise the discomfort felt especially by female participants who were surprised that researchers wanted to consult them (Scheyvens & Leslie 2000:120), we tried showing appreciation of their knowledge and that we valued the information they were giving us (Scheyvens & Storey 2003:151).

Despite trying to create a comfortable atmosphere by starting with straightforward questions and trying to initiate conversation, female farmers were generally very shy speaking with us which could be attributed to us being white outsiders (Creswell 2009:87). Due to our attachment with Fairtrade, participants may have perceived us as holding a position of ‘power,’ able to provide them with additional funds or able to influence the purchase of Fairtrade tea (England 1994:84). This could have led respondents to downplay any negative impacts while emphasising Fairtrade benefits and might have been responsible for women being reserved when met with our questions (Scheyvens & Storey 2003:149).

6. CASE STUDY: EXPLORING FAIRTRADE’S GENDER IMPACT

The following section is divided into two main parts. The first part begins with a brief contextualisation of the Gendered Economy by outlining the Sireet OEP cooperative and its setting to ground the findings and analytical components that make up the more extensive second
part. Each question draws upon the three potential impact areas of the Gendered Economy to deepen the understanding of respondents’ gender differentiated discourses from the individual through to the cooperative level. Despite our attempt to separate these three levels, their gendered outcomes can be overlapping or interlinked (Smith 2013).

We have structured the research questions in a similar arrangement to one another, starting each with a presentation of our findings. Based on Smith’s framework, we then analyse how the Fairtrade System (minimum price, premiums), and/or Producer Organisation Policies and Activities (primarily cooperative trainings) impact each level. The selection of these mechanisms depends on which ones are specifically relevant for the findings of each question.

### 6.1 Defining the Context

**Profile of Sireet OEP**

Sireet OEP is a small-producer organisation formed by small-scale tea producers in Nandi Hills in 2004, situated in Western Kenya (see Figure 3), a region renowned for its many large-scale tea plantations and small-scale tea farmers (Gesimba et al. 2005:334). Fairtrade certified Sireet in 2006 and currently remains the only certification scheme in place.

Sireet outlines their mission to “[…] work with relevant stakeholders to socially and economically empower members through sustainable use of accessible resources” (IS5). They consider themselves an equal opportunity organisation (IS4), yet only 22% of 6,200 members are women. Although this is around the average for

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7 They further outline their vision as being “committed to empowering members to sustainably produce and market quality teas in the world while building a portfolio of investments and rendering other services that socially and economically empower members” (IS5).

8 For interview coding see Appendix I.
female membership of Fairtrade producer organisations, it shows a considerable gender imbalance in members getting access to these opportunities.

Sireet OEP provides a number of services to its members. Before Sireet’s Fairtrade certification, farmers faced a number of challenges including, difficulty in tea transportation to factories, poor infrastructure, a lack of collection sheds, and fluctuating tea prices. Due to certification and the premiums, however, Sireet has reportedly implemented 17 premium projects in 2013/2014 alone, focusing on water projects, schools, dispensaries, transport and bursaries. To date, Sireet OEP has received premiums totalling over KES 144 million (USD 1.6 million). These funds are managed by the Premium Committee, a group of 15 elected members who democratically select projects from a pool of proposals written and submitted by members within each zone. Selection is based on feasibility, necessity, availability of funds, and proportional project distribution across the zones. Sireet also provides trainings and workshops across a number of issues including an entrepreneur programme, financial, environmental, and crop management that members can attend (IS2).

Due to the oversaturated Fairtrade tea market in the UK (Sireet’s main Fairtrade market), only 2.3% of Sireet’s tea was bought by Fairtrade buyers in 2012. In 2013, this number increased to around 10% (IS4), however these low Fairtrade sales significantly decrease Fairtrade’s overall impact on farmers. This should be kept in mind throughout the impact assessment.

**Farmer Profile**

Interviewees and survey respondents represented households from a wide range of economic standings. Families ranged from the poorest having no electricity, access to running water, and no road access to considerably wealthy farmers in possession of motor vehicles and housing constructed of bricks rather than mud or tin-sheeting. The average farm size of interviewees ranged from 0.5 to 5 acres, while the total tea area of Sireet OEP members covers around 5,800 hectares. Depending on need, small producers hire labour to occasionally assist with tea plucking. FLO (2011b) however, stipulates that in order to be certified as a small producer, labour must predominantly be supplied through family labour rather than depending on hired

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9 For general statistics on the survey respondents see Appendix V.
work. After accounting for payment of workers and transport, tea producers in the area earned an average of 11 KES/kg (USD 0.13) for plucked tea at the time of research (IS5).

6.2 Impact Analysis on Income and Employment Opportunities

**RQ1: How does Fairtrade impact income and employment opportunities for female and male farmers at the individual level?**

As the Gendered Economy suggests, Fairtrade mechanisms can bring about different changes in income and employment opportunities for men and women. Regarding that Fairtrade is a certification scheme for export agriculture, Smith (2011) expects a significant gender bias in income and employment opportunities. Such gender labour implications result from the fact that women are less involved in the tea production and more engaged in food production and other off-farm activities where they generate lower returns (Smith 2013:104). To assess Fairtrade’s impact on income and employment opportunities, findings along gendered labour divisions and access to resources are provided first. Subsequently, they are attributed to Fairtrade mechanisms which have the potential of changing these.

Male farmers generally emphasised their involvement in tea production, where specific duties included managing, supervising and tea plucking. “Sometimes I go to the farm and pluck tea and supervise because I don’t want to leave the workers alone. I also want to be conversant on what is going on in the farm,” George explained (IF3). “Sometimes I am a manager, sometimes I assist to pluck and to weed,” another respondent remarked, a shed chairman, who identified himself as both a water technician and farmer (IF6). All male farmers highlighted tea farming tasks around their managing and supervisory role.

Female Sireet member farmers were involved in the tea cultivation to a similar degree as men. They stated they plucked tea and were occasionally involved in managing/overseeing hired labour (IF8; IF12). A bivariate analysis between gender (V1) and main tea activity (V10) from our surveys supports this tendency, stipulating a similar degree of female member involvement

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10 The plucked leaves are delivered to and processed by the tea factory within that zone, which in the case of the Siret zone, is owned by the farmers themselves.
in tea production in a proportional manner to male members, particularly in tea labour activities (plucking, planting, weeding, washing) and occasionally management. A statistical significance was therefore not found (see Appendix VI).

