



change

Footprints of

Hivos
people unlimited

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The production of this publication was coordinated by Muthoni Wahome (Hivos) and Arthur Okwemba (AWC)

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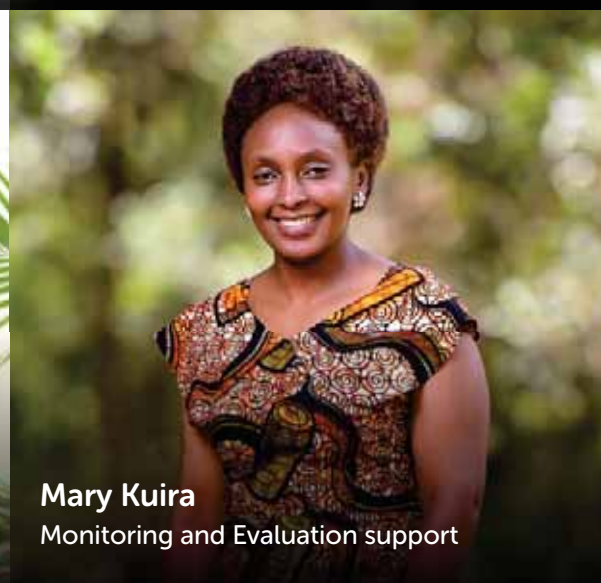
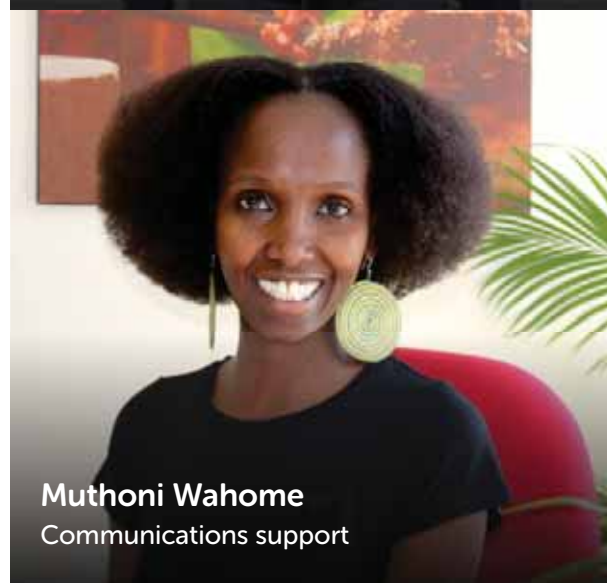
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Change

Footprints of

Meet The Team



Women
Unlimited

Footprints of change

In 2012, Hivos and its partners launched a campaign that would later turn out to be very transformative in securing the rights of women working on the horticultural value chain. Dubbed the Women@Work, the campaign established itself as East Africa's largest structured dialogue and advocacy initiative on women's labour rights. In its first phase (2012 – 2015), the programme focused on the conditions of women working in the flower sector in four Eastern African countries-Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, and Ethiopia.

In 2016, a five-year 'Decent Work for Women Programme' was established with funding from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs under the Dialogue and Dissent framework. This programme advanced the gains made in Women@Work¹ in the first phase. Its main objective was "The implementation of the right to decent work for women under poor conditions in global horticultural value chains by making global horticultural value chains gender inclusive".

This second phase also witnessed programme expansion in three areas: geographical delivery of the programme, sectors, and priority areas of focus.

From a geographical perspective, the programme was implemented in eight countries in Eastern and Southern Africa-Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe focusing on global horticulture value chains. In the Netherlands, the programme pursued advocacy strategies to influence these value chains at the global level. Specifically, the programme has been implemented in value chains of flowers, fresh vegetables, beans, avocados and chillies targeting women who form the vast majority of the workforce performing the bulk of the unskilled, lowest paid, precarious and most flexible jobs.

These women hardly realize the economic benefits that they are supposed to derive from horticultural trade no matter how well the economy is doing. They have often faced exploitation and are vulnerable to intimidation and sexual harassment.

They are also excluded from key positions and decision making processes. Hence the push for gender inclusive value chains was to ensure that women workers and female entrepreneurs were integrated in a stable and beneficial supply chain through addressing gender inequalities such as undervaluation of work and low wages. Other areas of focus for the programme were strengthening women leadership and their lobbying and advocacy capacities as well as that of their representative organizations. To realize this, the programme deliberately incorporated decent work principles within a women's economic empowerment framework. The main aim of this was to enforce change for women employees with regard to decent wages and incomes; good working conditions through labour rights education and awareness building; safety and security in the workplace; and participation in decision making through strengthening leadership at worker and management level and within the trade unions.

The programme priorities and delivery are aligned to Sustainable Development Goal 5 on Gender Equality and Goal 8 on Decent Work and Economic Growth.

Approach and partnerships

To deliver on its ambitious agenda, the programme adopted a multi stakeholder approach involving the government, civil society actors and the private sector players such as Kenya Flower Council, Fairtrade Africa, Uganda Flowers Exporters Associations among others to address the plight of women workers. A total of 21 programme partnerships across East Africa were in place by close of the programme in 2020.

A front runner² approach was at the core of the programme with farms with exemplary ethical business practices in the sector being used as pace setters to inspire others.

Through this approach, the campaign partners co-created and implemented key projects. This was realized through Hivos working

1 The terms Women@Work campaign and the Decent Work for Women Programme' have since 2016 been used interchangeably in communication and in operational level references

2 The term front runner under the Women@Work campaign is used in reference to horticultural farms or employers that has shown a demonstrable commitment to embracing gender progressive policies in its operations and has cutting edge solutions and approaches towards decent work for all.

closely with relevant government and inter-governmental bodies, businesses players and their associations, trade unions, workers and workers committees to deliver on the desired programmatic change.

The partnerships with the 21³ civil society organisations that included trade unions and labour organisations, lawyers' associations, human rights and women organisations, a flower association and a media organization saw thousands of beneficiaries being reached.

Through this partnership, partners in East Africa intervened in at least 121 horticultural companies reaching over 10,000 workers and managers. The women workers benefited from enhanced knowledge and skills on their rights; leadership and negotiation skills; and advanced the position and attitudes that sexual harassment was neither normal nor justified. This was achieved through continuous training and mentoring session and trainers of trainers..

These and other strategies realized significant results over the five-year period. These inspiring successes are documented in this publication.

Strategies applied and results

These were only possible due to a mix of strategies adopted by the campaign in targeting governments, horticulture farms, standards organisations, and when strengthening the agency of women workers. The strategies used included advocacy by the programme partners that demanded for more responsive national and international policy frameworks; lobbying for the adoption of policies by horticulture farms; and calling on the government and private sector standard bodies to include social indicators in their audit and regulatory frameworks.

Another important strategy used was awareness raising of women's rights as a way to promote equal opportunities for women and change behaviours, attitudes, and customs that negatively affect the ability of women to equitably contribute to development.

A number of public campaigns targeting the flower buying market and consumers were rolled out as well as a multi actor platform known as the 'living wage lab' where businesses, unions and other stakeholders congregated to come up with solutions aimed at ensuring workers in Africa access a living wage. Of equal importance was the establishment of the CSR Africa portal with social performance measurements that evaluated how business were doing in improving the working conditions of workers in the horticultural sector.

These strategies produced positive changes in the lives of women workers, business or institutions with regard to improved security at the workplace. This included putting in place policies to address sexual harassment; increased wages through better negotiated CBAs; and promotion of women workers as a result of improved agency. Other noteworthy results were formulation and adoption of equitable recruitment and promotion policies and compliance with health and safety standards such as access to better maternity and child support. Thanks to the business action, policies, and CBAs.

Gender committees in targeted farms were formed and remain functional. These committees are involved in addressing sexual harassment cases, creating awareness among workers on their rights, and negotiating better working conditions at the farm.

From a legal perspective, the campaign managed to bring 48 legal and policy propositions on labour and decent work before national governments and intergovernmental agencies and organisations. These include promulgation of a new labour law in Ethiopia in September 2019 that includes seven mandatory provisions on sexual harassment, thanks to intensive advocacy by NFFPFATU. At the horticultural farm level, Women@Work partners influenced management to make policies gender sensitive and aware of women workers' rights and sexual harassment.

3 10 partners in Kenya, 6 in Uganda, 3 in Rwanda, 2 in Tanzania and 1 in Ethiopia.

One such document is the model sexual harassment policy and a model gender policy that were developed under Women@Work campaign and adopted by businesses that partnered in the campaign.

The Kenya Flower Council (KFC) and Fairtrade Africa, for instance, adopted the comprehensive sector-wide sexual harassment policy as the standard framework for addressing sexual harassment in the Kenyan flower farms. They also made gender committees part of the key issues that companies are assessed on when it comes to gender protection at the workplace. These commitment by KFC and Fairtrade Africa bind their collective membership of more than 130 flower farms in Kenya to implement the provisions and commitments in the said policies.

Across the region, at least 180 horticultural companies adopted gender responsive policies. At the global level, the campaign contributed to ensuring that the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights was gender sensitive.

It also played a role in strengthening of labour rights observance. Its 29 recommendations on improving the MPS-Social Qualification standard were adopted. Another 60 recommendations submitted during the review by Horticulture Crop Directorate in the review of the Kenyan Standard 1758 around labour rights were accepted.

In addition to legal and policies successes, the campaign recorded positive results in creating massive public awareness and knowledge on the challenges women workers face in the horticulture sector. This helped put pressure on businesses and certification bodies to improve the situation. Over 70 media and knowledge products including research, documentaries, technical and policy briefs were produced and shared widely. In Kenya and Uganda alone, over six million people were reached through interactive radio programs that educated listeners on the rights of those working in the flower sector.

This has indeed been a journey of positive change. Hivos remains hopeful that the encouraging changes that happened in securing the rights of women working in the horticultural sector will be sustained. We hope the laws, policies, progressive practices and structures adopted by different stakeholders will guarantee this sustainability. Hivos further hopes other like-minded organisations will help sustain and scale up these gains.

We call on national level governments to sustain and build on the gains made so far by ratifying the ILO Convention 190 adopted in 2019; implementing the gender framework on the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights; improving funding and staffing of relevant labour departments that provide crucial oversight on implementation of workers rights; and reviewing outdated legal frameworks that do not guarantee adequate protections to workers such as the minimum wage policy in Uganda.

Hivos is happy and optimistic about the future and hopes that institutions and the people in the countries it intervened in will guard and sustain what has been achieved so far in instilling a decent workplace for workers, especially women, in horticultural value chain.

Virginia Munyua
Programme Manager

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Preface



Mendi Njonjo
Director, Hivos East Africa

The horticulture sector is a multi-billion income earner for countries like Kenya and Ethiopia, and presents opportunities for advocating for better work conditions for the workers, many of whom are women. The Women@Work Campaign that ran from 2016 to 2020 was set up to do just that. The campaign's singular purpose of improving the labor conditions for women working in flower farms focused on six key issues: Women Leadership, Sexual Harassment, The Living Wage, Worker representation and participation, Maternal and Reproductive health rights, and Health and Safety at the Workplace.

In the five year period, the interventions pursued by the campaign tackling these issues produced encouraging results as evidenced in this book. The workers, who toil every day on the horticultural value chain, made these successes possible. They, majority of them being women, stood up for their rights, and collectively improved their working conditions in line with the rallying call of this campaign. This book is a celebration of the strength, and the resilience of these women. Through this book, we not only purpose to showcase the program work, but also hope it can inspire individuals, and those engaged in horticultural enterprise, especially flower farming business, to continue supporting the creation of decent and safe workspaces for women.

This publication and the Women@Work Campaign would not have been successful without the funding from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Please accept our deep gratitude for your gesture. So are workers in the horticultural sector, partner Flower farms, and the flower sector associations in Kenya and Uganda, Civil Society Organizations; Trade Unions; Regulatory bodies and the media. To all, we cherish your efforts. Thank you for your dedication in this project. To African Woman and Feature Services and the Hivos Women@Work team, kudos for putting these inspiring and transformative stories together!

May this publication inspire generations to come.

Happy reading!

Mendi Njonjo

Sexual Harassment



Armstrong Too

Campaign brings hope to women workers in floriculture sector

Hivos East Africa

In 2016, Hivos East Africa expanded implementation of W@W campaign to more countries, sectors and issues of focus. An ambitious campaign to improve the labour conditions and position of women working in the horticultural value industry.

The Women@Work Campaign was a response to the need to address the numerous challenges facing women workers in horticulture farms in the region, including discrimination, sexual harassment, unfair wages, and undignified living and workplaces.

The campaign, implemented through partner initiatives in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Zimbabwe, Zambia and Malawi, has been able to galvanise support for an effective social certification regime for the sector. It has also contributed to law and

policy reform, built workers and their representatives' capacities and promoted engendered corporate social responsibility.

Results achieved

A key result that holds promise for transformational change in the sector is the adoption by more than 50 companies of a workplace policy against sexual harassment. Mr Henry Wera of the Women@Work Campaign says, adoption of the policy by the sector enables certification bodies, particularly the Kenya Flower Council and Fairtrade Africa, to better address the incidence of sexual harassment on flower farms.

Another key achievement is training of workers and their representatives. "Workers on the targeted farms have benefitted from a series of trainings by partners to increase their understanding of labour rights and procedures for addressing grievances," Mr Wera adds.

In Tanzania and Ethiopia, the campaign has empowered unions to advocate for decent work conditions. Civil society institutions have also been equipped with lobbying and advocacy skills. Through dialogue with partners, the campaign lobbied key stakeholders in the private sector and in government to focus on ensuring decent workplaces, especially for women.

The enduring legacy of the campaign is its anti-sexual harassment policy. "The policy will be the reference point for addressing sexual harassment at the work place and will push the East African—Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Ethiopia—flower sector for the longest possible time," says Wera. For workers and their representatives, the policy will anchor the campaign's sustainability.

He explains: "When you sensitise, inform and educate

workers about their obligations and rights, they begin to demand those rights and obligations at their respective workplaces," hence creating an environment of decent and sustainable work.

Strengthening of unions' capacity in Tanzania and Ethiopia also speaks to sustainability. "The unions have a permanent responsibility to champion and advocate for decent work at flower farms and this will be achieved because they were fully on board and their capacities have greatly been improved."

With strengthened capacity in advocacy and lobbying, civil society organisations will be able to continue with the work in the flower sector, even without funding.

Challenges encountered during implementation

Successes notwithstanding, the campaign has had its fair

share of challenges. Wera cites lack of coherence and negative competition among partners as having slowed down the campaign. For instance, while they expected partners to form consortia in their respective countries for sharing work plans and implementing them jointly, partners did not meet regularly.

He blames this on unhealthy internal competition in Kenya and Uganda, with each trying to protect its turf. This, Wera says, affected the implementation of the bigger sexual harassment campaign in Kenya, as partners with the same objective were unable to work together.

Going forward, it is important that right from the design stage, organisations implementing the same objective commit to work together as a consortium.

The certification project, too, faced challenges in the initial stages. "The Kenya Flower Council, the employers' association, businesses and Fairtrade Africa did not exactly understand the agenda and seemed to have looked at the project as a competitor," Wera says.

Also, some unions did not come out strongly to partner with the campaign. "In Kenya, it became quite difficult, because the sector is very political while in Uganda the union had its own internal challenges. Attempts to

contract them did not yield much as it became difficult to improve their capacity."

The cut flower industry in Rwanda is young and the union did not initially cover the farm workers. Since the launch of the Women@Work campaign, however, the situation has improved.

Wera provides insights on areas that can be explored for future interventions. "In view of the Covid-19, there is still much work to be done. We have lost some of the gains we made in the last five years such as decent pay and made two steps backwards in the overall campaign objectives. When the sector reopens, we must explore possibilities of enhancing our advocacy to ensure the farms and the employers don't wish away the issues of decency of work and the many gains made so far."

What we have learnt

One of the lessons learnt is the need for all stakeholders to agree on and abide by a common goal. "When the campaign started, there was a huge debate between livelihoods and human rights and people were asking which is important: is it the job or quality of the job? Many, especially governments and employers, were interested in jobs and labelled the CSOs pushing for decent work as economic saboteurs. Quality

The campaign, implemented through partner initiatives in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Zimbabwe, Zambia and Malawi, has been able to galvanise support for an effective social certification regime for the sector. It has also contributed to law and policy reform, built workers and their representatives' capacities and promoted engendered corporate social responsibility.

did not matter and that is the message we hear from the five countries we're working in," Wera says. He predicts a hot debate on whether focus should be on the quality or the quantity of jobs.

Wera notes that in a human rights perspective, the quality of the job is as important as the job itself. This is an area to which organisations can channel advocacy work." According to him, dialogue remains an important tool in the global development world.

The other key lesson is that more focus needs to be at farm level where there are workers if the campaign is to produce the desired results. "More work needs to be done on all the committees at farm level. When you have key results on the worker, then it's more sustainable," he says.

Moving forward

Wera underscores the need to include host communities in future interventions, if the campaign has to be replicated. "They have a way of putting pressure on the farms to act faster than the workers," whom, he says, risk dismissal for championing human rights.

He also proposes inclusion of players in the legal justice system, "for example the prosecution and investigative channels at the grassroots such as the policemen". Because cases needing intervention are recorded in police occurrence books, Wera notes, there is need to equip police, chiefs, assistant chiefs and village heads with an understanding of labour issues.

**5 years of advancing
labour conditions
for *women working*
in global horticultural
supply chains**



New policy protects women from sexual harassment

Uganda

Flavia Amoding listened quietly as a man confessed to having been a perpetrator of sexual harassment, albeit unknowingly. The flower-farm worker was the human face of the vice that had almost been normalised in the cut flower industry in Uganda. Here, women suffered in silence, afraid of stigma if they dared to speak out.

For Amoding, the programme manager at Uganda Workers' Education Association (UWEA), it was imperative to first change the culture of normalising sexual harassment. But it was difficult to delve into the issue because matters sex were almost taboo, "covered up and never to be talked about".

UWEA first reviewed the findings of research to understand the flower sector before designing an intervention programme.

Approaches used

A baseline survey conducted as part of the Women@Work campaign, supported by Hivos East Africa, showed that women accounted for at least 70 per cent of the labour force on flower farms. A significant number of them engaged in quid pro quo arrangements to get hired, for job security and other employment benefits. A number of women had left employment because of harassment and victimisation.

Interestingly, there was also emerging evidence of a link between gender rights, roles and productivity on flower farms to sustainable business. This motivated the organisation to conceive a programme that was good for both the business and women, which resulted in the 'Stop Sexual Harassment Policy for the flower sector in Eastern Africa'.

Amoding says the first step was to understand the nature of sexual harassment and to profile flower farm workers to enable the organisation to develop appropriate advocacy messages. Next was to secure buy-in within the flower farms. This entailed holding consultations with key stakeholders, including human resource managers, with the overall message that sexual harassment in flower farms was criminal, unacceptable and could no longer be tolerated.

The organisation realised that building momentum around eliminating all forms of sexual harassment was not enough; equally important was creating sustainable structures and systems.

Advocacy messages specific to flower farms were developed, with every training activity an

opportunity to entrench the need for a safe, free and fair work environment. Initially, UWEA began work on seven flower farms in northern Uganda and those situated in the vicinity of Lake Victoria. "A major highlight of this intervention and our firm foundation is in the Model Sexual Harassment Policy. The main tenets of this policy include a definition and scope of what sexual harassment entails," Amoding says.

All trainings were anchored in the policy, which delves into sanctions, consequences and repercussions of perpetrating sexual harassment.

"We took this policy to flower farms and began negotiations with the managers. Our approach was to highlight how this policy is good for business. Business models are today adopting a human rights

approach. The message is that a gender-sensitive business environment can boost workers' morale, create a spirit of cohesiveness and boost production."

Separate training activities were conducted for managers and workers' representatives, which resulted in many flower farms incorporating sexual harassment components in their policies. Training worker representatives has created a ripple effect as they have become positive change by training their colleagues.

"Demystifying sexual harassment is a critical part of any intervention around the rights and dignity of women at work. We have successfully achieved this in all targeted flower farms," Amoding adds.

The training lay emphasis on definitions and scope of sexual harassment which, as Amoding observes, is a highly emotive and misunderstood issue. "We've had testimonies of men saying, they had been unknowingly perpetrating harassment, and women also saying, they had been abused and did not know that what was done to them was wrong. Actions like someone intentionally brushing himself against your body while passing by you," she observes.

Another important approach was involving the men,

Equal Rights Advocates, a women's law centre in the USA notes that a staggering 90-95 per cent of women who have suffered sexual harassment experience life-long effects, including depression and low esteem.

without whose buy-in the intervention would have failed.

Registering results

Since the introduction of this policy in flower farms, UWEA has breathed life into gender committees where they existed, and inspired their establishment where they did not exist.

"Flower farms were calling them women's committees, but we've explained to them why they are meant to be gender committees. They must be represented by both genders as sexual harassment is not solely a women's issue. It's a human rights issue."

Gender committees have become critical in flower farms and are now the first respondents when such cases arise. They have the capacity to investigate, hold court, resolve or forward more complex matters to management.

"We now have increased awareness around sexual

harassment and increased reporting. Those affected by this issue suffer lasting effects, so we continue to advocate to ensure that workers' contracts make explicit mention that the workplace is an environment free of all forms of sexual harassment," Amoding says.

Indeed, Equal Rights Advocates, a women's law centre in the USA notes that a staggering 90-95 per cent of women who have suffered sexual harassment experience life-long effects, including depression and low esteem.

The results of the organisation's work are evident as flower farms embrace and mainstream the policy, with some producing newsletters. "One flower farm has committed to including at least one article on sexual harassment. We've educated flower farms through bumper stickers, posters, billboards and other educational material and now they're taking a proactive approach to creating awareness," she observes.

The organisation continues to undertake follow-ups with gender and union committees to ensure compliance.

Challenges encountered

Challenges faced in the fight against sexual harassment include pushback from implicit and inherent social structures that are extremely patriarchal. The fear of backlash, stigma and belief that no action will be taken against perpetrators, who are often in positions of power, derails progress towards ending workplace sexual harassment. UWEA came face to face with these challenges during the training discussions. However, after several encounters, some men have had a mind shift.

One of the lessons learnt in the intervention is the need to approach flower farms with openness, and to state clearly the gains to be accrued by both workers and the business. "Giving stakeholders a clear outline disarms them and makes them comfortable enough to partner towards better working conditions," says Amoding.

While a lot has been achieved in making the workplace safe for hundreds of women workers, several flower farms in the far-flung western part of Uganda are yet to be reached and a scale-up of this intervention is crucial.

**180+ Horticultural
companies** (in Kenya,
Ethiopia, Tanzania, Uganda
& Rwanda) have *adopted*
gender responsive
policies for enhanced
workplace systems &
culture that **protects**
women workers



Armstrong Too

Policy inspires a workplace free of sexual harassment

Kenya

After enduring violence and sexual harassment at work for years, women in the cut flower industry can sigh with relief following adoption of an anti-sexual harassment policy.

The policy aims at creating a workplace free of sexual harassment. It gives the definition and scope of sexual harassment, outlines the measures needed for implementing it, and creates workplace structures for its implementation. It also sets out sanctions for violating its provisions.

A brainchild of Workers' Rights Watch under the Women@Work Campaign, this policy is a culmination of years of advocacy, including several other campaigns against the vice. Eunice Waweru, the Workers' Rights Watch programme coordinator, observes that the policy is

welcome news to the sector hitherto dogged by a high incidence of sexual harassment in recruitment, promotion, provision of housing, transfers and allocation of tasks.

Encouraging results

The policy is already making an impact on the sector. The Kenya Flower Council (KFC), which was formed to foster responsible and safe production of cut flowers in the country, and Fairtrade Africa — an umbrella organisation for producers in Africa that works to ensure better prices, decent working conditions and fair terms of trade for farmers in Africa — have revised their certification standards to incorporate the relevant sexual harassment indicators outlined in the policy. This enables the organisations to effectively monitor the status of sexual harassment in flower farms during audits.



So far, 130 Fairtrade certified farms in Naivasha, Ruiru, Thika, Kiambu and Kitengela have adopted the policy. Key to implementation of the policy are gender committees to monitor and follow through the

handling of sexual harassment cases by the management. The lobby has helped to revamp gender committees on several farms in the sector.

"With the indicators, the auditors are able to go deeper into their investigations to find out if gender committees are an important structure within a farm, their roles and the number of cases they've received, and whether these cases have been satisfactorily resolved and if the committees have confidence in the management to investigate the cases," Waweru says.

The farms now have no option but to ensure the gender committees are in place, trained and know what they are doing even before the audit comes, she adds.

Farms that did not have gender committees have established them. "Gender

Committees in the four farms that we piloted in the project have reported resolving two-three cases over a period of one year following our intervention,” says Ms Waweru.

She is upbeat that most gender committees established or revamped under the Women@Work campaign can now prevent, investigate and resolve complex forms of gender-based discrimination or conflicts that may result in and from sexual harassment. The gender committees now have work plans and are allowed to train workers during working hours.

Training has played a crucial role in making resolution of sexual harassment cases possible. The Workers’ Rights Watch conducted regular training on select farms. “All the gender committees in the targeted farms have been empowered through regular trainings and follow-ups,” Waweru adds.

Employees, too, have been trained and empowered to intervene if they observe inappropriate behaviour. Where victims are afraid to report, or fear reprisals, fellow employees are encouraged to report the cases to their respective gender committees.

“Now, we are witnessing commitments by the management of farms to



Leonard Faustle

ensure certain practices are observed and victims of sexual harassment are treated fairly.

This can be attested by the fact that all the targeted farms have put a sexual harassment clause in the Employment Act. “All new employees are inducted and made to understand that the farm is a sexual harassment free zone. Their salaries and work benefits are negotiated by independent parties.”

In addition, most Gender committees now have work

plans and are currently allowed time off to train workers during working hours.

Initially, she notes that the gender committees had to grapple with limited time allocated for training and activities which in most cases resulted to limited knowledge of the policy

Further the gender committees are disseminating user-friendly materials in the farms developed by Workers Rights Watch to help workers

appreciate their rights, forms of violence and sexual harassment. In some farms, policies on recruitment, housing, and promotion, discipline, transfer and allocation of tasks have been restructured to avoid discriminatory effects.

Transformative strategy adopted

The sector-wide sexual harassment policy has come a long way. As Ms Waweru explains, it was preceded by a research in 2012 that established that cases of sexual

harassment were rampant in the flower farms. “We released the findings but this did not generate much success. The sector instead rubbished our findings in the research dubbed “Tackling Sexual Harassment in Kenya’s Flower Sector.”

This forced the lobby to shift gear to activism: “We exposed them through the media and held a series of demonstrations. The highlight of this was when we targeted the international market and lobbied consumers along the value chain,” says Ms Waweru.

The lobby also teamed up with the Kenya Human Rights Commission to coin key messages targeting the consumers. “This strategy earned us a stamp of approval and helped bolster our prospects in championing workers’ rights.”

Some of the campaign slogans were: “Beauty and Agony”, informing buyers that, while they were buying a good flower, it was a product of agony. “It comes from a worker who is mistreated, a child who cannot go to school, and a child who is left unattended for seven days, maternity leave is not provided and sexual harassment is rampant. Yes, the flowers are rosy but are produced in agony.”

This message caught the attention of consumers and workers alike, and motivated

the lobby to coin other messages, such as “Sex is not for sale”; “Dignity is not for sale” and “Manufacturers of Poverty,” which compelled KFC to intervene to mollify the situation.

In 2013, Worker’s Rights Watch conducted a baseline survey to establish if the gaps have been rectified. “We embarked on detailed research, asking how many workers had experienced sexual harassment personally or had witnessed a colleague being harassed.”

The findings from the baseline survey gave the lobby group ammunition to build a case for the enforcement of the policy.

“We engaged Human Resource Managers in the targeted farms to validate our findings.”

With the validation, the lobby group joined by the Kenya Flower Council and the Women Working Worldwide crafted a harmonized draft policy addressing all the issues that had been captured in the survey.

“We decided to pilot the draft policy in eight flower farms in a pilot project that would then be scaled-up to the entire flower sector in Kenya.”

Waweru states that the lobby group did a progress report showcasing what was working and what was not working.

“The farms that were piloted reported that the policy had worked and the gender committees were active.

In 2016, the policy was officially launched by the council which also pledged to rally growers and other players in the sector to push for a workplace free of sexual harassment.

“This helped us to penetrate more farms without fear. With support from the Kenya flower Council and Fairtrade Africa, the lobby started pushing for a workplace free of sexual harassment.

Challenges encountered

Implementation was not without challenges. “Sometimes farms would schedule our trainings during high season. In some farms, there was a feeling that gender committees were becoming “too powerful”, while in others, the management ignored the committees’ recommendations and relegated cases that touched on senior managers,” Waweru says.

However, with KFC and Fairtrade on board, farms had to align with the policy once it became a key aspect of the audit process.

Savouring success

The lobby has been able to secure much commitment at farm level, and mainly from KFC, that they will ensure their farms work towards

Training has played a crucial role in making resolution of sexual harassment cases possible. The Workers’ Rights Watch conducted regular training on select farms.

eliminating sexual harassment either through audits or corporate meetings.

“ A total of 130 farms have adopted the policy and are benchmarking against it. The policy is also being used by auditors in the Kenya Flower Council and Fair Trade Africa.”

In addition, flower-farm workers are committed to speaking out. “When they report cases, it means they’ve started speaking out,” says Waweru. With their roles well defined, gender committees are set to continue the work started under Women@Work campaign.



Haguruka stands up for women in horticulture

Rwanda

Women's rights are taking root in the horticulture sector in Rwanda, changing it to a safer and friendlier workplace for women.

Haguruka, a non-governmental organisation (NGO) that works to empower women and enable them to access justice and to ensure that they can claim their rights, has been pivotal to this transformation.

Through a programme supported by Hivos East Africa, the Women@Work campaign, The NGO is living up to its name, Haguruka, which, in Kinyarwanda, means 'stand up'. The NGO is shining a spotlight on the challenges women working in the horticulture face on account of their gender and seeking solutions to them.

The programme takes a comprehensive approach to entrenching women's rights at the workplace by empowering workers and training farm managers to enable them to create a conducive working environment, and anchoring women's rights in policy.

Haguruka project manager Nesta Narcisse Rutagengwa, says training farm managers on gender dynamics has proved to be "a major part of the solution". They are sensitised on women's rights, including the right to respect and equal pay, and on

gender-based violence (GBV), so as to guarantee women a conducive workplace. Once trained, they must be supported by women-friendly policies, with formal structures through which the rights of women can be defended and protected.

In January 2020, Haguruka celebrated victory when 17 out of 20 managers of fruit, herb and vegetable farms trained by the organisation adopted a code of conduct and the anti-sexual harassment policy, culminating a journey that started on August 5, 2019. It was preceded by consultative processes, such as the one held in Kigali, where 20 farms verbally committed to adopting legally binding procedures that protect women at work through signing of job contracts.

A farm manager and a human resource manager represented each of the 20 farms, reaffirming the seriousness of the issue at hand. The commitment has already been honoured since all the 20 farms currently are providing each worker with a contract.

Forums convened at the farm level provide a platform for women to discuss their rights and air their grievances. These have contributed to improved labour conditions because most workers, who were hitherto unaware of their employment

rights and national legislation are now well informed.

