

**CONTRIBUTIONS OF COFFEE MARKETING COOPERATIVES  
TOWARDS MEMBERS' LIVELIHOOD IMPROVEMENT IN ETHIOPIA –  
AN EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS**

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**ABSTRACT**

The main objective of the study was to assess the contributions of coffee marketing cooperative societies towards members' livelihood improvement in Yirgachefe District. Descriptive and survey research methods were deployed. Primary data was collected from the members of sample coffee marketing cooperatives through structured questionnaire. A sample of 151 member respondents was selected randomly for the study. The findings of the study show that except human capital development, coffee cooperatives have contributed significantly on the development of social capital, financial capital, natural capital and physical capital. The results of binary logistic regression show that family income, processing service, agricultural input services, fair trade premium and additional employment were the prominent determinants of members' livelihood improvement.

**Keywords:** Contribution, Coffee marketing cooperatives, livelihood improvement, Yirgachefe

**INTRODUCTION**

In Ethiopia, Cooperatives societies play a pivotal role in the free market economy by supporting community in mobilizing limited resource together and strengthening the bargaining power of small holder producer to improve their livelihood. For the last two decades, Ethiopia has been paying due attention on the cooperative sector to be one of the main stakeholders for the growth and transformation plan. Nonetheless, still there are ample unmet demands to be fulfilled for the sustainable growth and development of cooperatives in the country (FCA, 2017). According to FCA report dated as of December 30/2016; the number of primary cooperative societies are 79,636, the membership size is 11,297,713 male & 4,581,789 (28.85%) female total 15,879,502 members, amount of capital & savings is 16,093,833,443.00 Birr and 8.5 billion Birr respectively. The types of cooperative society also highly diversified. The number of cooperative unions is 370, with affiliated primary cooperative societies of 14,996 and with capital Birr

3,470,626,555.00. Additionally 4 cooperative federations are organized and functioned in 3 regions. Currently, the capital of cooperative society in the country has reached Birr 19.56 billion (FCA, 2017).

From a livelihood perspective, different types of cooperatives mediate the access of their members to assets that they utilize to earn a living. For instance, while savings and credit cooperatives facilitate their members' access to financial capital, agricultural multipurpose cooperatives help farmers to get access to the inputs they require to grow crops and keep livestock, and then help them to process and market their produce. Similarly, consumer cooperatives make it possible for their members and the society at large to get access to household supplies like food, clothing, and other products (Birchall, 2004). Such services ultimately help members to improve on their living conditions, thereby pulling some of them out of poverty. What is not clearly understood is whether coffee cooperatives in Ethiopia, particularly after the liberalization of the sector, have lived up to this expectation. This warrants to have an in depth investigation on the contributions of coffee marketing cooperatives in enhancing the livelihood of members.

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

In Ethiopia, several coffee farmers cooperative have been established to support peasants who are handicapped by their lack of negotiating power in the national and global economy. Coffee cooperatives have brought benefits to coffee farmers by providing a new marketing channel. The dividends are appreciated by farmers and have encouraged farmers to improve the quality of their coffee (Kodama, Y., 2007 as cited in Muhabie, 2012).

Nonetheless, the rural poor in developing countries like Ethiopia are often at a competitive disadvantage in the wider economy because of persistent market, state and institutional failures. For example, smallholders may face difficulties in selling their small agricultural surpluses because of the prohibitively high transactions costs incurred in assembling, transporting and marketing these surpluses (Bernard, T., et al., 2007). Smallholders may be unable to access necessary public sector services needed to sustain and improve their livelihoods—services such as input supply, output marketing, credit provision, or conflict mediation—because the state's infrastructure is insufficiently responsive to their needs. Smallholders may also face long-term difficulties in managing scarce common-pool resources because local socio-economic institutions like cooperatives fail to emerge and establish commonly-accepted systems to govern the resources' use and to resolve conflicts. Keeping the above in view, the contributions of coffee marketing cooperatives in enhancing the livelihood of members is an important element of Ethiopia's development program, and thus deserves an in-depth attention and analysis.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

