

IMPACT SHEET: Sustainable Production and Ethic Responsible & Women Empowered Coffee Value Chains (SuPER WE Coffee)

Growing Sustainable Coffee, Empowering Women



The SuPER WE Coffee Project helped coffee farming communities in Dakcheung District, Sekong Province, Lao PDR, improve coffee quality, adopt environmentally sustainable production practices, strengthen market access, and empower women to lead more resilient and inclusive coffee value chains.



PROJECT BACKGROUND

The EU funded SWITCH-Asia SuPER WE Coffee Project was implemented from March 2022 to June 2026 in Dakcheung District, Sekong Province, Lao PDR, one of the country's major coffee-growing areas. Co-funded by the European Union under the SWITCH-Asia Programme, the project worked with coffee farming communities, local authorities, producer groups, cooperatives, and private sector partners to promote sustainable coffee production, strengthen women's economic empowerment, improve coffee quality, increase access to specialty markets, and encourage environmentally responsible practices across the coffee value chain.

CHALLENGE

Coffee farmers in Dakcheung faced multiple challenges that limited productivity, income, and long-term sustainability. Traditional coffee processing methods required large amounts of water, labour, and single-use plastic drying tunnels, resulting in inconsistent coffee quality and environmental impacts. Limited technical knowledge, weak market linkages, and the absence of strong producer organizations reduced farmers' access to higher-value specialty markets. Women—particularly those from ethnic minority communities—had fewer opportunities to participate in decision-making, leadership, training, and economic activities within the coffee value chain. The project was designed to address these interconnected environmental, economic, and social challenges through sustainable production practices, cooperative development, improved market access, and gender-transformative approaches.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The SuPER WE Coffee Project promoted sustainable and inclusive coffee value chains by improving coffee quality, strengthening producer organizations, increasing women's economic empowerment, and encouraging environmentally responsible production and market competitiveness.

The specific objectives include:

- To improve sustainable coffee production and processing practices.
- To strengthen women's leadership and economic empowerment.
- To enhance producers' access to specialty coffee markets.
- To build resilient producer organizations and cooperatives.
- To promote environmentally sustainable and climate-resilient coffee value chains.

TARGET GROUPS

- Smallholder coffee farming households in Dakcheung District.
- Women coffee producers and women-led producer groups.
- Coffee producer organizations and the Dakcheung Coffee Cooperative.
- Local government agencies, extension officers, and private-sector coffee buyers.

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Sustainable Coffee Production

The project strengthened sustainable coffee production by introducing improved cultivation and post-harvest processing practices, including Farmer Field Schools, resource-efficient washing machines, permanent drying sheds, composting, shade tree promotion, and improved quality management. These interventions reduced water use, improved coffee quality, lowered labour requirements, and encouraged environmentally responsible production practices.

Women's Empowerment and Market Development

The project applied CARE's gender-transformative approach to increase women's participation in decision-making, leadership, entrepreneurship, and financial literacy. It supported producer groups and cooperative development, strengthened business and governance capacities, facilitated market linkages with domestic and specialty coffee buyers, promoted the Dak Cheung coffee brand, and showcased project achievements through trade fairs, knowledge sharing, and strategic partnerships.



LESSONS LEARNED

The SuPER WE Coffee Project was implemented in remote, mountainous villages with limited infrastructure, making travel, coordination, and the transportation of equipment challenging. Farmers also had varying levels of technical knowledge, and some proposed interventions—such as biochar production, a quality laboratory, and a Training of Trainers model—proved less suitable for local conditions. In addition, women, particularly from ethnic minority communities, faced barriers to participating in decision-making and accessing economic opportunities.

To address these challenges, the project adapted its implementation approach based on field evidence and continuous learning. It replaced the Training of Trainers model with participatory Farmer Field Schools, prioritized practical green technologies that reduced labour while improving coffee quality, strengthened producer networking and cooperative development, and applied CARE's gender-transformative approach to increase women's participation in training, leadership, and decision-making. These adaptive measures improved the relevance, effectiveness, and sustainability of project interventions.