Non-member female farmers, on the other hand, have shown to be less involved in tea production than members. The majority of their time is devoted to household responsibilities and other income generating activities such as kitchen gardening, poultry, dairy, and cattle keeping, both of which they view as their primary responsibilities (IF2; IF7; IF11). From our observations in households, indications of women, and the fact that no male interviewees mentioned carrying out household tasks, indicate that we are dealing with strongly traditional structures that have expectations of which duties women are permitted to carry out. Hutchens (2010:461) argues that it is highly difficult to intervene in such a system whilst being respectful to the local culture. Because gender roles are defined by culture and traditions actively challenging these structures is a sensitive task. According to Hutchens (2010:46), this is why Fairtrade has had little progress on gender inequality.

Several female farmers, both member and non-member (IF2; IF8; IF11; IF12), stated that they would engage on the tea farm if there was an insufficient number of workers or an increased production of tea that required additional labour. Evelyn outlined her daily tasks as:

“I wake up early in the morning and milk the cows and after that I make breakfast. After breakfast I do my housework and cleaning. After that I go back to weed my kitchen garden. In case there is a lot of tea to pluck, I also go there and do weeding and then I come back for my lunch. After lunch, I do my washing. After the use of my utensils, then I do the washing of the clothes. After that, I rest a few hours and then I prepare supper. [...]” (IF12)

This quote indicates a strong correlation with Smith’s expectations that especially in the situation where more labour is required, women are pulled away from their responsibilities to work on crop production (Smith 2011:2). As argued by Van Dooren (2009), this kind of women’s engagement in Fairtrade can be experienced as a ‘mixed blessing’ since women are, when required in the tea production, generally not exempt from their existing household duties. This situation was experienced by all female farmers interviewed, who face a heavy workload due to involvement in the household and other income generating activities in addition to their tea production duties.
When considering the acquired data, gender disaggregated and not, it became apparent that female farmers, whether member or not, are proportionally much more involved in activities outside of tea production. Although female members are also involved in tea cultivation similarly to men, further investigation found that the majority of women’s time is spent in activities outside of tea production. This double responsibility of both engaging in tea farming responsibilities and attending to domestic work is something only the women experience, as the men’s primary (and sometimes sole) commitment is to tea production. Similar gendered labour divisions were found in other studies conducted on Fairtrade’s gender impact (McArdle & Thomas 2012; Hutchens 2010; Rice 2010).

Regarding the access or ownership of resources, evidence from quantitative data (see Figure 4), indicates that land of Sireet members is predominantly owned by men. Findings have reported on the state of women and land ownership in Kenya, indicating that women account for a mere 5% of registered landholders nationally (WDR 2012:18). The fact that women’s land ownership is higher than the average in Kenya can be related back to our sampling. As indicated in the literature review, many cooperatives require land ownership in order to become a member. Although this is not the case for Sireet, we can assume that women who own land are more involved in the tea production themselves and therefore more likely to gain membership. Nevertheless, men are predominantly landowners among our survey respondents. Smith (2013:104) and Ellis et al. (2007) outline that men’s ownership of land can have far reaching impacts on women’s position in society by negatively affecting their ability to participate in the cooperative, receive direct cash payment for their labour, and gain from agricultural extension services. Amongst Sireet OEP, however, land ownership is not a prerequisite for membership in the cooperative, receiving credit from Sireet, or in gaining additional cooperative support and is therefore not a decisive factor in gaining access to full benefits of Fairtrade certification (IS5).
6.2.1 The Fairtrade System – Minimum Pricing

Several indirect and direct mechanisms of Fairtrade have the possibility to influence Smith’s outlined impact areas. One is the Fairtrade minimum price, which according to the Gendered Economy, is likely to bring positive effects on income of cooperative members and their families and thereby reduce income volatility (Smith 2011). Most agricultural commodity prices are volatile and have decreased significantly in recent years. Such a worldwide price drop, as well as the fluctuation can result in income poverty for many farmers dependent upon tea to sustain their livelihoods (Fairtrade Foundation 2010). Income poverty may further force women to undertake more paid work and agree to exploitative labour conditions (Smith 2011). Smith encapsulates previous studies that the Fairtrade minimum price has been found to reduce this income volatility and increase income (Ibid).

The minimum price goes directly to members of the cooperative. Since 78% of all Sireet OEP members are men, a more positive impact on men’s income opportunities can be assumed. Given the rather traditional gender roles in Kenya, where women’s domain is domestic duties while
men are expected to serve as the main breadwinner, men are compelled to take the position as the household member in the cooperative. Moreover, as suggested by both Leung (2011) and our findings, land titles are mostly in the name of patriarchal figures in the household. This results in men typically seeking cooperative membership to represent the family’s interests (Ibid). Nevertheless, current female membership statistics show a rise in female members since certification in 2006. Specific initiatives to increase female membership have however, not been observed in Sireet OEP, in comparison to other cooperatives with higher female membership who have actively set initiatives to draw more women (Terstappen et al. 2013:27). As a result of gendered membership, the Fairtrade minimum price is not directly received by as many women as men.

Among survey respondents, quantitative data does not show a difference between women’s and men’s perceived income changes. While female and male members indicate that their income has increased to a similar significant extent (see Figure 5), non-member women interviewed did not mention a change in their income since 2006 (IF2; IF7; IF11). These findings emphasise the importance of cooperative membership in order to benefit from the Fairtrade minimum price and experience a positive impact on income.

**Figure 5: Income Increase Since Fairtrade**

**Source:** Data administered from survey, Feb 2014
Despite the income increase revealed from the quantitative data, the majority of male interviewees identified several recurring challenges within tea production including the fluctuation of tea prices, high prices for fertilisers, chemical usage and access to water, as well as other agricultural issues such as diseases destroying food crops. Regardless of the minimum price, ever changing tea prices (for the 90% of tea sold outside Fairtrade) give farmers little stability and generate greater losses given the rates paid for hired labour must stay the same despite drops in tea revenue. These challenges are concerns which constantly influence the livelihoods of the farmers. This coincides with previous literature on the tea industry which illustrates that farmers experienced similar negative impacts on their livelihoods (Blowfield & Dolan 2010:147). While it may be assumed that such issues are largely pertinent to the household, it must be mentioned that no female farmers stated any challenges regarding the tea sector. This helps substantiate the gendered labour division, as expected in the Gendered Economy, where women are generally found more in areas outside of tea production (Smith 2013).

6.2.2 The Fairtrade System – Premium Projects

The Gendered Economy identifies the Fairtrade premium as a potential direct impact on women’s and men’s income and employment opportunities, regardless of membership. Its impact depends on how the premium money is used and on what kind of projects the cooperative focuses (Smith 2011). Social investments within the community have been shown in previous studies to have the ability to reduce the productive and reproductive burden of women (Nelson & Smith 2011).