There are few studies that can be mentioned as source of information on the contributions of cooperatives in Ethiopia. Francesconi and Heerink (2010) found that marketing cooperatives have smallholder commercialization impact. Bernard et al. (2008) recognized the potential contribution of smallholder cooperatives to agricultural production and marketable surpluses in rural Ethiopia and, in the long run, to overall agricultural development, economic growth and poverty reduction in the country. However, the need for a range of additional and innovative policies and investments is emphasized. According to Tiegist (2008), grain producers' cooperatives played an important role in providing Ethiopian farmers with better prices by reducing seasonal price fluctuations and by stabilizing the local grain markets in favour of the producers. Francesconi and Ruben (2007) found that dairy farmers in Ethiopia perform better under cooperatives than otherwise in terms of quantitative indicators such as herd size, productivity and market access. Based on a case study on the coffee farmers' cooperatives, Myers (2004) concluded that cooperatives helped to successfully position Ethiopian smallholder farmers in the international coffee market. Cooperatives have significantly contributed for poverty reduction and food security by allowing the possibility for income generation from employment opportunities. The employment impacts could be direct and indirect. Nonetheless, studies assessing the contributions of coffee cooperatives in the study area are scanty and hence the present study.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The following are the specific objectives of the study:

1. To assess the contributions of coffee marketing cooperatives on improvement of members' livelihood with respect to development of human capital, social capital, financial capital, physical capital, and natural capital and
2. To examine the factors determining members' livelihood improvement.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Both descriptive and survey method of researches had been employed to assess the contributions of coffee marketing cooperatives on members' livelihood improvement. Data for this study was gathered from primary sources which include members of selected coffee marketing cooperatives, board of directors and Cooperatives experts working at Woreda level. There are seven primary coffee marketing cooperative societies out of which three cooperatives were selected as study units by using simple random sampling technique. According to the records of the selected primary coffee marketing cooperatives, the total number of members was 832. By

using Yamane (1967) sample size determination formula, 164 members were selected as sample population. The determined sample size was distributed in proportion to the population size of three selected coffee marketing cooperatives. However, out of 164 questionnaires distributed to the sample respondents, only 151 respondents were returned the filled in questionnaire and thus the total sample population of the study was 151. In addition to member respondents, three board of directors from three cooperatives and four cooperative experts in the Woreda were selected purposively. Tools used for data collection includes structured questionnaire, key informant interview and focus group discussion. Descriptive Statistical tools such as frequency and percentage were used for analyzing the contributions of coffee cooperatives towards members' livelihood improvement. Inferential statistical tool viz., Binary Logistic Regression model was used to analyze the factors determining the members' livelihood improvement. The qualitative data collected from the cooperative experts and the board of directors were supplemented and substantiated with the survey results.

### **5.1: Variables' description, definition and measurement**

The description, definition and measurement of dependent and independent variables are described here under.

#### **Dependent variable**

The dependent variable in this study is members' livelihood improvement, a dichotomous nature, which takes the value 1 if improved and 0 otherwise.

#### **Independent Variables**

The variables that were assumed to determine members' livelihood improvement are discussed below.

**Better family income:** It is dummy variable that takes a value 1 if the members of coffee marketing cooperative have generated better income through the services of cooperatives and 0 otherwise. It is assumed that high amount of income generated from coffee sales had positive impact on member's livelihood.

**Processing service:** It is a dummy variable that takes value 1 if the members have access to processing of coffee from their cooperatives and 0 otherwise.

**Price of coffee bean:** This is a dummy variable taking a value of 1 if price of the coffee bean given by the cooperatives to the members lucrative or 0 otherwise. If the cooperative declare price better than the other marketing agents, the member will be satisfied both with the price

received and future dividend payment if the cooperative makes profit. Therefore, cooperative price coffee determines the members' livelihood positively.

**Transportation Access:** It is dummy variable that takes a value 1 if the members' have access for transportation and 0 otherwise. The availability of transport network and commercial vehicles is an important element for the speedy movement of agricultural produce.

