

Women in the Banana Export Industry

Regional Report on West & Central Africa



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Photo: James Robinson Photography

Summary

‘Women in the Banana Export Industry Regional Report on West & Central Africa’ is part of a global report on the economic aspects of gender issues in the banana sector. It analyses key issues for women workers with a particular focus on women’s employment in the region. The main roles carried out by women in the workplace are identified as are any advances towards Decent Work that have been made through multi stakeholder and project activity in West and Central Africa. The report will inform the gender work of the World Banana Forum.

Women’s employment in the region varies from 11% in Côte d'Ivoire, to 21% in Cameroon. This is in part explained by the dominant operator in Ghana and Cameroon, Compagnie Fruitière, being more restrictive of women’s employment in the field. The key issues for women across all three countries in the study (Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, and Cameroon) were low wages, hours of work, health and safety (in particular for pregnant women and nursing mothers, sexual harassment and lack of childcare provision. Women experience a triple burden as plantation worker, domestic worker and child carer. In Cameroon and Ghana women reported earning less than men.

Lack of education and training is a key barrier to better employment opportunities for women which companies are beginning to address. The Collective Bargaining Agreement between GAWU and Golden Exotics Ltd was an example of best practice, aiming to create a ‘women friendly’ environment. Unions involved in the report are active in gender training initiatives for women workers and representatives in partnership with British NGO, Banana Link, and the IUF. The African case shows that gender does not need to prevent women being employed in banana operations in both the field and packhouse, increasing job opportunities for women, although further research is needed to assess the impacts of greater numbers of women being employed in the field.

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Introduction

This is one of three regional reports on the economic aspects of gender issues in the banana sector (the other reports focus on Latin America and the Caribbean). This exploratory research was commissioned by the World Banana Forum's permanent working group on "Labour Rights and Other Workplace Issues", as part of an on-going process involving data collection, analysis and action. These reports will be presented to the second Global Meeting of Women Banana Representatives, which will be held in conjunction with the Third Global Conference of the World Banana Forum in 2015.

The need for this research was identified by participants at the first Global Meeting of Women Banana Representatives in 2012 who believed that further information about the issues detailed below was essential to drive forward the creation of strategies to increase the provision of Decent Work and fair conditions for women in the sector. This information includes:

- Key issues for women workers and small producers in the local banana industry
- A particular analysis on the issue of women's employment (including percentage representation of women, variations between region/company, analysis of causal factors)
- Identification of the key roles carried out by women in the workplace and any perceived associated productivity and quality benefits
- Any advances that have been, or could be, made through local, regional and international multi stakeholder dialogue and collaborative projects.

Methodology

The research in Ghana, Cameroon and Côte d'Ivoire has been undertaken in several stages. Initially all existing documents on women's employment were gathered from Banana Link's local trade union partners. These included reports from previous project activities with women workers in Ghana and Cameroon as well as meeting reports. These existing resources were used to develop a draft report, with assistance from volunteer researchers at Banana Link and Adwoa Sakyi, IUF Africa's Women's Project Coordinator.

Subsequently, information gaps were highlighted and developed into a questionnaire and workshop structure to enable grassroots research to be conducted with trade union partners at plantation level.

The questionnaire was completed by representatives of GAWU and IUF Africa in Ghana, FAWU in Cameroon and CIAGAH CI-Dignité in Côte d'Ivoire.

A workshop was carried out in Ghana with the General Agricultural Workers Union of Ghana TUC (GAWU) and the International Union of Food and Allied Workers (IUF) in June 2014 with 20 women workers and elected representatives from two companies, GEL and VREL.

In Cameroon three workshops were facilitated with the Fako Agricultural Workers Union (FAWU) with 15 women workers employed by the Cameroonian Development Corporation (CDC) in July; 14 women employed at Plantations du Haut Penja (PHP) also in July and 13 women employed at BOH in August 2014. These workshops were supported by the Comic Relief funded project 'Securing Decent Work in Tropical Fruit Export Production' in which Banana Link, IUF, GAWU and FAWU Cameroon are partners (See Annex 1).

In Côte d'Ivoire questionnaires were completed by women workers from two companies SCB and Eglin, facilitated by the union confederation CIAGAH CI-Dignité.

The information collected through questionnaires and workshops – all of which took place in 2014 - was then supplemented by desk research, including company Corporate Social Responsibility reports, although there was limited existing information documenting either levels or conditions of employment for women in African banana export production.

This regional report is the most comprehensive mapping of women's employment and the key issues facing women workers in the banana industries of Central and Western Africa. The information has been primarily sourced from women workers and their unions, in some countries this involved coordinating the first ever women only workshops to raise such questions.

In West and Central Africa there is one company, Compagnie Fruitiere, that controls approximately 80 % of banana production and trade. This company was selectively approached for their reactions to the research, because it is predominantly concerned with the situation for women workers on their plantations. Detailed information was received from each of the Compagnie Fruitiere subsidiaries in Ghana (GEL), Cameroon (PHP) and Cote d'Ivoire (SCB) including 2014 employment figures which were subsequently integrated into the report. Please also find employment figures for other years as well as the qualitative reactions in Annex 1: Feedback from Compagnie Fruitiere subsidiaries in Ghana, Cameroon and Côte d'Ivoire.

It must be noted that, due to limited capacity, the other companies mentioned in this report were not approached for their input or feedback. All information relating to these companies was provided by workers and their trade union organisations.

The 'Women in the Banana Export industry: Global overview' that accompanies the regional research reports contains 'Recommendations towards the provision of Decent Work and fair conditions for women in the global banana industry' which include suggestions on how this research could be developed further, for example, conducting further investigations – with particular input from national and multi-national companies – in order to analyse and assess why such variations in women employment exist between and sometimes within countries; and into the perspectives of company representatives on the issues raised in the regional reports. It is clear that significant further research and subsequent analysis is required including a focus on some of the most concerning impacts detailed in this report, including unequal pay, sexual harassment and the health impacts for pregnant and nursing mothers of exposure to toxic agrochemicals.

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We would also like to acknowledge the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) for financing this publication.

Background I: Historical & Cultural context

West Africa is a region in which there are more than 150 tribes, each with their own cultures, traditions and languages. Different tribal identities are likely to have enduring impacts on the gender roles and status that help shape women's role in the industry.

Banana production for export mostly occurs in the coastal zones of three countries: Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Cameroon. It is useful to briefly bear in mind the history of colonisation and trade with Europe from which the banana industry emerged before focussing on traditional gender and other cultural patterns.

The Portuguese were almost invariably the first Europeans to arrive in West African coastal areas in the late 15th century and early 16th century, where they established trading relations with local chiefs. The French, English and Dutch arrived somewhat later in the mid 17th century and set up trading stations. The Dutch mostly failed to establish permanent footholds and the Portuguese were largely displaced except in Guinea-Bissau and a number of islands. The Germans appeared much later, towards the end of the nineteenth century, when they briefly established colonies from the 1890s but only in Cameroon (which they held until 1922 when the territory became a British and French protectorate) and in Togo (which became a British Protectorate in 1914). Apart from these areas, trading access was dominated by the French and British.