The establishment of dispensaries, a dormitory for secondary school children, a transport system, improvement of infrastructure, a reforestation project as well as numerous bursaries were mentioned as most appreciated by respondents. The bursaries in particular were emphasised having a significant impact on the community, as it enabled families to afford sending their children to (secondary) school. These benefits extend beyond the boundaries of membership and also positively impact the surrounding community as intended by Fairtrade (Smith 2013).

Although the premium projects within Sireet OEP do not particularly target the needs of one sex over another, there are indirect gender impacts on income and employment opportunities as a
result of projects in certain areas. The Kipsigak Community Dispensary we visited, while open to the whole community, was assisting women and children specifically by reducing the travel time (and therefore resources) of mothers bringing their children to receive assessment, rudimentary medical care, or referral to the district hospital (IS1). Tekwane also refers to the positive effect of a water project that reduced women’s ‘double burden’:

“The water project done by FLO. Now we can get clean water in the home rather than travelling very far away. That is an advantage. [...] It has reduced the burden of going to the river by women using donkeys around three kilometres.” (IF1)

The fact that Tekwane’s wife no longer has to walk far distances to collect water decreases her burden of household responsibilities and gives her more time to commit to other income generating activities.

The projects also have direct benefits for men. The case of road construction as a result of premium projects was found to directly benefit men more than women. Men indicated that they are typically in charge of transporting the tea to the buying sheds where tea is purchased and collected from the local factory. Through newly constructed roads, the collection trucks have easier access to previously remote areas, ensuring that the farmers have less distance to carry their tea (IF10). Nonetheless, this was the only observable project which generated a more positive impact for men.

The findings that Fairtrade communities benefit positively from Fairtrade premiums is consistent with the results from previous studies (Nelson & Pound 2009; Leung 2011; McArdle & Thomas 2012). It is apparent that social projects of premiums have positively affected women, if not equally, then more so than men. This is because men are not carrying the ‘double burden’ of productive and reproductive work, but are more involved in the tea production for which the use of premiums is not directly intended.

6.2.3 Producer Organisation Trainings

An indirect mechanism of Fairtrade is the requirement of the cooperatives to provide technical assistance and workshop trainings. Active participation in trainings can serve participants to further their knowledge and skills needed for farming production, which can ultimately improve
economic outputs or even their employability prospects. Since trainings are designated for Sireet members, male dominance among participants is likely. On average, around 20% of all training participants are women (IS2), which constitutes the approximate female membership in the cooperative.

Sireet however offers one specific entrepreneur training, which particularly targets women and encourages them to grow kitchen gardens and sell these vegetables on the local market. Women have expressed their interest in and appreciation for such offered workshops in these areas. Evelyn, an active female farmer in the cooperative expressed her opinion on her activities outside the tea production and how these have helped her support her family:

“I like the kitchen gardening the most. And in fact I even like advising other women in the village to do the same kitchen gardening because it has given me income. Also to my family. Since 2006, I have never bought any vegetables. It’s just from the kitchen garden. So I don’t remove my income to buy the vegetables. Also you know using the indigenous, traditional, African vegetables [...] it helps the children to grow well. No diseases. So that’s what I like most about kitchen gardening.” (IF12)

This statement demonstrates the sense of value that women get from being involved in kitchen gardening and while not always responsible for adding to the household income, they are contributing in other (more invisible) ways that support the family (Redfern & Snedker 2002:38). While conforming more to the cultural gender roles in society and the implications of less involvement in tea production, these activities appeared to give women a sense of satisfaction and enjoyment in the contributions of their work. This raises the notion whether such issues of women being ‘left out’ from Fairtrade crop production as expressed in literature is not experienced by women here as a negative (Terstappen et al. 2012). By creating income opportunities in kitchen gardening, women are in essence benefiting indirectly from Fairtrade by creating new income opportunities such as selling kitchen garden produce on the local market. However, despite this benefit and its attempt to consider women, Sireet OEP is excluding women from tea production which decreases their opportunities in gaining Fairtrade benefits. Gendered labour division thereby is reinforced by the cooperative.

In sum, Fairtrade impacts income and employment opportunities of Sireet farmers to varying degrees in three different ways. The minimum price has a direct impact on men’s and women’s income, however due to the gendered imbalance of membership it benefits far fewer women than
men. Fairtrade premiums have a direct positive impact on both women’s and men’s income and employment by decreasing their time burden. Although cooperative trainings allow women to deepen their knowledge in kitchen gardening, extending their income opportunities, it reinforces a gendered labour division. Sireet OEP therefore does not challenge women’s status quo and is not proactive in setting gender policies to tackle gendered labour division. In the long run, this excludes women from Fairtrade tea benefits.

6.3 Impact Analysis on Intra-Household Gender Dynamics

RQ 2: How does Fairtrade impact intra-household gender dynamics at the household level?

In the Gendered Economy, Smith (2013:117) identifies the category of intra-household gender dynamics in which Fairtrade may have gender-related impact. Specifically, changes can occur in male member attitudes towards females, women’s self-confidence, as well as in men’s and women’s control over household resources. Her assumption is based on previous literature that while women may participate in Fairtrade production, Fairtrade payments and resources usually go to the male head of the household (Ibid).

Interviewees, both men and female, illustrated that income is generally shared between husband and wife and decisions on expenditure are made jointly. For all interviewed participants the questions raised regarding decisions on income expenditure were met with a degree of surprise, that it would be relatively absurd to consider making such important household decisions without doing so jointly with their spouse. When Isaac was asked about how decisions were made on the expenditure of income, he responded, “Together, of course! You know, we Kalenjins, go together with our wives [...]” (IF10).

Faith explained the division of resources in her household:

“We have decided that the tea goes into the account of my husband. Then we have other incomes like from selling of milk. Whatever I sell there goes into my account. It’s only that payment that goes there. But that doesn’t mean that when it comes to communal decision, for example when there is a child that goes to school that we wouldn’t do it together.” (IF2).

While family decisions are made jointly, the division of income along the lines of work, means that Faith is limited to activities which generate far lower cash revenue than her husband. Due to
the focus of Sireet’s initiative for women outside of tea production she is not afforded the same opportunity or support in engaging in tea farming.

Quantitative findings among Sireet members also show a strong tendency of making decisions together regarding the expenditure for food purchase, children’s education, household durables, as well as farming and production needs (see Appendix V). As the pie chart indicates (see Figure 6), even for household durables which, in Kenyan society are typically viewed as the women’s main working sphere, the majority of decisions are made jointly. Extending on Smith’s (2013) assumption that payments usually go to the male head of the household, while this holds true in our case, it does not influence the tendency of households making decisions together.