**Fair trade premium:** It is a dummy variable that takes value 1 if the members received fair trade premium or 0 otherwise. Fair trade premium is an additional sum of money which goes into a communal fund for farmers to use to improve social, economic and environmental conditions.

**Fair market:** It is dummy variable that takes a value 1 if members of coffee marketing cooperative have fair market in order to sell their coffee and 0 otherwise.

**Agricultural input:** It is dummy variable that takes a value 1 if members of coffee marketing cooperative had access to buy agricultural inputs from cooperatives with low cost and 0 otherwise.

**Dividend:** It is a dummy variable that takes value 1 if the farmers received dividend for their business patronage or 0 otherwise. Payment of dividend to members for their business patronage is mandatory for the cooperatives as per by law and cooperative proclamation when the society earns profit. Hence payment of dividend is assumed to have positive sign on the livelihood improvement of members.

**Adoption of Modern technology:** It is dummy a variable that takes a value 1 if the members of coffee marketing cooperative have adopted modern farming techniques and 0 otherwise.

**Additional employment:** It is dummy variable that takes a value 1 if the members of coffee marketing cooperative have created additional job opportunity for him and for the family members and 0 otherwise.

**Grading and standardization:** It is a dummy variable that takes value 1 if the members have received the grading and standardization services or 0 otherwise.

**THE EMPIRICAL RESULTS**

**6.1: Contributions of coffee marketing cooperatives on members’ livelihood improvement**

**Table 1: Human capital development through provision of skill development training**

Human capital indicators (After membership)	No. of respondents (n=151)			
	Freq.		%	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Improved coffee collection method	130	21	86.0	14.0
Upgraded skill on coffee processing	103	48	68.0	32.0
Developed skill on grading of coffee	92	59	61.0	39.0
Improved coffee farming system	94	57	62.0	38.0
Improved practicing of shade grown coffee	146	05	96.7	03.0
Enhanced coffee farming size	100	51	66.0	34.0

*Source: Field survey, 2017*

It is evident from the table 1 that as high as 96.7 % of the respondents opined that they have been practicing shade grown coffee with the support of coffee marketing cooperatives. As much as 86% of the respondents opined that there is an improvement in the coffee collection method through the intervention of coffee marketing cooperatives. More than 60% of the respondents agreed that they have upgraded skill on coffee processing, improved coffee farming system and enhanced coffee farming size. This finding indicates that coffee marketing cooperatives in the study area have been contributing to human capital development through education and training to its members to augment production and productivity. Through education and training members’ knowledge, skills, experiences and commitments are boosted up to carry out their agricultural operations successfully. Thus it may be stated that coffee marketing cooperatives have contributed significantly on human capital development.

**Table 2: Social capital development through participation in cooperatives**

Social capital indicators (After membership)	No. of respondents (n=151)			
	Freq.		%	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Participation in board election?	103	48	68.2	31.8
Attending annual general assembly meeting?	145	06	96.1	03.9
Participation in approval of annual plan	86	65	57.0	43.0
Participation in approval of annual report	86	65	57.0	43.0
Participation in approval of audit report	86	65	57.0	43.0
Raising voices and opinion in general assembly	63	88	41.7	58.3
Contestant in board election	33	118	21.9	78.1
Served as board/committee member	-	151	-	100.0

*Source: Field survey, 2017*

A cursory look at the table 2 reveals that as much as 96.1% of the respondents had attended the general assembly meeting conducted annually. Similarly, 68.2% of them had participated in the election of board of directors. It is distressing to note that although 21.9% of the respondents contested in the cooperatives election, none of them served as board members. More than 50% of the respondents didn't raise their voices and opinions in the general assembly with regard to issues of cooperatives. Further, though 96 % of the respondents were sincere in attending general assembly, their participation in approval of annual plan, audit report and annual report is not up to the expectation. This shows that nearly half of the respondents show up their physical participation and their mental participation is found to be moderate. Thus, coffee marketing cooperatives have contributed moderately on developing social capital. Members of cooperatives are supposed to participate in the decision making process, but the result indicates that their participation in planning and matters pertaining to management of financial resources (audit and annual reports) is moderate and thus the contribution of coffee marketing cooperatives towards social capital development is moderate.