Initially trading outposts were established where suitable harbouring could be found and agreements could be made with local chiefs. Often forts were built to protect trading stations but Europeans did not initially attempt to control the interiors. Nevertheless where trading interests were threatened by tribal wars, the Europeans would sometimes support militarily their local allies against the latter's enemies. In most cases, actual annexation of areas (or the establishment of 'protectorates') did not occur until the end of the 19th century, when borders were agreed between the European powers without consideration of tribal territories.

The banana export industry was initiated by Europeans for European markets. Even today the greatest volumes are exported by French Company, Compagnie Fruitière, which has plantations in all three countries. Plantations were established by colonial administrations or private businesses (from the mother countries) and these allowed some local people to earn money to support themselves and their families, while generating sufficient surpluses to pay the taxes which were levied on them by the colonial administrations.

After the Second World War demands for independence grew. Ghana achieved independence in 1957 with most of the other countries in the region following suit in the 1960s. Colonial operations producing bananas for export were in some cases nationalised by the newly independent governments, as is the case of VREL in Ghana and the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC) for example. Other national banana producers have been established in the period since independence.

Banana plantations attract migrants both from within countries and considerably further afield. In the case of Côte d'Ivoire, for example, migrants come from as far away as Mali and Burkina Faso. Cameroon also historically attracted significant migration from Nigeria. Ghana even experienced a wave of immigration from the very distant land of Sudan in the 1950s.

The impact of these broad historical processes on traditional tribal customs and practices and indeed on the position of women has been considerable. On the one hand, the mixing of populations of workers who migrated to plantations or to cities tended to weaken the influence of tribal patterns of status, kinship and marriage. While on the other hand, with independence, in some countries one or two tribes managed to become dominant in politics, with implications for regional development and for the allocation of resources

and employment opportunities to particular areas or tribal interests.

Many women in West Africa have traditionally been and still are active as traders. Similar patterns of change can be seen in the Akan, Ga and Fanti societies in Ghana. In the case of the Akan, (McCall D., 1969), the traditional division of labour between the sexes saw the woman farming both her husband's land and the land from her own lineage. On the former she was required to grow food to feed the family. On the latter, if she wished, she could produce to sell on the market, keeping the profits without any interference from her husband.

Women's trading was confined to foodstuffs and handicrafts. Men traded but in more valuable commodities, such as gold, slaves, kola nuts, monkey fur, ivory and cloth. This usually allowed men to earn more than women. Both marital partners contributed money, services or goods to support the family but they also maintained separate accounts from their personal profits.

In the late nineteenth century and into the twentieth, the financial positions of men and women changed significantly. The valuable commodities traditionally traded by men went into decline while agricultural commodities continued to be traded. Men's roles as traders began to disappear and increasingly women became the main presences in the market, diversifying into new areas as new goods from Europe became available. As time progressed, some women opened shops instead of working on markets or they became middle women who bought imports and sold to other women traders. The financial power of women made it difficult for husbands to exert control over them.

The fact that in many tribes or societies, it was the women who controlled farming and the fact that they are also often significant traders, may go some way to explain the position of women in banana plantations.

Background II: The Banana Export Industry today

The African countries with significant exports are Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Mozambique. Over the last five years, these first three main exporting countries have exported a total of between 530 and 550,000 metric tonnes per year of Cavendish (dessert) bananas. Volume from these four countries now represents 3.9% (FAO, 2014) of the world trade, which itself is between 15 and 20% of global banana production. Côte d'Ivoire is now one of the top 10 exporting countries in the world.

In Ghana banana is the single most important horticultural export crop in terms of volume and value. It is estimated that more than 12,000 people depend directly on the wages paid to banana workers. Through a combination of external service providers, suppliers and their dependants, it is estimated that an additional 28,000 people depend on the banana industry (EC, 2012).

Bananas generate about five per cent of Côte d'Ivoire's GDP. The country was Africa's largest producer of banana in 2013 with a national output of 240,000 tonnes (EC, 2012).

In Cameroon, bananas are, after wood, and excluding oil, the second biggest export product in volume in the country (the third in value) and in 2011 represented 46% of industrial agricultural exports. The industry directly employs 11,000 people, making it the second largest employer after the government and according to local estimates, banana exports contribute to the livelihood of 100,000 people (EC, 2012).

The vast majority of banana exports are sold in supermarkets in France and the UK, with small volumes finding their way to Central Europe. Some small residual volumes from export operations in the three countries are sold in neighbouring countries (Cameroon to Chad, Côte d'Ivoire to Burkina Faso, for example).

More than 80% of West and Central African banana exports are produced by the French owned multinational Compagnie Fruitiere (formerly Compagnie Fruitière de Marseille, 40% owned by Dole from 1992 until 2013). The company owns plantations in Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Cameroon, the three main exporting countries included in this study. A few other smaller national and international producers also operate in these countries.

Dole also has a marketing agreement with a South African company operating in the fast-growing export sector in Mozambique, whilst Ethiopia has recently started exports, although current levels are low. The employment practices and stated intentions (as outlined in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) reports) of Compagnie Fruitiere are critical in defining working conditions and attitudes towards the rights of women banana workers in the 'traditional' banana exporting countries of West and Central Africa.

1. Women's employment, roles and trade union representation by country

There are estimated to be almost a quarter of a million people whose livelihoods depend on the banana export trade in Africa, and around 35,000 people employed in the plantations and packhouses, of which approximately 15% percent are women (see Table 1. Section 4).

There are more workers employed per hectare on African plantations than in their counterparts in Latin America because the productivity rate of African workers is lower. African plantations employ 1.5 – 2 workers per hectare but on average 1 worker will be employed per hectare on a Latin American plantation; in Costa Rica it will be as low as 0.7.

The legal framework for workers employed in the banana sector is provided by the Labour Codes of each country (passed in Cameroon in 1992, in Côte d'Ivoire in 1995 and in Ghana in 2003). Minimum wages are set at a national level although in Cameroon and Côte d'Ivoire these are also set specifically for the agricultural sector. In Cameroon this is being renegotiated at the time of writing and is likely to be agreed at a higher rate than the national minimum wage agreed in 2014. In Côte d'Ivoire the national minimum agricultural wage is a mere one third of the national minimum wage. All three countries have ratified ILO Convention 100 establishing the right of equal pay for equal work.

These laws are supplemented by the employment codes of companies, Collective Bargaining Agreements and certification systems imposed by international buyers, such as GlobalGap or opted into by companies, notably Fairtrade.