6.3.1 Producer Organisation Trainings

Gendered impact on the household level is especially challenging to relate to different Fairtrade mechanisms since attributions to Fairtrade regarding household relations are relatively unexplored, and have revealed contradictory findings (Leung 2011:21; Smith 2013:102). The Gendered Economy comprises this challenge of disentangling indirect and direct Fairtrade mechanisms attributed to intra-household gender dynamics. For this reason, the potential impact
of these mechanisms is analysed in one section.

As the bargaining theory suggests, we would expect men to have a higher bargaining situation in the household since they predominantly receive the minimum price as well as due to prevailing patriarchal structures (Arbache et al. 2010). However, our findings that most decisions are predominantly made jointly constitutes the opposite of most evidence that men continue to dominate household income decisions (Smith 2013:108). Therefore, the question arises, why are men not as dominant as expected in our case?

Reasons can be related back to men’s appreciation of women’s other income generating activities and the instability farmers have experienced in the tea sector. Due to the special entrepreneur trainings by Sireet, women have been given the opportunity to advance their skills in kitchen gardening. This has provided them additional skills that may increase their income or let them contribute to household needs. Men seemed to value these contributions, since they are an important addition to the household income next to cash from tea cultivation. Especially in times when the tea crop itself has not been able to provide a stable income for farmers, other income generating activities and crop diversification are essential in securing a stable income (Gesimba et al. 2005). George expressed his appreciation of crop diversification as the following:

“[…] you know, you cannot only be a farmer on tea but you should have something small before you get the end salary of the tea to have something to sustain the farm because some of the workers can tell you ‘I need money’ and maybe you are still waiting for the end month so you should have something, maybe managing some chickens, to get eggs […]” (IF3).

This quote indicates that women’s responsibility for other income generating activities does not only supplement the tea income, but can give women’s work value and importance. This observation among households is contrary to the general undervaluing and underestimating of women’s productive work (as well as reproductive and community based) as suggested by Moser (1989). Women’s increased bargaining power can be seen a result of Sireet’s training that has provided women with skills and thereby enhanced their position in the household as a contributor to the total income.

Decision-making in partnership as husband and wife is attributable to what cooperative
bargaining theory suggests. Under these terms the woman’s decision-making and bargaining power increases, as her income contribution increases as total share of household income (Arbache et al. 2010:382). These results corroborate with findings from Lyon (2008) who found that women earning their own income have more extensive control over household resources. While determining whether the inclusion of women in these income generating activities is serving as a burden or raising status is highly household specific, we are able to draw from our observations and discussions the sense of ‘togetherness’ of husband and wife and a general appreciation of the work both parties contribute. It could also come down to the local culture and their values in regards to household relations and decision-making, as interviewees explicitly stated that Kalenjin culture was about the husband and wife doing things together, despite Kenya being a patriarchal society (IF10; IS5).

In addition to material contributions, women have experienced access to support networks through communal activities. Accumulating additional resources in self-initiated ‘merry-go-rounds’ can increase women’s self-confidence and bargaining power as they are part of an important network that can have substantial benefits for the entire household (IF7; IF11; IF12). This enhancement of women’s status quo can however not be related to any Fairtrade’s mechanisms.

Concluding, no Fairtrade mechanisms were found to influence intra-household gender dynamics directly. However, through the indirect avenue of cooperative entrepreneur trainings, women’s bargaining situation in the household has increased. Yet, this is highly dependent on men’s appreciation of women’s work, which again highlights a significant gender inequality, as well as women’s dependency on men.

6.4 Fairtrade’s Impact on Gendered Participation in Sireet OEP

RQ 3: How does Fairtrade impact gendered participation Sireet OEP at the cooperative level?

Smith outlines within the Gendered Economy that Fairtrade’s gendered impacts are highly

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11 The so-called ‘merry-go-rounds’ are self-finance groups that have been initiated by women in the Sireet community. Every member donates a certain amount of cash to accumulate a more substantial sum to enable one member household to make a larger purchase.
dependent on the approach and commitment of the certified producer organisation due to missing concrete policies from Fairtrade (Smith 2013:116). This question consequently outlines the cooperative’s gender initiatives regarding membership, trainings attendance, leadership positions and farmer’s involvement in Fairtrade’s social premium projects that are factors of gendered participation in Sireet OEP. Based on the male bias within producer organisations and the lack of gender aware policies and services, we would expect less engagement of women under the auspices of the cooperative (Smith 2013:110).

Despite an increase of female membership from 2% in 2006 to 22% in 2013, men still compose the distinct majority of Sireet members (IS3). This is owing to Sireet OEP not having specific initiatives to include women. Also, Fairtrade does not require a quota for female membership, but merely indicates that cooperatives are “encouraged to include female members” (IS5). Due to lacking policies from Fairtrade or Sireet, the high male membership can be drawn back to the fact that tea is primarily a male dominated export crop, requiring high skills in terms of usage of pesticides and quality requirements, which women generally do not acquire in Sireet’s trainings (Smith 2013:105f.). Moreover, men usually seek membership to represent the interest of the family since land titles are usually in the name of patriarchal figures in the household (Leung 2011). Yet, more members of the household can sign up for membership as long as they are supplying their tea to EPK factories and pay an administration fee on a monthly basis. Although a substantial prerequisite for most engagements within the cooperative, membership alone does not reveal whether farmers are actively taking part in the cooperative. Active membership is assessed on the basis of composite indicators on participation in trainings and workshops, leadership positions in the cooperative, and involvement in premium proposals.

6.4.1 Trainings

In order to encourage female participation and adhere to Fairtrade requirements, producer organisations can choose to include women specific activities through Fairtrade’s stipulation to identify any vulnerable groups. Since Fairtrade does not give directives on the type of trainings, the timing and the content of the training are factors solely determined by the producer organisation (Smith 2011).

To date, the entrepreneur programme has been launched by Sireet OEP to target their identified
vulnerable group of women. Although it is open to both men and women, Sireet sees it as focusing on women, by encouraging them to establish small businesses such as growing vegetables and selling them on the local market, since this is a venture women are traditionally much more involved in (IS4). Sireet management outlines their intention behind this programme:

“We are encouraging our farmers to do small businesses, like growing vegetables and going to sell them at the market. Our men would not like to do that. But women, I know they are at home and can do such jobs so long as we assist them on how to grow these vegetables” (IS4).