Sustainable agricultural innovations are most successful when they provide immediate benefits for farmers while protecting natural resources. The project demonstrated that participatory learning, locally appropriate technologies, strong producer organizations, and women's leadership are essential for lasting change. Continuous adaptation based on evidence and close collaboration with communities and partners helped ensure that project interventions remained practical, scalable, and responsive to local needs.

PROJECT ACHIEVEMENT

The SuPER WE Coffee Project strengthened sustainable coffee value chains by improving production practices, empowering women, promoting environmentally responsible coffee processing, strengthening producer organizations, and expanding market opportunities for smallholder coffee farmers in Dakcheung District.

- Reached indirect 4463 and direct 702 coffee farming households across **15 villages**.
- Supported 17 producer groups / 1 cooperative with 235 members.
- Reduced water use from **4,000 L to 2,500 L per 1,000 kg** of harvested coffee cherries.
- Installed 15 Coffee Pulper Machine, 18 Coffee Demucilager Machines and 47 permanent drying sheds.
- Trained 702 farmers, including 409 women.
- Strengthened market access through branding, trade fairs, and buyer linkages.
- Increased women's participation in leadership and cooperative governance.





The SuPER WE Coffee Project has shown that sustainable coffee production is about more than improving coffee quality. It is about empowering women, strengthening communities, protecting the environment, and creating opportunities for farmers to access better markets. The dedication of our partners, local authorities, and coffee farming communities has laid a strong foundation for a more sustainable and resilient coffee sector in Lao PDR.

Song Chanthavongsa

Provincial Manager, CARE International in Lao PDR



“Before joining the project, we produced coffee using traditional methods and had limited access to markets. Through the training, improved processing technologies, and support from the project, we learned how to produce better-quality coffee and work together through our cooperative. Today, we are more confident, women participate more in decision-making, and we believe our coffee has a brighter future.”

Keonavanh, Coffee farmer and project beneficiary, Dakcheung District, Sekong Province

Long-term project sustainability

The SuPER WE Coffee Project established a strong foundation for long-term sustainability by strengthening producer organizations, supporting the development of the Dakcheung Coffee Cooperative, and building the technical and business capacities of coffee farmers. Resource-efficient technologies, including improved washing machines and permanent drying sheds, together with Farmer Field Schools and practical training, have equipped farmers with the knowledge and infrastructure needed to continue producing high-quality specialty coffee beyond the project period.

To sustain project outcomes, the cooperative will continue strengthening market linkages, promoting the Dak Cheung coffee brand, and improving quality assurance and business management. Ongoing collaboration with government agencies, private sector partners, and Fairtrade organizations will support access to premium markets, while continued investment in equipment maintenance, traceability, women's leadership, and environmentally sustainable farming practices will help ensure lasting economic, social, and environmental benefits.

Project contributions to Climate Change Mitigation and SDGs

The project contributed directly to [SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production](#) by promoting resource-efficient coffee production and environmentally responsible processing practices. Improved washing machines reduced water consumption, permanent drying sheds eliminated annual plastic waste from traditional drying tunnels, and composting, shade tree promotion, and improved soil management encouraged more sustainable use of natural resources while enhancing coffee quality. Beyond SDG 12, the project strengthened climate resilience by promoting sustainable land management, biodiversity conservation, and practices that reduce pressure on forest expansion. Through CARE's gender-transformative approach, it also advanced women's economic empowerment and inclusive decision-making, demonstrating how sustainable agriculture can generate environmental protection, resilient livelihoods, and inclusive rural development.