The majority of workers are permanent employees, for instance in Ghana 86% of banana employees are permanent and 14% temporary, (O'Hanlon B., 2014), and have social security payments deducted from their wages giving them access to pensions and maternity pay however as the report details later there can be problems with the submission of claims for such benefits. Primary health care is provided in most instances by company clinics although there are frequent reports of a lack of essential medicines and, in Cameroon, a failure to acknowledge links between chemical exposure and negative health impacts. The two main exporting companies and unions organising in these companies are partners in the Banana Occupational Health & Safety Initiative, funded by the Sustainable Trade Initiative (IDH)¹, which aims to improve health and safety practices through the strengthening of workplace health and safety committees.

Compagnie Fruitiere, as well as most other banana companies operating in the African and global industry,

¹ <http://idhsustainabletrade.com/>

state in their CSR reports that they promote the employment and empowerment of women. Indeed the majority of worker photos in these reports are of women workers rather than men. The GEL CSR report, for example, states that *'The company particularly encourages female employment, and promotes the elimination of gender discrimination. However, efforts still need to be made to attract more female workers, and the company wants to enable women to have a job at GEL if they so wish. Job applications from female candidates are therefore highly encouraged, for priority employment in pack houses, banana tree nurseries or administrative positions'* (GEL, 2012).

In Côte d'Ivoire, as part of their Strategy Program for the Banana Sector 2009-2019 (partially financed by the Banana Accompanying Measures Programme) the objective in terms of women's employment has been set at 15% for the all Côte d'Ivoire banana plantation companies by 2018 (30% of these women in the packing stations)²; Ghana also announced their aim of redressing the *'significant imbalance in the number of banana employees'* by *'bringing better access to services and employment for women in the area, with the subsequent potential for social change'* (EC, 2012).

It should be noted that all of the trade unions involved in this study are involved in gender training initiatives for their women worker members and representatives to empower them to negotiate for Decent Work and subsequent improvements in living conditions for themselves and their families.

Ghana

There are three main companies operating in the Ghanaian banana sector:

- Golden Exotics Ltd (GEL), a Fairtrade certified Company Fruitiere subsidiary, which employs 2644 workers, 451 (17%) of which are women³
- Volta River Estates (VREL), a Ghanaian-Dutch Fairtrade certified joint venture, which employs a total of 600 workers, 170 (28.3%) are women
- Equatorial Capital Ventures (ECV), a national company which employs 269 workers, 21 (8%) women

In all of these plantations the majority of workers are permanent (100% at VREL) and there is no evidence to suggest that women are more likely to hold temporary contracts compared to men (EC, 2012).

Trade union representation

GAWU has for many years been the main trade union operating in the banana sector in Ghana and in 2013 had members in each of the three major companies; 2212 workers in GEL, 467 workers in VREL and 253 workers in ECV. GAWU has a Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) with VREL and is in the process of negotiating a first CBA with Equatorial Capital Ventures. All CBAs have gender specific clauses. GAWU has a full time Gender Officer who liaises with the National Women's Committee, Regional Women's Committee and local Women's Committees as outlined in the union Constitution. Each local Executive Committee has a second Chairperson position reserved for women only.

In 2014 a large number of GEL workers decided to join a new union, the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union (ICU). GEL invited the labour Department of the Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations to conduct a verification exercise to confirm which of the unions had the largest number of workers. ICU had 2344 workers representing 98% of the total number of workforce on the farm, with only 2% (142 workers)

² Information provided by SCB company management

³ Employment statistics provided by GEL management, and refer to both banana and pineapple workers

staying with GAWU. From this point onwards ICU therefore held the collective bargaining certificate and negotiates on behalf of all workers, in consultation with GAWU.⁴

The roles of women workers in Ghana

In Ghana women work both in the packing house and the field, although the most typical roles for women include packhouse duties such as sorting, selection, washing, tagging and packaging. Men also carry out these roles with the exception of the washing of the rubber 'diapers' that protect the fruit during harvest, which is only done by women (Banana Link and IUF, 2013).

In VREL however, both sexes work in the field on non-harvest days (harvest is two days per week). Field tasks for women include pruning, fruit care, fertilizing/ manure application and weeding. Similarly, at Equatorial Capital Ventures both male and female workers are employed in the field. At Golden Exotics women have more recently also started working in the field, but this is less common than in VREL. At VREL and GEL women also carry out administrative work and work in the banana plant nurseries.

At VREL and GEL pregnant women are often given lighter duties such as counting rubbers/ diapers and snail picking. Indeed GEL state that *'pregnant and nursing mothers are always given light duties to help them overcome any difficulty associated with their work'*⁵ However, workers report that more attention is needed in this area as pregnant and nursing mothers often continue with normal duties to the detriment of their health.

Cameroon

There are four main banana companies operating in Cameroon:

- Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC) is a state-owned company operating tea, rubber and oil palm plantations as well as bananas, working in technical and marketing partnership with Fresh Del Monte (since the 1980s) and now with Compagnie Fruitiere. CDC employs 6500 workers, of which 1548 are women (24%). An estimated 90% are permanent workers and 10% temporary
- Plantations du Haut Penja (PHP) is the Compagnie Fruitiere subsidiary, employing 6476 workers, of whom 842 are women (13%). 88% of total workers are permanent. PHP has recently secured Fairtrade certification on two of its four groups of plantations; 1 of the 5 members of the Fairtrade Premium Committee is female⁶.
- The more recent (registered in 2011) national company BOH Plantation Limited, which employs 600 workers, of which 350 are women (58%). An estimated 20% are permanent and 80% temporary.
- Society of Mbanga Banana Plantations (SPM), a national company which has approximately 2,000 workers but, in early 2014, the company halted banana production and trade due to financial difficulties, so has not been included in this study.

ASSOBACAM is the Association of Cameroon Banana Producers of which the above four companies are all members.

⁴ Information provided by GEL management

⁵ GEL feedback on the report findings, February 2016

⁶ All information in this bullet point has been provided by PHP management and refers to 2014 employment statistics

Trade union representation

The trade union FAWU is the main union organising in CDC and BOH and they also have a smaller group of members in PHP. FAWU has 7,042 members of which 1548 are women (not all work in bananas as FAWU also organise in oil palm and rubber). The union has 67 shop stewards of whom 14 are women; one in PHP, one in BOH and twelve in CDC. FAWU has two staff members employed to work on gender issues and is in the process of establishing its first Women's Committee. Women staff representatives have received extensive capacity building training over the last two years and leadership skills training is planned for women workers to increase the number of women standing to become staff representatives.

Another trade union, DISAWOFA also organises in CDC and BOH, but we have limited information from this smaller union.

In PHP, there are six different trade unions organising workers; SDEAPEM, SYATRAPBM, SDLAMP, SATAM, FAWU and DISAWOFA. A recent initiative by the IUF and Fairtrade International - and supported by the company – has led to the development of a Platform that brings these unions together and promotes collaboration between them. A large majority of PHP's permanent workforce are union members.