By offering an activity outside the tea production, the producer organisation explicitly prevents women from further participation in the production of Fairtrade cash crops. This does not only decrease their potential of gaining a higher income through the minimum price, it excludes them from acquiring skills needed surrounding the tea production and contribute to this sector. These findings concur with those in other cooperatives, where the establishment of female specific project was rarely conducted within the realm of the production of the Fairtrade product (Terstappen et al. 2012). Criticisers argue that such mechanisms reinforce existing inequitable institutions and systems (Ibid:27). On the other hand, concentrating on equal gender participation will not automatically change gender roles (Le Mare 2008). It could as well result in an increased burden of women managing their household duties, other income generating activities, and on top of that, tea production.

In contrast to the criticism, Sireet management considers their entrepreneur programme as the biggest potential benefit for women since they have been able to increase women’s awareness on what opportunities they have (IS4). Explicitly creating income generating opportunities for women outside the tea production, however, calls Sireet OEP’s approach to create equal opportunities within their gender initiatives into question. By arguing that women are ‘at home’ and ‘can do such jobs’ suggests that Sireet does not acknowledge the ‘double burden’ women are dealing with regarding the household and their productive responsibilities.

Regarding the attendance of general Sireet trainings, we found varied responses in regards to participation. The majority of men interviewed were attending trainings and workshops organised by Sireet OEP. Female interviewees reported attending trainings at most on an
occasional basis. When delving into issues such as frequency and reasoning of attending, female interviewees communicated often being restricted from participating in trainings due to their ‘double work’ burden, namely lack of time and domestic responsibilities (IF2; IF11; IF12). Other women mentioned that they typically only attended when their spouse was unavailable or not around which again emphasises women’s dependence on their husbands.

Evelyn, who was especially engaged within Sireet and the larger community, shows a contrasting picture. Throughout our interactions with her, it was apparent that she was much more confident than other women we engaged with. She was active in participating in trainings and even passed along the knowledge she gained to other women in the community (IF12). Her engagement highlights Hutchens’ (2010:452) findings that active participation has the potential to increase women’s self-esteem and status. This is also indicates the potential benefits beyond material gain for women of active cooperative membership.

Smith (2013) also highlights time constraints given domestic duties and other priorities as the main impediment for women to be active. The fact that women face higher restrictions and cultural expectation of being able to attend trainings once again reinforces a gendered labour division and decreases women’s opportunities to be actively involved in higher skilled jobs, such as the tea production (Nelson & Pound 2009; Le Mare 2008). Evelyn gave her opinions as to why women are hesitant to attend trainings:

“I think that’s because they have a lot of work [...] maybe the training is when the school is open and the children are at school so also the women have a lot of work to do at home. So maybe that can be the [reason]” (IF12).

Grace further elaborates, “I think this is because of [household] commitments. You know, we [women] are doing a lot of work in our homes [...] (IF8). This again highlights the need for Sireet OEP to proactively consider the impact of women’s ‘double burden’ when creating initiatives to promote a greater gender balance in the cooperative structure.

Regarding quantitative findings, we did not expect a significant gender bias, but frequent participation in trainings of both sexes due to our sampling of survey participants from a list of training attendees. This is supported by a bivariate analysis with gender (V1) and trainings attendance (V9) which revealed no statistical significance (see Appendix VI). The results
demonstrate over half of men and women respondents attending trainings either almost always or always. Due to the biased sampling, these results cannot be used in triangulation with our qualitative findings. It however, again suggests that membership is a pivotal factor for men and women to attend trainings regularly.

6.4.2 Leadership

Administering initiatives for a more balanced gender representation in the organisation’s leadership, such as encouraging greater women’s involvement through leadership quotas, is likely to have a direct impact on the numbers of males and females positioned in a leadership capacity. Fairtrade, however, has no involvement in this area, entrusting such initiatives to the certified producer organisations. Despite Sireet’s goal towards equal gender involvement (IS4), we found a lack of focus from Sireet in addressing these issues.

Among all interviewed women, none held leadership positions in the cooperative or were found within Sireet management. Several women expressed their interest in taking on a leadership position within the cooperative, however, again with an underlying hesitation that the household and family duties might suffer as a result (IF2; IF11). Hutchens’ (2010:452) concerns focused specifically on the lack of participation of women at the organisational and decision-making level of the cooperative. She argues that it restricts women from equally benefiting from Fairtrade, not only in terms of representation, but also in advantages afforded cooperative leaders such as acquisition of market contacts and information, and decision-making influence (Hutchens 2010; Le Mare 2008). The dominance of male representation in the organisation means women are not only underrepresented but have little voice and decision-making power up through the management structure. This phenomenon is indicated in our bivariate analysis with gender and leadership position which showed that even among members women held significantly fewer leadership positions than men (see Figure 7). This is found to be widespread among Fairtrade certified cooperatives. The FLO’s Strategic Funding Review of all FLO registered producer organisations reveals that less than 10% of cooperative board positions are occupied by women (Hutchens 2010:452). Interviewed male farmers on the contrary, held numerous positions within the cooperative, such as shed chairman, buying centre secretary, or as
a function in the premium committee (IF1; IF4; IF6) which highlights male dominance in power and decision-making in Sireet OEP.

Figure 7: Leadership Position

![Bar Chart: Do you have a leadership position in Sireet?](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Holding Leadership Position</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>yes</td>
<td>9 female, 30 male</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Data from administered surveys, Feb 2014

Women on the other hand, were more active in community activities, holding positions within church groups or merry-go-rounds. Agarwal (1997:29) refers to such activities as ‘cooperative conflict’ where community activities can bring individuals greater economic, social, and political gain by jointly managing a communal resource. She further notes, that operating as a group, rather than as individuals can significantly enhance women’s bargaining power (Agarwal 1997:30). These networks are self-initiated by women in the community and the cooperative is not involved in these ventures. Despite not holding leadership positions in Sireet operations or management, this indicates that women have created their own ways of engaging in other networks when there is absence of cooperative support.

6.4.3 Premium Project Proposals

Studies have shown that the inclusion of women in the decision-making of the expenditure of
Fairtrade premiums can have a direct positive impact on women’s needs (Smith 2013:1149). Smith (2011) argues that the gendered impacts of the premiums depend on how they are used, which in turn is contingent on how decisions are made regarding their use and whether women and men are both part of the decision-making process.

In Sireet OEP all male interviewees were highly involved in the proposal process to the board and conversant regarding the selection and implementation process of the premium projects. They were familiar with Fairtrade terminology and were well acquainted with the premium projects within their community. They outlined their involvement in meeting with members of the community and shed, discussing and identifying areas of greatest need, and writing and submitting the proposal to the board. Interviewed female members were also conversant regarding premium projects, though only partially involved in the project proposals. In contrast, it was apparent that female non-members had no understanding of Fairtrade premium projects or the Fairtrade system as a whole.