Between February and March this year, 700 farms workers were sensitised on their rights and on GBV, national labour laws and related policies. The forums were supported by other activities, such as the training of 160 trainers, including women workers from horticulture farms.

The organisation also offers women workers legal aid and advice through mobile legal clinics that include legal orientation, legal advice, mediation and preparation of the draft of legal brief workplace, Rutagengwa says.

Some cases of women's rights violations arising from mobile legal clinics end up in court. Between July 2019 and March 2020, 27 cases were presented before courts, speaking to increased awareness of women's rights at the farm level.

"We won 11 cases and lost only case. The remaining 15 cases are still pending in court due to COVID-19 challenges and restrictions," Rutagengwa says.

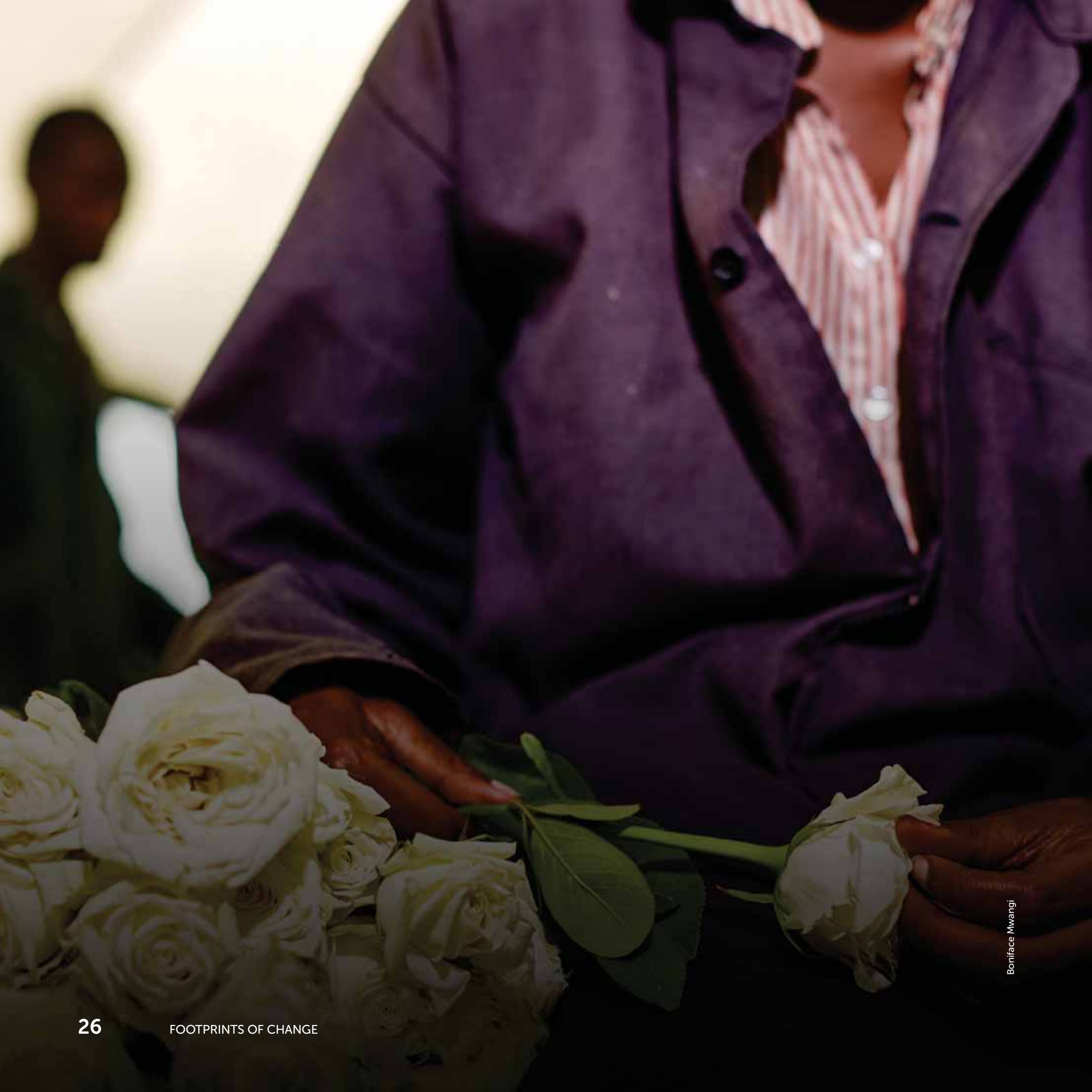
As the Women@Work Campaign concludes, Haguruka must mobilise resources to support the critical free legal aid clinics targeting women on farms across the land of a thousand hills.

Haguruka has learnt some key lessons. First, that women in the horticulture sector are still facing GBV. Second, there is a great need to continuously engage men in advocacy efforts.

"Women and men working in the horticulture farms emphasised the need to have men on board, especially during the training, to ensure that they understand their contribution and role in eradicating gender-based violence," Rutagengwa says.

Haguruka further calls upon the national worker's union to have a clearer role, participation in and contribution to the horticulture industry.

The organisation recommends that advocacy and interventions be scaled up especially during the COVID-19 pandemic as violations towards women are highly likely to escalate. Haguruka therefore recommends that all efforts be taken to ensure and guarantee constant advocacy and legal aid services to the vulnerable women in horticulture as they are most at risk.



Big win for gender empowerment in Kenya's flower farm

Kenya

"Desire, burning desire, is basic to achieving anything beyond the ordinary"

— Joseph B. Wirthlin,
American businessman
and religious leader

The desire to achieve improved work environments and working conditions in flower farms has, for a long time, seemed like a distant dream for women workers in Kenya's horticultural industry. Over the past decade, the sector has grown to be among the top foreign exchange earners for the Kenyan economy. The sector employs more than 500,000 people, mostly women who cultivate, harvest and package fresh cut flowers for export to European destinations.

And yet, the sector has also faced growing criticisms over widespread human rights and labour violations, ranging

from sexual harassment, poor pay, and lack of leave, to non-enjoyment of sexual and reproductive health rights. Low salaries, poor working conditions, exposure to pesticides, and discrimination are some of the challenges specific to women in Kenya's flower industry.

Today, the desire to improve conditions for Kenyan women in the flower sector is recording achievements that initially seemed unattainable. For instance, in Naivasha, at one of the country's largest flower farms, a women's empowerment initiative has triggered events that led to suspension of the farm's Fairtrade certification until requirements on sexual harassment were complied with.

This transformation began in 2012 with the initiation of the Women@Work Campaign,

a programme of Hivos East Africa to improve labour conditions for women working in the global horticulture supply chains (flowers, fresh vegetables, beans, avocados and chilies) through fair wages, security in the workplace and good working conditions.

The Women@Work Campaign in Kenya has partnered with business, government and civil society to enforce change for women employees regarding decent wages, participation in decision-making, leadership at management level and in trade unions, as well as safety and security in a workplace without sexual harassment.

The campaign has so far been able to galvanise support for an effective social certification regime for the sector, contribute to law and policy reform, build capacities of workers and workers'

representatives and promote engendered corporate social responsibility.

A key approach was to roll out a model sexual harassment workplace policy, aimed at creating participatory and sustainable workplace structures that protect women from sexual harassment. This was a first for the industry.

Initially piloted in seven farms countrywide, the policy has been endorsed by the Kenya Flower Council (KFC), a voluntary association of independent growers and exporters of cut-flowers and ornamentals, and Fairtrade Africal, a global certification agency that checks compliance with economic, social and environmental standards.

"The policy informs the certification audits by KFC and Fairtrade Africa on issues sexual

harassment,” says Henry Wera, Women@Work Campaign. KFC and Fairtrade also jointly helped to establish gender committees on each of Kenya’s Fairtrade flower farms.

Events at the 70-hectare Dutch-owned farm in Naivasha were triggered by research findings by the Workers Rights Watch (WRW), which revealed that widespread use of casual female labour increases the risk of human rights abuses, discrimination and cases of sexual harassment. These mainly occurred during recruitment and promotion, housing, transfer and allocation of tasks.

Backed with the findings, the issues were escalated by the gender committee to Fairtrade, which commissioned an audit that led to the suspension of Van Den Berg Roses’ certificate on July 30, 2019.

Eunice Waweru, Workers Rights Watch coordinator says, FLOCERT— the largest audit and certification body for Fairtrade Standards — suspended the farm’s certificate for six months, bringing to an end a longstanding unresolved case of sexual harassment. FLOCERT is responsible for the certification of all producers and most traders. Its certification bodies will suspend or decertify a producer or trader who has not upheld core certification requirements. Overall, however, the focus is on giving Fairtrade

producers the opportunity to address problems and improve over time.

Van Den Berg Roses’ suspension was lifted only after the case was resolved, says Waweru, adding, the flower farm was suspended barely three weeks after WRW had trained the gender committee. The training empowered the gender committee to disclose happenings that were previously unreported.”

The lobby credits the success to the sexual harassment policy, which tackles unequal power relations and promotes gender equality in producer organisations. The strategy is to build women’s power and autonomy so that they can take up roles they were traditionally denied, and to better influence their situations and conditions.

KFC and Fairtrade Africa’s adoption of the policy enabled the certification bodies to better address cases of sexual harassment in flower farms.

Instructively, Fairtrade Africa and KFC had also made it mandatory for flower farms to establish gender committees.

Today, these gender committees have become farm-level drivers of change. They offer hope in ensuring cases of sexual harassment are addressed in a timely, effective and sensitive manner through thorough investigations and



The strategy involved enhancing knowledge and skills among workers and holding forums between workers and farm managers.

appropriate mediation. They also address issues about creating decent workplaces for women.

Another notable change involves gender committees winning of workers’ confidence to report cases. “What’s evident is that the gender committees are increasingly and attentively

being listened to by certification bodies. The audits have also become inclusive and regular,” says Waweru, adding, the gender committee is important because it ensures everyone is treated equally. “That’s especially important for the women workers as they’re often not aware of their rights.”

Another key achievement is training of workers and their representatives; they have benefited from a series of trainings by partners to increase their understanding of labour rights and procedures for addressing grievances,” she adds.

WRW also supports the gender committees to train other trainers. “We’ve also disseminated guiding principles to enable gender committees to investigate cases in a more sustainable way. Workers were trained on the sexual harassment policy, different types of sexual harassment in the workplace, available reporting mechanisms, who to report to, and what to do with the pending cases.”

Additionally, women workers were taught how to clearly communicate and hold the farms and auditors to account. The strategy involved enhancing knowledge and skills among workers and holding forums between workers and farm managers.

Together with KFC and Fairtrade, WRW conducted a joint evaluation of the impact of the trainings. “Workers acknowledge that their concerns are being investigated and resolved, unlike previously.”

User-friendly materials were also developed to help workers appreciate their rights, forms of violence and sexual harassment. As a result, workers are now

reporting sexual harassment cases to the gender committees which also informs the rating of the company when its systems and practices are audited. The intervention is sustainable because the gender committees are permanent structures within the farms. “We’ve empowered them to engage or report any pending issues to the auditors.”

“The auditors’ openness to listen to the gender committees and take action is encouraging. The continuity of the gender committees depends a lot on their effectiveness on-farm, which will encourage workers to continue reporting cases of sexual harassment to them.”

Waweru says the lobby will continue empowering gender committees to ensure that they do not relent in pursuing cases that are reported to them. “We also plan to monitor the farms to ensure that they continue acting on the recommendations of the gender committees without retaliation or intimidation.”

Further, actors in the sector have committed to engaging the lobby beyond the campaign in creating decent work. “The work we’ve done with them has helped their workers to speak openly and engage the gender committees, the farm management and the auditors. Today, the farms are working towards creating a workplace free of sexual harassment.”

These issues and the success recorded have provided excellent learning points for WRW.

One of the lessons learnt is that working closely with certification bodies made it easy for the organisation to achieve faster results. “When we roped KFC and Fairtrade Africa into our activities, we were able to push for a workplace free of sexual harassment, form gender committees and offer them guidelines on how to handle related cases.”

The farms also opened up and owned the campaign. “This helped us to address any emerging issues without necessarily blowing the whistle and the farms were willing to listen and take up remedial measures. We also learnt that negotiation is a strong tool when seeking to operationalise policies.”

Further, the training of gender committees offered a chance to restructure the global supply chain and enact a robust social protection policy and implementation framework that can foster labour reforms.

WRW wants the government to ensure that women workers are equipped with the tools and training to enable them to fully push for their rights.

“We need a bigger conversation and to probably bring in stakeholders to discuss measures that the

government needs to put in place to ensure that workers have a comprehensive and affordable healthcare insurance scheme to cater for their health.”

Further, gender committees need additional support from Hivos as they have played a key role in building relationships between workers, farm management and WRW to raise awareness on problems faced by workers, which contributed to nurturing decent work.

The gender committees need to be empowered through regular trainings and follow-ups, aiding them in establishing linkages that will enable them to participate in decision-making such as an alliance with the union to take part in the collective bargaining process.

There is also need for growers to realise their roles as engines towards promoting gender-sensitive management and respect for gender-based policies within the farms. This should be accompanied by establishing long-term plans of the management of the committees to ensure sustainability, continuity, growth and efficiency.



Beredu Site - in sexual harassment cases, some victims are afraid and usually don't show up for court hearings, hence cases take time or collapse.

Allan Gichigi

Campaign brings hope in Ethiopia's Flower Farms

Ethiopia

The thousands of Ethiopian flower farm workers, most of whom are women, have heaved a sigh of relief thanks to the intervention of the Hivos East Africa's Women@Work campaign.

Before the initiative that started two years ago, sexual harassment was the order of the day in most of the 80 flower farms in the Horn of Africa country, rendering women workers helpless and hopeless.

But things have changed for the better after the Federal Government intervened and introduced legislation to deal with the vice, just ahead of the campaign launch.

An estimated 50,000 workers are employed in flower farms, 75 per cent of them women.

A significant change that can be attributed to the

interventions by the campaign was the inclusion of sexual harassment provisions in the labour proclamation, says Tariku Shachachew, the General Secretary of the National Federation of Farms Plantation Fishery and Agro-Industry Trade Unions (Federation), the implementing partner.

Major Achievements

There are 80 flower farms in Ethiopia, out of which 65 were covered under the campaign that focused on six core issues, namely, women leadership, Sexual harassment, living wages, worker representation and participation, maternal and reproductive health rights, and Health and Safety at the workplace.

The federation used several interventions to implement the programme, namely, lobbying; advocacy and training to reach out to the farm workers in

Holeta, Bishoftu, Ziway, Addis Ababa and its outskirts, all in Oromiya region.

Before then, there was a lacuna in law against the vice. Its inclusion was, therefore, a major accomplishment leading to sexual harassment policies, which were crafted and implemented on all the farms under the project.

A carefully selected team of participants and beneficiaries by the federation was used as an entry point to boost its lobbying, advocacy' and trainings critical approaches and strategies to achieve its desired outcome.

Several institutions and stakeholders were brought on board. They were law enforcement institutions such as the police, courts, office of the prosecutor. Others were Women, Children and Youth

Ministry, Ministry of Social and Labour Affairs, and Farm Management and Employers' Association.

Since then, hundreds of farm workers have benefited from the Hivos East Africa Women@Work Campaign, thanks to training and sensitisation forums by the federation.

Fresh cut flowers are a leading foreign exchange earner in Ethiopia after coffee. The government statistics shows that flowers, vegetables and fruits earn over US\$400 million every year.

One of the approved outcomes selected to be documented as best practices in Ethiopia under the implementer was the following statement:

On September 5, 2019, The Government of Federal

Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, through the House of People's Representatives, promulgated a new labour law, Proclamation Number 1156/2019, on the Negarit Gazette that included seven mandatory provisions on sexual harassment.

The campaign managed to build cross-cutting partnerships with businesses, governments, certification bodies, trade unions, the media, civil society organisations, and citizens.

Lobbying and advocacy

To achieve its goal, the federation armed itself with findings of an earlier research, which had unearthed the extent of sexual harassment in the workplace, which it used to come up with several advocacy messages.

The advocacy messages took note that sexual harassment was a workplace problem; that it affects women physically and mentally; and that it results in high staff turnover (women tend to leave work place or move to other farms); and that it adversely affects productivity and the employer.

Asked whether the outcome registered under Women@ Work campaign was sustainable, the Tariku said it was sustainable "because the outcome is the actual law pertaining to the labour area,

but more needs to be done to ascertain its enforceability.

More awareness-raising and empowering needs to be done. Workers, management (employer) and other stakeholders need to internalise it and this requires more awareness-raising and related works."

The official attributed their success to their beneficiaries, whom he described as "committed and understood that the existing situations had to be changed by partnering with the federation and implementing what they learned from the training and activities."

Another supporter was the Employers' Association, who was committed and embraced the federation's interventions through collaboration and assistance.

Asked if they had any unexpected results during the implementation of the project, Tariku says: "Workers developed confidence on the issues. Women had the courage to report cases of sexual harassment, while men who were previously indifferent to the vice started understanding what constituted sexual harassment and showed willingness to reveal such acts."

Some male chauvinists resisted to be trained to show that sexual harassment was a workplace problem and how it affected women primarily and others.



Allan Gichigi

Gender agenda

Throughout the campaign, the federation ensured that the approaches they used were gender-sensitive. "We gave women priority when deciding on the number of participants to an activity. The federation was sensitive during recruitment and gave women preference, especially those who were deemed to be more confident, influential and committed," said Tariku.

The Hivos partner was driven by the reality that the involvement of women and men advocates in the campaign produced better outcomes. Involving men helped them to attract other men to support the campaign for the benefit of the entire workplace and the community.

Challenges and Opportunities

During the campaign, several opportunities were identified to effectively deal with issues affecting women in the sector.

One of them was a leadership gap of having no women in top positions. Although women were trained and were aware of sexual harassment, they were not motivated to aspire for leadership positions, believing they had little chance of climbing the corporate ladder.

Another opportunity, according to the official, was

for the government to use its political will to assist in the campaign against sexual harassment in general and at the workplace in particular.

However, the campaign was not a bed of roses. The federation faced several challenges such as women workers not aware of sexual harassment, others who were not open, while the rest were resistant to the interventions.

Some male chauvinists resisted to be trained to show that sexual harassment was a workplace problem and how it affected women primarily and others.

Lessons Learnt

"During the inclusion of sexual harassment provisions in the labour law, there was resistance due to lack of awareness. There was problem of differentiating between gender violence and sexual violence. Even lawyers and advisors were initially reluctant to have these provisions included," noted Tariku.

Critics' main argument was that sexual violence was hard to prove and also the fear and possibility of women taking advantage of the law to fix men they had grudges against.

The federation tackled that problem by raising awareness, showing that the benefits outweighed the drawbacks.

It explained that could be proved with the necessary prudence and knowledge.

Asked what they would do differently if the campaign were replicated elsewhere, the official says they would ensure the implementation was done on a location/cluster basis where the beneficiaries could be better accessed and at farm level.

One of the lessons learnt during the implementation of campaign, the official says, was the way the project was crafted. According to the Tariku, it would have been better if the federation implemented the project on the farms. "We would be able to get more and better results in regard to improve working conditions at the farm level."

Asked to give recommendations of what needs to be done in future, if a similar campaign is conducted, the official says it would be good if the project approvals were sent in the shortest time possible (after project has been shared with partners). That would contribute to having the planned activities done in a timely and efficient manner.

How gender committee got new lease of life in flower farms

Kenya

Lucy Oduor, a harvester at Tropiflora Ltd, a flower company in Limuru, has a reason to smile, thanks to improved working conditions that make reporting for duty sheer delight. She vividly recalls her efforts to champion workers' rights, to no avail. That was about two years ago.

At the time, she served in the then dormant gender committee, which only existed for audit purposes and comprised of appointees from the management and not elected members as provided for in the committees' constitution.

The gender committee "had no influence in policy-making. It lacked the capacity to prevent, investigate and resolve cases," she recalls

Workers were suffering

"Workers continued to suffer in silence with nowhere to seek help. Women workers were denied access to maternal and reproductive healthcare. Sexual harassment was rampant, particularly when it came to recruitment and promotion, housing, transfer and allocation of tasks."

This took a transformative turn in 2018 when Worker's Rights Watch, a partner of Women@Work Campaign, rolled out trainings on sexual harassment and women's rights on the farm. "The campaign targeted gender committees and sensitised us on how to champion workers' rights, particularly those affecting women. It was the wake-up call we needed and since then, the committee has become a force to reckon with," she adds.

Decreased employee turnover

The committee has provided channels for women workers to voice their grievances as well as facilitated conflict resolution. Oduor notes that there has been a decrease in employee turnover and productivity has improved as a result of the committee's efforts to nurture a conducive work environment.

"Workplace safety has been enhanced through implementation of measures such as the sexual harassment policy," she notes. "In addition, we've conducted trainings to sensitise women workers on their rights so they can speak out when these rights are violated."

Moreover, the gender committees also provide advisory services to the women workers.

"We advise women to present a doctor's report early enough in their pregnancy for them to be allocated lighter duties," says Joseph Kakai a gender committee member.

"We've negotiated for breastfeeding mothers to be given manageable targets in order for them to leave at 1pm. This has motivated and increased employee retention among young mothers."

Second beneficiary

A neighbouring farm, Black Petal Limited, is also a partner of the Women@Work Campaign. Jackson Imbai, a member of the gender committee notes the impact of the training in equipping workers to know and fight for their rights.

However, he states that championing the rights of fellow workers is not an easy task because of pressure from employees who want their rights respected and sometimes victimisation by supervisors. "At the end of the day we're workers and have to protect our jobs too. Sometimes we're accused by management of inciting fellow workers. At other times we analyse workers' grievances and draw up some recommendations, but they fail to get an audience or [the grievances] are not acted on, which is quite disheartening.

"However, as a committee, we draw our mandate from the certification bodies and we know serving in this capacity requires more than passion and commitment," Imbai says.

Workers' Rights Watch Coordinator Eunice Waweru says, most flower farms targeted by the campaign have also adopted or revised their sexual harassment policies. "We've piloted the sexual harassment policy

in 12 farms. Eight farms have fully implemented the policy," she says, adding, farms that did not have gender committees have started establishing them.

Waweru is upbeat that most gender committees created or revamped under the Women@Work Campaign can now prevent, investigate and resolve complex forms of gender-based discrimination or conflicts, which may result in sexual harassment. She affirms that most reports on sexual harassment are being addressed quickly, effectively and sensitively through thorough investigations and appropriate mediation.

"All the gender committees in the targeted farms have been empowered through regular trainings and follow-up," Waweru says. "The management in these farms have shown commitment to support the committees in implementing reforms particularly on sexual harassment."



The study further revealed that about 26 per cent of this vulnerable population give in to sexual demands from their bosses to keep their jobs or earn favours from their employers.

How a flower farm dealt sexual harassment a blow

Tanzania

In a perfect world, men and women would work together in harmony without threatening each other. They are, after all, the same species, right? But this world is far from perfect, and often the greatest threat to a person's safety is their fellow human being.

For a long time, women workers at Mount Meru Flower farm (MMF) in Arusha, Tanzania, quietly put up with sexual harassment at the workplace. Sexual predators in the form of uncouth men made working at the farm a total nightmare. Unfortunately, as is often the case with victims of sexual abuse, most women chose to keep quiet afraid of stirring trouble and jeopardising their jobs.

That was then. Today, employees at MMF go about their duties without fear, thanks to the implementation of a sexual harassment policy and trainings in 2018 spearheaded by Tanzania Plantation and Agricultural Workers Union (TPAWU), through a Hivos project that sensitises women on their rights.

Something to smile about

According to Pili Msabaha, an MMF employee and chairperson of the women's workers' branch, the awareness campaigns and trainings have transformed the company's work environment from hostile to a home away from home. TPAWU sensitisation campaigns have given the workers, and especially women, something to smile about.

"I learnt a lot during the initial training, which equipped me with knowledge that I continue

to pass on to other women. I was very naïve on matters sexual harassment, but all that has changed due to the extensive trainings, seminars, and workshops I have attended since the project began," shares Msabaha who has served the company for a decade.

Prior to adoption of the sexual harassment policy, Msabaha admits that it was difficult to recognise, let alone apprehend, sexual harassment acts. Frustrated victims retreated further into their cocoons and emboldened predators went scot-free oblivious to the fact that their days were numbered.

One of the immediate gains following the uptake of TPAWU's programme was putting structures in place to address sexual harassment. Msabaha says the policy has created a structure to better handle complaints through platforms such as the women workers' organisation that has a unit tasked with handling issues such as gender bullying.

In MMF, the organisation has adopted user-friendly methods for victims to submit their complaints either face-to-face, via phone call or text message or through a trusted third party. Msabaha notes that confidentiality is paramount in order to protect those who report from hostile victimisation.

As a leader, Msabaha's training includes conducting investigations to establish details of the harassment incident. "With the permission of management, the women workers'

organisation allocates a day when we meet as women employees and discuss ways to stay safe. Inasmuch as the policy is in effect, cases of harassment still get reported. We have to stay vigilant."

She is grateful for management's support in handling complaints that are beyond her, like apprehending the offending parties.

Her chief role, however, is educating employees, both in and outside MMF, on the need to fight sexual harassment and protect the work environment from turning toxic.

"When I started holding the sensitisation forums, the turnout was not great because people didn't understand what I was talking about. That has since changed because people are now enlightened. Many people attend the trainings.

"The brochures I get from seminars and workshops make the sessions livelier. The attendees also carry these fliers home and study them at their leisure. I've found one-on-one conversations quite helpful as they allow for a greater degree of vulnerability particularly with victims of harassment."

Her sentiments are echoed by her colleague, Flora Zawadi, who lauds the use of different learning approaches to create awareness.

"The open forum sessions and private conversations have helped me understand this

issue of sexual harassment. I've acquired a lot of knowledge, which I share with the neighbouring Maasai community back home."

According to Msabaha, diversifying learning approaches makes the forums refreshing and caters for all, both slow and quick learners.

"I hope TPAWU can find more ways of bringing the flower farmers together, perhaps through a sports bonanza, where we can have fun and also increase sensitisation on sexual harassment," she says.



Tackling sexual harassment in East African flower farms

Kenya

“Do you like sex?” Eunice Waweru asks a group of women who work at a flower farm in Naivasha, Kenya. Everyone is shy and avoids eye contact with Eunice. “I like sex”, she says. This is Eunice’s way of starting a conversation on sexual harassment. She is in the farm to sensitise workers on the ever taboo subject of sexual harassment.

Eunice, a social worker and project manager at Workers Rights Watch, has been working with Hivos and other civil society organisations to tackle sexual harassment in flower farms in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Ethiopia. In 2013, Workers Rights Watch (Kenya), Uganda Workers’ Education Association, the Tanzania Plantation and Agricultural Workers’ Union, and the National Federation of Farm, Plantation and Fisheries and Agro-Industries Trade Union (Ethiopia), conducted a baseline survey in 20 flower farms which revealed that sexual harassment at farms was common, yet widely unacknowledged.

Workers were not comfortable reporting incidences of sexual harassment. The majority of flower farms did not have workplace sexual harassment policies, even though national legislation required that they do, and those that did have these policies did not have effective and viable structures for implementing them.

The Gender Committees tasked with addressing incidences of harassment did not have the technical capacity to address them. They also did not have the time and space to deliberate

on matters brought before them. Besides, it was almost impossible for the gender committees, mostly composed of general workers, to determine matters relating to senior management and ensure the enforcement of their recommendations.

In a number of homes/labour catchment communities, sexual harassment was not seen as a significant social wrong. Thus, many women workers did not feel the need to report incidences, at the risk of backlash and losing their standing in society, even their marriage. Above all, there was a near universal lack of knowledge and understanding about the meaning, scope, effects and legally defined consequences of sexual harassment, both in the community and in the flower farms.

In 2015, the four organisations, together with Hivos, engaged eight flower farms in a pilot project to adopt a sexual harassment policy that would then be scaled-up to the entire flower sector in Kenya. The foundational instrument was a model workplace sexual harassment policy whose main components are: Definition and scope of sexual harassment; Sanctions for violating the policy provisions; Measures required for implementing the policy; Workplace structures for implementing the policy.

Workers, supervisors and managers were made aware of the substantive scope of the policies as well as the broad context of sexual harassment and its effects. The gender committees in the

respective farms were also trained on how to address matters reported to them as well as on mechanisms for preventing sexual harassment in the work place. Farm management had the ultimate responsibility of implementing the policy, while the gender committees and union committees at farm level were tasked with monitoring compliance with the policy.

However, from the pilot, it was evident that a lot more than the model policy and the training provided was needed to eliminate sexual harassment and its long-term implications on those affected. Some of these interventions would include involvement of trade unions in order to activate the adoption of the model policy elements at contract signing and where appropriate, within Collective Bargaining Agreements.

A second phase of the project was rolled out between 2017 and 2019 and targeted four countries. In Kenya, the project received unanimous support from the export association, the Kenya Flower Council and certification body Fairtrade International. The two bodies now require that their members comply with standard indicators drawn from the project. This brings in the indirect commitment of at least 105 flower farms in Kenya.

In addition, the two bodies have revised their indicators to effectively monitor the status of Sexual Harassment in the farms during audits.

“With the indicators, the auditors are able to go deeper and get to know if the gender committees are an important structure within the farm, their roles, the number of cases they have received, have they been resolved to their satisfaction, do they have confidence with the management system of investigating cases and how do they do the cases,” expounds Waweru.

“The farms now have no option but to make sure the gender committees are in place, trained and

know what they are doing even before the audit comes,” adds Waweru.

The lobby group helped to revamp gender committees in several farms in the cut flower sector in a bid to improve the working conditions of women in the horticultural value chain.

According to Eunice, the farms that did not have gender committees have established them. “Most of them are giving us the number of cases resolved following the intervention of Gender Committees and we have found that the Gender Committees are happy with the resolutions adopted by the management.”

She is upbeat that most Gender committees established or revamped under the Women@Work campaign can now prevent, investigate and resolve complex forms of gender-based discrimination or conflicts which may result in and from Sexual Harassment.

Data compiled by Equal Rights Advocates, a women’s law center in the United States, states that 90-95 per cent of sexually harassed women suffer from some debilitating stress reaction, including anxiety, depression, headaches, sleep disorders, weight loss or gain, nausea, lowered self-esteem and sexual dysfunction. In addition, victims of sexual harassment lose \$4.4 million dollars in wages and 973,000 hours in unpaid leave each year in the United States.

Generally, sexual harassment has a long term demoralizing effect that discourages women from asserting themselves within the workplace. It also objectifies women employees as sex objects and perpetuates a culture of abuse. Besides the primary victim, sexual harassment also has an effect on the morale of third parties and employees within range of it. Colleagues of the victim, for example, can find their work disrupted by sexual harassment, even where they are not directly involved.

Workers were not comfortable reporting incidences of sexual harassment. The majority of flower farms did not have workplace sexual harassment policies, even though national legislation required that they do, and those that did have these policies did not have effective and viable structures for implementing them.

Training women on their rights has helped alleviate injustices



Ethiopia

"It was around noon. He told me that his wife was not present, and asked if we could go for lunch together. We have had lunch together in the company of his wife before, so I didn't think much about it. We had lunch near the wash area, where there is a changing room for the spray workers. There were other workers nearby also having lunch.

"After lunch, he asked if I could take him to the changing room. Things happened very fast. The next minute, he was choking me trying to pull down my underwear. I tried to scream for help as I knew there were colleagues nearby, but he responded by saying that people should mind their business. I tried to fight, but he won.