The key roles for women in the workplace

At CDC, women mainly undertake packing house operations (i.e. deflowering, selection, sticking and weighing) but they also do field tasks on non-harvest days including fertilizing, de-leafing and other miscellaneous jobs such as snail picking, shrubs cutting, material preparation and ribbon counting.

Roles sometimes assigned to pregnant women at CDC include material preparation, yard and office cleaning and snail picking but generally pregnant and nursing mother carry out the same roles as normal, but with lower productivity pressures. The amount of 'light work' the women do heavily depends on the administration of the farm they are working on.

Women are involved in company administration including the roles of secretary, accountant, manager, civil engineer, human resources officer and packing house supervisor. However, women workers report wanting to have more involvement at supervisor and management level as currently only men have the required training to undertake jobs such as transport clerk and Group Banana Manager.

At PHP, women are engaged in packing house operations (selection, sorting, and packing) as well as field duties but only light duties such as clearing leaves, spreading fertiliser, pruning and identifying banana diseases. Women are also employed as nurses and in some office assistance roles such as that of secretary but very few have supervisor, administrative or management roles. Women workers reported seeking such positions and submitting applications but currently only men are accepted. The company do however state that *'At PHP there are have been no proven cases of withholding promotion based on the gender of the candidate. PHP has developed a policy on "the prohibition of discrimination", which states very clearly "that it offers the same opportunities to all its employees regardless of race, colour, gender, religion, age, marital status or nationality". To reinforce this policy, an internal procedure has been written and communicated to all members of staff in the event of a vacancy or new position being available in order that all employees are able to apply. Files are received by the Human Resources Director without any form of discrimination and during interviews and tests the best are chosen based purely on the criteria of merit. A candidate has never been discounted based on his or her gender.'*⁷

The roles typically assigned to pregnant and nursing workers at PHP include cleaning, gathering of plastic waste, material preparation (such as ribbons and rubbers) and snail picking. However, workers state that

⁷ PHP company feedback on the report findings, February 2016

allocation of these jobs is rare and normally only allocated once a woman is heavily pregnant. The company adds that *'It is anticipated that all pregnant women and those who have just given birth be allocated to the nurseries under a gentler working framework'*⁸.

At BOH women also work in the packing house and field as with the above two companies. The roles typically assigned to pregnant workers include material preparation, ribbon cutting and sweeping the office. At BOH, women are also employed in roles such as that of nurse, secretary, accountant, supervisor and head of personnel.

Côte d'Ivoire

There are multiple banana companies in Côte d'Ivoire:

- Société d'étude et de développement de la Culture Bananière (SCB) - Company for the Study and Development of Banana Culture - a Compagnie Fruitière subsidiary, is by far the largest representing approximately 75% of national banana production. They have a total of 7,590 workers, of which 823 (10.8%) are women⁹. 96% of workers are on permanent contracts.
- SIPEF - a Belgian company who has in 2014 taken over the national banana operations of SPM and its subsidiary Eglin – is the next biggest company now employing 841 workers, of which 112 (13%) are women.
- The third biggest national company is 'Banane de la Côte d'Ivoire' which employ approximately 300 workers. Other key companies include CIAPA, Batia, Rouchard and SAKJ/Canavese. However, we currently have limited information from these other companies, so they have not been included in the study.

Trade union representation

The largest trade union organising in the banana sector in Côte d'Ivoire is the Workers Union of SCB – Côte d'Ivoire (SYNTRA/SCB-CI), a member union of the confederation DIGNITE and its agricultural and food workers federation CIAGAH-CI. SYNTRA/SCB-CI also has 62 members in the SCB laboratory, 50 of whom are women. There are 25 men and 4 women in the local leadership of the trade union.

There are three other trade unions organising in SCB plantations, SYNLITRA/SCB, SYNATRA/SCB and SYNAP/SCB but we have limited information from these unions. The four unions combined represent approximately 75% of the SCB workforce. There is also a union in the Eglin plantation, SYTATEG.

Key roles for women in the workplace

In both major companies women work in both the packing plant and the field. The field tasks given to women include general cleaning and maintenance of the plantation, fertiliser application and caring for the new plants in the nursery. Women are also employed in administration and management - as executives, supervisors, and specialised employees – although exact numbers are unconfirmed.

⁸ PHP company feedback on research findings, February 2016

⁹ Employment statistics provided by SCB management and refer to 2014

2. Regional analysis of variations in proportion of women's employment

Percentage of women's employment in West and Central Africa						
National Estimate	Ghana	18%	Cameroon	20%	Côte d'Ivoire	11%
Per company	GEL	17,0	PHP	13	SCB	10.8
	VREL	28,3	CDC	24,0	SIPEF	13,0
	ECA	8,0	BOH	58,0		

Source: All figures are for 2014, provided by company management in the case of GEL, PHP and SCB and in all other companies, statistics were provided by local trade unions¹⁰.

Analysis of differences in proportion of women's employment between countries

Across the West and Central African regions women work in the field in addition to packhouse operations, particularly in Cameroon. This is likely to be a key factor in the higher employment figures in this country.

The multinational employer Compagnie Fruitière – which has subsidiary companies in Ghana (GEL), Cameroon (PHP) and Côte d'Ivoire (SCB) controlling some 80% of banana export production in the region – appears to have the lowest percentage of women's representation in the workforce in each country (except compared to ECA in Ghana). This to some extent explains the differences in national employment percentages as the Compagnie Fruitière subsidiaries are by far the dominant players in both Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire, but less so in Cameroon where CDC is the main banana company in terms of employment level (although not in terms of production levels).

Under colonial rule in Ghana women were protected within national labour legislation from certain types of employment deemed to be either 'dangerous' or 'too masculine', preventing women from engaging in many forms of formal employment. Although repealed the influence of this legislation is still seen in the low numbers of women employed (in the agricultural sector). At a national level, women workers suffer from specific labour market discrimination, particularly in agricultural industries such as banana (Cooper A. & Quesada V., 2014). This discrimination is also reflected at a household level as workshop participants clarified during research, sharing that many men do not support the idea of a woman/ their partner working in the fields among a majority of male employees. Cultural perceptions of gender from family and community members can play a key role in women's employment patterns in the differing African countries.

Analysis of differences in proportion of women's employment between companies

Further investigation and information gathering from the companies operating in the sector would be required to establish why each of them have such different practices in terms of the tasks that women can, and are trained and empowered, to undertake in the workplace. However, some initial observations can be made:

The employment practices of Compagnie Fruitière subsidiaries in each country differs from that of the national producers as they appear to be more restrictive of women's employment in the field. This company therefore has employment practices more similar to that of the other major multi-national banana producers operating in Latin America – such as their former co-owners Dole - where women work only in the pack-house.