“You know why we needed so long to explain?” the translator commented when we were asking a member’s wife about her opinion and involvement in premium projects. “You have to put it in the context of Sireet because women know Sireet rather than the ‘premium’. Sireet putting up [community projects]. But when you ask these questions from the premium point of view, they wonder what is ‘this premium’. But when you mention Sireet, the identified bursaries, this is something they understand” (Translator during IF11).

This incident suggests Sireet shortcomings in sufficiently informing the community in the structure, procedure, and functions of the Fairtrade premiums, something shared by Dolan (2008) in her study of Kenyan tea farms and Fairtrade. She found that despite almost all farmers being aware of community projects, only about one third participated in their selection. While her findings were not disaggregated by gender, this can be indicative of insufficient information flows from the cooperative structure down to the community. Our findings outline a lack of knowledge surrounding the premiums and the proposal process, which is not disseminated along to the member’s wives. As long as intended beneficiaries are not included in the identification process of premium projects and have no knowledge of the Fairtrade system and its mechanisms, women and men will, according to Nelson & Pound (2009:24), not be empowered through Fairtrade. While there may be many reasons behind this and the lack of active participation of women producers overall, Smith (2013:110) notes that rural women, particularly the older
generation, tend to have less education than men. This inhibits them from engaging in leadership positions and limits their participation in cooperative activities such as trainings and these premium proposal meetings.

In summary, no Fairtrade mechanism has revealed direct impact on gendered involvement in the cooperative. Instead, there is potential of addressing these issues indirectly through the producer organisation. Although cooperatives have the possibility of tackling gender inequalities on these levels, Sireet OEP is largely lacking such initiatives for cooperative participation as measured by the factors of membership, training attendance, participation in the premium selection process, and involvement in leadership positions. Therefore Sireet is found to have very limited impacts on unravelling gender inequalities. In fact, women are restricted from participation in tea production due to the cooperative women’s focus on activities outside tea cultivation and thereby excluded in decision-making roles at the cooperative level.

7. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The purpose of this study was to explore Fairtrade’s indirect and direct gender impact on smallholder tea producers of Sireet OEP cooperative in Nandi Hills, Kenya. Considering the lack of gender inclusive academia in the Fairtrade tea sector, this study aims to, with its application of the Gendered Economy, contribute to an understanding of the Fairtrade gender impacts. The framework presented in this thesis illustrates the inherent complexity of this topic and how interlinked the mechanisms within the Fairtrade system are, resulting in multifaceted gender outcomes.

Through a case study analysis, it was established that Fairtrade standards per se have a limited direct impact on gender roles from the individual to cooperative level. With regards to income and employment opportunities, Fairtrade has a direct positive impact through premiums, especially on women in the community. For household gender dynamics the income increase trickling down to the member’s wife is dependent on the husband and his attitude and appreciation towards women’s work. Especially on this level, Fairtrade standards have a limited impact. On the cooperative level, it is indirectly through the producer organisation’s mechanisms, as an extended arm of the Fairtrade system, that Fairtrade has greater influence on
gender equality. This is highly dependent on the prioritisation and approach of the individual cooperative, which in Sireet’s case is questionable.

Examining the different forms of data looking specifically at membership revealed that the benefits farmers receive through Fairtrade’s various mechanisms are not dependent on the beneficiary’s gender, but rather on whether farmers are members or not. Membership is clearly a factor that influences whether women have direct access to Fairtrade benefits. Nonetheless, membership alone cannot unravel existing gender inequalities, since it is not a mechanism that can tackle gender labour roles or patriarchal structures. On the basis of these results, the question arises how Fairtrade or the cooperative should act upon gender inequalities. Including more female members does not evidently challenge deeply rooted gender roles as they are found in Sireet. It could actually increase women’s burden since they are not exempt from their other duties.

Although the findings indicate a number of gender differentiated Fairtrade impacts among female and male Sireet farmers, it became apparent during the investigation that gender differences were not of central concern to interviewees. From the grounding of our literature review and case studies, we expected to find more concrete indications of women’s hardships and a degree of dissatisfaction with their circumstances. However, this was not the case. This perception can otherwise reflect not merely a level of disregard for ‘gendered issues’ but (cultural) differences in the understanding of ‘gender’ and ‘gender equality’ (Omoyibo & Ajayi 2011:3732). Given that the gender term has been mostly used in Western feminist discourse, when disseminated to the Global South as an analytical tool and policy initiative, it arguably carries a Western bias (Ibid). We realise the potential of being ‘blinded’ by our Western perceptions and understanding of gender equality, and as a result are wary of bringing to the spotlight issues based on our preconceptions of context, which may still be of significance, however in contrasting ways to our initial assumptions. Therefore whether gender roles among the participants are so accepted and culturally embedded that people do not ‘perceive’ or question them, or whether such differences are really not problematic for men and women is an important contextual aspect to look at. Our time in the field, discussions with locals, intensive observations, and to a certain extent the conducted questionnaires, imparts that it is the former that prevails in this particular case.
7.1 Future Research

Studies on Fairtrade’s gender impact do not make a clear distinction between who is a member and who is not. While this study did not set off with the intent to explore Fairtrade’s benefits on members versus non-members, examining these two layers highlighted the importance of membership in creating more equal access to benefits for women. However, further initiatives need to be taken in order to ensure women equal opportunities. More contextualised research of a similar nature is necessary to inform FLO policymakers and cooperatives on such specific initiatives for promoting gender equality, addressing the vulnerabilities that smallholder farmers, particularly women, face in developing countries. It is also a salient aspect for future research whether Fairtrade should be doing more to challenge patriarchal structures and entrenched gender norms where they are found, in order to facilitate lasting impacts on gender equality in the Fairtrade system.
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### APPENDICES

**Appendix I: List of Respondents**

#### FARMERS

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<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Member</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Zone</th>
<th>Interview Type</th>
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### KEY INFORMANTS

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<td>NW</td>
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<td>IS2</td>
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<td>Sireet Chairman</td>
<td>EI, SSI</td>
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<td>Richard</td>
<td>Sireet Tea Factory Chairman</td>
<td>NW</td>
<td>16.1.14</td>
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<tr>
<td>IS4</td>
<td>Mr. Biwot</td>
<td>Sireet Management</td>
<td>EI, SSI</td>
<td>16.1.14</td>
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<td>IS5</td>
<td>Mr. Kemei</td>
<td>Sireet Extension Officer</td>
<td>INFI</td>
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<tr>
<td>IFT1</td>
<td>Ms. Russell</td>
<td>FT Africa M&amp;E Officer</td>
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<table>
<thead>
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<tr>
<td>NW</td>
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<td>Informal Interview</td>
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<td>IF</td>
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<td>Interview Sireet</td>
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<tr>
<td>IFT</td>
<td>Interview Fairtrade</td>
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Appendix II: Interview Guide for Fairtrade Farmers

Introduction: Presenting our research/thesis topic; asking for recording permission and assuring anonymity of interviewees; explaining situation of two researchers: one taking notes, the other guiding the interview; asking if note taking during interviews is ok; asking for verbal consent of participants to participate in the research

Information about the Participants:
Name
Age
Location of farm/zone
Sireet membership
How many people live in your household?