**Table 3: Contribution to physical capital development**

Physical capital indicators (After membership)	No. of respondents (n=151)			
	Freq.		%	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Purchased own house site	26	125	17.2	82.8
Constructed own house	33	118	22.0	78.0
Repaired the dwelling house	83	68	55.0	45.0
Purchased agricultural machinery	11	140	07.3	92.7
Purchased gold ornaments	79	72	52.3	47.7
Purchased household articles/appliances	93	58	61.6	38.4
Purchased motor cycle	36	115	23.8	76.2
Purchased tractor	-	-	-	-

*Source: Field survey, 2017*

A close look at the table 3 shows that members of coffee marketing cooperatives in the study area were able to generate physical assets such as household appliances (61.36%), made repair of the dwelling house (55.0%) and purchased gold ornaments (52.3%). Between 22 and 24 percent of the respondents were able to construct own house and had motor cycle. Very few (17.2%) of the respondents had purchased own house site for building house in future. None of them own tractors. Agricultural machinery which is very important for soothing the agricultural operations, the survey result shows that as high as 92.7% of the respondents do not possess agricultural machinery. This finding indicates that no doubt coffee marketing cooperatives have contributed for generating physical capital among their members to some extent especially purchase of household appliances, gold ornaments and repair of existing house which are highly essential in the day to day affairs of the family. Making investment in gold ornaments may sometimes help the farmers at times of financial scarcity. It is quite obvious for the farmers to have house in a better condition and furnished with necessary household appliances which may assist them to contribute a lot in the agricultural field.

It is distressing to note that farmers in the study area couldn't possess agricultural machinery owing to capital inadequacy. Moreover, land size of the farmers in the study area is found to be small and hence they might not have given due importance to invest in agricultural machinery. This indicates that coffee marketing cooperatives in the study area have contributed to some extent as regards generation of physical capital for livelihood improvement of their members.



Key informant interview with the cooperatives experts reveals that the degree of success of the coffee marketing cooperative in helping farmers marketing a significant percentage of their own products that of coffee is unprecedented in Ethiopia and vastly exceeded expectations. Focused on coffee which, despite the low prices of a few years ago, offered real potential for dramatic increases in farmer income through a combination of better marketing and quality improvement at all stages, from production to on-farm and local processing to bulking and export. The increase in volume is attributable to increased membership in unions and affiliated primary cooperatives as well as purchases from farmers not currently affiliated with the movement. Quality also improved through interventions by multipurpose cooperative on both production and processing.

Interview with the board of directors shows that as their financial positions improve, primary coffee marketing cooperative societies and cooperative unions have begun to build or otherwise acquire warehouses, office facilities, and equipment (trucks, processing machinery, etc). Cooperative societies have built small warehouses and sub market structure mostly with local mud and wattle walls but with roofs made of iron sheets and in some cases with cement floors. These warehouses and sub market structure are adequate for short-term storage, which is all most primary societies do at present, but are often too small for the increasing volume of product and not appropriate for longer-term storage for holding products until prices improve.

**Table 4: Contribution to financial capital development**

Financial capital indicators (After membership)	No. of respondents (n=151)			
	Freq.		%	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Sale of coffee with fair market price	82	69	54.3	45.7
Increase in annual net profit	67	84	44.4	56.6
Increase in family income	54	97	35.7	64.3
Increasing saving	59	92	39.0	61.0
Engage additional employment for myself and family	69	82	45.7	54.3
Increase in accumulation of productive assets	66	85	43.7	62.3
Improvement in production/consumption goods	54	97	35.7	64.3

