

Fighting poverty one cup at a time!

At the roundtable on August 9th I had the opportunity to meet an extraordinary young woman on a mission to build the economic resources of Burundi and its people by marketing its most precious product, coffee, to the developed world. She wants to "start a for-profit company with social benefits."

Burundi coffee is consistently rated one of the best tasting coffees in the world by coffee connoisseurs. The economy of Burundi is principally agricultural with growth heavily dependent on coffee export, but cultivation is from smallholders with more than 600,000 households involved in production according to some estimates.

Jeanine was leaving for Burundi shortly after we talked. I just received a note from her saying that she had good meetings with women farmers and coffee producers. She hopes to "start from the bottom with women and farmers by providing them with financial support--micro-finance, training, promotion of their coffee directly to the international market; with washing station owners to train them on how to manage their cash flow and help them access direct markets." In the end her goal is to "bring more currency to one of the poorest nations in Africa" ... "one cup at a time."