Labour/Roles:
Can you describe an average day of work for you?
What are your main responsibilities?
Do you own the land you work on?
How do you feel your amount of work is too much/too little?
Do you receive support from your partner in your activities?
Are you satisfied with your kind of work and the amount?
If there is one thing you could change (about your work) what would it be?
Can you explain the challenges/difficulties you face?

Household Relations:
Who is responsible for what tasks in your household?
Do you share your income with your spouse?
How do you make decisions regarding your income?
How do you make decisions regarding your household income?
What are your responsibilities in the household like?
Who decides on....?

Involvement in Cooperative:
Do you take part in Sireet trainings/workshops?
Do you feel that you benefit from attending trainings/workshops? Which have been most beneficial?
Why do you think less women are attending trainings/workshops?
Do you take part in Sireet meetings?
Are you involved in the cooperative in any position/activity?
Do you have a leadership position in the cooperative?
Can you tell us about your community activities?
Are you satisfied with the way the cooperative/Fairtrade works?

**Impact of Fairtrade Certification:**
What do you think there are the advantages/disadvantages of being Fairtrade certified?
Has your income increased since Fairtrade participation?
Are there any premium projects you have benefitted from?
How are you involved in the premium projects? In the application process of premium projects?
How do you spend the additional income from the minimum price?
Appendix III: Interview Guide for Cooperative Management

**Producer Organisation’s Profile:**
- What is the mission/vision of Sireet?
- Since when has the cooperative been Fairtrade certified?
- Are there multiple certifications?
- How many members/farmers are in your cooperative?
- How many men/women are members of the cooperative?
- What is the prerequisite of gaining membership?
- How much area do your farms cover?
- Does your cooperative have its own set of values/focus? And what are these?
- How is the cooperative organised? And how are decisions made?
- How does the payment system work in your cooperative?
- What is the land tenure system in your producer organisation?
- What are Fairtrade premiums mostly invested in?
- What are the main trainings the cooperative offers to its members?
- In average, how many women/men attend? For which?

**Gender Initiatives:**
- How much of your tea do you sell to the Fairtrade market/buyers?
- Who are your main Fairtrade buyers? Do they have any policies promoting gender equality/women’s empowerment?
- Do you/have you had any specific gender equality/women empowerment initiatives?
- Has a gender committee been formed in your cooperative?
- Does Fairtrade require any positions to be specifically held by women?
- Do households receive any benefits by registering a female at the cooperative?
- What do you think are the predominant gender issues in producer organisations?
- Do you think gender equality is a significant issue in this context?
- From your experience among the producer organisations, what do you think are the most promising initiatives that promote gender equality on farms?
Appendix IV: Survey Questions for Sireet OEP Farmers

V1. What is your sex? (Wewe ni wa Jinsia gani?)

- Female (Mke)
- Male (Mume)

V2: What is your age in years? (Una miaka mingapi?)

V3: What is your marital status? (Tafadhali taja hali yako ya ndoa?)

- Single (Sijaoa/Sijaolewa)
- Married (Nimeoa/Nimeolewa)
- Divorced/separated (tumewachana)
- Widowed (Nimefiwa na bibi/bwana)

V4: Are you a member at Sireet cooperative? (Je, wewe ni mwanachama wa Sireet cooperative?)

- Yes (Ndio)
- No (La)

V5: Is your spouse a member at Sireet cooperative? (Je, bibi yako au bwana yako ni mwanachama wa Sireet cooperative?)

- Yes (Ndio)
- No (La)
- Not applicable (Hamna jibu)

V6: How many adults and children live in your household and eat together? Count everybody including yourself. (Ni watu wazima wangapi na watoto wangapi ambao huishi kwa nyumba yako ambao mnakula chakula pamoja? Hesabu kila mtu na were

57
**V7: Who is the main breadwinner of your household?** (Sana sana, nani hulisha familia/boma hii)

- [ ] Myself (Mimi)
- [ ] My spouse (Mme/mke/mpenzi wangu)
- [ ] Jointly (Sote pamoja)
- [ ] Other (Jibu nyingine)

**V8: What is your level of education?** (Kiwango chako cha elimu ni?)

- [ ] None (Hakuna)
- [ ] Primary (Primary)
- [ ] Secondary (Secondari)
- [ ] Higher education (Chuo kikuu)

**V9: Do you take part in trainings/workshops in your community?** (Je, unajihusisha na mafunzo za cooperative?)

- [ ] Always (Kila wakati)
- [ ] Almost always (Karibu kila wakati)
- [ ] Sometimes (Wakati mwingine)
- [ ] Hardly ever (Vigumu)
- [ ] Never (Kamwe)

**V10: What are your primary tea farm tasks?** (Unafanya kazi gani shambani?)

- [ ] Picking (Kuchuna)
- [ ] Washing (Kuosha)
- [ ] Weeding (Kupalilia)
- [ ] Drying (Kukausha)
- [ ] Planting (Kupanda)
- [ ] Managing/supervision (Usimamizi)
- [ ] Organisational activity/administration (Ukarani)
**V11**: How many hours on average per day do you spend on farming activities? (Kwa jumla, unatumia masaa mangapi kila siku shambani?)

**V12**: How many hours per day do you spend on household activities? (Kwa jumla, unatumia mda gani kwa kazi za numbani?)

**V13**: When you compare your present economic situation to your situation in 2006, how has the Fairtrade certification affected your economic situation? (Ukilinganisha hali yako ya kiuchumi sasa na mwaka wa 2006, cheti cha Fairtrade kimekusaidia ki-vipi?)