Both company and union representatives have suggested that the restriction on field work is due to stricter

¹⁰ Derived from figures compiled from research questionnaires and Banana Link information, 2014

social standards, for example, on the key issues of health and safety and sexual harassment, both of which are reported to be more likely to represent a problem for women who work in the field (Banana Link and IUF, 2013). In VREL however, the company notes that there have been no reports of sexual harassment from field workers. In Cameroon women interviewed that are employed by companies that hire women to undertake field tasks, including PHP and BOH, did not report incidences of sexual harassment. Further independent research would need to be conducted to assess whether field work really does increase the exposure of women to the threat of sexual harassment, and, if so, how companies could overcome this.

Compagnie Fruitière subsidiary plantations also seem to be relatively restrictive of women's employment in administrative and management positions compared to the other national producers, particularly in Cameroon. One reason for this could be that because women mainly only work in the pack house they do not, or can not, gain the understanding of the whole production process that is required in supervisory or managerial roles. Women also tend to enter the industry with less formal education (at primary, secondary or tertiary level). More than 50% of female agricultural workers in Ghana have never attended school (Ofosu-Baadu, B., 2012). They will also have had less opportunity to gain technical qualifications relevant to the sector which may cause a barrier to promotion (Larson V. & Watkins S., 2014).

PHP management representatives have noted in previous conversations that their women's employment levels are lower than those of CDC due to the variation in employment opportunities for women in the different regions where the plantations operate. Women in the Haut Penja district near PHP often choose to work informally, for example selling food and other produce by the side of the road, as they can gain significant earnings and the work is also flexible so can be easily adapted to childcare and other duties. The company claims that women have less informal work opportunities in the region where CDC operates.

CDC is a state-owned operation and has therefore not solely been operating on a profit making basis unlike other privately owned companies in the region, such as PHP. There is more of a focus on employment provision, in a region where unemployment levels are high. However it is unclear whether CDC has prioritised women's employment and if so whether this could be connected to the positive socio-economic impact this could provide given the number of female headed households.

BOH in Cameroon has the highest women's employment figures in Africa but research has so far been unable to establish why; this needs further investigation. BOH also has an unusual 80% of workers on temporary contracts. As part of this research, FAWU has not received a substantive answer from BOH about the potential causal link between a high level of temporary and women's employment.

In Ghana, while GEL and VREL are both Fairtrade (FLO) certified – GEL since 2012 and VREL since 1996 - it is interesting to note the significant variation between rates of women's employment in the two companies. On the VREL Fairtrade Premium Committee 3 out of the 9 members are women (33%) compared to 3 women out of 12 members (25%) in GEL. The proportion of women's representation on both of these committees is still greater than the proportion of women employees however meaning that women have higher representation in decision making processes than is proportional to the number of women workers at plantation level (Larson V. & Watkins S., 2014).

Further analysis is needed to assess whether Fairtrade certification has impacted positively on women's employment over time or otherwise. There are however specific requirements on non-discriminatory practices within Fairtrade standards, and also specifically on women's empowerment and capacity building in Year 3 of certification (Fairtrade International, 2014) so this may have a positive impact in years to come on both GEL and the recently certified group of plantations at PHP in Cameroon. It is however important to note that VREL has the lowest wage rates in the Ghanaian banana industry, so further analysis is needed to investigate the potentially worrying link between women's employment and low pay (Banana Link and IUF,

2013).

3. Key issues for women workers in the workplace and at home

In this section the author has not referred to issues in relation to individual plantations or companies, even where this information exists. This section therefore collates general reports from different women workers and women union leaders to highlight potential issues on a national industry level. However, significant variations in practices do of course exist between specific companies and are analysed in 'Innovations towards Decent Work for women banana workers' later in this report.

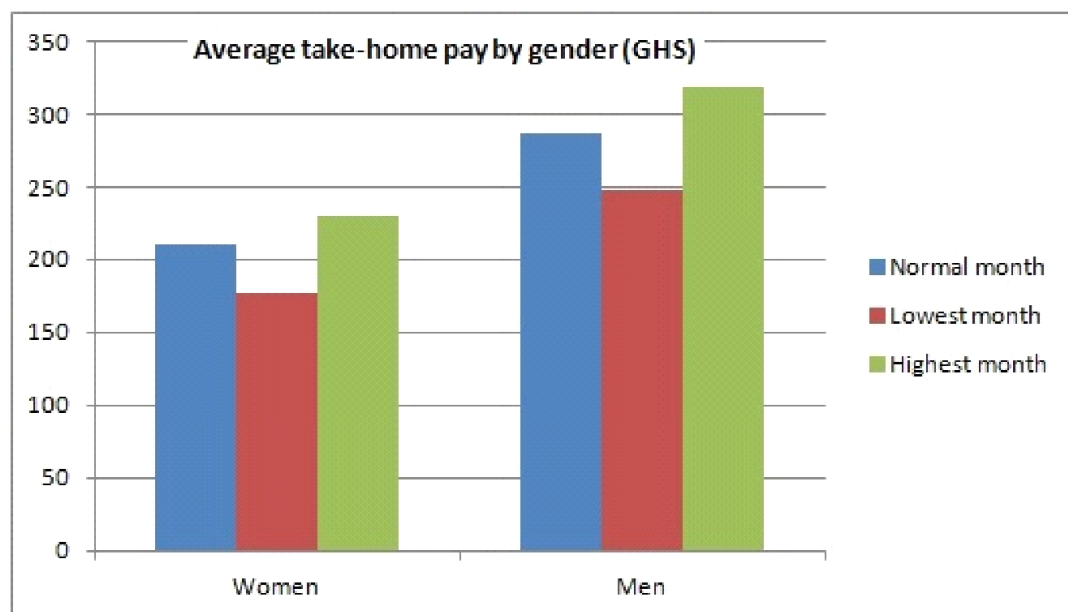
It must however be noted that detailed feedback was received by Compagnie Frutiere subsidiaries in response to the issues raised in this section and some of this information has thus been included. Due to limits in the capacity of this research, other companies have not however been approached for their responses to the claims in this section.

Ghana

In the workplace

The key issues identified by women workers in the Ghanaian banana industry are low wages, hours of work, health and safety, sexual harassment by supervisors and lack of childcare.

Wages in Ghana are well below a living wage for both men and women, but women generally earn less than men. See the graph below which shows an estimation of wage rates for men and women workers across all companies in the Ghanaian banana and pineapple sectors (figures are in Ghanaian Cedi (GHS)) (O'Hanlon B., 2014).