While the SuPER WE Coffee Project directly supports SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), its impacts extend across multiple Sustainable Development Goals. By improving coffee productivity, quality, and market access, the project contributes to [SDG 1](#) (No Poverty) and [SDG 8](#) (Decent Work and Economic Growth) through increased livelihood opportunities for smallholder coffee farming households. The project also advances [SDG 5](#) (Gender Equality) by strengthening women's leadership, entrepreneurship, financial literacy, and participation in producer groups and cooperatives. The promotion of sustainable coffee production, water-efficient processing technologies, composting, shade-grown coffee, and biodiversity-friendly farming contributes to [SDG 6](#) (Clean Water and Sanitation), [SDG 13](#) (Climate Action), and [SDG 15](#) (Life on Land) by reducing resource use, protecting ecosystems, and improving climate resilience. Through collaboration with government agencies, research institutions, producer organizations, Fairtrade partners, and private sector actors, the project also supports [SDG 17](#) (Partnerships for the Goals) by fostering long-term cooperation for sustainable coffee sector development in Lao PDR.

Impacts at a Glance

Economic Impact	• 44% average revenue increase per producer. • The project demonstrates a significant expansion of the green product portfolio, moving from virtually no documented green technologies/specialty-coffee production at baseline to 500 adopters, 163.24 tons of specialty-quality coffee, 100% specialty-grade scoring among target producers. • Improved access to specialty coffee markets, stronger market linkages with domestic buyers, increased visibility through trade fairs and branding.
Environmental Impact	• 38% reduction in water usage, from 4,000 litres to 2,500 litres per 1,000 kg of harvested coffee cherries. • Permanent drying sheds reduced plastic waste. • Reduced wastewater through water-efficient washing machines.
Social Impact	• The construction of 47 drying houses improved occupational safety, particularly for women involved in post-harvest handling. • The project strengthened employment opportunities through processing centers, cooperative establishment, and coffee value-addition activities. • Youth from all target villages actively participated in all major project activities, including training, Farmer Field Schools, coffee production and processing, cooperative development, exchange visits, market promotion, and community events, helping build the next generation of skilled and sustainable coffee producers.
Climate Benefits	• Promoted shade-tree planting to improve resilience. • Encouraged sustainable land management. • Strengthened biodiversity-friendly coffee production practices. • Improved coffee quality through climate-smart processing technologies.
Green Finance	• Facilitated linkages between coffee producer groups, cooperatives, buyers, and private sector partners. • The project strengthened cooperative governance and business capacity to improve future access to commercial opportunities and sustainable investment.
Target Group Engagement	• 6 coffee buying and exporting companies in the needs assessment engaged. • 10 key market entities (exporters, cooperatives, banks, coffee businesses) during the market assessment and business matching activities. • Participation of more than 45 domestic and international exhibitors at the Sekong Provincial Fair, national level and regional level in Thailand and Sri Lanka including private-sector actors.
Policy Development	• The SuPER WE Coffee Project maintained strong engagement with policymakers through more than 15 policy dialogue and coordination events throughout the period. • The project further strengthened policy engagement through Implementation Management Committee (IMC) meetings and high-level discussions with the Ministry of Agriculture and Environment, the Provincial Agriculture and Environment Office, and the Dakcheung District Governor on issues related to sustainable coffee production and the potential impacts of bauxite mining on coffee-growing communities. • The project contributed to policy dialogue, cooperative development discussions, sustainable coffee production recommendations, gender-responsive value chain promotion, and the National Coffee Workshop.
Europe-Asia Cooperation	• Close collaboration with the EU Delegation to Lao PDR and the SWITCH-Asia Programme. • Joint participation in the National Coffee Workshop. • Participation in World of Coffee Bangkok and international coffee events. • Joint communication and visibility activities through SWITCH-Asia and EU platforms.



FUNDING

EUR 2,000,000
(EU Contribution: 90%)



DURATION

March 2022 - June 2026



PARTNERS



CARE International in Lao PDR



Ministry of Agriculture and
Environment



Sekong Provincial Chamber of
Commerce and Industry



Haliéus



4FORM



International Cooperative
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Fairtrade Italia



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