- My situation has improved since 2006 (Nime-imarika)
- My situation has worsened since 2006 (Nimepungukiwa)
- There has been no change since 2006 (Hakuna mabadiliko)
- Don’t know/refused (Sijui)

**V14**: How would you describe your household's economic situation at this point? (Jinsi gani unaweza kuelezea hali ya kiuchumi nyumbani kwako wakati huu?)

- Very poor (Duni sana)
- Poor (Duni)
- Middle (Katikati)
- Upper middle (Katikati wa juu)
- Rich (Tajiri)
- Don’t know/refused (Sijui)

**V15**: Do you feel like your household income has increased since Fairtrade certification? (Je, unahisi mapato yako yameongezeka tangu upate vyeti vya fairtrade?)

- To a large extent (Kabisa)
- Moderately (Kiasi)
- To a small extent (Kidogo tu)
V16: Do you feel like your household income is more stable since Fairtrade certification?

Unaona ni kama mapato yako yameimarika tangu upate vyeti vya Fairtrade?

- To a large extent (Kabisa)
- Moderately (Kiasi)
- To a small extent (Kidogo tu)
- Not at all (Hapana)
- Don’t know/refused (Sijui)

V17: Who decides where the income of your household for food purchase is spent?  
Nani hufanya umamuzi mtakapotumia mapato ya boma yenu kwa kununua chakula?

- I do (Mimi)
- My partner does (Mme/mke/mpenzi wangu)
- Jointly (Sote pamoja)
- Other (Jibu nyingine)

V18: Who decides where the income of your household for purchase of household durables is spent?  
(Nani hufanya umamuzi mtakapotumia mapato ya boma yenu kwa kununua bidhaa za nyumba?)

- I do (Mimi)
- My partner does (mme/mke/mpenzi wangu)
- Jointly (Sote pamoja)
- Other (Jibu nyingine)

V19: Who decides where the income of your household for the education of your children is spent?  
(Nani hufanya umamuzi mtakapotumia mapato ya boma yenu kwa masomo ya watoto wenu?)
V20: Who decides where the income of your household for farming/production needs is spent? (Nani hufanya umamuzi mtakapotumia mapato ya boma yenu kwa mahitaji ya ukulima?)

- I do (Mimi)
- My partner does (Mme/mke/mpenzi wangu)
- Jointly (Sote pamoja)
- Other (Jibu nyingine)
- Not applicable (Jibu haifai)

V21: I feel like I can influence where Fairtrade premiums are spent. (Nahisi naweza kushawishi ni wapi malipo ya Fairtrade yanapotumika.)

- Strongly agree (nakubali kabisa)
- Somewhat agree (nakubali kiasi)
- Somewhat disagree (nakataa kiasi)
- Strongly disagree (nakataa kabisa)
- Don’t know/refused (sijui)

V22: Who owns the land you work on? (Ni nani mwenye ardhi mnapofanya kazi?)

- Myself (Mimi)
- My partner (Mme/mke/mpenzi wangu)
- Jointly (Sote pamoja)
- Relative (Jamaa zangu)
- Other (Jibu nyingine)

V23: Do you have a leadership position in the producer organization? (Je, una
usimamizi wowote katika shirika la wanaofanya ukulima?)

□ Yes (Ndio)
□ No (La)

V24: Do you take part in cooperative meetings? (Je, wewe hushiriki katika mikutano za cooperative?)

□ Always (Kila wakati)
□ Almost always (Karibu kila wakati)
□ Sometimes (Nyakati zingine)
□ Hardly ever (Sio sana)
□ Never (La)
Appendix V: Univariate Results from Quantitative Data – Administered Survey via mSurvey

V1) Gender
   Female: 26 (35%)
   Male: 48 (65%)

V2) Age
   Mean: 36 years

V3) Marital Status
   Married: 73%
   Single: 27%
   Divorced: 0%
   Widowed: 0%

V4) Sireet membership
   Yes: 100%
   No: 0%

V5) Is your spouse a member
   Yes: 50%
   No: 28.4%
   Not applicable: 21.6%

V8) Education
   None: 2.7%
   Primary: 17.6%
   Secondary: 56.8%
V14) Current Economic Situation
   Very poor: 5.4%
   Poor: 8.1%
   Middle: 52.7%
   Upper middle: 21.6%
   Rich: 12.2%

V17) Decision Food Purchase - coded
   Female: 14.9%
   Male: 25.7%
   Jointly: 58.1%
   Other: 1.4%

V18) Decision Household Durables - coded
   Female: 16.2%
   Male: 24.3%
   Jointly: 59.5%
   Other: 0%

V19) Decision Education of Children - coded
   Female: 8.2%
   Male: 23%
   Jointly: 66%
   Other: 1.4%

V20) Decision Farming Needs - coded
   Female: 16.2%
   Male: 32.4%
Jointly: 51.4%

V22) **Land Ownership** – coded

- Female: 14.9%
- Male: 45.9%
- Jointly: 23%
- Relative: 14.9%
- Other: 1.4%
Appendix VI: Bivariate Results from Quantitative Data – Administered Survey via mSurvey

V1 (Gender) – V9 (Participation in Sireet trainings); Chi square test: 0.851

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chi-Square Tests</th>
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<th>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</th>
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How often do you take part in Sireet trainings/workshops?

<table>
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<th>Number of Respondents</th>
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<td>never</td>
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<tr>
<td>hardly ever</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sometimes</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>almost always</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>always</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>always</td>
<td>16</td>
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The diagram shows the distribution of responses to the question about the frequency of attendance at Sireet trainings/workshops, with responses categorized as never, hardly ever, sometimes, almost always, and always. The data is further broken down by gender, with male responses indicated by blue bars and female responses by red bars.
**V1 (Gender) – V10 (Main Tea Activity); Chi square test: 0.062**

### Chi-Square Tests

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### What tasks do you mostly do as a tea farmer?

![Bar chart showing the number of respondents for different tea production tasks by gender](chart.png)

- **Picking**: 24 female, 14 male
- **Managing and Supervising**: 11 female, 4 male
- **Weeding**: 7 female, 2 male
- **Administration**: 4 female, 1 male
- **Planting**: 3 female, 0 male
- **Washing**: 2 female, 0 male
- **Other**: 2 female, 0 male

---

*Note: The chart illustrates the number of respondents for each task, categorized by gender.*
V1 (Gender) – V13 (Comparison Economic Situation before/after Fairtrade); Chi square test: 0.492

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V1 (Gender) – V15 (Income Increase since Fairtrade); Chi square test: 0.371

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V1 (Gender) – V16 (Income more Stable since Fairtrade); Chi square test: 0.485

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V1 (Gender) – V23 (Leadership Position); Chi square test: 0.298

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