Source: O' Hanlon B. 2014 'An analysis of working conditions in banana and pineapple plantations in Ghana'

Further research on wage levels in relation to task also showed that women are generally paid less even when carrying out the same roles as men in the packhouse and the field. However, the disparity is further increased by the fact that only men have access to higher paid roles such as quality control, security and

tractor driving. Workers interviewed for this research were not asked why women did not have such roles only to describe their own role on the plantation. However, the company states that *'it is the policy of GEL that female workers doing the same job as their men colleagues earn the same salary. This is a policy which is strictly enforced by GEL.'*¹¹

Hours of work is of concern to women as late-night working hours endanger their safety when returning home and also affect family responsibilities and relations. One impact of women returning home late from work (and as packhouse workers later than any of the workers employed in the field) in communities where women being in formal employment is relatively new is an increase in women being the victims of domestic abuse; 'punished' by male partners for their absence from home and suspected of being unfaithful. Long working hours where women stand for long periods of time in the packhouses with insufficient breaks are also a problem because of negative health impacts which include back problems, abdominal pains and irregular menstruation.

Other health and safety related issues include inadequate facilities to cater for women's needs such as washrooms and changing rooms. Women (and men) also lack on-the-job training on the range of activities/operations at the workplace and relevant health and safety precautions required. Accidents and illnesses therefore arise due to ignorance. There are specific health and safety issues in relation to pregnant and nursing women who remain engaged in normal duties that are unsafe and present health risks (in particular in relation to chemical exposure). If pregnant or breastfeeding women are exposed to chemicals through application, handling of chemically impregnated materials such as bags or ribbons (used on the banana plants) or as a result of aerial spraying the these can be transmitted to the foetus or breastfed child. Increased incidence of birth defects, miscarriage and stillbirth are all reported by women exposed to chemicals in banana production. However, the company states that *'GEL has in its policy not to allow access to pregnant and breastfeeding mothers to any chemical house or facility. Special training is also given to all staff including women on how to take precautionary measures when applying chemicals.'*¹²

Childcare is a particular concern for women workers. Generally, women are not allowed to bring children to work (and specifically not in FLO certified plantations) but there are no childcare facilities, even for nursing mothers. The legal maternity leave of ninety days is not considered long enough by workers (GAWU has successfully negotiated paternity leave of 5 days in banana industry CBAs). Following maternity leave, the majority of women workers rely on a family member to look after their children while they are at work, but for those without family support, and in particular single parents (mainly women), childcare is often unaffordable. Some women report that they cannot afford childcare for their youngest child and therefore have to arrange for the older children to attend their schools in 'shifts' to ensure that someone is looking after the youngest child. All women workers questioned would support childcare provision in the workplace, where it is not already provided.

Sexual harassment of women workers by company administration was reported in the research workshops and can lead to employment/job discrimination depending on the women's 'reaction'. However, the company states that *'GEL has a policy that frowns upon sexual harassment. To this effect, women workers are being educated to report any such harassment encountered. The matter is then investigated and addressed properly.'*¹³

At home

It is common for women working long hours in the banana industry to find they have insufficient time for

¹¹ GEL feedback on the report findings, February 2016

¹² GEL feedback on the report findings, February 2016

¹³ GEL feedback on the report findings, February 2016

home, family and relationship responsibilities. Research conducted in 2014 found that the average length of a working week was 48 hours (including breaks) however, 40% of workers spent more than 48 hours working during an average week. Domestic work and childcare are considered to be the responsibility of women creating a 'triple burden' as plantation worker, domestic worker and child carer. In Central and Western African banana production this is exacerbated as women in employment continue to undertake 'more than 80% of household work, even when she brings home all the income' (World Bank, 2012). According to FAO research into conditions for rural Ghanaian women employees, conducted in 2012, 'while 65 percent of men spend from 0 to 10 hours per week on domestic activities, 89 percent of women spend 10 hours per week or more. The most time-engaging activities for women are cooking and taking care of household members (FAO, 2012).

Cameroon

In the workplace

The key workplace issues for women in Cameroon include multiple health and safety issues – especially for pregnant and nursing mothers – that are the result of long working hours, inappropriate work tasks, and lack of protective equipment and basic training and education (many of these issues therefore of course apply also to male workers).

It must be noted here that PHP Cameroon state that *'the majority of statements highlighted in this section are without foundation at PHP'* and that *'at PHP there is a matrix that sets out protective clothing individually according to the risks associated with the job role. Each worker has the relevant protective clothing for the work he or she carries out'*. The company has also provided significant further information in response to the health and safety issues raised in this section and this can be found in the 'Innovations' section and also in Annex 1, section entitled 'Exposure to chemical products and negative impacts on health'. Specific responses can also be found in the footnotes in this section.

Work tasks causing negative health impacts include spending long hours with hands in water when washing bananas in the pack house¹⁴, applying fertiliser and other chemical products by hand without protection¹⁵; sorting ribbons and other materials that are impregnated with chemicals by hand without protection; physically demanding field jobs such as deleafing, soon after giving birth and long hours undertaking repetitive packhouse jobs without enough space to bend properly which can cause back pains and strains. Female workers have reported the following health impacts as a result of their work: skin diseases; cardiovascular diseases; miscarriages; persistent abdominal pains; irregular menstruation; asthma; eye infections; nose bleeds, swollen feet and nail fungi. PHP do however state that *'if the health conditions mentioned in the document can be found in women, these are in no way related to their work role.'*¹⁶

There are no studies into the long term health impacts of worker exposure to agrochemicals in the African banana export production. In Cameroon, where chemical use is significantly higher than in either Côte d'Ivoire or Ghana due to the high incidence of Black Sigatoka, there are only journalistic reports often commissioned by campaigning organisations such as Transparency International¹⁷. However impacts have been documented in Latin America; in 2014 a study found that urine samples taken from pregnant women living in areas near banana plantations show increased concentration of ethylene thiourea (ETU) derived pesticides which can increase the risk of problems in the thyroid gland' (IRET, 2014).

¹⁴ PHP clarify that in their feedback on the report findings that 'the water used to process bananas does not contain any pesticide that is damaging to human health. Added to this water is only a weak concentration of calcium hypochlorite as a disinfectant and a neutral type of bacterol used to disperse latex.'

¹⁵ PHP clarify that 'Fertilizer applicators wear PPE consisting of gloves (PVC or Nitrile), boots and aprons'

¹⁶ PHP company feedback on the research findings, February 2016

¹⁷ <http://transparency.org>

Women workers tend to work long hours, from 10 to 14 hours on harvest days when in the pack house, with only 30 minute lunch break. Female and male workers engaged in field operations continue to work in severe weather conditions leading to fatigue, accidents or occupational diseases. Workers with partial permanent disabilities report being allocated very difficult tasks that they are unable to accomplish so they abandon their jobs.

Whilst duties for pregnant women are sometimes changed in later stages of pregnancy (i.e. the final three months) problems often start arising before then. Ante and post natal care is provided at company clinics however a doctor employed by a national company has been reported to have told women workers “pregnancy is not an illness, it is a condition” and that therefore pregnant women should not be treated differently, unless a problem arises. Pregnant women are also using overcrowded transport which is dangerous to their health (many report collapsing on the way to and from work). PHP do however state that *‘the transportation of staff to PHP is done by suitable vehicles reserved for this activity and we are not aware of passengers potentially falling as all our workers are seated.’*

Female workers in early pregnancy reported molestations and intimidation by company administration in an attempt to discourage them from continuing with pregnancy.