"I'd never thought that I could get raped at work. After the incident, I just sat there not knowing what to do. The head of the women committee was called to the scene, and she has been helping me in my recovery. The farm management took me to hospital and to the police station. The case is now in court."

This is one of the toughest cases Beredu Site has had to deal with as the lead of the women committee at the flower farm where she works. *Etana, 18, has only been employed at the farm for three months. After the incident, she could not go back to her work station in the pack house. She reckoned everyone knew of her ordeal. Beredu asked the management to relocate her to a more 'private' office until she recovers fully.

Of the 13 years Beredu has worked in flower farms in Ethiopia, she has been a member of the women committee for three years.

"We've seen major changes in recent years. There were many problems that women employees faced. The major one was exploitation of women by their supervisors. We had cases where women would work in the farm

This is one of the toughest cases Beredu Site has had to deal with as the lead of the women committee at the flower farm where she works. *Etana, 18, has only been employed at the farm for three months. After the incident, she could not go back to her work station in the pack house. She reckoned everyone knew of her ordeal. Beredu asked the management to relocate her to a more 'private' office until she recovers fully.

and were then asked to do house chores for their supervisors," says Beredu. "The women felt bothered and uncomfortable, but they didn't know what to do or what their rights were, so they would keep quiet."

Repeated training

It's through repeated training by the National Federation of Farm Plantation and Fisheries and Agro-Industries Trade Union — the union under which flower-farm workers fall—and the support of Women@Work campaign that the women now understand what is wrong and how to go about reporting such cases. Beredu Site, Lead, Women Committee, says: "The frequent training by the union on our rights cannot be underrated."

As the principal of the women's committee, Beredu has pushed for subsidy for basic foodstuffs for workers, who can now buy items such as sugar, lentils, rice and maize flour through a canteen, where the costs are subsidised by the management up to a tune of 40 per cent. This means the employees can devote their savings to other expenses, like school fees.

Beredu, 35, has also been vocal in curbing sexual harassment. She tabled a case where a grading manager was known to offer promotions based on relationships he had with his staff. "He used to put pressure on the women workers for

sex. I raised the issue. He was investigated and eventually dismissed."

Solving cases has not been easy, since, as Beredu notes, institutions such as the police and hospitals don't fully support them. In sexual harassment cases, some victims are afraid and usually don't show up for court hearings, hence cases take time or collapse.

Beredu is grateful for the consistent and frequent training by the union for both the junior and senior staff. "Most workers are illiterate and have no idea that there are laws to protect them. It's through such trainings that supervisors are reminded to abide by the law. Before the trainings, we had supervisors who would verbally abuse workers," Beredu recalls.

*** Not her real name**

Flower farms reaping big from blossoming work culture

Kenya

In 2016 a revolutionary drive dubbed the Women@Work Campaign kicked off in the horticulture sector across the eastern Africa region. It sought to address some of the challenges crippling the sector, especially labour and gender rights.

A spot check on the farms shows the campaign has succeeded in influencing policy reforms at farm level to create better working conditions, particularly for women workers. Its comprehensive approach touching on gender equality, environmental health, safety and healthcare has transformed the lives of not just the workers, but also of neighbouring communities.

Tropiflora farm, a Women@Work partner, has adopted progressive gender policies on sexual harassment, maternity leave and gender inclusivity.

Serving workers more efficiently

In addition, the farm's gender committee has been revamped and streamlined to serve the workers more efficiently. "We're evaluating the recruitment processes to ensure that all workers and potential employees are treated fairly. In the past, we've faced challenges of gender equity, especially in the area of leadership roles and wages. The campaign has enlightened us on ways of bridging the gender gap and increasing motivation among the workers," says Veronica Mwaniki, a production manager and chairperson of the gender committee at Tropiflora.

To this end, the company has realised a notable increase of women in management and supervisory positions.

"The campaign has empowered the workers to step up and pursue top positions, be it in the organisational structure or in the welfare committees. On the other hand, the trainings have sensitised employers on issues affecting workers and how to create a good working environment for their staff. This is an excellent approach because workers and their employers move at the same pace and empowered staff aren't held back by retrogressive policymakers."

Inspired confidence

Mwaniki says women workers at the farm seem happier and more confident in expressing their views. "When I look around, I see enthusiastic workers, something I attribute to changes that have been spurred by the sensitisation campaigns. Women workers feel safer, thanks to the sexual harassment policy that has been reinforced through the campaign.

"We've put a sexual harassment clause in the employment policy. All new employees are inducted and made to understand that the farm is a sexual harassment-free zone. Their salaries and work benefits are negotiated by independent parties."

The sexual harassment policy is backed by male champions to ensure buy-in by all workers, contrary to the popular misconception of harassment being a “women’s issue”.

Great asset in reducing stress

As a result of the campaign, the management was also inspired to set up a day-care centre after being sensitised on the anxiety of mothers, who leave their children unattended at home to report to work.

Since its establishment, the centre has proven to be a great asset in reducing stress and absenteeism among women workers which, in turn, has boosted productivity. The facility is huge enough to accommodate up to 45 children comfortably.

Purity Thigira, a farm manager, adds that the centre also helps offset workers’ expenses. “The centre is well maintained to include meals for the children. This way, mothers are assured of their young ones’ safety, and can easily access them for bonding during work breaks.”

The successful uptake of the Women@Work Campaign has brought palpable hope of achieving safe workspaces and nurturing fulfilling employee relations.

At another farm, Black Petals Limited, the community continues to reap benefits of the sensitisation on how to work together harmoniously without infringing on the rights of each other.

Following a series of trainings organised by Workers’ Rights Watch, a partner of the Women@Work Campaign, gender conflict issues such as wage discrimination and inappropriate sexual advances are being handled swiftly to enhance workplace safety especially for women, who are often the victims of gender injustices.



Margaret Mbula, a senior supervisor at the farm and the chairperson of the gender committee lauds the company for indiscriminately implementing policies that promote the rights of all workers. Through the committee, she says, the company is keen to promote women’s rights to ensure they have decent working conditions and are remunerated fairly.

“We recognise the need to develop a gender mainstreaming framework, hence the partnership with Workers’ Rights Watch. One of the agenda was to review our policies and redesign them, if need be, to promote gender rights in our organisation.”

Both organisations are committed to continuing with the trainings so as to sustain the milestones made so far. At Tropiflora, a training department is already up and running to ensure that all new employees are enlightened on labour and gender rights and that awareness is adopted in the organisational culture.

“We’re confident that these trainings will rid us of limitations on workers’ self-confidence, interpersonal skills and personal development skills, and promote growth in our workforce.”

The sexual harassment policy is backed by male champions to ensure buy-in by all workers, contrary to the popular misconception of harassment being a “women’s issue”.

Initiative shines spotlight on sexual harassment in flower farms in Tanzania

Tanzania

Flora Mpukwini speaks firmly. She is not shy either as she does not mince her words when she narrates a case where a security guard at the farm was sexually harassing a fellow woman worker.

Mpukwini has worked at the farm, Mount Meru Flowers in Arusha, for eight years. She recounts that sexual harassment cases went unreported for a long time as one was required to report to his or her supervisor.



“Bosses were feared. Some of the staff cannot imagine approaching the supervisor or human resources to report a matter,” narrates Mpukwini, who is now the head of the Gender Committee.

The impact began with activities around the sexual harassment policy when on November 1 2018, the farm adopted a sexual harassment policy which seeks prevention and management of sexual harassment at the workplace.

It is the first flower farm, of the ten flower farms that partnered with the Women@Work campaign in Tanzania with a sexual harassment policy. It is also the first sexual harassment policy adopted by Mount Meru Flowers.

Adoption of the policy has created awareness on what sexual harassment entails and how it can be addressed. It has created a good working condition as well.

“We terminated the security guard after the Gender Committee presented the findings of the case to us. The fact that an action was taken gave confidence in the workers, that their reporting was not in vain. An aura of positivity in general, was also witnessed,” says Hamida Kilogo, Human Resources Manager at the farm.

Kilogo further notes that the gender committee gives power to the staff , women, as tradition has been that it is only men who spoke out about issues or were in leadership. Further, it has also proved that everyone has the right to be heard and get a fair trial. Initially, the supervisors would

be left to decide if to report the matter, of sexual harassment or not.

Also, initially the farm relied on the general constitution that guides on complaints and procures reporting mechanism.

This meant that sexual harassment complaints were handled as a normal grievances procedure just like a case of someone who has stolen which should not be the case.

The Gender Committee conducts the trainings during lunch time, every three months. The training are conducted in departments as the farm employs about 900 workers.

Additionally, there was training in negotiating. Mpukwini attributes self-confidence in the workers as a result of the training conducted by Tanzania Plantation and Agriculture Workers Union (TPAWU).

“It is only men who spoke or participated in Collective Bargaining Agreements but not anymore,” says Flora with a proud smile unmistakable on her face.

“For sure the staff are more outspoken on various issues. The negotiation skills and understanding of labor laws taught to us by TPAWU cannot be undermined. The training seminars have also brought us belief in oneself. Knowing that you are speaking on behalf of 900 workers, you have to be confident and believe in yourself first,” she adds.

Further, the training have brought order as initially, individuals would want to table “personal issues” hence a lot of time was wasted as members deliberated on matters that held no water. However, that has now changed as the committee comes up with a proposal beforehand so that by the time they are going to a negotiation meeting, they have a clear agenda.

Through the negotiation skills, Mpukwini and her team has been able to bargain for an increase in the annual leave days from 28 to 30, basic salary to be increased to Tsh200,000 from 130,000 (\$87

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Flora Mpukwini

from \$56), house allowance from Tsh 25,000 to 50,000 (\$11 to \$22) and 90 days of maternity leave from 84.

While celebrating the successes, the Gender Committee acknowledges that a lot needs to be done for staff to understand labor laws. This is tied to the fact that illiteracy levels for farm workers are very low.

Sadly, sexual harassment happens to be one of the most underrated offences at the work place. Yet, its severity has seen its victims often women quit work all together in order to safeguard their safety and dignity. However, most of the victims are forced to continue suffering in silence not only for fear of losing their jobs but also to escape the stigma associated with sexual harassment cases.

Further, awareness campaigns were also facilitated. At Mount Meru Flower Farm (MMF) for instance, remedy for this violation has been realised thanks to awareness campaigns spearheaded by Tanzania Plantation and Agricultural Workers Union. “We have a zero tolerance for sexual harassment policy at the farm,” says Hamida Kilogo , HR manager.

Before the rolling out of the campaign in 2018, conflicts arising from sexual harassment were simply swept under the carpet. Married women, for instance, were hesitant to report harassment

cases to the management for fear of jeopardising their marriages.

Furthermore, the existing sexual harassment policy at the time was vague and ineffective in solving reported cases.

According to Kilogo, the policy was unclear especially in defining what constituted harassment. Such loopholes made it inadequate in addressing complaints of sexual harassment.

“The policy we have now is more detailed and has helped streamline the reporting structure. For instance, we have a clause on third party harassment, something that was unheard of before the trainings by Tanzania Plantation and Agricultural Workers Union,” she says.

In addition, the workshops and seminars held to sensitise members of staff have empowered them to know when they are being harassed as well as built their confidence to file complaints in case they need to do so.

“The intervention bore fruits. Last year, a worker was harvesting flowers at the farm and a security guard touched her inappropriately. Those working at the farm witnessed this and reported the matter to the women’s committee who escalated it to HR office,” says Kilogo. Adding: “The guard was apprehended even though the victim raised the issue herself. Before the training, these witnesses would never have reported the matter and the guard. He would probably walk scot free to prey on his next victim.”

Besides the revamped sexual harassment policy, MMF now has welfare committee that handle workers’ conflicts promptly without necessarily involving management.

However, implementation of the policy has faced teething problems as some workers are still hesitant to file reports of harassment.

“Some employees may still wish to ignore offensive acts committed against them for fear of

stirring up trouble. Despite all these interventions, there are those who will opt to brush off harassment especially if it involves their supervisor or other people in authority for fear of losing their jobs,” she says.

Still, the gains achieved by the Tanzania Plantation and Agricultural Workers Union training are undeniable. Kilogo hopes the trainings can be extended to cover other human rights issues.

“The MMF community is grateful for the opportunity to be empowered by the training. We are hoping Tanzania Plantation and Agricultural Workers Union will visit our farm once more and sensitise the staff on issues that affect their day to day life at the work place such as labour rights,” she says.

“This sector has a high employee turnover so it would be nice to have frequent trainings to enlighten new staff who joins the farm. This will also help to internalize this new culture,” she adds.

Kilogo further recommends that future trainings to include both men and women as well as representatives from management so that everyone is enlightened and able to appreciate the efforts being made to ensure the farm is rid of sexual harassment. His concern was that there a lot of focus on women during such trainings.

“We need all staff members to be involved in the sensitisation campaigns for them to own the process of making our farm safe and friendly for all workers,” she recommends.

Access to Justice Legal advice & representation made *accessible to women workers* with **23 cases filed** on behalf of workers in court in Rwanda. **499,063 Workers / citizens reached** with legal education & mobile legal aid clinics including through radio talk shows in Uganda.

How my coverage helped change lives of women in the flower sector

Kenya

When Brenda Mulinya attended trainings on the rights of women working in flower farms in Kenya, little did she know that this would completely change her reporting on the sector.

A former features Editor at the NTV, a television station owned by Nation Media Group, Mulinya revealed how her interaction with issues that were being addressed by the Women@Work Campaign transformed her professionally, and affected her news sources and audiences.

Says Mulinya: "The campaign was a good project because it gave us exposure and enabled us to see what was going on in the flower farms, especially by women workers, behind the scenes. We were also able to expose and help to mitigate what they were going through."

She recalls how, as result of the campaign, she got lots of content for her TV viewers, especially over the weekends when more air time was allocated for news features and analysis.

One of her best news features was titled: The Ugly Side of Roses that focused on one of the leading violations, which is sexual harassment of female workers by their colleagues, supervisors and managers.

Several women workers went public about the rising cases of sexual harassment at their workplace. "This was shocking and enlightening at the same time," Mulinya says.

"The news coverage and reaction from stakeholders and even the national and county governments forced the farm's management to intervene and led to fewer cases being reported thereafter. The feedback from the ground IS that it was taken seriously by the management, who acted swiftly to reduce cases where supervisors and some managers were implicated," says the editor.

She recalls how a news feature she did on NTV that highlighted how workers in a certain farm had not been paid their wages and salaries for several months helped focus attention on the matter. There was also increased urgency to solve the issue. By the time of writing this story, the matter was still under review.

Says Mulinya: "My exclusive news feature spurred a conversation and got the union and Kenya Human Rights Commission officials to come on board to condemn the firm."

Such coverage made the editor to better understand her critical role and position in helping bring about change in the lives of women workers.

"The campaign helped to sharpen my skills, and increase my news sources and networks in addition to making me more aware of the female farm workers' plight in their workplaces. In fact, it opened my eyes to see the reality of women working in this industry."

Mulinya is happy and proud that the news coverage on the plight of flower farm workers led to reforms in the sector as far as review and enforcement of gender, human rights and labour laws were concerned.

Her employer and editors were supportive and gave her the opportunity, time and resources to travel to flower-growing areas in the country to highlight critical issues to the country and the world as.

Her main challenge during her coverage of the sector was difficulty in accessing flower farms. But thanks to AWCFS and other Hivos partners, she managed to reach out to some workers and their union representatives, who she interviewed off site. "I used my networks in the Hivos campaign to link me to flower farm workers who met me outside the restricted area for tips and in-depth interviews."

But that also posed another challenge. Hiding the source's identity by concealing the face and distorting the voice compromised the credibility of the news story and feature to the viewers, but it was inevitable. This was important to protect the source of information from sacking or other retaliatory responses by the employer.

The other challenge was to get the women to share their frustrations and plight at their workplace. Most sexual harassment victims took time to open up, trust the reporter and candidly share the real issues affecting them.

Mulinya feels that for media to contribute positively to improving the sector, more resources should be allocated to media work to enable journalists to undertake more investigative stories that have proved to be influential.

The campaign should also be extended beyond flower farms to other areas of the horticultural sector to address labour and human rights issues further, she notes.



The campaign helped to sharpen my skills, and increase my news sources and networks in addition to making me more aware of the female farm workers' plight in their workplaces. In fact, it opened my eyes to see the reality of women working in this industry.

Brenda Mulinya

Tosarika! Respect my body, Ugandan women tell sexual predators

Uganda

Three out of every five women in Uganda have experienced sexual harassment at the workplace. This is according to a 2008 survey conducted by workers' rights advocate, Frank Kiwalabye on the effects of sexual harassment in Ugandan. About two-thirds of the respondents were women aged below 35 years and earning low income.

The study further revealed that about 26 per cent of this vulnerable population give in to sexual demands from their bosses to keep their jobs or earn favours from their employers. Sadly, only about 13 per cent of the respondents were aware of policies that protect employees from workplace sexual harassment.

Still, the issue remains unaddressed with most victims afraid of speaking out, lest they lose their jobs or endanger their lives.

It doesn't help that the laws put in place to address sexual harassment have yawning gaps that leave room for misinterpretation and omissions that work against the victim.

Take for instance, Uganda's Employment Act of 2006, which stipulates that only employers with at least 25 workers are required to have a sexual harassment policy that guides the prevention or investigation of incidences at the workplace. Does this mean that sexual harassment cannot occur in an organisation with 10 employees? Five employees? Two employees?

It is such loopholes that necessitated the Women@Work Campaign, spearheaded by Uganda Workers' Education Association (UWEA), a human rights organisation. The objective was to bring to light the injustices faced by victims of sexual predators and put an end to the hush-hush culture of addressing this issue not only in Uganda but in the entire East Africa region.

"There were rampant [cases] of sexual harassment and HIV/Aids stigmatisation in flower farms. Representatives from various worker' organisations in the region came together to deliberate on policies that would help address this problem, hence the trainings," Flavia Amoding, Programmes Officer, UWEA, explains.



In 2017, the Women@Work Campaign was rolled out in flower farms in the region covering Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Ethiopia, and Rwanda. The campaign adopted a six-prong approach that included sexual harassment, maternal and reproductive health, living wage, worker representation and participation, workplace health and safety, and women's leadership.

Over the past three years since its implementation, the campaign has been able to put sexual harassment—a major concern for most women workers in the sector—at the top of its agenda.

Trained as a champion

"I was trained as a champion of sexual harassment awareness during the Women@Work Campaign. Most women, including myself, knew that sexual harassment was limited to rape only. I'm wiser now and committed to helping other women understand this vice," says Gloria Namayanja, a human resource assistant at Xclusive Cuttings flower farm in Uganda.

She goes on to share her encounter with a sexual predator: "When I joined the company three years ago as a fresh graduate from Makerere, it was as though the men were waiting for my arrival. Their eyes were on me. One in particular became a nuisance. He would call and profess his love. Luckily, I was already enrolled in the campaign so I knew how to spot a sexual predator. I mustered the courage to confront him and told him to quit calling me. That was the end of him harassing me with persistent phone calls."

Namayanja says most men in the company now fear being reported for harassment as this could cost them their jobs.

Her colleague, Phiona Birungi, agrees that most women at the company had limited information on sexual harassment. They "were blind to acts of harassment, which we passed as playful jokes made by men. Sometimes when you're having a conversation with a male colleague, he pats you

The study further revealed that about 26 per cent of this vulnerable population give in to sexual demands from their bosses to keep their jobs or earn favours from their employers.

lightly on the back and before you know it, he spansks your behind."

Zero-tolerance policy

"Thanks to this campaign, we're wiser now and we know better than to tolerate offensive behaviour no matter how subtle it appears," Birungi adds.

The comprehensive module on the sexual harassment section of Women@Work has helped to broaden the definition of this form of harassment and understanding of workers and management to include verbal harassment, indecent exposure, unwanted gifts and attention, profane language, forced physical contact including forced hugs and invasion of personal space.

Besides training, the flower farms enrolled in this campaign have implemented a zero-tolerance policy to sexual harassment within their human resource practice.

Placement of fliers and posters around the company premises, especially at the entrance, have also helped to raise awareness on sexual harassment. They read: Tosarika; Break the silence! Respect my body.

It is hoped that as more women get enlightened on the issue, they will gain courage to stand up against sexual predators and promote a safer, happier work environment.

FEMNET's robust advocacy efforts in championing decent work bearing fruit



Jess Bailey/Unsplash

Kenya

In June 2019, Kenya, Uganda and Rwanda joined other member states of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) to unanimously adopt Convention 190 on eliminating violence and harassment in the world of work. This marked a milestone in FEMNET's intense advocacy efforts in promoting gender equality and decent work under the Women@Work campaign.

FEMNET is a pan-African feminist and membership-based organisation committed to advocating for gender equality and dignity in work spaces.

Also known as ILO C190, the convention speaks to the issues at the heart of the Women@Work Campaign: creating and promoting safer work

spaces for women at work in the horticulture industry, Kenya's third largest foreign exchange earner.

"Although the convention was more of the ILO tripartite mandate meaning that it was shared among three parties, as a civil society organisation, we undertook significant advocacy work to champion its adoption at national, regional and global levels," says Dorothy Otieno, FEMNET's Women in Leadership Project Coordinator. The advocacy covers respect and dignity for women in workplaces, equal pay for equivalent work done, and inclusive and meaningful representation of gender at the workplace.

ILO defines the tripartite principle as a universal set of guidelines that should be applied by "multinational enterprises, governments, employers and workers, and organisations on such areas as employment, training, conditions of work and life, and industrial relations." These fundamental principles are critical to realising the objectives of ILO as they are guidelines for "enhancing the positive social and labour effects of the operations of multinationals."

The ILO tripartite in Kenya's horticulture is represented by the government through the ministry of labour, the Agricultural Employers Association and the Kenya plantation and Agricultural Workers Union.

In advocating for safe spaces, FEMNET employed a multi-prong approach of raising awareness on what constitutes decent work, building an enabling environment in the horticulture industry through training of workers on leadership, mainstreaming gender, and advocacy at national, regional and global levels.

"On advocacy, FEMNET participates in high-level forums such as the Commission on the Status of Women, High Level Political Forums and African Regional Forum for Sustainable Development,

where the conventions and legal frameworks have been widely discussed and lobbied for," Otieno says.

Locally, the pan-African organisation was key in building momentum around the country's participation and adoption of the convention during the 108th International Labour Conference held in Geneva, Switzerland in 2019. Kenya was among the countries that unanimously adopted C190.

The advocacy strategy entailed writing letters to the government, specifically the relevant ministry and lobbying through the media, including social media platforms, by penning opinion pieces. Overall, FEMNET actively promoted dialogue around the convention through online and offline platforms.

"Sexual harassment and violence in the workplace is a manifestation of indecent work as gender pay gap for equivalent work done exhibits structural and gender inequalities. We've been advocating for a living wage because most workers in the horticulture sector still earn below the minimum wage," says Otieno.

FEMNET was not pivotal to the adoption of the Convention as this was a country mandate. Still, its influence cannot be underestimated. The organisation now wants to ensure that Kenya ratifies C190, Fiji and Uruguay having led the pack.

FEMNET is currently consulting with like-minded civil society organisations to convene a seating with the relevant stakeholders to push for ratification. But a domesticated international policy will not be effective if the targeted beneficiaries are not aware of its benefits.

For this reason, FEMNET first targeted three flower farms—Isinya Roses in Kajiado, Tropiflora in Limuru and KHE in Nanyuki—with training on leadership, gender equality and decent work.

Flower farms have suffered bad publicity and, initially, they were suspicious of us. We needed intervention from the Kenya Flower Council and other industry stakeholders for the targeted farms to buy into our advocacy efforts."

Dorothy Otieno
FEMNET's Women in Leadership
Project Coordinator

Institutionalisation of the gender committees was enhanced and leadership training facilitated in the two years, 2018 through 2019. Four additional farms, including East African Growers, expressed interest and were roped into the campaign in its later stages in 2019. Legacy Farm, a woman-owned, small scale farm in Kajiado was part of the campaign.

By the end of the initiative, FEMNET had reached to at least 500 workers with leadership skills through a trainer of trainers' module. Human resource managers from 10 farms were specifically targeted with training on gender mainstreaming in policy and practice. This training roped in human resource managers from Rwanda and Uganda for peer learning.

Otieno says the priority was to review farm policies and assess their capacity for gender mainstreaming. FEMNET provided advice on how policies could be strengthened to promote gender equality.

In the end, recruitment increased, and promotion of women in flower farms targeting women who were trained in leadership, and whose confidence and potential to negotiate was boosted by the trainings.

Reports gathered from the farms indicated that established gender committees, working with human resource managers, significantly contributed to the reduction of sexual harassment cases and streamlined operations in the farms.

"This is a highly lucrative sector that sadly optimises on 'casualisation' of labour. The convention is therefore important towards improving working conditions and promoting safe and dignified working spaces for women," Otieno says. She speaks on the need to drum up support for domestication of C190 and to scale up advocacy for creation of even safer spaces for

women at work in horticulture, who contribute 65-70 per cent of the workforce in the industry.

The sector is so lucrative that in 2019 for instance, government statistics shows that the horticulture sector netted 142.7 billion shillings. Fresh produce currently ranks third as a foreign exchange earner after tourism and foreign diaspora remittances.

The journey has not been easy for women's rights and civil society advocates, however. Accessing flower farms for on- and off-farm trainings was particularly challenging, and it took a big effort in lobbying for a buy-in. Otieno adds: "Flower farms have suffered bad publicity and, initially, they were suspicious of us. We needed intervention from the Kenya Flower Council and other industry stakeholders for the targeted farms to buy into our advocacy efforts."

FEMNET has thus learnt the need to target top-level managers to acquire buy-in through a less tedious process. While much time was spent at the negotiation and consultation stages, it paid off. There is now an understanding of what decent work entails and various structures such as the gender committees were put in place or enhanced to set the process in motion.

Otieno speaks of positive changes that are taking place in the sector, which are good for women whose esteem and confidence continues to grow.

"Women in the sector feel they're the lowest of the lowest workers in the supply chain. They don't seek promotions because they believe they're not qualified for supervisory or management positions. We're able to empower and affirm that they're leaders in their own right and have the capacity to influence change and rise in ranks, including in the male-dominated positions," she says.

Much remains to be done, though, like changing the attitude of the media towards the horticulture industry and that of the community and workers in the flower farms. Sector players such as flower farm owners have often complained about harsh and unfavourable reporting of the horticulture sector by the media.

Otieno recommends that flower farms be encouraged to set aside resources, time and space to ensure trainings and other capacity-building efforts are included in their strategic plans. She also expresses the need to focus on the sector because COVID-19 has exacerbated the unequal work responsibilities for women, including their vulnerability to loss of livelihoods, gender-based violence and rising unpaid care work.

Post-COVID, Otieno speaks of the need for pandemic recovery responses to address the specific challenges that women in flower farms face, especially because the industry was among the first casualty of the ongoing pandemic.

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People
Unlimited

Women Leadership



Bridging the gender inequality gap in Rwanda's flower farms

Rwanda

More than 100 flower farm workers are reaping the benefits of a dignified, safe and fair workplace, thanks to a partnership initiative to champion gender equity and women's empowerment in Rwanda's horticulture sector.

The Women@Work Campaign, implemented by the Rwanda Women's Network (RWN) in partnership with Hivos East Africa for the past four years, focused on promoting safe and secure work environments and ensuring equal opportunities for women farm workers in the horticulture sector.

According to RWN's Communication and Advocacy Officer, Ms Sharon Bideri, the collaboration was a response to growing concern by horticulture stakeholders over gender-based violence and discrimination at the workplace, and the need to eliminate the vices.

She adds that, the Women Leadership Project in the Horticulture Sector in Rwanda was designed to advance women's leadership and representation in decision-making processes the horticulture sector by addressing both strategic and practical issues that hinder their progress.

To better understand the situation in the horticulture sector, RWN first conducted a baseline assessment of gender equity and equality on four small and large flower farms in Nyagatare, Gatsibo and Rwamagana districts of the Great Lakes state.

The assessment focused on women's positions in terms of employment, involvement in leadership, equal opportunities and fair treatment of men and women in the workplace.

Of the four flower farms, Bella Flowers Ltd is the largest with 773 workers – 489 men. Garden Fresh Ltd has 150 workers (120 women); Green Best has 50 workers (27 women); and Akanyenyeri Ltd has 31 workers (19 women).

The assessment made some interesting revelations. Although women workers were more than men, there were huge disparities in wages and allowances across genders in the same job group or in

the same departments. Men earned double the daily wage rate —FRw1,500 or US\$1.6 — compared to what women received. More so, casual workers' pay was unreliable and below the set living wages.

Other findings showed that the farms had neither gender-sensitive workplace policies nor platforms where workers could air their grievances or concerns. Issues of wages and salaries, health and safety, sexual harassment,

The collaboration was a response to growing concern by horticulture stakeholders over gender-based violence and discrimination at the workplace, and the need to eliminate the vices.

Ms Sharon Bideri
RWN's Communication and Advocacy Officer

working conditions and hours and labour rights were not receiving adequate attention.

Also, workers did not have access to savings and cooperative schemes, and lacked basic knowledge on proper personal financial planning.

“On two farms, there were no women holding any supervisory or managerial positions. In fact, most women were casual labourers, many without written contracts,” the assessment showed.

Approaches used

RWN used the findings to launch a training of trainers (ToT) programme to strengthen women’s leadership capacities through skills development and leadership training. The ToT programme, held between March and April 2018 was based on a Women’s Leadership Curriculum covering several focus areas, including women in power, gender and globalisation, and financial literacy.

The network partnered with Rwanda Workers’ Trade Union Confederation (CESTRAR) to organise sessions on labour rights and legal literacy.

Promising results

As a direct result of these trainings, the empowered women workers were able to use their newly-gained

leadership skills to engage management and agitate for setting up of gender committees, and catalyse formation of village savings groups. At Garden Fresh and Bella Flowers, workers formed groups of 10, with weekly contributions ranging from FRw5,000 (US\$5.2) to FRw20,000 (US\$2.3).

The outcomes are encouraging. It has birthed a savings culture that is now firmly rooted among flower farm workers, and attracted the participation of the wider flower farm community.

In April 2018, the management at Bella Flowers and at Garden Fresh farms established gender committees to ensure that the needs and concerns of women

workers are well represented, communicated and addressed. The committees play key roles in entrenching gender equality in the workplace and in addressing issues such as workplace sexual harassment and the involvement of women workers in decision-making.

They also cascade information and reach other workers in addition to providing a mechanism for redressing grievances and passing on worker’s views to management. The results have encouraged more flower farms to sign agreements with RWN to enhance capacities of farm workers to promote gender equity and women’s empowerment.



Leonard Faustle

**10,173+ Women
workers & managers**
trained on leadership
& negotiation skills &
decent work aspects

A woman with a warm smile is working in a greenhouse. She is wearing a blue headscarf, a white long-sleeved shirt, and a blue vest. She is wearing green gloves and is tending to a bush of white roses. In the background, there are blue wooden frames, possibly for hanging plants, and the greenhouse structure is visible with some lights in the distance.

"I 'm happy because I'm respected by people. I got trained on leadership after the elections. 104 is a huge number. People are very different and I need to know how to deal with different personalities and issues."