*Source: Field survey, 2017*

A cursory look at the table 4 reveals that more than half (54.3%) of the respondents opined that they have been selling their coffee beans with fair market price. Between 62 and 64 percent of the respondents opined that there is no improvement in terms family income, production/consumption goods, productive assets and saving. Nearly 46 percent of the respondents opined that they are engaging additional employment for themselves and family. This finding indicates that on an average 55 percent of the respondents opined that there is no improvement in their financial capital which is distressing state of affairs. It is quite obvious that majority of the farmers are involved in agricultural operations for bread and butter. Owing to the small land size coupled with inadequate physical capital farmers in the study area were unable to augment their financial capital amidst the intervention of coffee marketing cooperatives. Thus, it may be stated that the contribution of coffee marketing cooperatives in financial capital development is found to be moderate.

**Table 5: Contribution to natural capital development**

Natural capital development indicators (After membership)	No. of respondents (n=151)			
	Freq.		%	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Purchased land for cultivation	78	73	51.6	48.4
Purchased cattle asset	56	95	37.0	63.0
Purchased milk animal	13	138	08.6	91.4
Having own irrigation	37	114	24.5	75.5
Planted tree for coffee shade and soil conservation	143	08	94.7	05.3

*Source: Field survey, 2017*

As far as natural capital development indicators are concerned, the survey result as depicted in table 5 shows that as high as 94.7% of the respondents had planted tree in order to give shade for coffee plants and soil conservation which would definitely help improving coffee production and at the same time gives due concern for environment protection. More than half (51.6%) of the respondents had purchased land for cultivation. It is interesting to note that nearly one fourth of the respondents had their own irrigation system. Dairying (milk animal) as subsidiary occupation among the members of coffee marketing cooperatives is found insignificant. Nonetheless, 37% of the respondents had purchased cattle assets. This finding indicates that most of the members of coffee cooperatives had showed due attention to tree plantation for paving shade to coffee plant and soil conservation and purchased additional land for cultivation. Thus, it may be stated

that coffee marketing cooperatives had contributed to some extent on natural capital development.

**Factors determining members’ livelihood improvement**

**Table 6: Factors determining members’ livelihood improvement - Binary logistic regression**

<b>Independent variables</b>	$\beta$	S.E.	Wald	Df	Sig.	Exp ( $\beta$ )
Better family income	1.841	.444	17.197	1	.000*	6.303
Processing service	1.201	.464	6.705	1	.010**	3.322
Price of coffee bean	.059	.466	.016	1	.899	1.061
Access to transportation	.488	.440	1.229	1	.268	1.629
Fair trade premium	1.057	.451	5.490	1	.019**	2.877
Fair market	.247	.449	.304	1	.582	1.280
Agricultural input	1.079	.443	5.949	1	.015**	2.943
Dividend	.618	.473	1.705	1	.192	1.855
Adoption of modern technology	.361	.466	.599	1	.439	1.434
Additional employment	2.092	0.790	7.021	1	0.008*	8.104
Grading and standardization	-0.953	0.602	2.509	1	0.113	0.386
Constant	-3.259	.640	25.893	1	.000	.038
Nagelkerke R- Square = 0.878						
Note: * and ** indicate significance at 0.01 and 0.05 probability level respectively						

Table 6 above revealed that the fitted logistic regression model has explained 0.655= 65.5% of the variability in the dependent variable of study (livelihood improvement). The P-value from the likelihood ratio test is equal to 0.000 < 0.05. This shows that the predictor variables used in the logistic regression model were jointly efficient in explaining the members’ livelihood improvement.

Among 11 independent variables used in the model, five variables were found to be statistically significant. This implies that they do have a significant effect on the members’ livelihood improvement by their respective cooperative economic contributions. These variables include: better family income, processing service, fair trade premium, agricultural input and additional

employment. However, the remaining predictor variables were not statistically significant to determine the livelihood improvement of members at 5% level of probability.