On the following issues regarding pregnant and nursing women PHP have provided significant information that has been included in the innovations section ‘PHP advances on maternity and breastfeeding provisions’ on page19.

The legal maternity leave period as stipulated in the Labour Code is considered too short by women: pregnant workers are eligible for 14 week maternity leave, one month prior to giving birth and two months after delivery. The national social insurance scheme is supposed to pay the workers the equivalent of their normal salary for these three months of maternity leave, as soon as the worker gives birth. Some women do not however know the process for submitting their documents to apply for maternity leave and some women report never receiving their leave payments despite going through the correct administration process (due to the company Social Insurance Clerk not correctly administering the documents with the authorities, although the company is now dealing with this problem). FAWU has subsequently provided all women with information about how to apply for maternity leave and the two major employers have confirmed that they have staff aware of how, and available, to support women to secure their maternity pay.

After maternity leave, women are allocated inappropriate jobs, for example climbing ladders which leads to continuous abdominal pains, or chemical application jobs with insufficient PPE, which is a particular concern when breastfeeding. So many women resort to absenteeism. Moreover, legal guidelines on hours of work for nursing mothers, Section 85 of the Cameroon Labour Code states that nursing mothers are entitled to a 1 hour break for a period of 15 months following child birth, are often not respected. As many mothers live far away from the plantation, this legislation can also prove impractical to implement.

Other health and safety issues arise from a lack of basic education and training (an issue for men too). Female banana workers in particular complain of being ignorant in the handling, storage and application of agrochemicals despite chemical application being a key role for women (and pregnant women) workers. This is often done by hand with limited protective equipment or using alternative inappropriate tools (such as washing soap and fresh pasteurised milk). There are cases reported of female workers applying toxic chemicals such as nematocides collapsing in the fields. Workers who carry out chemical applications on a regular basis reported that they do not have thorough medical examinations for purposes of detecting work-related diseases. In interviews with Banana Link (in 2011) the doctor responsible for the operation of one company's clinics denied any causal link between chemical exposure and illness. Such attitudes

challenge formal documentation.

Women workers (from one company only) also reported sexual harassment and intimidation from supervisors. In this company promotion and task allocation is seen to be directly related to their reactions to advances made by supervisors. This is also the case of the company healthcare facilities with better care being provided in return for sexual favours.

At home

The combination of long working hours and low wages can have a number of impacts in the home. Children can be neglected with a detrimental effect on their development and / or behaviour as mothers are away from home but cannot afford childcare. Nursing breaks are given to mothers who work both in the packing house and the field and crèche facilities are provided by some plantations but nursery schools and other childcare facilities are needed.

The children of female workers often suffer malnutrition and anaemia as women do not have the time to cook properly, nor to provide basic healthcare. Mothers report not being able to afford drugs prescribed that are unavailable at the company clinic. This has apparently resulted in the deaths of some workers and their children. Those mothers in relationships also report multiple challenges in sustaining a relationship when they do not have time for household or sexual activities due to fatigue from long work hours.

Another key issue is low pay affecting the ability of workers to pay school fees; Banana Link research in 2012 showed that children of banana workers are most likely to be the ones not able to afford and therefore attend school producing a negative development impact for community as whole (Labouchere H. & Skolidou D., 2012).

Côte d'Ivoire

In the workplace

The key issues reported by women workers included dangerous transport to and from work, low wages, excessive working hours (over legal maximums) and sexual harassment.

Women tend to work around 10 hours per day, despite the legal working day being 8 hours. Legally required overtime is not often paid. Company transport to work is overloaded and this is a particular safety issue for pregnant women. Workers also reported not having the appropriate equipment for their tasks, which is a particular issue for those involved in chemical application. There were reports of sexual harassment within the workplace.

Although women have access to crèche facilities this is only for younger babies, nursery schools are also needed.

At home

Women workers arrive late at the home after work (as late as 11pm on some nights) negatively affecting relationships with both children and partners and leading to poor sexual relations, mistrust and adultery by partners and sometimes domestic violence. Restricting women to tasks in the packhouse where finishing times are often late (up until 11pm) because harvested bananas have to be packed the same day and companies expect workers, especially in peak season, to do overtime (even if in excess of legal working weeks of 40 and 48 hours in Ghana and Cameroon respectively) can have a negative affect on family and partner relationships. In workshops women highlight the impact of long working hours such as poor sexual relations, mistrust and adultery by partners and sometimes domestic violence, as some of their key concerns as employees in the banana sector.

Poor accommodation is also an issue, even when provided by the company. A woman with 30 year's service who began work single and subsequently married and had children, has had to remain in the same company accommodation and conditions are therefore very cramped.

4. Innovations towards Decent Work for women banana workers

Advances in childcare, maternity and breastfeeding provisions

Current childcare provisions appear to be minimal across all three countries, according to both worker reports and company CSR reports. For example none of the Compagnie Fruitière CSR reports for Ghana, Cameroon and Côte d'Ivoire produced in 2013 mention crèche or childcare facilities

Employers in both Ghana and Cameroon are however taking steps towards childcare provision utilising Banana Accompanying Measures (BAM) monies. In Cameroon, CDC has submitted an application for BAM monies which included provision for a crèche, as lobbied for by FAWU, at Moquo Farm where 35 women workers would directly benefit. This would be the first childcare provision by CDC in any of its agro-industrial operations in Cameroon. PHP Cameroon also states that 'the project to construct a crèche is well advanced and real construction will take place very soon.'

BOH in Cameroon has introduced a policy whereby nursing mothers work for five days and then take the sixth day off, paid. Mothers believe that having a sixth day off is good practice as it is not practical to implement the national legislation that requires employers to allow nursing mothers a 1 hour break to breastfeed, especially when crèche facilities are not provided on the plantation. Following further worker consultation, the union, FAWU, is interested in negotiating for this BOH policy to be implemented in other plantations without crèche facilities.

In Ghana, all new plantation developments now incorporate childcare facilities and GAWU aims to have commitment to childcare provision written into all of their CBAs with companies. GEL has also submitted an application to use BAM monies to build or convert a former school house in the local community into a crèche. There are 150 mothers employed at Golden Exotics who would benefit from the proposed workplace childcare provision. Currently, mothers bring babies to the workplace where they are looked after by a babysitter collectively provided by parents. GEL has temporarily introduced the payment of monies to cover childcare costs in lieu of permanent provision.