Besa Kenato

FIDA-Uganda takes lead in promoting rights of women

Uganda

As a leading legal non-governmental organisation in Uganda, the Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA-Uganda) has significantly increased access to justice for vulnerable women. This has been a direct impact of increased awareness on women's labour rights.

A partner organization within the Women@Work campaign supported by Hivos East Africa, FIDA-Uganda has engaged strategic decision-makers, such as labour officers in an effort to advocate for better working conditions for women.

To raise awareness on labour rights for vulnerable women such as those working in horticulture, on 19th August and 21st October 2019, FIDA-Uganda invited a labour officer from Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) to speak on CBS Radio and Beat FM Radio respectively.

KCCA is the legal entity that replaced the Kampala City Council. The entity was established by the Ugandan Parliament and is responsible for all operations of Kampala City.

Engaging labour officers from KCCA was a strategic move as were efforts to work with the media to raise awareness on labour rights and the plight of women in horticulture.

"Listeners received information on labour rights and laws that included termination of employment, leave days, maternity protection, and sexual harassment," says Irene Ekonga, FIDA-Uganda.

"The discussions over the radio further exposed the officer to the multiple challenges faced by the vulnerable groups in need of their labour rights and the challenges women faced when trying to access justice,"

she adds. Ekonga speaks of the continuous interactions and engagement with the KCCA labour office in efforts to resolve labour-related cases.

As a result of these engagements, labour offices began to refer cases of labour violations suffered by the vulnerable women in flower farms to FIDA-Uganda. This added onto the cases that came directly from the farms to the legal organisation.

The women receive much-needed free legal advice and representation. Additionally, Ekonga says that to improve access to justice, FIDA-Uganda has collaborated with KCCA.

As such, on February 4, 2020, FIDA-Uganda wrote to KCCA labour office requesting that a labour help desk be established. They further recommended that this office be set up at the

same premises that houses KCCA labour offices.

In the same month, the KCCA Labour Office set up the first Labour Help Desk in Uganda to offer legal aid, legal representation, mediation, arbitration and other forms of alternative dispute resolution within its premises at KCCA building on Sezibwa Road in Kampala.

The aforementioned services are provided to the workers with labor related issues and in this case vulnerable women working in horticulture.

"The desk continues to represent women in court and conducts mediation between women and their employers. Thirty women so far are beneficiaries of this initiative," Ekonga says.

FIDA-Uganda supports this initiative by providing technical expertise, and a full-time legal officer was assigned the desk to offer legal aid on labour matters. The organisation further supports the initiative by raising awareness of its existence and supports all initiatives by the desk.

This year, FIDA-Uganda participated in the Labour Laws and Labour Rights Awareness Campaign during 16 Days of Activism that was held at mobile legal aid clinic situated at KCCA offices.

By supporting this initiative, FIDA-Uganda has learnt that establishing a labour Help Desk eases access to justice for the vulnerable women.

Ekonga says the organisation has also learnt the importance of collaboration. She says that supporting and facilitating legal officers or labour experts from independent organisations such as FIDA-Uganda to work with KCCA labour officers improves results. "It is very important to provide services in collaboration with the labour offices. We now have more women reporting various labour violations," she says.

She further states that vulnerable women need not worry about legal fees as they are represented free of charge.



Leonard Faustle

Ekonga recommends that organisations working to support vulnerable women proactively seek such collaborative opportunities with other agencies because this boosts success and sustainability.

"In a collaborative initiative, partners work within existing structures and this is therefore a cost effective approach," she notes.

She further notes that this reduces replication of duties as each partner can focus on the areas they are best at.

FIDA-Uganda recommends the establishment of more labour help desks at district, country and regional levels. Ekonga says such initiatives would supplement the understaffed labour offices in Uganda and that this would contribute to more women accessing justice.

"Additionally, there is need to support the capacity of organisations that are operating labour help desks so that they become even more efficient and effective," she says.

Overall, Ekonga also recommends an increase in the numbers of legal officers to support the help desks, and other vulnerable groups of women in horticulture.

**48 Legal & policy
propositions on
*labour & decent
work*** brought before
national governments
& intergovernmental
agencies & organisations



Women leadership makes a difference in Rwanda's horticulture industry

Rwanda

A leadership initiative by Rwanda Women's Network, under the Women@Work Campaign has slowly, but surely, changed the place of women in the horticulture sector.

The initiative to increase the number of women in leadership and decision-making was informed by a baseline study on Rwanda horticulture organisations, which showed that, while women in the industry outnumbered men by a significant margin, accounting for 56.5 per cent, they were not represented in flower farms' leadership positions.

A situation analysis conducted by Hivos in five East African countries also showed that few women were in supervisory and management roles. This meant that women's voice was missing at the table where decisions that could improve their working conditions were

made. Women were also missing from conversations touching on creating decent workplaces where all workers were guaranteed fair treatment with regard to pay, access to maternity leave and reproductive health services, as well as their labour rights.

Approach used to tackle this challenge

To address these challenges, Rwanda Women's Network started a leadership programme whose objective was to strengthen the leadership capacities of women workers and their representatives, as well as management.

We approached the management of four farms to secure their buy-in, with the intention of showcasing the importance of empowering women."

Ms Sharon Bideri

RWN's Communication and Advocacy Officer

"We believed that these strategies would result in more women in leadership, influencing changes at the personal level and policies and practices at the farm level, ultimately leading to gender equality and decent workplaces," says Sharon Bideri, Rwanda Women's Network (RWN) communication and advocacy officer.

RWN was convinced that development and enforcement of workplace policies was a key success of the initiative and sustainability of the results. "We approached the management of four farms to secure their buy-in,

with the intention of showcasing the importance of empowering women," says Bideri.

However, bringing farms on board proved difficult as the management was cautious about the cost implications of such an initiative. They believed that women would start demanding their rightful place in the management structures, and that would force them to create more positions to accommodate them. This would have financial implications.

"Some farm managers would not allow workers to participate in our dialogue sessions on their grounds, or give them time to hold these sessions elsewhere, arguing that this interfered with their work," she adds.

Great achieved realised

It was, therefore, a great relief when, after a few months, Bella Flowers, based in Rwamagana District, and Garden Fresh Vegetables in Nyagatare District

signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Rwanda Women's Network to implement the programme to enhance women's leadership skills.

With the MoU in place, the first step was to carry out a baseline assessment of the status of female employees on the two farms. Specifically, the organisation assessed the women's position in terms of employment, involvement in leadership, equal opportunities and how they were treated at the workplace compared to their male colleagues.

The assessment revealed that the farms lacked gender-sensitive workplace policies and organised structures and mechanisms for promotion of gender equality and decent work. They also lacked platforms for workers to air their grievances.

There was a need to strengthen the leadership capacities of women workers, their representatives and management, Bideri says.

RWN, therefore, embarked on the training of trainers on both farms to equip workers with the necessary leadership, knowledge and skills to excel in the horticultural sector, and to increase their labour rights awareness. "Our main goal was to enhance the confidence of women in the sector to assume

leadership and challenge discriminatory practices in the sector," Bideri adds. The training was done jointly with Rwanda Workers Trade Union Confederation, and was based on the RWN's Women's Leadership curriculum developed in collaboration with Akina Mama wa Afrika in Uganda. The curriculum covers gender and globalisation, financial literacy and labour rights.

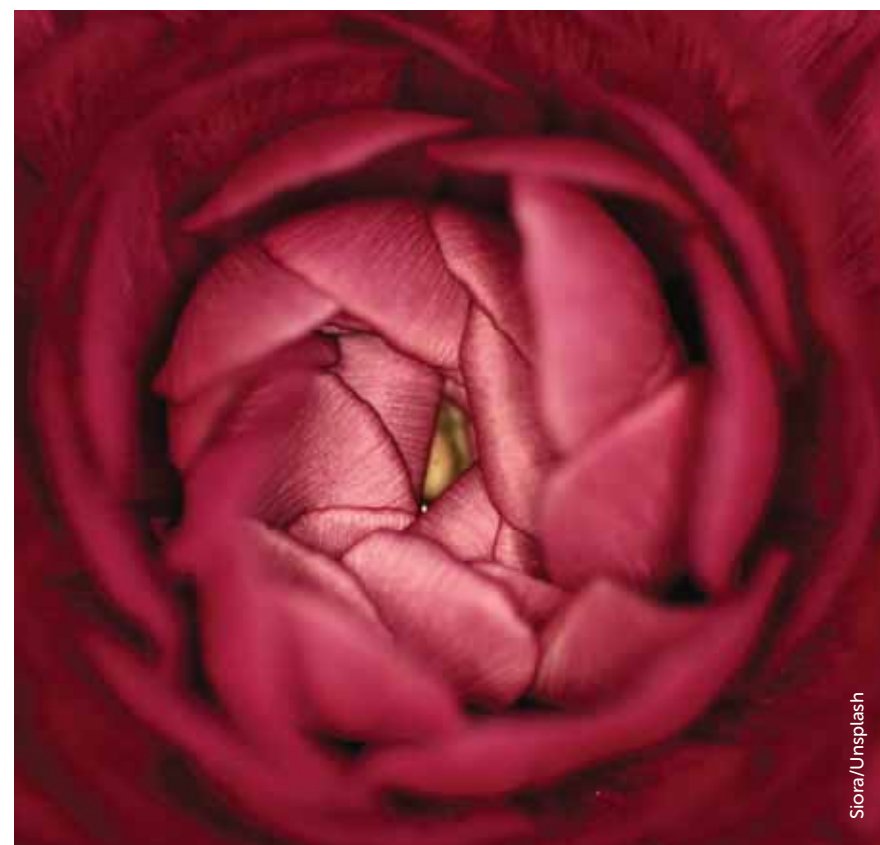
Positive strides recorded

Following the training, farm workers were able to engage management and agitate for setting up of gender committees, which were established in 2018.

"Bella Flowers established a gender committee, which ensured the concerns of women workers were well represented and that women were involved in decision-making," Bideri says, adding, the committee also pushed for equality at the workplace and addressed issues such as sexual harassment—a topic not discussed openly on the farm previously.

Bideri says that the gender committees continue to provide a mechanism for workers to air their grievances and seek redress, and an avenue through which workers' views are taken to management.

After the establishment of the Committees, Bella Flowers



Siora/Unsplash

commissioned a consultant to develop gender-sensitive policies and mechanisms. These policies have and will continue to strengthen and improve the situation of women working in this flower farm.

A key lesson from the intervention was the need to emphasise the link between women's leadership and empowerment and improved productivity. As Bideri observes, creating a decent workplace for women ensures farm owners meet the international standards required of them and in the process record handsome profits.

Give me a chance to lead:

Testimonies of women in flower farms



Cherono Doris – As a leader you have to study the characters of your staff. While at the farm, I have received training on first aid, leadership, personal development and financial management.

Kenya

As the Women Leadership project bears fruit across East Africa as a result of the Women@Work campaign powered by Hivos East Africa, it is time to take stock. It is said some people are born leaders while others are trained or given opportunities that transform into leaders.

But what chances does someone with a low level of education and one who has been denied various opportunities to improve due to societal and cultural norms have to be in leadership position? This is the situation of most women working in the flower farms of East Africa.

Although most farm businesses have now put in place mechanisms to give women leadership opportunities, a lot more needs to be done. Here are the voices of women on their journey towards leadership positions in the flower farms.

Ruth Wanjiku Muchai: Grading supervisor

"I joined Tropiflora in 2006 as a general worker and moved to grading after two years. In 2010 I was promoted to team leader, in charge of 10 staff. Two years later, I was promoted to grading supervisor. In this position I supervise over 40 people.

It's a difficult job, but it challenges one to think broadly. I have always been a leader. I was the school captain in high school. I know it's inborn; but you also have to prove yourself. I take pride in my work. I'm a fast learner.

After completing school, I searched for a job for almost four years. I was ready to take up any job. I dropped off my application at the farm's gate. They asked me to leave my contacts. They called me a week later. I started as a casual, working six days a week and earning Ksh2,800 (\$27 a month). After three months working as a casual worker, I got a permanent contract.

When I got promoted to supervisor, I was able to employ a minder to help look after my two children. This enabled me to rent a house closer to work. Initially I had to walk for close to one hour to get home and vice versa.

My manager, Eva Ngige, noticed that I managed time well and that I was disciplined. She would leave me in charge whenever she was absent. Likewise, I also recommend other women when I see potential.

Maureen Achieng: Senior supervisor

I started working at the farm when I was 22 years old. I was a general worker for 10 years earning a basic salary of Ksh4, 700 (\$45). In 2017 I was promoted to team leader. Shortly after, I rose to a supervisor position and now I'm a senior supervisor. At first, farm work was difficult – the pricks from the thorns were a bit tough to bear, but after my first salary, I was happy as I have two children whom I raise on my own.

When the supervisory role became vacant, it was proposed that KI take over, because the management wanted a woman, seeing the position had always been held by a man. My performance was also good. When I started working her, I was young and very shy. Now I'm confident. I can sit with the farm managers and table issues (of the farm) and they respect me and my work.

I'm in crop protection and supervise 39 workers. My day-to-day job is to identify problems with the flowers and file a report. I've to monitor bugs as well. I advise on the treatment and report on the outcome.

The most pressing challenge is the issue of speed, which is necessary in this work. If any of my staff doesn't meet their target, I try to talk to them to understand what the issue might be. I have also introduced bonuses pegged on performance as a motivation and it's working quite well.

Miriam Wangari: Gender committee

I have been working in the flower industry for almost two years now. I was a pre-school teacher, but after the work ended when the school shut down. I had come to visit my sister who lives in Limuru (outskirts of Nairobi) and she recommended that I apply for a job at a flower farm nearby as she had worked there and liked it. I applied and was taken in as a casual on a three-month contract. I was earning Ksh6350 (\$62). As a teacher I earned Ksh9,000 (\$87). It was difficult to adjust, but I needed a job. When the gender committees were being formed, I was selected. The proposal was by show of hands. The fact that they heard that I had a teaching background is one of the reasons they chose me. The management is in the

lead and supports our work as the gender committee. In a span of a year and half in the committee, we have handled four cases. One of the challenges we face as a committee is that if cases are tabled during peak seasons, they will have to wait until work lessens. When work is a lot, all other things come last.

Cherono Doris: Senior supervisor

I started as a general worker in 2010. I completed high school and proceeded to pursue a diploma in Tourism and Hospitality, a course which took me two years. However, I was already a mother as I had child when I was about 16 years old, and in secondary school. I didn't think I would stay long at the farm as I felt "I was educated".

I got promoted to the post of a supervisor in 2012, a position I held for two years before becoming a senior supervisor. A supervisor controls a block while a senior supervisor is in charge of both workers and supervisors. I oversee 11 supervisors and control six blocks, all with a minimum of 30 staff. My starting salary as a general worker was Ksh6,800 (\$66); this is one of the challenges of working in farms at low levels. The pay is little and the work is tough.

As a leader you have to study the characters of your staff. While at the farm, I have received training on first aid, leadership, personal development and financial management.

Damaris Kaviti: Nursery supervisor

I started as a general worker when I was 19. I worked for five years in this position. One day they announced that there was a position for a supervisor and those interested should apply. Only two women applied. We were interviewed and I got my current job. We were trained on how to manage a nursery. I have gained a lot of knowledge on flower farming because I had to propagate different flowers. I started earning Ksh8,000 (\$78) as a supervisor and I currently earn Ksh20,500 (\$200).

How campaign pushed women into leadership roles at farm

Tanzania

That Fauster Urasa works as a certification officer, a post previously considered men's, is testament to the success of the Women@Work Campaign. Fauster works for Rungwe Avocado Company, where the campaign was implemented in 2018.

"One of the greatest gifts it gave me is the ability to ask questions about working conditions. We were also introduced to our rights as workers," she says.

Her sentiments are echoed by HR manager Unjile Mwambelo, who credits the women's club, which was born from the Women@Work Campaign, as having empowered the women with confidence and knowledge about their rights. Unjile, a lawyer, uses her position to sensitise workers about their rights according to the law.

"Through the women's club, I speak to them about their reproductive health rights including maternity leave, and I guide them on how to fill maternity leave forms," she says.

Some challenges Unjile faced in passing information was patriarchal practices that did not give women a voice, and women refusing to speak out on their challenges. Unjile says that through constant dialogue, the women stopped feeling like their views were inferior and opened up.

One such woman was Fauster, who opened up and has fully embraced her leadership role at the organisation. She is a team leader at work, and uses her position to educate her male and female team members about their rights.

The certification officer is confident that rights of women working in avocado farms are now much better than they were before the campaign. She adds that they have also implemented an economic empowerment programme through the women's clubs.

The campaign has certainly left the women who work in avocado farms in Rungwe district more hopeful, and that the positive changes they have seen at their places of work are there to stay. They recommend that the campaign's reach be expanded to include all workers in farms.

"Instead of sending representatives when training, the campaign should cover all workers and establish more women's clubs in districts and regions. This way, networking and sharing of ideas would be much easier. They could also consider establishing an umbrella body, which would handle all issues affecting the clubs," says Fauster, who also recommends that they engage more companies in light of expanding the campaign's coverage.

The beneficiaries of the programme generally feel liberated from the past way of thinking and living. Their overall message? "We want some more, please!"



Mama County, a voice for the voiceless



Kenya

Justerian Iminza believes there can't be a victory without a battle. And Mama County, as she's popularly known, has had to fight many a battle in her life. The 36-year-old single mother of three teenagers is a domestic violence survivor, who knows only too well the cost of not speaking out. That's why she valiantly defends the rights of women and children.

She is a force to reckon with in Karagita, a high-density estate in Naivasha, where single mothers head many families.

"I know myself and my rights and what a man can do, a woman can do better," she says with a smile. Iminza is a shop steward at Nini Farm, in Naivasha, where she has been employed for the last 13 years. She believes that it's easier to fight and change things from within rather than from outside.

Two years into her contractual employment, Iminza was disturbed by the conditions of the workplace environment and remuneration, especially for women. Says she: "We used to earn Sh3,200 per month, but we were being paid through petty cash and by end-month, most of us had nothing to take home."

She wanted a better life for her fellow workers and this is what motivated her to start agitating for their rights. She believed that most of her colleagues accepted their fate because they did not know their rights. The situation was worse for female workers as a majority of them were breadwinners. The poor working conditions made them vulnerable to sexual abuse as they sought to put food on the table.

In 2009, Iminza was confirmed as a permanent employee. At the same time, she was introduced to the Kenya Plantation and Agricultural Workers' Union (KPAWU) and the journey towards improving their lives began with its numerous risks and sacrifices.

"I started talking to my colleagues and recruiting them to become members of the union secretly as the management then was opposed to unions. My first attempt failed as the workers were intimidated and most of them opted out," she notes.

Despite resistance, she decided to try the second time in the same year and this time round, she recruited about 300 members out of the 500 employees.

"It is at this point that I invited KPAWU to engage with management, who eventually accepted the proposal in 2013. "I became the secretary to the union at the farm," Iminza says.

Today, Iminza can comfortably quote sections of the Constitution and labour laws, which she uses to make convincing arguments. She credits the Women@Work campaign partners, with whom she has worked, for her confidence in championing workers' rights.

Iminza's union leadership has not been without challenges, with access to information and knowledge topping the list. She needs both as tools to empower fellow workers and to hold management to account. She acknowledges that Haki Mashinani, one of the partners under the Women@Work campaign, has significantly contributed to what she is today.

"I attended over 40 capacity-building sessions organised by Haki Mashinani that have consistently empowered me. I've gained a lot of knowledge on how to handle not only workers' issues, but also community issues," Iminza, says.

A major intervention has been securing a three months fully paid maternity leave for staff. This, she says, is "unlike in the early 2000s when women would take only a one-month leave. Additionally, expectant mothers are given light duties."

She notes that the management provided a mechanism for employees to systematically address their grievances. Meetings between shop stewards and workers happen during the first week of the month to give the workers opportunities to air their grievances. The second meeting in the month is between shop stewards and their branch union to discuss the issues raised by the workers, and the last meeting is normally with the Human Resource department.

At community level, Iminza says, she is privileged to sit on a number of village committees such as security. She has used these platforms to educate the community on the importance of respecting the rights of women. She has also engaged with the media in the county to articulate issues affecting women workers in flower farms.

Iminza notes that having understood the referral pathway to responding to cases of sexual violence, she has managed to address issues of defilement, contributing to having perpetrators sentenced to at least five years imprisonment.

Progress aside, Iminza says that her job has its fair share of challenges; most workers live in fear and lack confidence to speak out, lest they lose their jobs. More organisations like Haki Mashinani are needed to reach out and empower the community, whose workers are steeped in ignorance that denies them their rights. She believes that once workers get to know their rights, they will join her in the struggle to bring about change both in the farms and in the community.

Her parting shot? "A luta continua (the struggle continues)".

At community level, Iminza says, she is privileged to sit on a number of village committees such as security. She has used these platforms to educate the community on the importance of respecting the rights of women. She has also engaged with the media in the county to articulate issues affecting women workers in flower farms.

From shy woman to bold leader

Kenya

Before 2017, Roselyn Aida never imagined she could speak in front of her colleagues at Baraka Roses flower farm, let alone champion for their rights. “I did not have the confidence to talk about what women working in this industry need. I believed men knew much more than women,” she says.

Today, Aida plays an active role in sensitising her colleagues on gender equity and justice issues. Over the past two years, she has been on the frontline advocating decent working conditions for women at the farm.

So, what transformed Aida into the bold leader her colleagues love and respect in equal measure? It all began with the uptake of a campaign dubbed Women@Work Campaign on the farm back in 2017. The campaign was facilitated by a human rights organization called Haki Mashinani as part of its efforts to promote gender equity at the work place.

At Baraka Roses, there existed a gnawing gap of women in leadership that made it impossible to have a robust Gender and Welfare committee. Like Aida, many women at the farm remained passive in policy implementation and bore the repercussions of tough working conditions day in day out.

Wheels of change

Thankfully, the campaign set the wheels of change rolling by providing training opportunities for the women. Aida admits it was during these trainings that she first heard about labour rights, laws and policies, and the Model on Sexual Harassment Policy.

“Before the training, I thought that if I am personally not sexually harassed then the issue does not affect me. I was very wrong. According to the policy this affects the work environment and in the end I am affected too,” she says.

It is at one of the trainings that she also learnt about quid pro quo scenarios—something for something—and how such scenarios endanger a healthy work environment. For instance, such



situations provide fertile ground for misuse of power by those in authority when they demand “something” in exchange for basic employee rights such as promotions or job incentives.

The important thing is that these trainings, though conducted on company premise, were not monitored by management, thus giving the women freedom to raise their concerns, ask questions, and share experiences, including unpleasant ones without fear of victimization.

Workers were taught to identify behaviour that was inappropriate and infringed on their rights as employees and as women. It was in this forum that they understood the unique challenges women at the work place faced by mere virtue of their gender.

“We can now tell the difference between normal supervision activities and harassment. For example, if a supervisor shouts at a pregnant worker to hurry up ‘because pregnancy is not a disease’ then we know this is wrong,” Aida notes.

Misconceptions, particularly on matters sexual harassment were deconstructed much to the workers’ enlightenment. Did you know that an incident of harassment can have more than one victim—referred to as third-party victims? These are people who witness harassment and fear it could also happen to them. Some time back, women took to the streets in a protest march that became Nairobi’s soundtrack for a while, “My dress, my choice!”

The protest was sparked by a wave of harassment that ripped through the city where women were being stripped in public due to their manner of dressing. Many women became afraid of walking in the streets lest they be stripped naked or subjected to other forms of harassment.

Citing a workplace example, Aida says, “A person who makes crude jokes leaves the listener disgruntled thus creating a hostile work environment.”

Since the training, Baraka Roses farm has witnessed a change that is a breath of fresh air, especially to the women. Take for instance the implementation of flexible work hours for nursing mums to allow them adequate time to take care of their babies. Protection of workers from sexual harassment and bringing predators to book has further enhanced work place safety especially for women workers.

However, the critical point is the involvement of women in leadership and policy-making. They have learnt to speak out and be involved in decision-making. Others, like Aida, have become trainers empowering other women so they can express themselves and enjoy their experience at the workplace.

Interestingly, a Human Resource representative at the farm says there is a need to now realign the gender committee which has 11 women members and only 5 men.

Evidently, the Women@Work Campaign began a revolution that is making the farm a safe space for workers of all gender to thrive and nurture women leaders, like Aida.

On a mission to transform lives, one bargain at a time

Kenya

They call her MCA (Member of County Assembly) and she is renowned for her unrelenting advocacy for workers' rights. Josephine Wanjia, a shop steward at Tropiflora narrates her journey as a fighter for labour rights in the horticultural sector.

"It all began way back in 2004 after I joined the workers union. Fair Trade made it mandatory for all employees to be unionised.

This directive was issued as part of efforts to address challenges at the workplace. For instance, we did not have a housing allowance which forced majority of the workers to share limited accommodation facilities on the farm. Issues of hiring and firing were commonplace and many lost their jobs on very flimsy grounds. To make matters worse, there was no platform for workers to air out their grievances."

Establishment of the workers' union gave a ray of hope to many who had suffered in silence for decades.

Workers' voice

"Like my fellow colleagues, I was very excited at the prospect of having a union which would give workers a voice and hopefully some of these challenges. I decided to step up and vie for a leadership post and be actively involved in bringing forth change."

Wanja was elected as shop steward to be the workers' voice in the union. She has served faithfully since then, earning love and respect in equal measure from her colleagues and management.

"One of the factors that have shaped me into the union leader I am today is training. Forums such as the trainings conducted by Workers Right Watch under Women@Work campaign have given me the skills and knowledge to train workers on their rights."

Her leadership record is decorated by many gains including championing a campaign to abolish "warnings" which were basically threats issued to workers who failed to meet their targets.

Today, such threats are unheard of at the firm. Furthermore, workers are now eligible to overtime pay during flower farming peak season.

Wanja notes the Women@Work campaign has sensitised her to push for the rights of women at the work place particularly in the horticulture sector. She is determined to increase the intensity of her activism and help more women enjoy a conducive work environment.

To this end, Wanjia has used her powers as a unionist to secure free meals for workers at the grading department who are mainly women. "These workers are subjected to long working hours and the meals come in handy."



"During the peak season, they work up to 11pm. Apart from the lunch break at midday, they were supposed to work nonstop to meet daily targets. I successfully managed to secure them a break at 8pm. In addition, they enjoy free meals by the company as part of an ongoing initiative to address their plight."

In addition, Wanja negotiated for access to a day care centre for mothers who have small children and can't afford to hire help.

However, it has not always been rosy, she has had to endure a fair share of prickly thorns.

"My position dictates I take the workers' side and that is not always the right side. For instance, conflicts on absenteeism tend to be tricky when an employee claims they were unwell yet they fail to produce a doctor's letter to support the claim."

Thankfully, part of her training includes conflict resolution and arbitration which has gone a long way in helping her fulfil her obligation to the workers with utmost competence.

She remains committed to encouraging workers especially women to join unions and even take up leadership positions.

"Most workers and especially women are missing out on amazing benefits dictated by the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) between the Kenya Plantation and Agricultural Workers Union and the employers simply because they are not unionised."

As a beneficiary of the Women@Work Campaign trainings, Wanja aspires to empower more workers on their rights especially the ones touching on gender issues which are often overlooked.

Josephine Wanja is determined to increase the intensity of her activism and help more women enjoy a conducive work environment.

From shy 'village women' to confident leaders



Luqman Mahoro

Alphonsine Murebwayire - I used to be scared of leadership responsibilities but now I long for them.

Rwanda

Alphonsine Murebwayire lives in Kagitumba, Nyagatare district with her husband and six children. She has been working in the shed department at Garden Fresh Rwanda – a farm in Nyagatare District, Eastern Province which produces and exports fresh French beans— for the past two years as a cleaner.

Currently, she is one of two advisors for the Gender Committee at the farm: a committee that was formed after a training on leadership. Never

in her life had Alphonsine ever imagined that she could lead others or even address a crowd.

It was not until she attended the Women@Work Campaign training that she discovered her potential. Under the Women Leadership Project, Rwanda Women's Network (RWN) partnered with the farm with an aim to promote a safe and secure environment that provides decent work conditions and equal opportunities for women farm workers.

The organization introduced the project to the farm in February 2018, with a selection of eight farm workers (six women and two men) to lead the farm level engagements. As a beneficiary, the 43-year-old mother of three describes her experience in the training as transformative.

"I am no longer the shy woman I used to be. I used to be scared of leadership responsibilities but now I long for them. I hope to mentor other women as well with the knowledge I gained from the Rwanda Women Network workshops," she says.

As a result of this campaign, the management at Bella Flowers and Garden-Fresh farms established gender committees in April 2018 to ensure that concerns of women workers are well represented, communicated and addressed. The role of the gender committees is to entrench gender equality within the workplace and address issues such as sexual harassment within the workplace and promote the involvement of women workers in decision making.

Women workers at both farms hailed the role of gender committees in winning the workers' rights including job contracts and paid job leave, among others.

Leah Irumva, a gender committee member and team leader for 18 farm workers at Bella Flowers in Rwamagana District, said Women@Work Campaign has boosted her self-esteem.

"After the training of trainers in 2018, we established a gender committee at work to handle all disputes among the workers and advocate for our rights to the management but we also advise women on dealing with domestic violence," said the 25-year-old, adding the campaign empowered them with abilities to stand up for their rights and benefited them with fair treatment at work.

Epiphanie Mukahabumugisha, the coordinator of the gender committee at Bella Flowers, said that she has mentored 50 co-workers and is helping her neighbors to address domestic violence issues.

"After acquiring RWN training, I started making informed interventions at my community meetings and that made some community members start coming to me for advice about their family problems," she says.

"I have got to understand that I have to help communities live better and in harmony. I took up this responsibility with passion and offer my time to hear and reconcile my neighbors whenever conflicts arise in their families," she adds.

The farm worker at Garden Fresh in Nyagatare District of the Eastern Rwanda says she now has the confidence to lead others and to stand up for her rights. She hails the Women@Work campaign launched in Rwanda in October 2017 by Hivos with a special focus on Rwanda's horticulture sector.

In the beginning, to ensure that women like Murebwayire benefitted through a project tailored to their needs, Rwanda Women's Network conducted a baseline assessment on the status of female

employees. This was undertaken at Bella Flowers Ltd and Garden-Fresh Ltd to assess gender equity and equality in the work environment.

The findings indicated the farms did not have gender-sensitive workplace policies, no platforms where workers could air out their grievances, and that posed the need to strengthen the leadership capacities of women workers.

Murebwayire journey of transformation started after the baseline in February 2018 when RWN picked her, a village woman as she claimed, to attend the training of trainers in Kigali City.

The impact is clear for all to see. Prior to the training Murebwayire doubted her skills as a leader, which limited her engagements with her coworkers.

This she says was due to a lack of self-confidence and a concern for job security; 'people in the community talk and any negative comments towards you can easily lead back to your employer, which may put your job in jeopardy'.

Farm level workers are mostly employed on a casual basis and do not receive a letter of appointment or contractual agreements. Subsequently, there is no job security which affects the workers livelihood.

Although Garden Fresh established a workers' committee, most workers did not seem to understand its role or function. Murebwayire was inquisitive and wanted the opportunity to change her livelihood, her way of thinking and realize her rights as a worker.

In the beginning she did not understand the modules, as activities brought on new concepts that she was unaware of. But slowly by receiving constructive feedback and encouragement from the training team, fellow trainees and support staff, she increased her self-confidence.