***Better family income:*** This variable is highly contributing for improving the livelihood of members of coffee marketing cooperatives. The result of the model shows that other variables remain constant, a birr increase in family income of members through the intervention of cooperatives increases the odds of livelihood improvement of patron-members by 6 times (OR =6.303 and P value of .000 significant at .01 level). This implies studied cooperatives were performing well in augmenting family income of their members. The income provided by cooperatives could be in the form of offering better prices for members' supply of red and sundry cherry, dividends, wages and different incentives.

***Processing service:*** This variable does have its significant influence on the members' livelihood improvement. The result of the model shows that other variables remain constant, a unit increase in processing service of cooperatives increases the odds of livelihood improvement of members by three times (OR=3.222 and P value of .010 significant at .05 level). It is justified that processing leads value addition to the product which would definitely fetch better price for the produces of members. This ultimately leads to the improvement of members' livelihood.

***Fair trade premium:*** The model result shows that fair trade premium is one of the important determinant variables on members' livelihood improvement. The results of the model shows that a unit increase in fair trade premium increases the odds of members' livelihood improvement by 2.877 times (OR 2.877 and value of .0419 significant at .05 level). The result is aligned with the conclusion of (Bäckman, T., 2009) who found that fair-trade premium does bring economic benefits to farmers by making price of fair-trade coffee higher than that of conventional coffee, enabling farmers to receive a premium that is to be invested in furthering coffee production.

***Agricultural input:*** This variable is one of the important determinants of members' livelihood improvement. The result of the model shows that other variables remain constant, a unit increase in agricultural input services, increases the odds of livelihood improvement of members by 2.943 times (OR=2.943 and P value of .015 significant at .05 level). It is justified that agricultural input is one of the major contributors in augmenting coffee production.

***Additional employment:*** Coffee marketing cooperatives provide not only direct employment, but also self-employment, indirect and induced employment. For example, coffee cooperatives maintain farmers' ability to be self-employed given that for many farmers the fact that they are members of a cooperative and derive income from the services, allows them to continue to farm and contribute to rural development. And in both urban and rural contexts, the impact of coffee marketing cooperatives in providing income to members creates additional employment through

multiplier effects including enabling other enterprises to grow and in turn provide local jobs – the indirect employment capacity of cooperatives. Similarly, the study result employing the above model depicts that employment had a direct and significant influence on members' livelihood improvement. As employment provision by cooperatives increases by one unit, the members livelihood will increase by around 8.1 times [OR = 8.104, and P value of .008 significant at .01 level).

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the study findings, it may be concluded that the coffee marketing cooperatives have significantly contributed towards members' livelihood improvement on social capital, financial capital, natural capital and physical capital development except human capital development. Overall, no doubt, coffee marketing cooperatives in the study area has contributed its level best to improve the livelihood status of the members by offering multifaceted services. Nonetheless, the societies in general and the members in particular need to concentrate on overcoming the problems in relation to finance, management of cooperatives, participation, service delivery, accountability and transparency.

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were forwarded to maximize the contributions of coffee marketing cooperatives in the study area.

1. Coffee marketing cooperative societies need to pave much attention to develop human capital through consistent training programs on entrepreneurial activities, skill development, adoption of on farm and off farm technology, farmers' tour for experience sharing which would definitely help the farmers to increase the production and farm income to lead better standard of living.
2. The contribution of coffee marketing cooperatives in developing social capital is found to be moderate and hence the societies need to encourage the members to evince keen and active participation not only in the business affairs but also in the decision making process. Members need to be motivated to express their views, opinions and suggestions in relation to annual plan design and approval.
3. The contribution of coffee marketing cooperatives in developing physical capital was found to be moderate and hence the societies need to extend its support to the members to develop physical capital such as agricultural machinery and equipment to augment coffee production.
4. The societies in the study area need to take steps to develop natural capital in the form of irrigation projects, environment protection and coping mechanism to the severity of climate change through long term projects.
5. Members of coffee marketing cooperatives should be assured with provision of dividend annually to maximize their participation.

6. Coffee production needs finance for long term and medium term and hence the societies need to arrange medium term and long term credit facilities to farmers in collaboration with Development Bank of Ethiopia.

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