"I liked the session on taking care of yourself, setting goals and learning about rights at the work place," she said.

Even more, her financial literacy was boosted as the project also focused Rwanda wage structures. Currently Rwanda does not have a minimum wage which has impacted the wages and salaries across different sectors, including the horticulture sector.

As part of the Women Leadership Curriculum a financial literacy module was introduced to encourage a savings culture, overall money management and investment for the farm workers.

Murebwayire and her fellow trainees were encouraged to start savings groups at the farm which has empowered the group to inspire others and improve their living and working conditions.

She has since bought land and built a new house through the funds collected in the savings group. Murebwayire has a better working relationship with her coworkers too.

"I appreciate the savings groups a lot because I am now able to save and support myself in ways I was unable to do before. I am more outspoken and not afraid to speak and encourage others in the community," she said.

She is also a member of the gender committees at Garden Fresh and Rwanda Workers Trade Union Confederation (CESTRAR).

Murebwayire has hailed the campaign for equipping her with financial literacy which has improved her family's welfare. She brought together 50 workers in a money saving group which enabled her get rid of house rent after buying a house valued at about Rwf1 million last year. She has also bought a tailoring machine at Rwf90,000 in addition to 10 chickens and two goats.

She is not the only one. Azera Muhawenimana, another farm worker and gender committee leader at Garden Fresh, said she was a shy woman before acquiring RWN training which gave her confidence to advocate for women rights at work and play a role in handling gender-based issues in her community.

"The campaign has been so instrumental in changing our lives; it brought us together to share ideas and helped us conquer the fear of speaking in public. We can now advise other women about issues facing them in their families and share the testimony of our transformation," says the 43-year woman.

Muhawenimana added that the acquired financial literacy has enabled her to buy a cow at Rwf 120,000 and four goats, and that she is contributing alongside her husband in building a decent living house for their family.

Amini Makenga, the Human Resource Manager at Bella Flowers, commended women workers who received RWN training for their leadership skills that help in the company's management.

"This campaign compelled us to establish gender committees which have been so instrumental in creating better workplace environment as they solve most of the workers' disputes and leave little work to the management," he said.

He added that the committee has successfully advocated for the workers' contracts, paid sick and maternal leave, health insurance and breastfeeding permission, among others.

In addition to Bella Flowers and Garden Fresh, RWN currently runs the Women's Leadership Project at Akanyenyeri and Green Best farms in Gatsibo District of the Eastern Rwanda.

Makenga recommended that the Women@Work Campaign continues for some years to keep empowering women and creating conducive work environment, a concern he shares with all the interviewed farm workers.

**Living
Wage**



Carlos Quintero/Unsplash

Pushing for inclusion of social justice indicators in certification standards

Kenya

The phenomenal growth of the horticulture industry in the last four decades is among Kenya's economic success stories.

Today, horticulture is a top foreign exchange earner for Kenya, generating at least Ksh100 billion (US\$1 billion) annually. More than two-thirds of these earnings are from floriculture in which Kenya ranks among the world's largest exporters of cut flowers, mostly to markets in the UK and Europe.

But the story is not so glowing for some 150,000 people employed in flower farms. The drive to remain globally competitive in the cut flower value chain, combined with increasing consumer scrutiny into the environmental and social conditions in which flowers are produced, has seen a proliferation of social standards and certification schemes for Kenyan cut flower producers.

There are now 10 recognised social certification standards for the horticultural sector, focusing on flower farms. These include the statutory certification known as the Kenya Standard (KS)-1758 for the horticulture industry, administered by the Kenya Bureau of Standards, and the internationally accredited KFC Code of Practice by the Kenya Flower Council (KFC), a voluntary association of growers and exporters of flowers in Kenya.

Other certification schemes include the Fairtrade Standards/ Fairtrade International Hired Labour Standard, Milieu Project Sierteelt (MPS)/MPS Socially Qualified (SQ) Certification Scheme, Ethical Trading Initiatives (ETI) Base Code/ SMETA, and Fair Flowers Fair Plants (FFFP).

Business Social Compliance Initiative (BSCI) Code of

Conduct, Social Accountability International SA8000 Standard, Flower Label Programme (FLP), and International Code of Conduct (ICC) are the others.

But recent studies show that most of these certification schemes operate parallel to each other. They also put too much stress on compliance with international export/import standards, audit procedures and environmental concerns, rather than focusing on local empowerment and responding to contextual issues.

The certification schemes are faulted for not adequately responding to challenges of power dynamics in the workplace, such as discrimination against women, sexual harassment, unfair wages, and undignified habitats and workplaces.

The Kenya Human Rights Commission (KHRC) — an NGO

focused on human rights and social justice — argues that the bias towards international standards and voluntary certification schemes is a response to weak enforcement and increasingly opaque national laws and labour bureaucracies.

"Workers' vulnerabilities continue to be manifest at the work place, with intentions promoted through certification not matching action on the ground," notes a KHRC study.

"There is growing evidence of minimal improvements on work/labour conditions on wages, freedom of association, rights to collective bargaining, and extended work hours, despite existence of various codes — and as a result thousands of workers employed in increasingly precarious situations," it adds.

Methodologies applied

Worried by this gap, KHRC started pushing for the recognition of social justice issues as well. KHRC joined the Women@Work Campaign team to address ongoing criticism on the failure of certification schemes to improve workers' work conditions.

KHRC advocates for social certification standards to address seven key concerns at the workplace, namely, forced labour, child labour, freedom of association and effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining, discrimination, health and safety as well as fair remuneration and working hours.

The Results Based Social Certification System (RBSCS) intervention by KHRC seeks to sharpen focus on how certification standards can measure their impact and outcomes on workers' social conditions.

"KHRC will develop and test a results-based framework that is able to track both implementation and results of various standards to gauge sustainability certification schemes," says Mary Kambo, a labour rights advisor at KHRC.

So far KHRC has been undertaking awareness-raising campaigns targeting both flower farm managers and workers in the flower growing

zones of Thika, Naivasha and Mt Kenya region, mainly in Nanyuki and Meru.

KHRC has reached more than 1,100 workers through trainings and dialogue sessions. "We found that despite the existence of certification standards, most workers were not aware of them and how they apply to work places," explains Kambo. KHRC also reviewed the existing certification standards the horticultural sector uses to assess their appropriateness against national and international labour regulations and standards.

A review of the mandatory Horticulture Industry Code of

Practice, which is the national guideline for all horticultural produce for local and export markets, established that there was weak enforcement.

KHRC partnered with the Horticulture Crops Directorate, the national regulator of the horticulture industry, to introduce recommendations for KS1758 to safeguard labour rights. Another review was conducted on the MPS-SQ, a social certification system owned by the Dutch auctions and Dutch growers' associations, used by some Kenyan flower farms. "KHRC recommended MPS-SQ to reclassify some social indicators, making them

mandatory rather than just have persuasive influence," says Kambo.

These interventions that actually include local NGOs and trade unions to monitor standard compliance are important because they could potentially push for standards to address more locally embedded and hidden problems like discrimination or lack of freedom of association.



Annie Spratt/Unsplash

**1,500+ Workers &
host-communities
members** sensitized on
*social certification
processes & demanding
accountability* from
businesses & certification
bodies

'A solution for problems we didn't know we had'

Noting that learning is a process, Makenga recommends the campaign continues to empower workers and managers with important skills.

Rwanda

Three years ago, Epiphanie Mukahabumugisha was just a daily wage earner, who never imagined that her working conditions and family's welfare could change.

The 29-year-old mother of one says she used to spend all her wages on clothes, shoes and simple items for home use, leaving big tasks like house construction to her husband.

Then came the Women@Work Campaign in 2017. It was "a solution for problems we didn't know we had as women workers since we knew nothing about our rights and legal frameworks," says Mukahabumugisha, the team leader for 18 farm workers at Bella Flowers Ltd. The farm is Rwanda's largest producer and exporter of flowers, and is based in Gishali Sector of Rwamagana District in the Eastern Province.

Under the Women@Work Campaign, Hivos, in partnership with Rwanda Women Network (RWN), started in October 2017 the 'Women Leadership Project' in Rwanda's horticulture sector.

The farms that were targeted under the campaign are Akanyenyeri and Green Best in Gatsibo, Garden Fresh in Nyagatare and Bella Flowers in Rwamagana.

Mukahabumugisha, a secondary school graduate, was chosen alongside seven co-workers as the first beneficiaries of the training of trainers (ToT) course, starting a transformational era for women workers

in flower farms. Women representing four companies were provided with leadership and financial literacy skills, and then commissioned to impart the skills to their co-workers.

"[We] left the training room with a plan to start a money-saving group to serve as a model to our co-workers with whom we were going to share the acquired skills. We each committed to saving Rwf10,000 (US\$10) monthly. One of us would be the treasurer. Our target was to ensure that each of us owned some livestock and this was attained," she says.

She also bought three goats, which have since produced others, some of which have been sold to cater for the family's needs. "My savings have contributed to improving my family's welfare, and when the welfare improves, conflicts ease," she says.

Grouping all workers for money saving

Leah Irumva, another leader of an 18-member team of farm workers at Bella Flowers, says that on completing the ToT, each of the eight trainers took on a group of 50 co-workers to teach them workers' rights and financial literacy.

They started saving a minimum of Rwf2,000 (US\$2), "but some of us saved as much as Rwf10,000 (US\$10) every month, and we shared the savings at the end of a year. Using my savings, I was able to buy a cow at Rwf120,000 and I will be milking it soon," she says.

Irumva stresses that her greatest gain from the Women@Work Campaign is the self-esteem and saving skills. “This results in taking on more responsibilities at work, in our families and communities, and an attempt at development activities,” she adds.

Women workers at Garden Fresh Ltd, which is located in Nyagatare, another district in Eastern Rwanda, received the same training, made similar efforts and registered great strides.

Alphonsine Murebwayire, a farm worker at Garden Fresh, received RWN training and decided to save almost all her monthly earnings with the aim of building her own house and offloading the burden of monthly rent.

“I saved up to Rwf300,000, which I used to buy roofing sheets and other construction materials. I then started construction of my family’s house in 2018. It was completed last year at a cost of about Rwf1 million,” says the mother of three. She also bought a tailoring machine at Rwf90,000 and 10 chickens and two goats, all thanks to the workplace money-saving scheme.

Murebwayire, 43, commends the Women@Work Campaign for empowering her with financial literacy and paving the way for her to work with a bank, which recently gave her a loan to work on her family house.

Her co-worker Azera Muhawenimana also testifies to the strides she has made, thanks to acquired financial literacy skills and lessons on running small projects. “I was shy, largely depending on my husband before receiving RWN training. With the training, I can now contribute to my family’s welfare. Using my savings, I bought a cow at Rwf120,000 and four goats. I’m also working with my husband to build a decent house,” she says.

Increased workers’ productivity

The companies that work with Women@Work Campaign have reported increased production, thanks to the impact of the campaign on workforce motivation.

Amini Makenga, the Human Resource Manager at Bella Flowers says the campaign helped workers to get together in money-saving groups, which enabled them to own livestock and improve their socio-economic status.

“Seeing how earnings from their job are contributing to their welfare, they give more value to their job, hence their higher productivity. The company’s production has also increased due to



a motivated workforce that loves their work,” he says, but without citing any figures.

“We got to understand the workers’ rights and how respecting those rights leads to higher productivity. Workers are now given better treatment, which affords them better advantages,” he says.

Makenga represents the company in the Women@Work Campaign. The initiative, he says, has provided the management with a better understanding of workers’ rights and a lot has changed in the way the company treats its employees, including having them sign job contracts.

“Before, we treated them as daily wage earners,” Makenga says. Missing work for any reason meant no pay. “We were also not paying them for maternal or sick leave, but now we do.” The company, he adds, has started paying subscriptions for workers’ community-based health insurance, locally known as Mutuelle de Santé.

Noting that learning is a process, Makenga recommends the campaign continues to empower workers and managers with important skills. He promised the company’s collaboration with those in-charge of the campaign.

Makenga’s wish for the continuation of the Women@Work Campaign is reiterated by workers at both Bella Flowers and Garden Fresh farms. They recommend that the organisers make regular visits to help them address challenges they face in implementing the project.

Hivos project stirs up the horticulture job market

Rwanda

Job contracts were once a pipe dream for workers in Rwanda's horticulture sector. This was until 2018 when Hivos — a Dutch international development aid organisation — in partnership with Rwanda Workers' Trade Union Confederation (CESTRAR) introduced a project to promote horticultural workers' labour rights. Hivos seeks to bring about social change in Rwanda's horticulture sector through its Women@Work Campaign.

For the last three years, the campaign has been implemented jointly with CESTRAR, Rwanda Women Network and Haguruka.

Labor rights and financial literacy

"Before the introduction of this project, we didn't have job contracts and our working hours were not streamlined," says Annualite Benemariya, 29, an assistant supervisor for pack house department at Bella Flowers Ltd. "Since a trade union committee was established to represent us, those issues have been addressed."

Previously, even where a farm worker had a contract, Benemariya recalls, it took a while to have it renewed, upon expiry.

The high school graduate says the stability of her job and the financial literacy training she has acquired under the Women@Work Campaign have enabled her to save enough to pay for university, which she plans to start soon.

Benemariya, who also represents youth affairs at the flower firm says the youth now have time for inter-department sports friendlies, thanks to the advocacy by the union committee to the management.

Assumpta Karekezi, production supervisor at Bella Flowers, says, what she appreciates most is that they are now paid on time.

"Our salary often delayed as the payment process was manual, but with the advocacy of the union committee, the company management has introduced an ICT-based system, which has speeded up payment," said Karekezi, a bachelor's degree holder, who is also in charge of gender affairs in the committee.

Karekezi says that when workers learnt about their labour rights, they compelled the employer to pay them for overtime. "The workers are now more motivated and feel their jobs are secure after signing job contracts. They're also getting benefits such as paid leave, maternity leave and fair treatment by the employer," she adds.

Improved workers' wellbeing

Callixte Kibibi, 55, a maintenance team leader at Bella Flowers says the quality of his life has improved since he got a contract and started receiving his salary on time. "I can now afford regular meals for my family, and pay contributions for their community-based health

insurance as mine is paid for by the employer.” Kibibi, who is also the union committee’s advisor, says the job contract has helped him to secure a bank loan.

The resident of Kavumu Cell of Gishali Sector in Rwamagana District adds that his job stability has helped him to put up a commercial building at Rwf1 million (\$1,021) and to buy a solar energy system at Rwf500,000 (\$510).

Another staff, Moise Shyaka, who is the spray supervisor and secretary of the union committee at Bella Flowers, attributes all the benefits his colleagues are enjoying to having a union, and hence a stronger voice. The committee is currently pushing for better salaries to match the market rates, says Shyaka, 34. He also recommends study tours to other horticulture firms, especially in other countries where the sector is more developed.

Better understanding of staff rights

Amini Makenga, human resource manager at Bella Flowers, says, the company is now performing better as its 800-strong workforce is motivated. “We’ve also improved workplace safety by providing staff with appropriate equipment, besides opening a health clinic on our premises, and trained workers on providing first aid,” he adds.

The campaign, Makenga says, has provided the management with a better understanding of workers’ rights, and a lot has changed in the way the company treats staff. From non-payment of absentee casual workers’ pay and of mothers on maternity leave, “now we do,” is Makenga’s proud remark. The company has started paying subscriptions for workers’ community-based health insurance locally known as Mutuelle de Santé.

Makenga hopes the campaign will continue empowering workers and managers with important skills.



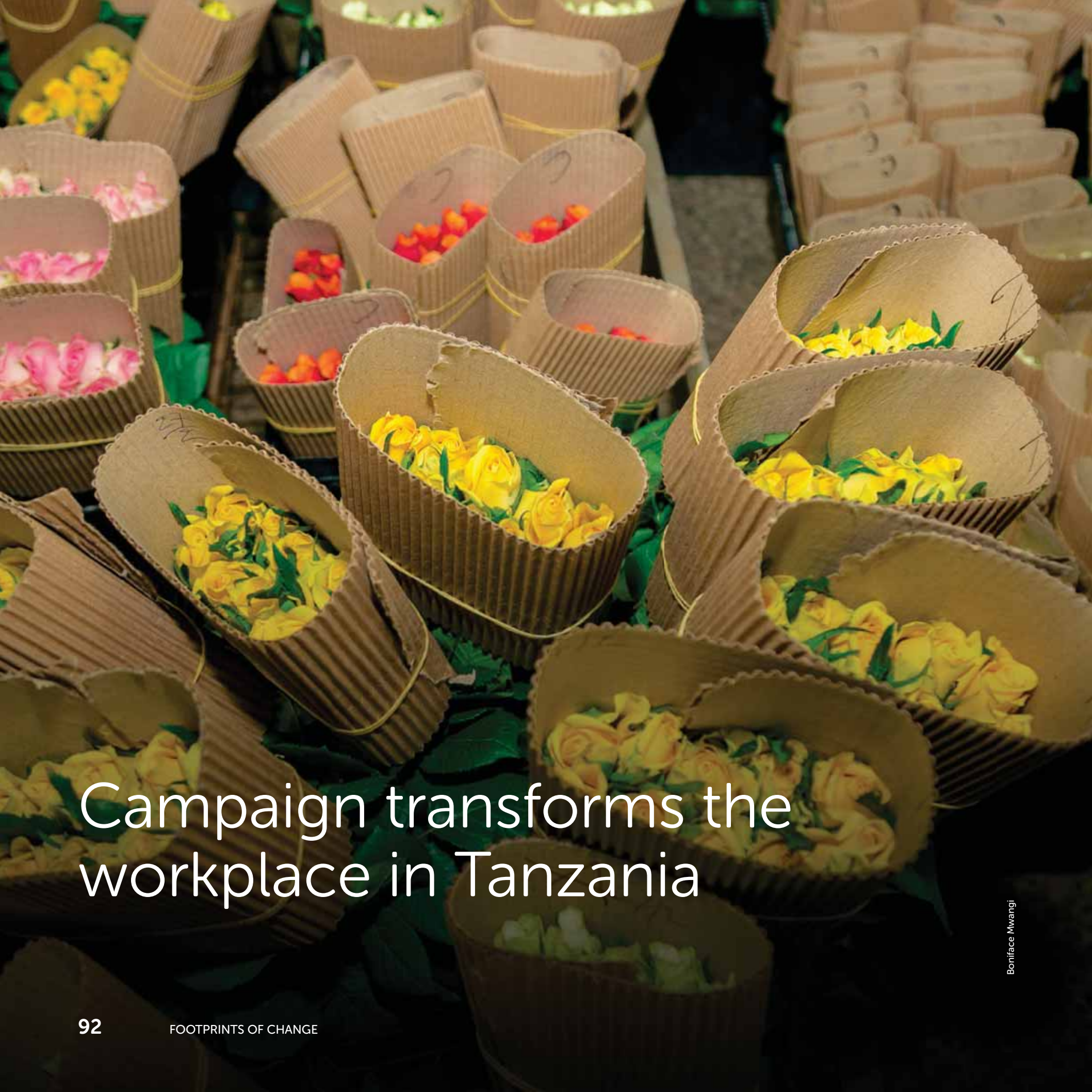
Luqman Mahoro

“Before the introduction of this project, we didn’t have job contracts and our working hours were not streamlined.”

Annualite Benemariya
Assistant Supervisor , Bella Flowers Ltd

people

Health and Safety



Campaign transforms the workplace in Tanzania

Boniface Mwangi

Tanzania

Hundreds of flower-farm workers in Tanzania's Arusha region are savouring better working conditions, thanks to a transformational advocacy campaign.

The Women@Work campaign, which was implemented for a period of three years (2017-2020), has positively changed working relations, welfare and livelihoods of the workers, mostly women, on flower farms, according to Cecilia Gasper Mariwa, Zone Secretary of the Tanzania Plantation and Agricultural Workers Union (TPAWU).

To achieve these results, TPAWU had to use various approaches. Key among them, which has produced encouraging results, is training women workers on their rights. More than 1,000 workers at Mt Meru Flowers Ltd, Dekker Farms, Fides Tanzania Ltd and Zaden Africa Ltd took part in a Training of Trainers (TOT) programme.

The trained workers started using their newly-acquired knowledge to bring about change at the workplace. First on their list of successes was the acceptance by the management of flower farms to introduce, for the first time, a sexual harassment policy for the floriculture sector.

The adoption of the policy has, and continues, to provide a framework for prevention and addressing sexual harassment at the workplace.

Other results related to the intervention were reflected in the Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBAs) signed between the union and managements of flower farms. The knowledgeable union workers were able to use their newly-acquired skills to sign good agreements.

Other tangible results include recruiting more unionisable workers, improved salaries thanks to better negotiation skills by the shop stewards, and increased awareness on labour laws, workers' rights and sexual harassment issues.

According to TPAWU Secretary-General Kabengwe N. Kabengwe, cases of sexual harassment have reduced by about 40 per cent since the flower farms adopted the relevant policies. Says Ms Mariwa: "At the beginning, we had many cases, but after we started the trainings under the Hivos Women@Work Campaign such cases have reduced."

During the Women@Work Campaign, the union officials identified various opportunities to boost their advocacy strategies. One of them was that sexual harassment cases should be included in the firm's sexual harassment policies so that they become part of organization practice.

With the policy in place, the fire-fighting work load of TPAWU Regional Secretary and her team has reduced as she now has

many empowered TOTs on the ground to address grievances workers raise on a daily basis.

The trainings have also boosted working relations between the union and the management, which has led to more workers being allowed to join the trade union to protect their jobs and to fight for their rights. At Fides Ltd, for example, the numbers rose from 150 to 220.

However, it has not been all smooth for the union. A major challenge has been the unskilled status of the mostly semi-literate workers. Because of capacity challenges, the trainers had a hard time repeating the same thing many times to get the workers to understand their messages.

Another challenge was that of farm managers who refuse to release workers to attend training either on-site or off-site. On one farm (name withheld), the managers refused to allow any trainings during the week, only releasing them after the union talked to the Director General who allowed them to conduct them over the weekends.

One of Ms Mariwa's biggest challenges under the Hivos Women@Work campaign is facing unionisable staff that have been exploited for not knowing their rights, and have been coerced into relinquishing their union positions, often because of threats from their bosses.

One of the main lessons learned from the campaign is that, continuous education of workers and the management on issues of sexual harassment helps internalise the key provisions of the policy, and engenders a willingness to implement the principles designed to reduce harassment of workers.

Says Ms Mariwa: "The trainings have helped us increase our membership. CBAs," she adds, "are very important as they give job security, address workers' wages and salary issues and promote workers' and women's rights issues."

Going forward, TPAWU recommends that the campaign expands its training and syllabus content to address more issues such as leadership and livelihoods that confront flower-farm workers on a daily basis. The campaign should also include a component on exchange programmes by workers' representatives to share best practices and successes in the other flower-growing Eastern Africa countries of Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda and Ethiopia.



Haki Mashinani's unprecedented union with Baraka Roses

Kenya

A visit to Nakuru on any day is incomplete without encountering fleets of branded staff buses transporting workers to and from flower farms spread across the vast county.

At the flower farms, a sneak peek beyond the iron gates into the depths of the covered farm structures will reveal a beehive of activity. These are the frontline workers—mostly women—engaged in cultivating, harvesting and packaging fresh cut flowers for export to European destinations.

However, not much else is known about what goes on inside the farms, despite growing concerns about the workplace environment and the working conditions on these farms.

NGOs working on labour rights, social justice and women's empowerment have complained that their attempts to independently verify the state of workers' conditions are being frustrated by flower farms. Journalists, too, often cite frustration in accessing flower farms or getting their managers to respond to reports of unequal pay, gender-based violence, sexual harassment, health and safety concerns and discrimination of women at the workplace, among other issues.

Also, despite their numerical dominance in the horticulture sector, women workers remain

underrepresented in leadership and positions of influence.

This scenario set the stage for Haki Mashinani—a grassroots-based NGO in Nakuru County focused on social justice—to enter into partnerships with stakeholders to address labour rights and sexual violations on flower farms and host communities.

Haki Mashinani partnered with Hivos East Africa, under the Women@Work campaign, to improve the working environment of women on flower farms in three sub-counties through signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) that would address key challenges facing the workers.

Rewarding strategies

A breakthrough came in 2017 when Haki Mashinani established contact with Baraka Roses, one of the county's leading flower producers that employs up to 600 workers during peak season.

"It was initially not easy to access Baraka Roses farm, but after numerous meetings, we finally did," recalls Salome Odera, the executive director of Haki Mashinani.

It started with an introduction by the Kenya Flower Council — a voluntary association of independent growers and exporters of cut flowers, which

seeks to foster responsible and safe production of cut flowers – to the Baraka Roses human resources manager.

Then followed a series of talks with various people at the farm, including managers, supervisors, general workers, gender committee members and the executive director of Haki Mashinani. The result was an MoU between Baraka Roses and Haki Mashinani allowing for independent tracking and monitoring of working conditions for women at the farm.

Haki Mashinani undertook to improve awareness on women's labour rights and to build a reporting and grievance-redress mechanism when instances of sexual harassment or discrimination occurred.

It was also an opportunity to document personal experiences of women's working conditions and to highlight recommendations for deliberation and action by farm managers.

"This was an unprecedented and important outcome for us. It was an opening for us to work with flower-farm managers for positive change," Ms Odera says.

A key approach for Haki Mashinani was to roll out a model sexual harassment workplace policy, aimed at creating participatory and sustainable

workplace structures that protect women from sexual harassment.

Initially piloted on seven farms across Kenya by Workers Rights Watch, another partner in the campaign, the policy has since been endorsed by the Kenya Flower Council and Fairtrade International, a global certification agency with membership in the country.

At Baraka farm, Haki Mashinani conducted a series of sensitisation workshops to make health and safety policies a workplace culture, as well as on labour rights violations, sexual harassment, and respect for women's reproductive health rights.

Each training targeted a maximum of 30 workers. "Selection of trainees aimed at reaching as many workers as possible, and participatory approaches were employed to ensure active engagement of all participants," Ms Odera adds.

The gender ratio was three women for every male participant. Male and female change ambassadors were identified and trained to highlight the challenges female workers face, and to champion their rights, especially amidst male colleagues.



CESTRAR'S work leaves workers with broad smiles

Rwanda

The spectacle of flower-farm workers on duty at Garden Fresh in eastern Rwanda is both a welcome and refreshing first for the country's horticulture and floriculture sub-sectors.

Every worker is kitted in high quality, industry-compliant personal protective equipment (PPE) to shield them against hazardous chemicals and pesticides used in flower farms.

More so, the PPEs are provided free of charge by the employer, a major shift from when farm workers bought their own often sub-standard and ineffective protective gear.

This is thanks to the intensive efforts by Rwanda's Workers Unions Confederation (CESTRAR) to improve working conditions, especially for women, in the fast-growing horticulture sector.

CESTRAR is the national umbrella body of 16 affiliate trade unions representing more than 165,000 workers in different sectors. However, until 2017, it did not represent agricultural workers from flower and vegetable farms, because they were not yet unionised, says Jean Paul Nkuzabo, a union official.

Approaches used

With support from Hivos, under the Women@Work Campaign, CESTRAR moved to recruit new members and expand the reach of union representation across the horticulture industry, beyond the traditional sectors of coverage.

Although horticulture in Rwanda is still a relatively new sector compared to Kenya and Ethiopia, its importance cannot be understated. Horticultural produce is currently predominantly exported to neighbouring countries. While this constitutes only about three per cent of non-traditional exports, growth in the sector is seen as key to diversifying and expanding Rwandan exports.

Horticultural exports from Rwanda increased from US\$5 million in 2005 to \$25 million in 2018, according to the Ministry of Agriculture and Animal

Resources. CESTRAR embarked on a campaign targeting 17 flower farms to help workers set up committees and form union chapters.

"It was critical for CESTRAR to first establish systems in each flower farm to enable workers to negotiate collectively with their employers on improving the working environment," says Nkuzabo.

This was a particularly challenging task that called for securing buy-in from both workers and employers. It was a delicate and lengthy process that had to follow specific procedures and at the same time balance the contrasting interests of the key actors.

On one hand, it was about persuading workers to see the benefits of banding together and forming committees to collectively front their interest

Challenges facing women in flower farms include unequal pay structures, sexual harassment, health and safety concerns, and [lack of] female leadership at the work place.

and concerns. They needed to be convinced to see how a union would benefit them by pushing for improved working conditions and better wages, and also protect them from unfair practices.

To achieve this, CESTRAR undertook outreach campaigns and field trainings to increase awareness on workers' rights and the role of union representation in improving welfare and working conditions.

CESTRAR was keen to emphasise the importance of selecting the right people as leaders, to identify and articulate workers' pressing concerns, and to be decisive in negotiating with employers. To this end, CESTRAR engaged in extensive consultations and negotiations with employers to build the case for boosting efficiency and productivity at the workplace through improved collective relationships with workers.

"It's not a simple matter of just inviting workers to come and join a union. We were also talking to employers about the benefits of union representation in their flower farms. It's very important to walk this process together with the employer if they are to embrace unions in their farms," Nkunuzabo explains.

Important achievements

Since none of the workers in the 17 flower farms were unionised, it was important for employers to fully understand

the legal context and framework of labour rights and trade unionism. As a result, six out of 17 targeted flower farms are now unionised.

CESTRAR further conducted an audit in 16 flower farms to ensure compliance with industry requirements on hazards and occupational safety. A key finding from the audit was the need to improve workers' safety by preventing or reducing harmful exposure to pesticides used in flower farms.

At Garden Fresh, it emerged that workers financed their workplace protective clothing, with an amount deducted from their monthly wages.

Even though the audit unearthed a multitude of concerns requiring CESTRAR's attention, the revelation about inadequate protective wear provided the perfect entry point for labour union intervention.

"CESTRAR negotiated a deal in which Garden Fresh agreed to provide workers with personal protective equipment at no cost," Mr Nkunuzabo recounts.

Garden Fresh is one of Rwanda's largest and most successful producers and exporters of fresh vegetables, fruits and flowers. That is why it was important for it to be the entry point for CESTRAR to engage with the county's horticulture sector.

It was also a win-win deal for Garden Fresh, which was keen to ensure compliance with international labour practices and adherence to ethical and fair trade with regard to labour relations.

"The very first step of getting a union chapter established is critical for opening the path to address many other key labour concerns, including those facing women workers who face specific challenges," says Nkunuzabo.

Challenges facing women in flower farms include unequal pay structures, sexual harassment, health and safety concerns, and [lack of] female leadership at the work place.

Looking into the future

CESTRAR emphasises the need to ensure effective

representation of the horticulture sector at its field, farm, regional and nationwide levels. The goal is to ensure that each flower farm is represented by three workers comprising at least one member of each gender. They, in turn, vote in an interim committee to engage with CESTRAR and liaise with employers.

However, unionisation of the horticulture and floriculture sub-sectors has been slowed by recent nationwide measures to contain the spread of Covid-19.

The emerging lessons from CESTRAR's experience suggest that scaling up of interventions will further entrench unionisation of the horticulture and floriculture sub-sectors, and strengthen workers' ability to effectively negotiate with their employers.



Leonard Faustle

71 media & knowledge products produced for *enhanced visibility of campaign* co-created interventions (for decent work advocacy) & *public awareness campaigns*.



Mignon Hemsley/Unsplash

KHRC push for labour rights bears fruit

Kenya

The saying that the future is already here is attributed to William Ford Gibson, a fiction writer who alluded to the fact that what will constitute the future is already an existence for some day.

That can be said to be true for the scores of poor and marginalized women who work at the Afriorganic Kenya Limited in Ngarendare, Meru County, as the many labour laws and rights provided for in the Constitution of Kenya 2010, finally become a reality.

For the first time in the history of the company, all the workers have been issued with contracts and women granted paid maternity leave.

This follows an initiative by the Kenya Human Rights Commission under the Women@Work Campaign that not only brought owners

of the company to account but helped to improve the situation and condition of women workers.

At the moment, the flower farm has aligned their human resource policies to the Employment Act and adopted measures that have led to the enjoyment of rights and benefits ranging from paid maternity leave, contracts, allowances and union privileges.

The Women@Work campaign was launched in 2012 to improve labor conditions for women working in the global horticulture supply chains through fair wages, security in the workplace and good working conditions

Today the workers are reaping benefits from initiatives spearheaded under the campaign which has revolutionized the sector and

achieved a great milestone in improving the working conditions in the farms.

Significant changes

The Kenya Human Rights Commission takes credit for securing key labour rights and improving working conditions at the farm.

According to Mary Kambo who is a labour rights advisor at the Kenya Human Rights Commission, the fact that all workers in the company have been issued with employment contracts is a key gain for the campaign.

“Prior to our intervention none of the workers had a contract of employment. The women who were deployed in the green houses to line up fertilizer along the beds did not have any protective gear. There were so many violations that seasonal workers did not enjoy paid

maternity leave,” adds Kambo during the interview.

But from December 2019, the farm has registered commendable changes. “The women who work in the fertilizer section have been issued with protective equipment while issues of working hours have been revised.”

In addition, all female employees are now entitled to fully paid maternity leave. “All pregnant women have been enjoying paid maternity leave whether they have been seasonal or permanent. Initially there was discrimination on the basis of contract status so that if you are a seasonal worker, you do not get to enjoy paid maternity leave, now they are enjoying that.”

Further, sprayers that were complaining about Personal

Protective Equipment (PPEs) not replaced as regularly as it should be, can now heave a sigh of relief. "The issue of irregular replacement of PPEs also has been resolved."

Kambo is emphatic that workers now belong to formations that can protect their rights and this can be attested by the fact that the welfare committee is running independently. "Workers are confirming that even their relationship with the management has improved greatly, so they feel more respected now by their managers."

KHRC was also able to secure sick-offs for employees. "The issue of the employees being retained in the company until 2pm when they fell sick is now a thing of the past. When an employee is sick and need to seek medical attention, they are allowed immediately to go to hospital."

"Cases where workers were getting into the green houses before the lapse of the re-entry period has been addressed. The company strictly adheres to the stipulated re-entry period and workers are only allowed to the greenhouses once the re-entry period is over."

Effective approaches

The highlight of this intervention was to address the myriad of human rights violations faced by workers in the farm.

To jumpstart the process, KHRC initiated dialogue with the company where they presented a raft of violations as listed by workers. "We prepared a brief which outlined the violations and secured a meeting with the company's director. During the meeting, we presented the brief and also highlighted the issues through a conversation."

This approach was critical in determining our next course of action. "We had threatened to move to court if the company failed to address workers grievances."

According to Kambo, the threat of litigation worked very well for KHRC and therefore the company agreed to fast track the issues that needed to be remedied.

KHRC also developed a brief highlighting the issues that needed to be corrected. "There were a raft of about ten issues and we applied all the key issues and outlined the provisions of the law that had been violated."

Promising Results

As a result of this intervention KHRC strongly believes that the design and approach presents a great opportunity to enhance the focus and attention to violations that still dog the sector.

"The sector has been grappling with the same issues

for a long time. For instance, most female employees in other companies do not get paid for their maternity leave. The fact that one company has demonstrated a best practice, presents an opportunity for us now to showcase this best practice and say if this particular company can respect the law and not run out of business, the other companies also can do the same.

She is optimistic that this particular approach can be replicated in future interventions. "This gain has been registered in a sector that is quite known for violating rights. We are able to show case that it is possible to respect rights and remain in business."

Kambo is upbeat that the changes are viable as the company is aware that any violation of these particular rights can attract legal suit against themselves.

She cites the paid maternity leave. "It will be very hard for the company to deny any seasonal worker their paid

maternity leave because they have already set a precedence which means that female employees in the company whether seasonal or permanent will enjoy the benefit. Even future employees regardless of their employment status will definitely enjoy paid maternity leave."

Further workers now have contracts and can institute legal action if dismissed arbitrarily. "New employees will be given contracts because that has been initiated as a practice by the company."

She states that all the gains registered under this intervention were unexpected as the KHRC had gone to Meru on a data collection mission. "For us, we intervened in a situation that presented itself and workers got their rights upheld not because we set out deliberately to go and meet employees at Afri Organic Kenya Limited but because an issue was presented to us."

Both male and female employees benefitted from the initiative as employment rights accrue to all.

According to Kambo, the threat of litigation worked very well for KHRC and therefore the company agreed to fast track the issues that needed to be remedied.

Challenges encountered

Despite this positive progress, the intervention encountered some challenges. Lack of resources to iterate the intervention emerged as a key challenge. For instance, we had not planned for this intervention and therefore it was not in any of our budget lines."

Further, many workers were very fearful of engaging. "First of all even speaking out was a major challenge because many were afraid of losing their jobs and they were not sure how we would intervene. They felt that they would be targeted for having attended the meeting and raising the issues."

"The fact that many had neither interacted with KHRC and nor trained before were really scared for their jobs, getting them to talk and to trust that we would deal with this issues in a way that would not lead to victimization took a bit of convincing."

"We had to demonstrate to the workers that we have done this kind of work before and therefore they would not land into problems by engaging with us."

In addition, it was a big challenge to physically engage because of the distance involved. The company is located in the interiors of Meru County and even where we would want to do a quick run



Mika Baumeister/Unsplash

to hold a meeting to see if the issues we raised were being addressed, we relied on email correspondence and phone calls in some of the instances where we could not do physical meetings."

Learning points

The good news is this intervention offered valuable lessons for future interventions or replication.

One of them is that Companies have the ability to respect human rights but they chose not to unless compelled with dire action. "When we threatened to sue Afri Organic Kenya Limited, we registered substantial gains within a period of six months.

The other lesson was that dialogue has a unique place when negotiating for labour

rights. "We engaged in dialogue. We did not end up going to court and yet we still achieved so much. Dialogue has a very unique place when both parties are willing to embrace in honest and transparent negotiations."

Campaign rallies workers around workplace safety

Kenya

In a remote village of Ngorica, Nakuru County, lives a thriving community of more than 600 people, at Baraka Roses Flower Farm. One of the largest flower farms in Kenya, Baraka's 52 greenhouses are abuzz with growing, grading, packing and lending technical support to staff.

The farm is a beneficiary of the Women@Work campaign spearheaded by a human rights organisation, Haki Mashinani, which seeks to raise awareness among workers in the horticultural sector in East Africa through trainings on gender rights.

Following signing of a memorandum of understanding between Haki Mashinani and the Baraka Roses Flower Farm management, the trainings involved two workers from every department to ensure no one was left behind. Participants had ample time to undergo the on-site training as management strove to empower workers and improve the working environment.

At first, Alfred Kirugi from the Maintenance Department did not understand why he was selected to participate in the training. Such sessions usually involved workers in greenhouses.

"When the topics for the training were outlined, I understood why all departments had to be involved. The objective of the training was to sensitise us on how to promote workplace safety. Right from the gate, the moment one steps on this flower farm, your safety becomes a key issue," he says.

One of the issues addressed during the training was sexual harassment, which is rampant in the sector with women bearing its brunt.

Kirugi is thankful for the campaign; he now has a broader understanding of gender rights and the role they play in promoting a conducive working environment.

"I came to know about third-party sexual harassment, which involves outsiders such as suppliers, auditors or sub-contractors, who introduce misconduct in the workplace. We learnt it was our duty to protect one another from being violated because such cases not only threaten the safety of the victim, but may also ruin the company's brand."

The company allows workers to report cases of sexual harassment from third parties for action by the relevant departments.

Ownership, cohesion

Kirugi further explains that the trainings brought a sense of ownership and cohesion on the farm. Before the training, workers in different departments operated in silos with limited interaction.

"Those in crop protection, packers, and maintenance interacted amongst themselves. The trainings have provided a platform for people from various departments to interact during and after the sessions. It is not unusual these days



for a grader to come to me with an issue for assistance.”

Women, in particular, have exploited these interdepartmental interactions to share challenges, confide in one another and form friendship. They have realised a sense of belonging and safety in numbers.

Like most male workers at Baraka, Kirugi thought gender rights were the same as women issues and was, therefore, never keen to know more. However, the Women@Work Campaign has opened his eyes to the gravity of ignoring gender rights. He is now a transformed man, a champion for gender equity and conflict resolution for a happier, safer work community.

“We had this perception that it’s the sole responsibility of the employer to make us comfortable as workers. However, we are now aware that we, too, have a role in shaping the workspace to be what we desire it to be,” Kirugi says.

He adds: “After all, workers interact with each other more than they do with the employer. If a woman is facing hardships, then the first person to see this is the male colleague working side by side with her.”

Kirugi wants the Women@Work Campaign to continue to ensure workers in all departments benefit so as to contribute meaningfully to creating decent working conditions, especially for women.

Flower farms team up to help children fight for their rights

Uganda

The children in Wakiso District, Uganda, have cause to smile. The flower farms in the area have teamed up to ensure that they are trained on topics like sexual harassment among teenagers, guarding against HIV/Aids infection and matters of occupational health and safety at the workplace, which their parents working in flower farms face.

Participating flower farms include Wagagai Limited, JP Cuttings, Aurum Roses, Xclusive Cuttings, Mairye Estates, Ugarose, Jambo Roses and Fiduga, each of which provided technical and financial support for the schools they were attached to.

The farms considered the training and sensitisation of the children their social responsibility since their parents worked at the various flower farms. Therefore, the management of these flower farms partnered with the National Organization of Peer Educators (NOPE) to organise awareness-creation meetings for teenagers in the schools attached to them.

Ambassadors of change

Over 550 pupils were trained to become ambassadors of change in their schools. One teacher was selected from each school to be the patron of the entire programme to coordinate the activities.

Each flower farm provided space on their premises for the exercise, and part of the training was to show to the teachers and pupils what goes on in the farms, how workers go about their work and how they're armed with information on sexual harassment at the workplace, HIV/Aids and workplace hazards.

At the end of the training, there were school competitions in drama, poetry and essay writing on the subject matter they had been exposed to.

In preparing the pupils for the competitions, each flower farm ensured the trainings were done on their farms. "The main topics were sexual harassment and HIV/Aids because we're aware these are challenges teenage children are faced with," says Gloria Namayanja, assistant human resource manager of Xclusive Cuttings.

Her farm was attached to Taasaga and Bright Future Primary schools, which were the overall winners in the competition. The children were also taught first aid in case of any fire outbreaks at school or at home. They were encouraged to be open with their parents in case of any challenges they encountered.

As part of social responsibility, Mairye Estates bought desks and balls, which were handed over to the school. Mairye also facilitated the pupils participation in the competitions.

David Kitsewa, the compliance manager at Mairye Estates, notes that there is an overwhelming number of children dropping out of school, especially girls, making the CSR programme a good for encourager of behaviour change.

The pupils performed skits that showed women in leadership roles, which encouraged them to see women in a different light.

Kitsewa notes that his flower farm came up with a policy on positive living for people living with HIV and Aids after the training programme. They also strengthened their various committees and ensured leadership roles for women. The flower farm works in close collaboration with the school's administration to identify and manage various challenges.

A good partnership

Frank Kirinya is the human resource manager, Wagagai Ltd, which was attached to St Denis Kigero Primary school. The flower farm shares the playground with the school and they were the main host of the competitions.

Kirinya found the programme worthwhile because it promotes partnership between the flower farms, schools and the communities.

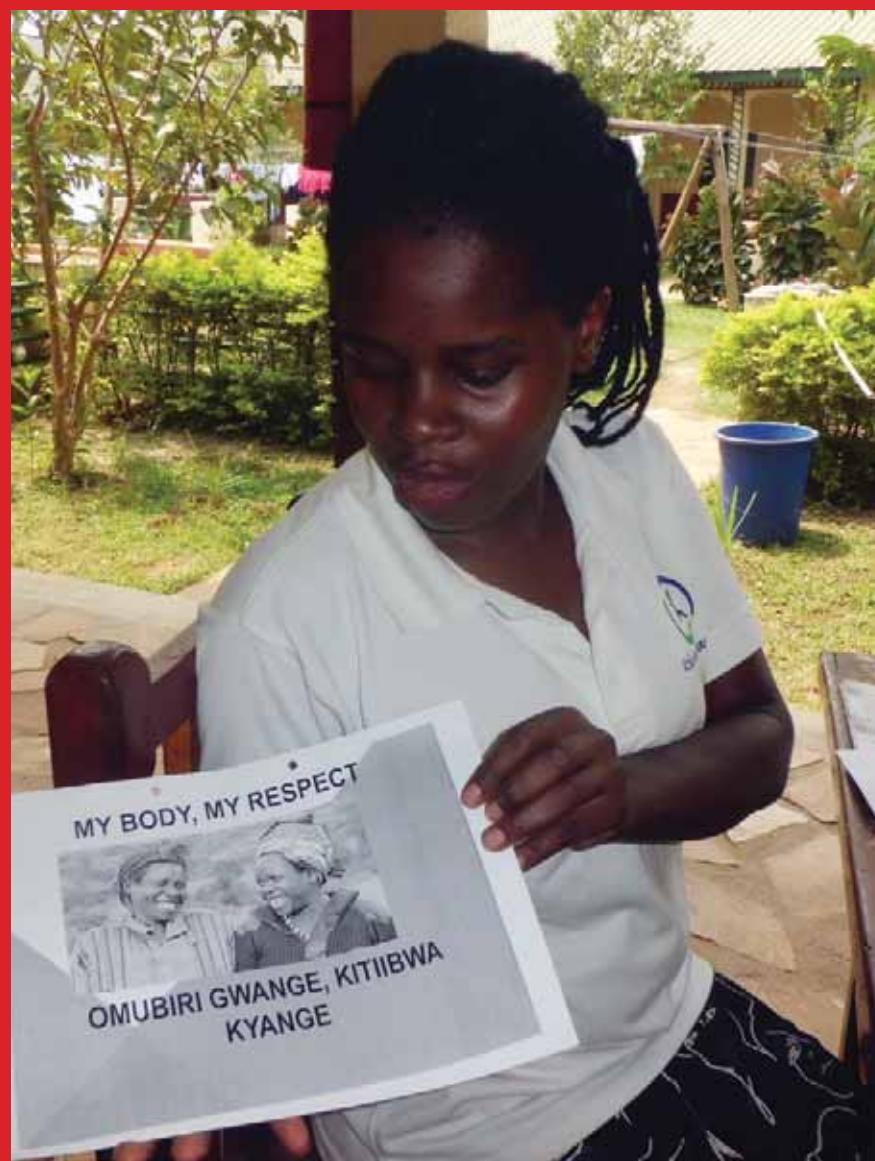
"Our flower farm is located close to a fishing landsite along Lake Victoria, where sexual activity and alcoholism are rife. School children usually fall victim [leading] to high rates of teenage pregnancies in the area. However, since we embarked on sensitising the school children on their rights insofar as sexual harassment and HIV/Aids-related challenges are concerned, they've become change agents and are helping in educating other children within the community," he says.

He notes that there are a lot of activities taking place at the lakeshore like sand-mining, fishing, with high rates of crime, mainly sex-related, and so it's the corporate responsibility of the flower farm to guard the pupils not to fall prey.

His farm has over 2,000 employees, most of them single mothers, whose children are learning in this school. They've developed a mentorship programme where managers who were trained under the programme routinely go to the school to educate the children on how to behave before their parents and within the community.

Apart from providing the playground, Kirinya's flower farm bought the trophy, which the overall winner took.

Ann Nampijja, the human resources manager at Aurum Roses, notes that her farm decided to partner with Bugiri Primary school, which is a public government school that is vulnerable in all aspects of education.



"We bought the children basic school equipment, including school uniform and shoes. This helped motivate them to stay in school." The pupils staged a play showing the lives of their parents at the workplace.

Nampijja hopes that the relationship they have created with the school will be sustained beyond the partnership with NOPE.

The flower farm managers sought the continuation of the programme so that the chain of knowledge-sharing is not broken as the pupils complete their primary education and join secondary schools.

Women and children's rights take centre stage in campaign

Rwanda

Médiatrice Uwamahoro had to wait for over two years to legalise her marriage with her husband with whom she had been cohabitating from July 2018. The mother of four gets emotional as she explains how she came to sign her marriage contract on October 1, 2020. She attributes the signing to the legal support she got from Haguruka, a Rwandan NGO that promotes women and children's rights.

Uwamahoro, 33, is a workers' leader at Kazihort Ltd, a farming company located in Masaka Sector, Kicukiro District of the City of Kigali.

With funding from Hivos, a Netherlands-based international organisation that is passionate about social change, Haguruka implemented the Women@Work campaign in 17 horticulture farms in Rwanda. The interventions in the farms started in 2017.

"Haguruka trained us on labour and women's rights. I started sharing with my husband on the benefits of a legal marital union and he finally accepted to legalise our marriage," said Uwamahoro, adding that Haguruka is also giving her legal support as she pushes her first husband to provide child support to their 13-year-old son.

Uwamahoro, who went on maternity leave in October 2020, also commended the Hivos project for making her employer commit to

legal binding procedures that protect women at the workplace.

"Before adopting these legal policies at Kazihort, women were excluded from some tasks such as loading and offloading of trucks, which were said to be men's, yet women could also do them. Things have changed and women can get any job so long as they can handle it," she said.

Mutual respect

Francine Kayitesi, another farm worker at Kazihort Ltd, said adoption of a code of conduct and other legal instruments has engendered mutual respect between the workers and their employer.

"We received training on our rights and responsibilities as workers. We've gained confidence to demand our rights from the employer, and on the other hand, we know we have to respect work hours and do our work professionally," said the mother of four.

Kayitesi is also happy because pay delays are now a thing of the past. Timely payment has made savings possible, enabling her to build a kitchen, and buy a pig, a goat and chickens, all worth about Rwf200,000 (\$204). Kayitesi has also bought herself a mobile phone, a device she previously considered only appropriate to her husband.



Kazimoto is facilitating her workers to get bank loans to assist them start small businesses. The company employs 20 women who represent 90 per cent of the workforce.

Further improvements required

Appreciating the change that the Women@Work Campaign has brought into their work and family life, both Uwamahoro and Kayitesi are asking for written contracts so that they can feel stable in their job and access bank loans for small businesses. "We're better off now as we're not worried of losing our jobs because of being away on maternity leave as was the case before, but we would want to have job contracts," Uwamahoro says.

The workers recommend the project implementers to get closer to them so as to help them tackle the remaining issues relating to their work and families.

Designed by Hivos, the Women@Work Campaign is implemented in Rwanda in partnership with CESTRAR, Rwanda Women Network and Haguruka.

Cansilde Kazimoto, the founding manager of Kazihort Ltd, hailed the campaign for raising awareness on labour rights among workers and managers.

"The project has yielded good results for my company. Previously, I didn't know labour laws, but since I got to know them, I treat my workers fairly. They, in turn, feel motivated and their output has increased. They have become more responsible because we now give them maternity leave and time off to breastfeed," she said.

Kazimoto is facilitating her workers to get bank loans to assist them start small businesses. The company employs 20 women who represent 90 per cent of the workforce.

“Currently, women do work that was previously deemed to be men’s. I’ve also become so close to my workers that they feel free to tell me about their family issues and I try to help them. There are other women outside my company who come to ask me for legal assistance about their family issues because they have heard about how our workers have benefited from this project,” says Kazimoto, who is also the leader of Rwanda Horticulture Inter-Professional Organization (RHIO).

She said she has so far awarded job contracts to a few workers who can read and write. Kazihort is working with the local government to raise literacy levels among the other workers and other citizens so that they can also get contracts.

She asks Hivos to consider allocating funds to RHIO to enable farms to train workers on some important skills and set up facilities such as breastfeeding rooms.

Victory in court

“We currently have court cases where we’re accompanying women workers and we need money for this. One woman has so far won a case over property-sharing with her former husband. In future, we want to train men on laws on sexual harassment because some men think it’s okay to beat their wives,” she says.

Kazimoto recommends that the legal instruments given to farm workers be translated into Kinyarwanda, the language mostly spoken and understood by many workers. This will increase uptake and appreciation by workers of their legal rights.



Under the Women@Work Campaign, 20 Rwandan farms committed to adopting legal binding procedures, which protect women at work through the provision of job contracts. The farms include Kinazi Agribusiness Ltd, AVIPROCO. Ltd, Excella Produce Ltd, Wine Production Ltd, KUC Ltd, Kirehe Umubavu, Covafga, Ctaga Uburyohe Ltd, Mult-Food Ltd, Green Best Ltd, Kazihort Ltd, Global Farmers, Cahocop, Gatsibo Farmers, Agi Ltd, Ruhimbi Farmers, Bio-Hep Ltd, Bella Flowers, Rugaba Farm Ltd and Garden Fresh.

In January 2020, 17 out of 20 trained farm managers approved and adopted a code of conduct (internal rules and regulations policy) and anti-sexual harassment policy that protects women workers in their farms.

**Over six million
people** reached
through interactive
radio programs that
aired *educative
information on the
rights* of those working
the flower sector.

Campaign opened my eyes to the plight of women in the flower sector

Kenya

For the past 15 years that John Muchangi has worked as a print journalist in Kenya, he has never enjoyed covering an issue like he has done the flower sector.

A science editor at The Star, a national daily, Muchangi says he got attracted to the sector when African Woman and Child Feature Service introduced him to the Women@Work Campaign during an awareness-creation meeting for journalists reporting on human rights. What he heard about the plight of women working in the flower sector was heart-breaking. He decided to use the power of his pen to make a difference in the women's lives.

The campaign influenced him in two ways: "I got exposure on issues around gender, labour laws, floriculture, the economy and the living and working conditions of farm workers, especially women in settlements surrounding flower farms."

He realised his power as an influential communicator and the importance of covering the floriculture sector positively, thereby inspiring change. The campaign also empowered him to increase his knowledge, and to become an authority in covering issues in the flower sector.

"The exposure sharpened my journalistic skills, and expanded my network of news sources whom I met during the trainings and field trips," he says. The campaign's greatest impact on Muchangi as a professional was that it opened

his eyes and interest in issues around flower farms, gender, and human and labour rights.

"The news stories, features and editorials that focused on this sensitive sector made a positive impact locally and internationally through our online edition. The best impact was when the media sensitised farm workers on the best practices that were acceptable locally and internationally by certification bodies and stakeholders," the writer says.

Thanks to the bold coverage of the sector, The Star was identified by stakeholders in the campaign as an authoritative newspaper and media house that upholds gender, workers and human rights as a policy. Feedback from farm workers, trade unionists and non-governmental organisations was also positive.

But it was not all rosy. Muchangi recalls some flower farms calling him to express displeasure at his coverage of the sector, which, they said, focused on the negative, hence a threat to them.

Looking back, however, Muchangi is happy with his contribution. "Before this campaign, I was only interested in the business side of the flower sector. I was not keen on highlighting female workers' grievances, such as sexual harassment, and industrial action. This has changed."

Some useful lessons he learned from his involvement in the campaign was the need to project women and men issues differently, if the

former's situation is to improve. Media need to pay more attention to issues affecting women's productivity, such as reproductive health, maternity, and childcare, and on the need for salaries and wages to reflect real-life situations.

This understanding, Muchangi notes, changed the frequency and depth of his coverage of issues affecting women in the flower sector. "Before 2016," he recalls, "we did not have many news reports on the flower sector. We now have many published stories with different angles, such as business, labour, and gender and human rights issues."

Muchangi believes his articles have influenced how policy-makers, legislators and other stakeholders address issues of flower sector workers.

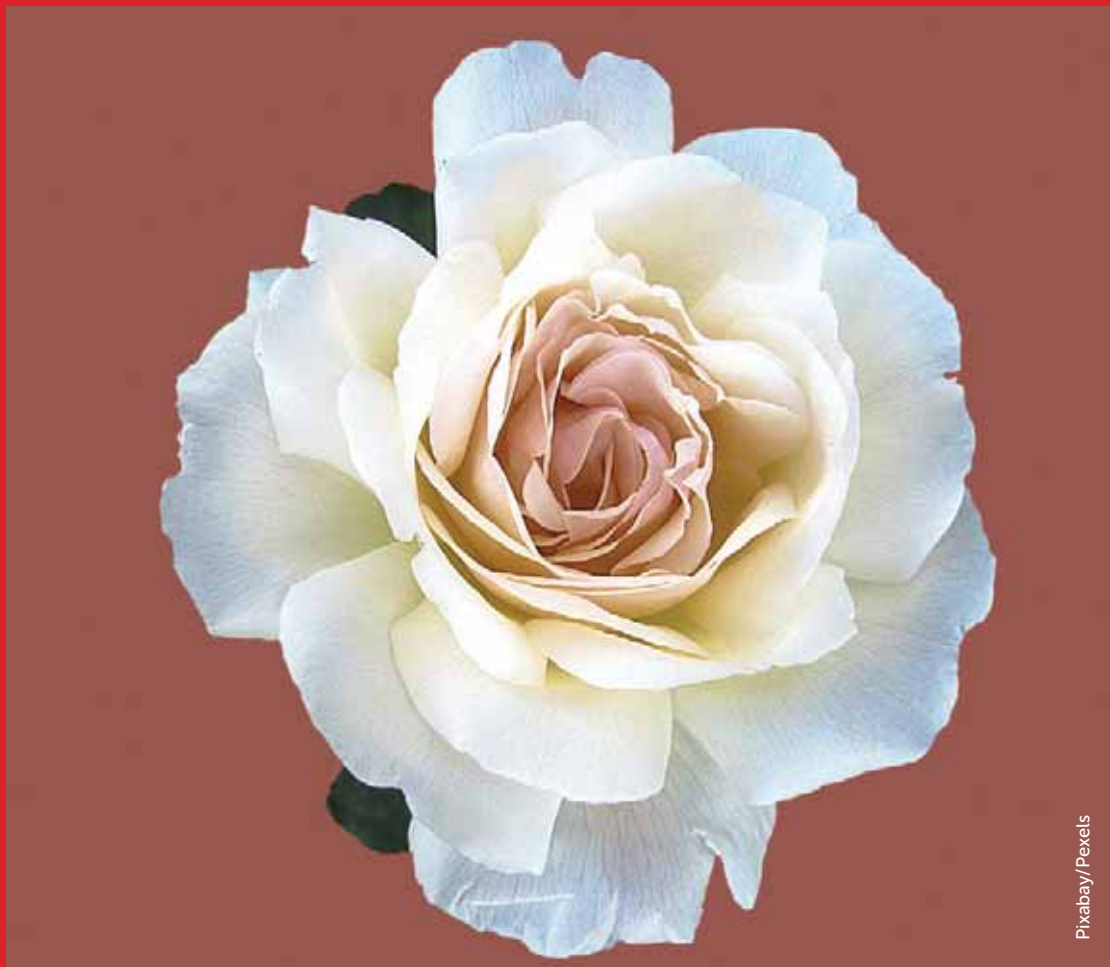
In covering the sector, Muchangi says he has faced some challenges. "Initially, some CSOs (civil society organisations) working in the sector perceived me as a spoiler and rabble rouser! But things have changed and we have a cordial working relationship. They now treat me with trust and respect and are ready to share confidential information for the good of the sector."

Also, some powerful and influential flower-farm owners tried to stop publication of some of his stories. They called The Star, threatening to go to court if the story was published. Happily, the media house went ahead and published the stories to safeguard media independence. Muchangi says the areas the farms did not want featured were sexual harassment, poor remuneration and delayed salaries.

Difficulties in accessing flower farms, with some remaining no-go zones for media, was another challenge. This only changed when some NGOs and union officials, who requested anonymity due to the sensitivity of the matter, tagged him along.

To address some of these challenges, Muchangi proposes the following:

- There is a need to promote more interaction between journalists and Hivos partners to ensure campaigns like this get media focus and coverage.
- Media should use success stories as an entry point to highlighting issues affecting women and farm workers as a whole and as a strategy to avoid antagonising farms that are doing positive work.
- A joint stakeholder meeting involving the media and women's rights advocates to be held before a campaign of such magnitude is launched to rope in everyone that matters.
- Hold exchange programmes that will enable journalists from Eastern African countries to appreciate issues in other countries.



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Inspiring struggles for women's rights

Tanzania

A saying goes, it takes one lit matchstick to start a blazing fire. In the same spirit, it takes individuals to bring about positive transformation that lives on after the individuals are long gone.

A group of "lit matches" in Tanzania are doing splendid work, inspiring women in the horticultural sector to fight for their labour and gender rights. The group composed of members of the Tanzania Women Lawyers Association (TAWLA) is championing decent working conditions for all women workers under the Women@Work Campaign. Their interventions include building legal capacities of women workers, addressing marginalisation, and tackling violations women face in the horticultural value chain.

Significant progress

So far, the group has made significant progress in raising awareness among the workers and rallying them to push for equality, workplace safety, and labour rights.

The campaign was conducted in Arusha and Kilimanjaro and reached more than 10 flower farms, including Rungwe Avocado Limited, Highland Flowers, Oasis, Vaso, Mount Meru, Mungushi and Tengeru Flower Farm.

TAWLA's approach was to demystify labour laws outlined in the constitution by presenting a simpler version to the workers and educating them on the same.

Project coordinator Gloria Amin attributes this approach to low literacy levels among the women workers. "In some areas, women could not even read or write, let alone demand their rights. We had to come up with learning material that explained tenets of the constitution in lay persons' language. The workers were also sensitised on rights such as maternity leave and how to request for sick leave.

"In addition, the workers were enlightened on the importance of signing a contract with employers before starting work. Sample contracts were demonstrated, educating them on what a legally binding contract should contain. Emphasis was placed on the need to ensure that workers understood terms of a contract, even if it required the employer to present it in a language that is easy for the worker to understand, preferably Kiswahili," says Amin.

Following this sensitisation, at least 200 women, both casual and seasonal labourers, now have contracts negotiated through workers' committees. In some farms like Rungwe Avocado Company in Mbeya, women's clubs have been formed to provide a platform for members to discuss issues that affect them at the workplace.

Says Amin: "Before the Women@Work Campaign, most women were ignorant of their rights. Furthermore, they were afraid to

express concerns such as sexual harassment, poor pay and hostile terms, like being denied leave. Today, the committees are active, and employers have been sensitised on their responsibility to provide pleasant working conditions for staff.”

In their collaborative endeavour to empower women, TAWLA presented a proposal highlighting the plight of women workers in the horticulture sector during a roundtable discussion with the Ministry of Labour and the Parliamentary Committee on Constitution and Legal Affairs. The Ministry promised to look into the matter.

Transformative strategies and approaches adopted

For TAWLA, collaboration was the winning strategy that helped them achieve their objectives. “For instance, teaming up with Tanzania’s Plantation and Agricultural Workers Union eased our access to farms, allowing us to train many workers at a go.”

TAWLA also used peer educators to rally fellow workers to stand up for their rights. The champions and peer educators born out of the project have become a dominant feature in the community, spearheading efforts to safeguard women’s rights in and outside the flower farms.

“We trained 80 peer educators on labour laws in four farms. Each was tasked with training five people—two men and three women. With this strategy, the organisation has been able to reach more workers as some of the peer educators enlisted in the campaign managed to train an entire farm.”

TAWLA underscores the need to explore opportunities in the media in future campaigns. “We still have unexplored potential in community radio stations, which can be used to amplify voices of women workers and influence more reforms beyond just the



horticulture sector. An approach that brings together all workers in the informal sector, including workers in tea, sisal and coffee, would overhaul the current unfavourable work system,” says Amin.

TAWLA is currently championing an amendment to the Employment and Labour Relations Act as regards sexual harassment.

“The Act only mentions sexual harassment as a form of discrimination, but doesn’t define sexual harassment, what amounts to sexual harassment and what happens if someone is responsible. It doesn’t address the issue comprehensively despite the high prevalence of sexual predators in the horticulture sector,” Amin explains.

Women
Unlimited

Workers Representation and Participation



Allan Gichigi

Empowering flower farm workers to stand for their rights

Kenya

Kenya's flourishing floriculture industry, as evidenced by the huge profits posted by farms annually when compared to earnings of other sectors, belies the inhumane conditions of the workforce.

Besides working in challenging environments that deny them their basic human rights, most flower-farm workers—70 per cent of them women—suffer in silence for fear of losing their jobs and being victimised by their seniors.

While a number of factors, including low educational levels that deny them alternative job opportunities, have been cited as reasons why they suffer in silence, a key limitation is lack of information about their rights that would enable them to make informed decisions.

This was a major gap that Haki Mashinani sought to seal when

it set up shop in Naivasha, Kenya's flower farming capital, in 2016. The organisation was a major blessing to workers, proving with time that, information is power.

A partner under the Women@Work Campaign, Haki Mashinani's mission was to empower grassroots women by creating awareness on social and legal information and services to improve their lives and well-being.

Approaches used to bring change

Haki Mashinani's Executive Director Salome Odera says their work in Naivasha was implemented within the organisation's legal justice programme, which sought to link up service providers and beneficiaries. Services provided to flower-farm workers spoke to issues like civil, business, land and property registration,



Haki Mashinani's Executive Director Salome Odera - The practical sessions were more appreciated by the workers as opposed to lectures... we wanted to make it simple but memorable

as well as succession and inheritance.

Workers living in the Karagita informal settlement in Naivasha, about 100 kilometres from Nairobi, found these services

useful, as most of them spent entire days at work with hardly any time left to attend to their personal needs. Besides these services, there was also need to provide the workers with information on labour and employment rights.

Haki Mashinani started by first engaging flower-farm management and owners to provide access to their premises. The organisation approached Florensis, Van Den Berg, Flamingo and Flamingo Kingfisher Vegetable and Flowers and Baraka Roses.

"We scheduled several one-on-one meetings with human resources managers and requested them to provide us with space to set up desks at strategic locations and to allow workers to seek legal aid and assistance from our pro bono lawyers," Ms Odera says.

The intention was two-prong: To promote workers' rights and to change the relationship between employees and employers, thereby enhancing productivity.

After months of engagement, four farms bought into Haki Mashinani's idea. The organisation then engaged lawyers who went to the farms twice a week to consult with workers during their breaks.

Haki Mashinani also used theatre to enlighten the workers on their labour and employment rights. "We realised that theatre was the most effective in empowering workers with information, as the workers participated in the lively sessions. The practical sessions were the most appreciated by the workers compared to lectures... we wanted to make it simple but memorable," Ms Odera says.

One of the most inspiring sessions was when the trainers helped workers to understand the details of the employment contracts they had signed. Many of them confessed that they had not had time to read the contents of their contracts and did not, therefore, understand their obligations and remedies in the event of a breach. The workers were also introduced to statutory obligations of the farms and workers on pertinent issues

such as remuneration, leave and days off.

"This information helped workers realise that they were overworked, since a number of them worked seven days a week without rest as recommended in the employment laws and provisions," Ms Odera says.

Positive results stream in

Within a few months of sharing information and providing legal services, change was evident. Workers began raising complaints about poor working conditions and labour malpractice, including keeping workers as casuals for prolonged periods, and unlawful termination.

Some casuals said their rights under the labour law were being violated, while others complained of being forced to resign without notice during low seasons on claims of redundancy. Another complaint was that the management was unlawfully holding workers' identity cards, literally detaining them on the farms. Some workers expressed concern that upon termination, they could not secure jobs elsewhere because they were not given testimonial letters.

"Worse still, the workers complained of health-related issues, such back pains and chest problems due to

exposure to harmful chemicals used in the greenhouses. This was also evidenced by reports from the health records in the clinics. Women@Work interventions saw workers start taking action on these issues, which was not the case before," Ms Odera says.

In a year, about 70 female workers had sought lawyers' advice on termination of their contracts, their rights as a result of exposure to harmful chemicals, and workplace injuries. To win the workers' confidence, the organisation had to be open with them and show willingness to receive information.

"Although many of the workers wanted the cases taken to court, we embraced dialogue between them and the management as a more [time-efficient] and cost-effective solution to addressing these issues," Ms Odera says.

Challenges experienced

However, there were challenges. When, for instance, Haki Mashinani sought to address issues with specific farms, many workers were reluctant to follow the cases through for fear of victimisation. And, considering that some of the workers were employed on casual basis, it became difficult to conclude cases if affected workers were no longer in employment.

"We also noted that farms outsourced the human resource function to agencies, thus transferring the responsibility of hiring workers to an independent firm, which made it difficult for us to follow up," adds Ms Odera.

Despite these challenges, it was evident that the workers were equipped with knowledge on their rights and agitated for improved working conditions.

Involvement of the entire farm management at the planning stage proved to be a major lesson during implementation. "We realised that we needed to involve farm owners and chief executive officers to effect the changes that would improve workers' lives," Ms Odera says.

She concludes that enhancing decent work for flower-farm workers requires continuous partnership with stakeholders to push a common agenda. "I'm pleased that many partners came in to promote the rights of flower-farm workers, but there is need for concerted efforts to realise greater results."

37 cases benefited from
*legal representation on
unlawful termination
and employment
inconsistencies* in Uganda.



"Before I started this job, all I knew was to obey my husband. But now I know what obligations and rights we have as men and women. Before, my husband's word was everything. I have been trained on various things among them labour laws and this has helped me know better my rights as an employee of the farm. Also, socially I have learnt a lot. If a person is affected by HIV I would have ran away. But now I have been educated on how to cater for such persons. The company has been very supportive. Whenever there is a call for training/workshop, they allow us to attend."

Sisay Asrat

Quest for national union in Rwanda's horticulture sector

Rwanda

As Rwanda's horticulture sector continues to grow, the need for a national union to champion the rights of hundreds of workers on horticultural farms has become apparent.

Women working in vegetable, flower and herbal farms need unions to advocate issues like access to reproductive health services, support for pregnant women and lactating mothers, a conducive working environment free of all forms of sexual and gender-based violence, promotion on merit and equal pay for equal work.

The Women@Work campaign, a regional movement powered by Hivos East Africa through Rwanda's Workers Trade Union Confederation, CESTRAR, is working to establish a union in horticulture, a step at a time. CESTRAR has a mandate to establish a national workers union within the horticulture

sector and to staff it with legal experts to provide much-needed legal aid for workers.

"We've started by supporting workers to set up farm-based union committees," Bagirihirwe Jean de Dieu, a union organising officer at the confederation, says. The committees will be combined to form a national committee and board of the union.

Creation of a national union started at farm level because it was important to first educate targeted workers on the

need for a union since their membership would be strictly based on their willingness to be represented.

"We cannot establish an umbrella union without first organising the workers we seek to represent," stresses Bagirihirwe.

Additionally, CESTRAR uses the farm level approach to avoid antagonising the employers and encourage dialogue and protection of the interests of all involved.

Between August 2018 and January 2019, workers at Garden Fresh, Bella Flowers, Green Best, Kazihort Ltd and Akanyenyeri (flower farms, located in the eastern part of Rwanda, set up union committees. This was done in a structured and thorough process that entailed in-depth training to raise awareness on how they could improve the working conditions of women on the farms.

"Before the committees, there was a lot of violation of workers' rights and those affected, particularly women, had nowhere to turn to," Bagirihirwe says. He cites working without a written contract, paying salaries in cash and in an informal and unstructured manner and lack of personal protective equipment (PPE) among the most common violations.

Workers now have protective gear, salary payments are more structured, and there are efforts to address the many challenges working women face as they juggle their reproductive, productive and caregiving roles.

While both male and female workers were affected, CESTRAR noted that the situation is direr for women, hence the need for a union that can design strategies to address specific issues of men and women.

Bagirihirwe says the committees are already having an impact with the working conditions for women improving. "One of the most important processes that was triggered by the training of the elected committee members is that they started negotiating for better working conditions, and this has happened."

Workers now have protective gear, salary payments are more structured, and there are efforts to address the many challenges working women face as they juggle their reproductive, productive and caregiving roles.

Importantly, trained committee members learnt to emphasise that women can be and are as productive as men, and to demand an end to disparities in pay based on gender.

However, even with the demonstrated benefits of union representation, CESTRAR still faces resistance from some employers who are unwilling to have their workers organised in unions.



"We have also encountered workers who fear supporting unionisation. They fear representing their fellow workers in committees," he says, this at a time CESTRAR lacks funds to sustain its work and address representation challenges.

"Nonetheless, we've learnt that capacity-building is key to keeping the unionisation process alive as we continue

to mobilise resources," says Bagirihirwe. Training, he adds, must target both employers and employees to encourage buy-in and goodwill from both parties.

Bagirihirwe hopes Hivos East Africa will renew the campaign and scale up interventions to enable CESTRAR to deliver a national union for horticulture sector workers.

**13,083 workers and
community members**
in Uganda flower sector -
catchment area trained on
Sexual Harassment & HIV/
AIDs aspects by *trained
peer educators and
champions.*



How strategic communication gave voice to voiceless women workers

Kenya

If there is one thing women working in flower farms have experienced in the past three years, it is increased focus on their situation and struggles as they eke out a living in the sector.

This visibility has catapulted their issues and the conditions they work under to the national conversations and agenda. Such focus helped to push flower farm managers, owners, policymakers, and the government into appreciating and accounting for what they are doing for these women. The visibility further opened up the flower sector to scrutiny by the communities they operate in, local and international actors.

Investigative stories highlighting the worrying conditions women were working under saw managers in these farms come out

to account for what was happening. For instance, managers of flower farms in Naivasha, Nakuru County, and Thika, Kiambu County, invited the media to see the changes they had made to improve the situation of women in the sector.

Before the launch of the Women@Work Campaign, such conversations on human rights would not have happened to the degree witnessed in recent times. Shining the spotlight on the sector through radio programmes, publications and the online campaign resulted in the managers coming out and promise reforms.

Icing on the cake

Such increased pressure and attention can be attributed to specific interventions. Over six million people were reached through interactive radio programmes that aired

educative information on the rights of flower sector workers, most of them women. A total of 18 issues of the Kenyan Woman newspaper with over 300 stories focusing solely on issues affecting women in the flower sector were published. The online publication focuses solely on stories, concerns and needs of women working in this sector,

The publication offered a platform for Women@Work partners to highlight their advocacy messages around improving workers' wages and salaries, respect for workers' rights, and demand for better health and working conditions in flower farms.

Between 2017 and 2020, an online campaign that attracted more than 160,236 readers, who interacted with stories touching on issues affecting women working in the flower

sector, complemented the newspaper publicity. From Google Analytics, the stories generated interest globally particularly in the following countries: Kenya (50,364 readers), USA (30,224), European Union (9,627), South Africa (3,062), and Norway (1,566 readers).

The icing on the cake was a book documenting the resounding achievements made by Women@Work partners in changing the lives of women working in the flower sector.

Approaches used to deliver these results

To achieve these results, African Woman and Child (AWC) Feature Service used five critical approaches. The first one involved constituting a team of five investigative journalists to examine the conditions under which the women in the sector work. The

journalists were selected based on their interest, especially in tackling human rights issues. They were then taken through a series of trainings to help them appreciate gender issues and rights, what the Women@Work campaign was all about and why their participation in this process was critical.

After this empowerment, they set out to investigate issues around labour rights, working conditions in the farms, sexual harassment, and adherence by the farms to national laws, especially around workers' rights and safety.

Righting the wrongs of the past

The result of this intervention was publication and airing of compelling stories that saw flower farm managers and trade unions come out to take action on the issues raised. These included poor pay, failure by the farms to implement Collective Bargaining Agreements, and sexual harassment.

The managers and trade unions issued press statements showcasing what they were doing to right the wrongs of the past. Unions such as the Kenya Plantation and Agricultural Workers Union (KPAWU) called press conferences where they promised to ensure the CBAs they had negotiated with the farms were fully implemented.

The publication offered a platform for Women@Work partners to highlight their advocacy messages around improving workers' wages and salaries, respect for workers' rights, and demand for better health and working conditions in flower farms.

Says Arthur Okwemba, AWC Executive Director: "In the past three years, we have seen many flower farms willing to open up to scrutiny by media on what goes on behind their closed gates; this wasn't the case earlier."

In addition to investigative journalists, AWC Feature Service worked with a team of editors and producers to help in advancing the women's rights agenda. These editors were sensitised on women's rights issues of those working in the flower sector and what Women@Work sought to achieve. The editors committed to support the cause.

This commitment would later result in the allocation of space and airtime for stories articulating issues affecting workers in flower farms. Through their stories, the editors began holding the government and flower-farm actors to account on the situation of women working in this industry.

As a result of this partnership, a team of reporters were nominated by these editors to undergo training on how best to use their platforms to highlight the conditions of women in this sector. More than 10 of these journalists published and aired flower-farm related stories. It was encouraging that the journalists and their media houses used their own resources to produce the stories. Even as this campaign wound up, three editors committed to continue focusing on the sector.

Says Okwemba: "We've seen the journalists and producers we trained regularly produce more news stories and features about the campaign through their media houses. This has been a success."

"We're confident that this will continue and will help them report professionally about this sector," adds Ruth Omukhango, AWC Program Manager.

To sustain interest and focus on the sector, AWC has developed a guide on reporting issues in the flower industry. The guide is based on the experiences of the journalists and other actors on how the sector has been reported in the media.

The second approach used to deliver the results involved creating a platform that amplified the voices of women working in the sector. This saw Kenyan Woman redesigned. This targeted focus that lasted for three years resulted in the publication of over 300 stories that elevated the conversations and issues in the sector to national and global levels. Some of the stories were republished by other organisations, thus increasing attention to the issues raised among the local and international actors.

The third approach entailed conducting interactive radio programmes that created awareness and educated workers and the public on the rights of flower sector workers. Radio stations that are popular in listenership in the flower-growing areas were selected for purposes of these programmes. This was to ensure that as many people as possible—workers, community members, and policymakers—listened to the programmes. Flower-farm workers, gender advocates, unionists, and lawyers were



used as discussants in the radio programmes. Such intense awareness contributed to the consciousness in the flower farms, something other Women@Work partners said made their advocacy easier.

The fourth approach that contributed to the above results was conducting an online campaign on various social media platforms. By the end of the campaign, more than 200,000 people had been reached with messages on conditions of women working in flower farms. Over 160,000 readers from Kenya, the USA, the European Union, South Africa, and Norway visited the Kenya Woman site to interact with the stories.

Offering media support to Women@Work partners,

building their capacity on media engagement, and helping them come up with strategic communication plans, was the fifth approach used to deliver the above results. The support enabled the partners to use radio, online and media platforms to advocate for the rights of the women they were working with.

Challenges encountered

But putting all this together and registering the above results was not smooth sailing. AWC encountered challenges that affected the speed and degree of success that was recorded.

Refusal by most flower farms to allow media on their farms to interview workers and managers was a major challenge that affected the speed at which articles were

written. AWC and the journalists had to rely on their links with Women@Work partners to some farms to get access.

The immense interest of media owners in the flower sector, some of them owners and/or directors in these farms, and the influence of advertisers, made it difficult for some stories to be published or aired by the affected media houses. In one instance, a journalist we were working with was threatened with sacking if he published a story on flower farms in which he had implicated managers abusing workers' rights.

Delays in publishing or airing stories was another challenge. This was due to editors' preferences on what story they wanted published or aired. Evidence has shown that stories that advance gender rights usually get lukewarm attention in a media that is male-dominated and guided by strong gender stereotypes.

Getting partners to see the importance of the media as a platform to advance their cause was another challenge. "When we started, some partners were not ready to go to the media because of fear and myths, but now there's a change of heart, and most are happy to share their reports with the media," says Omukhango.

Lessons learnt

These challenges, however, provided useful lessons to AWC.

Creating partnerships with decision makers—editors and producers in the media and reporters—and getting them see the value of advancing women's rights issues increased their willingness to offer space and airtime for stories highlighting this cause.

Another significant learning was working in a consortium where many partners were suspicious of and feared the media. We overcame that by engaging and holding several training forums on media and strategic communication issues.

These lessons should inform future interventions. In this regard, AWC proposes that if a similar campaign is implemented or replicated, the following be considered:

- Media practitioners selected as partners in a campaign of this nature should demonstrate through their writings, their belief in women's rights issues.
- Members in a consortium should have communication plans before starting an advocacy campaign of the Women@Work nature.
- The production of a magazine like Kenyan Woman, which documents the campaign's work, should start in the third month after the launch of the campaign to ensure enough time to publish quality content.



New dawn for Tanzania flower farm workers

Lugman Mahoro

Tanzania

For some 1,450 flower-farm workers in Tanzania, June 24, 2019 was no ordinary day. The workers had several reasons to celebrate as the day marked the climax of a Tanzania Plantation and Agricultural Workers Union (TPAWU) initiative to improve their working conditions, when collective bargaining agreements (CBAs) were signed with their employers.

Three years of strategising, planning, lobbying and engagement, under an empowerment programme supported by Hivos East Africa, culminated in a deal that not only saw flower-farm workers' monthly wages increase, but also resulted in enhanced social benefits.

The CBAs entitled workers at Mount Meru Flowers, Dekker Bruins Tanzania Ltd and Rijk Zwaan Qsem in Arusha to increased maternity leave from 84 to 90 days for a single delivery and from 100 to 110 days for multiple delivery. Day care facilities would also be provided at the workplace.

More importantly, the CBAs contained a clause on prevention of sexual harassment at the workplace.

Cecilia Gasper Mariwa, a unionist remembers the momentous occasion of the signing of the CBA. The signing opened the way for three more – with Young Plant Limited on October 16, 2019 and Bondeni Machame Flowers and Machame Flowers Ltd, which raised minimum wages for their staff in line with the two-year CBA.

Mariwa observes that getting flower farms' management to sign the CBA was not easy, but the training the unionist and her colleagues had received, courtesy of Hivos, came in handy. They held several meetings with the management teams to negotiate the new terms of engagement.

The union had another advantage: the 15 branch union leaders in every farm were experienced and properly equipped and empowered with labour law and rights skills. More than 100 workers were trained.

The union would start by sending a CBA proposal to the management of the respective flower farms to study and give feedback before seeking a formal meeting. The environment at the meetings

was cordial and respectful for both parties. "We didn't have a major problem; we gave them time and they responded well, with the exception of minimum wages, which proved to be a long struggle," says the unionist, whose five-year experience paid dividends.

At Qsem farm, the union wanted a minimum wage to be raised to Tshs300,000 (\$130) per month, but after negotiations, they settled on Tshs260,000 (\$112). The union was granted the maternity leave days as requested.

Recommendations

Mariwa wishes government would revise the minimum wage for farm workers from the current Tshs100,000 (\$43) set seven years ago, as employers exploit the static minimum wage in the law to underpay and overwork flower farm workers, most of them women. She calls on other partners to organise more empowerment and capacity-building forums for farm workers and their leaders to create awareness and sharpen their leadership and working skills.

Besides supporting the union to negotiate better wages and improved working conditions,

Hivos' Women@Work campaign has benefitted hundreds of flower farm workers in Arusha region in Tanzania immensely.

The programme has transformed working relations, welfare and livelihoods of workers, most of whom are women in Mt Meru Flowers Ltd, Dekker Farms, Fides Tanzania Ltd and Zaden Africa Ltd.

During the project period, over 1,000 workers trained as trainers in some of the flower farms and in hotels and social centres in the neighbourhoods.

They also participated soccer tournaments, which served as team-building activities.

The highlight of the training was that the management of the flower farms agreed to introduce sexual harassment policies.

How campaign improved HR practice in the flower sector

In addition, he reviewed maternity leave terms, making it 90 working days, from the previous 60 days, to allow mothers sufficient time to nurse their babies and recover from childbirth.

Uganda

What comes to mind when you think about the human resource department at your place of work?

Well, it is the office that welcomes workers into an organisation. It facilitates the worker's stay there ensuring they have everything they need to work smoothly. Ideally, this department cultivates a robust organisation citizenship and culture because happy workers post happy results.

However, such ideals may fail to be realised simply because the department is not equipped with the skillset needed to promote a healthy work environment.

Isn't it tragic when workers fail to find safety or solutions to challenges faced at work from the very hands that ushered them into the organisation? Thankfully, such a tragedy can be averted by training HR managers on how to handle threats faced by workers in the organisation.

Akina Mama wa Africa, an organisation that champions women human rights awareness, in partnership with FEMNET, have been at the forefront of equipping HR managers with information on how to improve the work environment.

Bridging gender disparity

One of the training approaches used by the organisation under the Women@Work Campaign initially rolled out in 2017 targeting various

horticultural companies as an intervention to bridge gender disparity in the sector. The training attracted HR representatives from different companies in the East Africa region, including Royal Van Zanten Ltd, Ugarose Flowers Ltd, Jambo Rose Ltd, and JP Cuttings, among others to appreciate gender and gender rights issues at the workplace.

The campaign has enhanced HR best practices in the sector, resulting in crafting and implementing progressive policies, particularly those touching on gender issues.

Juliet Kabaitiri, HR manager at Royal Van Zanten Ltd, says the training keeps empowering her to push for policies that empower women workers, whose voices have traditionally been muffled. She has been resilient in speaking up for women's rights despite being the only woman in the board of management at the Royal Van Zanten Ltd.

Fearless advocacy

"I've been part of the Women@Work campaign ever since it was rolled out. I travelled all the way to Naivasha, Kenya, to attend the forum, and since then, I've never stopped advocating women's rights. Here at Royal Van Zanten, we implemented a policy on sexual harassment and another on wage increment. Both are upheld to the letter," she says.

In addition, Ms Kabaitiri spearheaded the implementation of maternity leave for women who have suffered miscarriages. The policy was

non-existent but is now enforced courtesy of her fearless advocacy.

“We had a passive sexual harassment policy, but thanks to the knowledge gained during the Women@Work Campaigns, I’ve managed to activate it and we now have zero tolerance for sexual harassment. It doesn’t matter who the predator is or their position in the company, all perpetrators are to face the gender committee in the event of such incidents.”

Besides policy implementation, Kabaitiri is on a mission to influence more women to take up leadership positions, since, she says, top jobs are not a preserve for the ‘boys’ club’. Her efforts are bearing fruit with the recent appointment of four women to assistant head positions in various departments.

Richard Omaria, HR manager at Ugarose Flowers Ltd, planned to adopt new norms that would create a conducive environment for women workers, especially, since they are the majority at the farm. He noted that most workers had young children — babies and toddlers — and had to leave them unattended as they went to work. This prompted the idea of setting up a day-care centre at the farm where children could be taken care of, and mothers could interact with them during work breaks. Construction of the centre is underway.

In addition, he reviewed maternity leave terms, making it 90 working days, from the previous 60 days, to allow mothers sufficient time to nurse their babies and recover from childbirth.

The sexual harassment policy was non-existent at Jambo Rose Ltd until Yvonne Nagujja, the HR manager, understood its importance during the Women@Work campaign.

One of her post-training take-homes was to have the policy implemented at her workplace, a task she accomplished successfully. She is now

working with other farms to push for an equal-wage policy such that workers, men and women alike, receive equal pay for equal work.

When Janat Haminda, assistant HR manager at JP Cuttings completed the training, she decided to conduct the campaign at her company.

“I took the risk of enlightening women on their rights at the workplace. Fortunately, I did not suffer any harsh consequences. On the contrary, my initiative was appreciated. My fellow women are now empowered; it’s quite refreshing!”

Testimonies continue to trickle in of positive changes taking place at the companies that participated in the Women@Work campaign, specially tailored for HR managers. A wind of change is blowing in the horticultural sector, making history of poor practices such as normalised sexual harassment, unequal pay, poor maternal healthcare and various forms of gender injustice.



Online portal paves way for greater inclusivity at Tambuzi



Kenya

"Nothing in nature lives for itself. Rivers don't drink their own water. Trees don't eat their own fruit. The sun doesn't shine for itself. A flower's fragrance is not for itself. Living for each other is the rule of nature." Nikunj Patel.

The workers at Tambuzi flower farm can attest to the truth that no man is self-sufficient. Minding another's welfare is core to having vibrant, productive communities especially at the workplace. However, co-existing harmoniously and working in seamless sync is not always easy especially when channels of communication are non-existent.

Improved communication

For Tambuzi, the implementation of the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Africa Portal has greatly improved communication between workers and management. This is a joint initiative by Hivos, Ufadhili Trust and True Price (the Netherlands) under the Women@ Work Campaign. It is designed to help businesses monitor their performance in handling their workers social needs.

Conflict resolution

Through the portal, workers can log in and express their concerns, suggestions and innovative ideas at any given time. Their supervisors can analyse the needs and experiences of workers real-time and this has helped nip issues in the bud especially in resolving conflict.

"The portal has helped us track the firm's performance in addressing pertinent issues that affect our employees such as health and safety, gender equality, representation, training and capacity development, water use, wages and social security," says Kevin Ngare, the partnership officer at Tambuzi. He adds that the platform has reduced employees' alienation from management, one of the challenges they faced before because of their many numbers.

"We're more than 380 staff but through the portal, each of us can now post their grievances and get an audience with the relevant department heads."

Apart from opening up communication avenues, the portal has made it possible for workers to take part in decision making. Ngare notes that there have been a lot of changes arising from the experiences posted by workers on the portal. For instance, the farm has adopted a policy on gender development to encourage more women to take up supervisory and leadership roles.

Women in leadership

"Our current HR manager is a woman; we're happy to see more women take up managerial positions. The establishment of a gender committee has greatly improved the manner in which issues are being addressed. For instance, reporting structures are now streamlined to ensure matters such as sexual harassment are dealt with accordingly. Gender related cases have plummeted and so has employee turnover."

The farm has installed a water purifier in response to complaints of frequent illnesses caused by consuming contaminated water. Thanks to the portal, these complaints received audience with management and a solution implemented.

Work absenteeism has also reduced especially among women workers who were often forced to take compassionate leave to take care of their sick children.

"The management is keen on workers' welfare and granting them several incentives to increase job satisfaction. These include helping them install home solar systems to cut cost on energy consumption and advancing interest-free education loans to the workers."

Apart from the portal, the Women@Work campaign has conducted training on gender issues such as sexual harassment and wage discrimination.

"The sensitisation has helped improve working conditions especially for women. For instance, we now have a fully equipped nursing room

For Tambuzi, the implementation of the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Africa Portal has greatly improved communication between workers and management. This is a joint initiative by Hivos, Ufadhili Trust and True Price (the Netherlands) under the Women@Work Campaign. It is designed to help businesses monitor their performance in handling their workers social needs.

to enable lactating mothers to bond with their babies. Expectant mothers are reassigned lighter duties with occasional breaks. Generally, we're more aware of unique challenges women face at the workplace and how to mitigate them, all thanks to the campaign," says Ngare.

The impact of this training has not only been felt internally, but also in the local community. The company has partnered with the county government to equip local dispensaries with laboratories to enable the community access health services for free. "We also pay the lab assistants a monthly stipend to keep the facility running."

The CSR Africa portal has come in handy in tracking the progress of all these worker-focused initiatives. "It makes project analysis more convenient and comprehensive. We're able to map out successes and gaps that need to be filled. We're hopeful that through this online platform, we will be a model for sustainable practices in line with Vision 2030."

Trade unions' mission to foster peace on flower farms

Ethiopia

Minaye flowers farm in Bishoftu, about 50 kilometres from Addis Ababa, the Ethiopian capital, was just like many farms not immune to riots and disruptions of day-to-day operations whenever conflict between staff and management arose. However, for a year now, farm workers have not gone on the rampage. This is thanks to the realisation that disagreements and conflicts can be amicably resolved.

Amicable conflict resolution is one of the positive outcomes of training union leaders and farm workers on conflict resolution strategies. The National Federation of Farm, Plantation, Fishery and Agro-Industry Trade Unions (NFFPFATU), the flower farms umbrella union, has trained Minaye farm union leaders on techniques needed to achieve peace in the farms.

With 29 other farms, Minaye union leaders were also equipped with collective bargaining techniques, and understanding of the labour law (commonly known as Proclamation).

As a result, Minaye Flowers Union has negotiated, through a Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA), for 18 days as staff annual leave — four days more than is provided for in the Labour Law. Further, through a CBA, the farm now gives mothers an hour to nurse their babies until they are eight months, meaning, they can report to work at 8am instead of 7am, or leave at 4pm instead of 5pm. The Labour Law has no such provision.

In the past, employees, who were also part-time students, would take days off their annual leave to do exams. This has now changed as they get days off once one submits the exam dates from their school.

Aselefech Desalegn, a union leader and women committee chair, notes that abduction of girls and sexual harassment were once considered 'normal'. She is, however, grateful that such incidents are now negligible. The horrendous ordeals have been virtually eliminated through various staff training sessions, including for senior management, who now know what is wrong and what is right.

Formal way of reporting

"In the past, there was no formal way of reporting. People didn't know what to do in case they were harassed," says Desalegn, who has been in the union for five years. She cites a case where a female worker was being pestered by a man who was at the time not a farm worker.

However, unknown to the management, the man applied for a job in the farm and was posted in the same department as the woman he had been harassing.

The woman alerted the committee and the harasser found out. He never showed up for work. He would, however, continue to harass her outside the workplace. The woman filed a complaint with the Women, Children and Youth



Allan Gichigi

Such knowledge of what to do when harassed has changed things drastically. This comes from the consistent trainings we have carried out.

Aselefech Desalegn
Union Leader and Women
Committee Chair

Services, a government body mandated to handle such cases. The committee, together with the union, wrote to the body to support her case.

“Such knowledge of what to do when harassed has changed things drastically. This comes from the consistent trainings we have carried out,” Desalegn adds.

Though various strides have been noted, the union aims to bargain for salary increment and bonuses as the average pay —\$45 dollars monthly — is still quite low.

NFFPFATU is an umbrella organisation of 204 basic unions with more than 120,000 members. Together with **Hivos’ Women@Work Campaign**, NFFPFATU has been working to improve women’s livelihoods by promoting a living wage for workers, protecting workers from sexual and gender-based violence, improving occupational health and safety at the workplace, facilitating access to reproductive and health rights at the workplace and developing the capacities of workers’ representation.

Campaign made Okello a better man

Kenya

Meet Zachariah Okello, a worker at Baraka Roses flower farm in Nakuru, and a male champion, whose views about gender were transformed after attending a Women@Work Campaign training course.

"Society has taught us to believe that men are superior to women. I knew no better and had no idea how gender issues affected our work. However, today I'm an enlightened man, a male champion for women's rights in the work place," he says, beaming.

In 2017, Haki Mashinani rolled out the Women@Work Campaign with a keen focus on flower farms in the East African region to address rampant gender injustice in the sector. In Kenya, Baraka Roses in Nakuru was selected as a campaign partner.

Okello expresses his gratitude for the opportunity to be trained on gender issues because it has opened his eyes to the plight of women in the work place. He was, for instance, surprised to learn men often earn higher wages than women for equal work done. For the first time in his life, he got a chance to hear some of the challenges uniquely faced by women at work, and it saddened him to realise he would never have noticed these issues were it not for the campaign.

Men benefit too

Says Okello: "These women are our mothers, wives and daughters. When a woman is treated with respect and dignity, men benefit too. But it takes training to understand all this, and to change something a man has believed all along."

It was a light-bulb moment for Okello as it finally dawned on him why some of his female colleagues seemed perpetually sad and overwhelmed, while others just threw in the towel and quit work. "They've had it rougher than us, yet lack a platform to express their grievances. One of the biggest wins from these trainings is the setting up of committees that advocate for rights of women," he says.

No more time wastage

In addition, the committees born from the campaigns have reduced conflicts, especially those arising from gender disparity.

"We used to waste a lot of time on cases," says Okello. "This worker is reporting that one, that worker is not talking to this one, and this one was in a bad situation. Thankfully, that's now behind us. Workers have been trained on how to live amicably, and to be sensitive to the needs of others."

“As a male champion, it pleases me to be actively involved in creating a safe work environment for my female colleagues.”

Zachariah Okello

Worker at Baraka Roses Flower Farm

He observes that workers are now more empowered and this has fostered better employer-employee relations at the farm. For instance, sensitisation on women's rights has inspired workers to build safer communities for women and girls.

“As you've seen, this is a very remote area with big farms everywhere. The safety of women and girls must be a priority at all times. We walk everywhere because we don't have bodabodas or matatus, so the trainings helped us to be more watchful of our female colleagues.”

It is this unity and goodwill for one another that led to the establishment of a vibrant welfare and gender committee that gives a fair hearing to the grievances of all workers. The Women@Work Campaign also conducts training for these committees to ensure that they are competent in serving all the workers.

“The committee members treat workers with respect and confidentiality, and are fair when handling cases. This saves time as the long processes of going through more formal conflict resolution mechanisms are avoided,” he explains, adding that reduced conflicts create a harmonious work environment and time saved increases workers' productivity.



The sexual harassment policy is in full gear at the farm, much to the relief of women who often fell prey to predators.

“As a male champion, it pleases me to be actively involved in creating a safe work environment for my female colleagues,” He says.

Thanks to the campaign, Baraka Roses now has an active sexual harassment policy that makes the farm compliant with the Ministry of Labour requirement that any employer with at least 20 employees must have a written statement in the form of a policy on sexual harassment.

The flower farm has at least 600 workers, and Okello hopes each of his colleagues will get a chance to experience Women@Work campaign trainings first-hand.

He concludes: “I feel empowered and sensitive to gender issues, particularly the suffering of women at the work place. The training helped me become not only a better employee, but also a better man.”

10 schools in Uganda “twinning”
with **8 flower farms** as part of
Corporate Social Responsibility
initiatives that saw businesses
provide technical to financial
support (coaching, scholastic
materials, access to playfields, water
and transportation) *that benefits*
farms, employees & communities
in efforts to **promote gender rights**,
mitigation of sexual harassment &
HIV & AIDS.

Maternal and Reproductive Rights



Novel initiative twins schools with flower farms on gender and reproductive rights issues

Uganda

A novel initiative to twin schools with flower farms in Uganda is showing how communities can be engaged to own and resolve issues of sexual harassment and address HIV and Aids.

The twinning school model was designed to enhance strong coalitions between flower farms and schools that would improve violations of women and girls both at the work place and community level.

This initiative by the National Organisation of Peer Educators Uganda (NOPE-Uganda) roped in employers, workers, school administrators and pupils, to promote gender justice, reduce sexual harassment and the rate of new HIV infections and address the stigma and discrimination women living with HIV and Aids face both in their workplace and at home under what was known as the

Blooming Workplaces and Community Program (BWCP).

The BWCP was implemented by Uganda Flowers Exporters Association (UFEA), Uganda Workers' Education Association (UWEA) all W@W Partners.

While NOPE-Uganda intervened heavily at the community level and schools to address these issues, the other partners intervened at the farm flower levels to ensure a comprehensive response to issues affecting the flower farms and the communities that surround them.

NOPE-Uganda, which was established in 2013, runs health and social programmes mainly through advocacy in HIV and Aids and in strategic behavioural interventions.

In 2016, the organization embarked on the Blooming

Schools and Workplaces Programme, under the Women@Work Campaign, with the aim of promoting gender rights and creating safe work spaces for women in flower farms. The project targets eight farms and 11 schools around flower farms. Its activities include reviewing and harmonising policies on sexual harassment and HIV and Aids.

The twinning concept has seen schools receive support from flower farms, both financial and material, besides free coaching during drama festivals.

Under the project, workers are trained on HIV and Aids awareness. They also learn how to prevent sexual harassment and HIV and Aids in the workplace while peer educators in schools are equipped with knowledge, skills and information on HIV and Aids prevention and on the care of people living with HIV and Aids, sexual and reproductive health rights, and menstrual management.

Peer educator approach was used to promote health and behaviour change, and use the Ambassadors of Change model to support and inspire youth to conduct sessions and outreach on HIV, sexual and reproductive health, and sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), among others.

Juliet Agwang, the monitoring and evaluation officer at NOPE-Uganda, says, the twinning

arrangement has made major strides in empowering schools and flower farms to create safe spaces for women at the workplace. The 500 Ambassadors of Change and peer educators have become a dominant feature in the community, spearheading efforts to safeguard the rights of women in and outside the flower farms.

Some 22 teachers have also been roped into the initiative and are engaged in guiding and counselling pupils to share confidential information about the abuses they suffer in school or at home.

At farm level, NOPE-Uganda has influenced better practices through 55 peer educators and trained 70 gender rights advocates, who are providing support at the community level.

Equally remarkable are the gender rights advocates, who are giving hope to a community that has been grappling with high school dropout rates, and who were sexually abused. The Ambassadors of Change, peer educators and gender rights advocates are now celebrated champions against violence on women and girls.

In addition to this awareness and advocacy work, NOPE-Uganda has also developed a child protection policy that promotes good practice in

schools, which has seen pupils' stand up for their rights in case of violations. "We established all these structures to strengthen the objectives of the Women@Work Campaign by linking the workplaces to the community," says Agwang.

The twinning concept has seen schools receive support from flower farms, both financial and material, besides free coaching during drama festivals.

According to Agwang, the project employs a four-tier system of ranking best-performing farms in the implementation of the HIV/Aids and Sexual Harassment policy. "Farms received Platinum, Gold, Silver and Bronze medals respectively based on gender responsiveness of their implementation plans."

Other strategies use to advance the safety and rights of women working in farms included trainings, advocacy sessions and use of community media. The aim was to increase knowledge, shape attitudes and influence practices around gender rights, safety of women at work, prevention of new HIV infections, reduction of stigma at the workplace and ensure that children developed coping mechanisms at an early age in case of violations.

Hosting of strategic community forums and art festivals that brought together schools,

flower farms and community members to discuss areas of collaboration in addressing issues affecting women and girls was another strategy applied by the organization.

User-friendly materials with illustrations were also developed to help women and girls appreciate their rights, forms of violence and sexual harassment.

But to achieve its objective, NOPE-Uganda had to pursue strategic partnerships with other organizations. For instance, together with Uganda Horticultural Industrial Services Provider and Allied Workers Union, they were able to promote a workplace policy and community culture that is responsive to addressing HIV and Aids as well as sexual harassment in the workplace, communities and schools.

These interventions produced encouraging results. One of the major successes was commitment by flower farms to implement gender-responsive workplace programmes.

In this regard, in late 2017, NOPE-Uganda, in collaboration with UFEA, managed to convince the management of the six flower farms to agree to develop gender inclusive policies and programs to eradicate sexual harassment and mitigate the effects of HIV/AIDS.

"By signing and agreeing to implement sexual harassment and HIV/Aids policy, six flower farms demonstrated commitment to protect women," Agwang said

This paved the way for NOPE-Uganda in collaboration with UFEA to support the Flower Farms to review their HIV/AIDS and sexual harassment policies for gender responsiveness, and develop implementation plans to actualize these policies.

In November 2017 to December 2017, NOPE-Uganda trained 40 focal point persons and gender response committee members from the six farms in the design and implementation of HIV/AIDS and gender responsive policies at the workplace.

In addition to this, NOPE led the process of adopting a peer educators' training manual which was used to train the first group of 10 Workplace Champions. This was done in collaboration with UFEA.

The organization also trained some 40 focal members from project flower farms to enable them to implement the model policy, thus ensuring that the policy and its objectives survived beyond the campaign.

"We've established ambassadors of change clubs and trained teachers who serve as their patrons. The



clubs have been incorporated into school structures, which serve as an opportunity to sustain the programme. Both representatives from the schools and flower farms have committed to retain the ambassadors of change after the project,” said Agwang.

The gender rights advocates in the community and the peer educators in the flower farms continue to support the programme, with the farms supporting the art festival as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility.

NOPE-Uganda in collaboration with UFEA, which focused largely on flower farms, worked closely to link its advocacy work at community

and school level to the interventions being carried in the flower farms by UFEA.

Parents-Teachers Associations from the 11 project schools also twinned with 10 flower farms to sign a child protection policy, which seeks to shield children from sexual exploitation and exposure to HIV. This emerged as the first legally binding child protection policy, which seeks to enhance the amended Children’s Act of 2016. NOPE-Uganda has already disseminated the policy in the targeted schools.

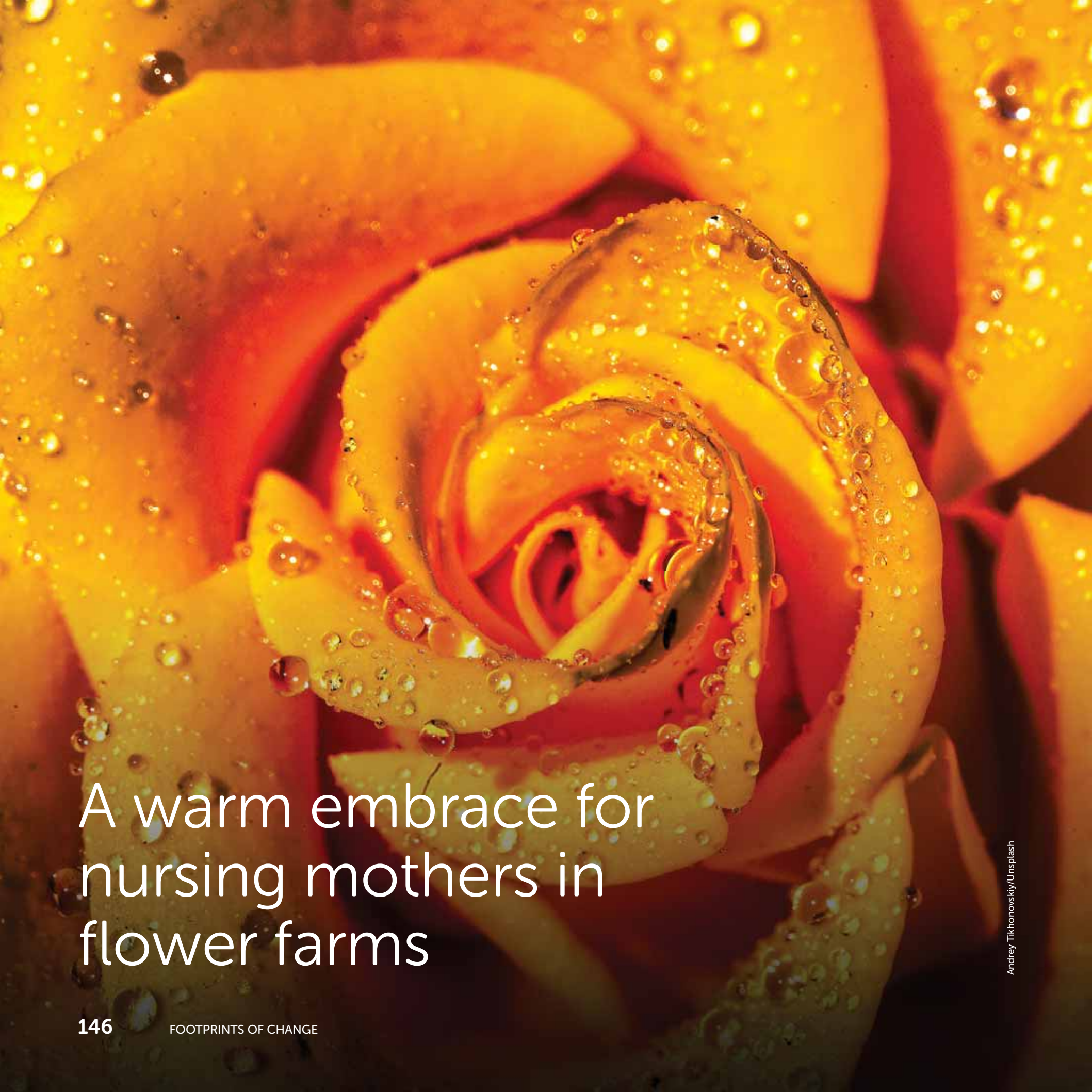
But the project was not without challenges. The COVID-19 for instance forced the organization to cancel a girls’ summit and to significantly cut-down on the

mentorship and supervision visits to flower farms.

Nevertheless, the success recorded has provided excellent learning points for the organization. One such lesson is that forging strategic partnerships is an effective and efficient approach to promoting decent work in as far as it focuses on implementation and eschews reinventing the wheel.

This is exemplified with the twinning of flower farms with schools, creating safe spaces for the women, and training of peer-educator that NOPE-Uganda implemented in collaboration with UFEA.

In safeguarding the gains made so far, Agwang believes that a lot of investment will need to be put in the monitoring schools and flower farms in the blooming schools and workplaces initiative; peer educators, community gender rights advocates and ambassadors of change on the work doing and educating them on how to sustain it.



A warm embrace for nursing mothers in flower farms

Rwanda

Combining work and childcare can be quite a juggle! But women working in the informal, seasonal or part-time economy—such as agricultural farm labourers—often endure greater hardships on returning to work post-maternity.

Research on women working in flower farms shows that thousands of nursing mothers face discrimination at their workplace, including denial of breastfeeding breaks, lack of privacy, and job loss threats. Such discrimination often forces them to stop breastfeeding or lose their jobs, exposing mother and child to major health risks.

It is widely acknowledged that breast feeding gives children the healthiest start in life, and is one of the simplest, smartest and most cost-effective ways of ensuring that infants survive and thrive. It also boosts nursing mothers' morale and confidence.

Recognising the health and social benefits of addressing concerns of women workers in flower farms, the Rwanda Women's Network (RWN) in 2019 signed an agreement with two flower farms to provide adequate accommodations for newly-delivered mothers.

Akanyenyeri and Green Best farms, located in the eastern

Rwanda district of Gatsibo, have more female than male workers—19 female and 12 male, and 27 female and 23 male workers, respectively.

The breakthrough was realised when a memorandum of understanding with the two farms was signed to enable mothers to work while their employers gave them time and space to nurse their babies.

The initiative is coordinated under the Women@Work Campaign—a Hivos East Africa initiative to improve labour conditions for women in the global horticulture supply chain through fair wages, security in the workplace and good working conditions.

The three-year campaign saw RWN focus on six core areas, namely, women leadership, sexual harassment, the living wage, worker representation and participation, and maternal and reproductive health rights, and health and safety at the workplace.

Sharon Bideri, RWN's Communication and Advocacy Officer, describes the initiative as "a big success" and home-grown solution of the two farms' managements to the childcare concerns of women workers.

Following training by RWN on women's empowerment, the management of the two

farms took it upon themselves to create a more conducive working environment for their women workers by committing to a policy to facilitate breastfeeding at the workplace.

RWN supported the development and dissemination of the policy as well as the training of farm workers and supervisors.

Each farm allocated a crèche to provide private space for mothers to comfortably breastfeed their children and a safe space for the children to play and nap under supervision. Mothers who bring their children to work take turns to attend to the children, who are also fed at the crèche.

There has been a positive transformation through increased productivity and lower stress levels at the work place, according to Ms Bideri. This high morale of the workers is crucial for higher productivity, quality of products and profits along the value chain.

"The establishment of the crèche is very popular among workers; it has boosted the morale of nursing mothers, saved time for those who would have gone home to nurse their children, and strengthened the bond between farm workers and management," she says, adding: "Nursing mothers have a renewed sense of care and compassion from their employers. They feel secure at work, knowing that their children are in a safe environment and in safe hands."

Both farms have sustained the initiative even after the Women@Work Campaign ended in June 2020, says Bideri, who notes that the initiative's success provides lessons for replication across the agricultural sector. A key lesson is the need to listen to women workers' specific concerns such as maternal and reproductive health rights.

Research on women working in flower farms shows that thousands of nursing mothers face discrimination at their workplace, including denial of breastfeeding breaks, lack of privacy, and job loss threats. Such discrimination often forces them to stop breastfeeding or lose their jobs, exposing mother and child to major health risks.

Flower farms partner with schools to foster behaviour change in pupils

Uganda

For the first time, flower farms have partnered with 10 schools in Uganda to help learners acquire skills and knowledge to help them navigate life as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). This was courtesy of the Hivos-sponsored Women@Work Campaign executed by National Organization of Peer Educators (NOPE) in various flower farms.

The eight farms twinned with selected primary schools in a bid to create awareness in children and their teachers of subjects such as sexual harassment, occupational health and safety, HIV and Aids and gender rights, among others.

The beginnings

The programme rolled out in 2016. It reached its climax between July 1 and 31, 2019 when the farms in the Mpigi and Wakiso districts provided financial and technical resources to the schools to facilitate their activities, which included competitions in sports, drama, and essay and composition writing, among others.

The farms were Wagagai Limited, JP Cuttings, Aurum Roses, Xclusive Cuttings, Mairye Estates, Ugarose, Jambo Roses and Fiduga. The primary schools were Tasaaga Orphan and Vulnerable Children, Tarry Till I Come, Bright Future, Archbishop Kiwanuka, St Denis, Bugabo Lakeview, Outspan, Bwerenga Junior, Nsimbi and Bugiri.

One of the activities conducted was an Essay and Arts festival. This was aimed at promoting gender

justice, decent work, mitigation against HIV and Aids and sexual harassment within the flower farm sector.

The first step was to train learners and their teachers on how girls, especially, should guard against sexual harassment at school and at home. The children also learnt about behaviour that can lead to HIV/Aids infection and on the violation of their rights. Participants in the training became change agents and can now guide other children in their communities on the subject.

Support accorded by each flower farm

Wagagai provided the venue for the festival, the second runners-up trophy, and electricity for the day. The farm is twinned to St Denis Kigero Primary School.

JP Cuttings provided \$159 (US\$590,422) to hire a coach and costumes to Bugabo Lakeview Primary School.

Xclusive cuttings supported Tasaaga Orphans and Vulnerable Children Primary School, Bright Future Primary School and Outspan Primary School with costumes, food and a trophy for the overall winner.

Aurum Roses provided costumes, performance items including backdrop, curtains and a trophy to Bugiri Primary School.

Fiduga Dumen Orange farm provided costumes to Archbishop Kiwanuka Memorial Primary

School, and Jambo Roses provided costumes to Nsimbi Primary School.

The children benefitted greatly from the partnerships. For example, Wilson Nsereko, 13, a pupil at Tarry Till I Come Primary School said that NOPE trained him and other children on behaviour change. He is now a role model to the rest of the children in the community, who he educates on issues of good behaviour and sexual harassment.

Testimonies from the teachers

Ms Teopista Nantumbwe, a 65-year-old teacher at Tasaaga Orphans and Vulnerable Children Primary School in Wakiso district, is happy that NOPE executed the programme, especially because the girl child is vulnerable to sexual predators at school and at home.

She teaches pupils from primary one to three and she participated in the programme and attended all the trainings.

“I’m aware that sexual harassment is a major challenge to the girl child, but after participating in the trainings, I made sure I engaged the change agents to talk to fellow pupils, especially teenagers, who were not part of the training. The male teachers now know that there are consequences to preying on little girls,” she says.

She noted that some children don’t live with their biological parents and their guardians mistreat them. “We encourage such children to open up and we approach these guardians and talk to them about children’s rights.”

During the competitions, Teacher Nantumbwe played a major role in guiding pupils on how to compose good essays. One of the pupils composed an essay on teen marriages being on the rise and how this can be avoided, while another composed a poem on cruel parents.

The plays were about decent workplace policies in flower farms. Nantumbwe’s guidance saw

her school take the overall winner perch in all the competition categories. Nantumbwe says the children have gained knowledge and are no longer shy in expressing themselves.

Daniel Kaberenge is a teacher and programme patron at Tarry Till I Come Primary School. He narrates that at his school, the training was focused on challenges children face in their day-to-day lives. This includes mental abuse and physical torture and underlines the importance of teaching them to deal with such situations.

The children were also made aware of HIV/AIDS, how it is contracted, and how to avoid it, and the dangers of stigmatising those who are HIV-positive.

The school is attached to Mairye Flower Estates and together, they have developed a child rights policy which parents and teachers adhere to.

The skills and knowledge building have not only translated to behaviour change, but the academic performance of the pupils has also improved.

Xclusive cuttings supported Tasaaga Orphans and Vulnerable Children Primary School, Bright Future Primary School and Outspan Primary School with costumes, food and a trophy for the overall winner.



Rights campaign for women ripens at avocado farm

Tanzania

Three years ago, getting pregnant was the surest ticket to losing one's job at Rungwe Avocado Company located in Mbeya region of Tanzania's Southern Highlands. Not so anymore, thanks to the Women@Work Campaign.

The initiative that was launched at the farm three years ago is hailed by beneficiaries for instilling self-confidence in women and making them aware of their rights as employees. It also addressed issues related to reproductive health.

Devotha Ambokile, a farm worker, and one of the beneficiaries of the intervention, hails the programme for equipping her with negotiation skills. "This skill comes in handy when I speak to management about our rights as workers," she says.

Her colleague Loveness Anyimike Mwakyonde, who is currently on maternity leave, concurs, adding that maternity leave was unheard of in the past.

Some of the issues Devotha and her colleagues have negotiated are space to breastfeed their babies, maternity leave and special treatment for pregnant women.

The campaign sought to better the working conditions of women in the horticulture value chain in Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi and Tanzania. In Rungwe District, the campaign focused on women working in avocado farms.

During the training, the first ever women club was established to create a platform for women at the workplace to discuss their issues, seek solutions to their challenges, and strengthen their welfare.

The women's club provides a platform for free discussion of welfare issues. One of the outcomes of these discussions has been improved livelihoods as a result of soft loans given to women to start income-generating projects.

The women say that they also use their club to disseminate knowledge on women's rights at workplaces for colleagues who missed the 2018 training session.

Male chauvinism was one of the challenges initially experienced by the women when implementing the lessons from the campaign. Some men refused to cooperate with the women in advancing women's rights issues. However, they eventually managed to change their mindset and to build consensus through frequent dialogues.

Workers' meetings that were previously non-existent became the norm. They started organising meetings to discuss various welfare issues. Today, they hold at least four meetings in a year.

The women want the company management to meet the Women@Work team to discuss how to sustain the gains so far made.

The women say that they also use their club to disseminate knowledge on women's rights at workplaces for colleagues who missed the 2018 training session.

16,836 pupils from **10 schools** in Uganda where **80% of the flower farms are located** imparted with skills aimed at *increasing knowledge*, shaping attitudes & influencing practices *around gender rights, safety for women* at work, prevention of new HIV infections, reduction of stigma at the workplaces and ensuring that children develop coping mechanisms at an early age.

Women reap fruits of work rights campaign in Uganda



Cody Chan/Unsplash

Uganda

For the past three years, the Women@Work Campaign has been transforming the lives of women workers in the horticulture sector across East Africa.

Through targeted trainings, the campaign has helped shed light on pertinent issues affecting women the work place such as leadership,

maternal and reproductive healthcare, living wage, representation and sexual harassment.

In Uganda, several farms have benefitted from this campaign by adopting progressive policies that have increased job satisfaction among the workers.

For instance, at Ugarose Flower Ltd, maternity leave was extended to 90 working days from the previous 60 days, to allow mothers to recover from childbirth and also nurse their babies.

Concern for maternal and reproductive health inspired this review during the campaign, which also targeted policymakers from management.

Nursing rooms

Furthermore, management set up nursing rooms for women who wished to bring their babies and babysitters to work. This was meant to give the mothers an opportunity to bond with their babies during breaks.

In all the participating farms, women were offered free family planning clinics. Here, they enlightened them on safe family planning methods.

"I learnt about the pill during the Women@Work training. We were also taught how to use condoms. The company places some at the entrance for us to carry home," says Shamimu Nabuma who works in the flower picking section at Xclusive Cuttings.

Xclusive cuttings supported Tasaaga Orphans and Vulnerable Children Primary School, Bright Future Primary School and Outspan Primary School with costumes, food and a trophy for the overall winner.

The campaign revived occupation and safety policies that lay dormant in most of the participating farms. Basic safety measures such as ensuring all workers put on overalls and facemasks while working in the greenhouses were emphasised.

"We were trained on basic first aid skills and given first aid kits containing spirit, cotton wool and spirit to handle simple injuries. In case of an accident, I can be of assistance before medical help arrives," says Phiona Birungi, chairperson of the women and gender committee at Xclusive Cuttings.

Notable changes have also occurred in leadership particularly in the welfare committees. There are also a number of women in managerial positions in most of the flower farms as evidenced by human resource managers.

At Xclusive cuttings, for instance, two women, Hellen Awori and Annet Awren, were promoted from harvest supervisors to managers.

On matters of representation and participation, workers have joined trade unions that serve a crucial role in negotiating wages on workers' behalf.

Improved wages

"We are addressing the issue of living wage with a partner Fair trade, which tops up wages paid by the farms. Consequently, general workers now earn Ush130,000 (US\$35), up from Ush90,000 (US\$25) per month," says Yvonna Nagujja, the HR manager at Jambo Roses Ltd.

Impressively, the results of this campaign have not only touched the lives of staff, but also the neighbouring community by prompting Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives in the surrounding schools.

Through the committees, workers have continued to sensitise learners, particularly those in primary school, on sexual harassment.

Some of the women have got a chance to apply the skills they acquired on conflict resolution to solve disagreements among members of their community and abate cases of domestic violence.

At work, the women employees have joined hands to form saving schemes from which they can access loans to cater for their families' needs. At the end of the year, members share dividends from the group.

Although the campaign provided much, it was not without challenges. It was often difficult to mobilise women to attend the trainings during peak times such as the Valentine's season, and so some sessions nearly lacked quorum. Another challenge was the high turnover that slowed down the training as new entrants necessitated the trainers to begin afresh. All the same, the milestones reached make it worth the trouble.

The workers hope the trainings will continue and further that the topics will be extended to include HIV and Aids, which still attracts a lot of stigma in the work place.

Rwanda horticulture sector now safe for nursing mothers

Rwanda

The horticulture sector in Rwanda is going through a revolution. Once hiring a handful of women, the sector is now a haven for nursing mothers.

Women in Rwanda's horticulture sector have been enjoying changes in their working conditions since 2018 when Hivos partnered with three local organisations to launch the Women@Work Campaign, a project that seeks to empower working women and promote their rights.

The campaign by Hivos, a Netherlands-based international organisation that is passionate about social change, is implemented by Rwanda Women Network (RWN), Haguruka and Rwanda Workers' Trade Union Confederation (CESTRAR).

To understand Rwanda's horticulture sector, RWN researched on the status of female employees at Bella Flowers Ltd and Garden-Fresh Ltd. The objective of the study was to assess gender equality in the work environment, looking at women's involvement in leadership, how opportunities were shared and find out if women were treated fairly compared to men.

Gender-sensitive workplace

The findings showed that the farms lacked gender-sensitive workplace policies, organised structures and mechanisms to promote gender equality and decent working conditions for women. The findings also indicated a need to strengthen the leadership capacities of women

workers, their representatives and management in the horticulture sector.

The survey further revealed that there were no platforms for workers to air their grievances, besides lacking clear training avenues for women workers like skills development and leadership training.

Applying for work

The implementation by RWN started in February 2018 with the training of farm managers and selected horticulture workers who were commissioned to train their workmates. The Women@Work Campaign has changed a lot especially in making the workplace safer for nursing mothers.

Honorine Nyirangendahimana, 33, of Green Best farm got her third-born in 2019. However, she was not afraid of losing her job like her colleagues in the past. "We previously feared applying for jobs while breastfeeding as many mothers would not get jobs. When this project came, we were trained on women's rights and our employer learnt how to make work life better for nursing mothers," she said. "We're now given time to breastfeed and care for our children during working hours. We're so happy with the change this project has brought us!"

She explained that before the project was introduced, they would secretly rush home for a few minutes to breastfeed their babies. "My work is important to my family, especially for the education of my children. One is in Primary Six,

another in Primary One. I can afford their school fees and materials as well as provide them with good meals.”

“I work in a chili farm, but leave the farm for some minutes to breastfeed. This was not allowed before as the employer considered that a sign of laxity. We’re currently given three months paid maternity leave and it’s so helpful although we’re not paid the full salary,” she says.

According to provisions of the Law No. 003/2016 establishing and governing maternity leave benefits scheme in Rwanda, Rwanda Social Security Board (RSSB) compensates all female employees absent from employment because of pregnancy, giving birth and subsequently caring for the new-born child.

Under the coordination of RSSB, the scheme introduced 12 weeks of fully paid leave during which a monthly compensation equivalent to the mother’s last salary is given but the social security administration pays for the last six weeks of the maternity leave while the employer pays the first six weeks.

Breastfeeding rooms

Nyirangendahimana adds that she saves Rwf500 (51 US cents) daily and has bought a sewing machine at Rwf100,000 (\$102). She recommends the company to build a breastfeeding room near the farms for nursing mothers to be close to their babies during working hours.

Céline Uwimbabazi, the founding manager of Green Best, said the Women@Work project taught her to treasure her 30 employees as she is also embarking on applying the human resource management training that she got from RWN.

Uwimbabazi wants Hivos to consider supporting some farms to put up breastfeeding rooms and help them buy appropriate safety materials for workers. She also asks Haguruka to provide legal aid to women facing gender-based violence.



“The project has provided us managers with important skills about our workers’ rights and responsibilities,” she says.

Under the Women@Work Campaign, Green Best and Akanyenyeri Ltd signed, in July 2019, a breastfeeding workplace commitment for supporting time allocation for breastfeeding mothers at their farms. It was the first ever commitment by the two farms to support nursing mothers who are allowed to bring their children to the workplace. This commitment is already in effect as the development of a policy is underway.

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