Both GAWU in Ghana and FAWU in Cameroon are undertaking research into childcare needs because of concerns about provisions on or near plantations with intensive agrochemical use and in particular aerial spraying. The research will look into whether there are preferable options that also effectively address breastfeeding needs, especially given the large scale of the plantations and distances women may need to travel back to a central childcare provision to breastfeed. Initial research from Cameroon with CDC workers shows that 90 % of the workers are positive towards the idea of CDC offering childcare, and of these 95 % of interviewees would prefer to receive an allowance instead of bringing their children to a childcare facility at the plantation. This is due to concerns about transport to the plantation, exposure to chemicals and the long hours that children would need to stay at the facility to match their parents work hours. By giving a childcare allowance CDC could therefore adhere to the ILO recommendations on childcare and hopefully benefit from reductions in absenteeism with potential beneficial impacts on productivity (Larson V. & Watkins S., 2014).

PHP advances in maternity and breastfeeding provisions¹⁸

Regulations in force in Cameroon provide the conditions in which the rights of women who find themselves in this temporary situation are exercised. PHP rigorously applies these provisions by granting maternity leave of 14 weeks to all pregnant women without this having a negative impact on their pay at all during the length of their maternity leave. Their salary is taken care of by the NATIONAL SOCIAL SECURITY FUND based on documents provided by PHP for the benefit of the person concerned (maternity leave certificate, salary statement, certificate of no return from maternity leave, etc.).

The only loss of earnings that a female worker could suffer during these periods are the general bonuses linked to professional performance. However, an inclusive bonus will be awarded to make up for the consequences of losing the quality and productivity bonus during their maternity leave. The annual end of year bonus and the Christmas dash do not take into account the period of inactivity of pregnant women on maternity leave.

Upon return from maternity leave, female workers resume their work role without any problems and breastfeeding hours are guaranteed to them as per the requirements of the work code. Once the company's administration is informed of their condition, female workers are allocated work roles that take into consideration their new situation. This is with the aim to treat them considerately and to assure the development of their pregnancy goes well, with appropriate medical supervision by our occupational physician.

It is anticipated that all pregnant women and those who have just given birth be allocated to the nurseries under a gentler working framework and to where they will be transported under appropriate conditions. Infants will be left in the child-care centre nearby and can be fed on demand. Wage conditions will be adjusted so that women transferred to the nurseries do not suffer any inconvenience relating their salary as linked to their previous work role.

PHP has, moreover, drawn up a social policy entitled: "The Rights of Pregnant Female Workers at PHP" in order to inform women of their rights and of the pregnancy declaration procedure.

Education and training – for women workers and their families

Lack of both basic school education as well as professional training has been mentioned by women working in the banana sector throughout as a key barrier to their access to employment, especially for supervisory and managerial roles. However, many companies are working to improve education opportunities for women workers.

In Ghana, VREL is reported to run various training workshops and seminars for both women and male workers. These include technical training for roles in both the packhouse and field, health and safety and also other workplace issues such as informing women on how to report incidences of sexual harassment.

In CDC, Cameroon, study leave is granted to workers who wish to get a higher education certificate and then come back to work. However this study leave is granted only to those with jobs that need technical or academic training such as nurses, doctors and accountants (so not accessible to normal labourers). Some training is also provided in-house, such as for those wishing to take on a secretarial role.

¹⁸ *This section has been added to the report following feedback from PHP, Cameroon on the report findings. Maternity provisions of other companies have therefore not been analysed here but other good practices may of course also exist in other companies and countries of production.*

The three Compagnie Fruitière subsidiaries all have advanced worker training initiatives from which both women and men benefit. These include technical training relevant to packhouse tasks and also training on health and safety, as well as literacy and information technology training for some workers.

In PHP Cameroon an 'education loan' is provided to enable children over the age of 5 to participate in school education. These school loans are granted free of charge and without any interest to all employees who require them and who are eligible. In 2012, 330 children benefited from these loans.

To reinforce this school support policy, PHP runs a school group offering both middle and upper schooling called "Complexe Scolaire les Tisserins", where priority intake is reserved for children of the company's employees. In addition, the company subsidises 50% of school fees for all children of non-executive employees who use this school group.

Both GEL and VREL uses Fairtrade premium monies to fund the education of workers and their children.

The SCB Corporate Responsibility report 2013 also states that they have constructed 5 nursery schools and one primary school that together provide education for 600 children. Union reports state that there remains a need for nursery education for workers children. With a workforce of almost 8,000 it is of course clear that the majority of workers do not have access to these schools.

Health provisions for women workers and their families

One of the key issues for women workers across all African export producing countries was that of occupational health and safety. Although most of the companies have very detailed health and safety policies and initiatives there seems to be virtually no consideration of the gender aspects of health and safety in any of these company manuals or reports. We cannot therefore share many innovations in this area relevant specifically to women workers, or more specifically pregnant and nursing mothers.

In the case of PHP in Cameroon however, the company have provided significant feedback on their health and safety initiatives in response to the findings of this report. These initiatives can be found in Annex 1. in the section entitled 'Exposure to chemical products and negative impacts on health'. It is also relevant to note here that both PHP and CDC are partners in a new industry level project on health and safety, coordinated by Solidaridad, Banana Link and the World Banana Forum and funded by the IDH, a Dutch government initiative. This project will provide a space not only to share existing good practices on health and safety but also implement a health and safety training programme on their plantations with both male and female workers and company representatives. This training programme will have a gender focus.

Also on the side of cure rather than prevention there are a number of exemplary initiatives. Healthcare provision at PHP in Cameroon is particularly good and far exceeds national standards. This is partly due to collaboration between the company and a French NGO 'L'Ordre de Malte' who have collaborated to develop an advanced hospital 'l'Hôpital Saint Jean de Malte' open to workers and their families. The hospital provides birthing, pre-natal and post-natal care for women workers as well as specialized services for HIV and malaria patients. The company covers 100% of medical fees for its employees and 80% for other members of workers' legitimate family.

CDC also have two medical centres providing healthcare for workers and family members, although the level of care is poorer than the aforementioned hospitals and the location of one of the centres adjacent to a rubber processing operation is a health concern. The proper provision of drugs, and refunding of the cost of drugs by CDC when unavailable in the clinics, is a key point in social dialogue between FAWU and CDC.

In 2014, SCB, the Compagnie Fruitière subsidiary in Côte d'Ivoire opened a new hospital in collaboration with L'ordre du Malte following the Cameroonian model, for banana and pineapple workers, their families and the wider community in the Tiassale region (where SCB employ approximately 2,500 workers). However, SCB have another five banana sites spread across the country and it is not clear if workers are assisted with transport to attend this central hospital. There are however local medical centres and pharmacy sites provided by the company.

In GEL Ghana, a health clinic is currently being under construction on their plantation to be completed before end of the year 2016. It will have all medical facilities including a gynaecology department to cater for the medical needs of women workers.

The GEL/GAWU Collective Bargaining Agreement¹⁹

This agreement was originally signed in 2007 and has been reviewed every three years since then until 2014 when the agreement was taken over by the new trade union ICU. However, the information below refers to the previous GEL/GAWU agreement

Through this agreement the union and company worked together to try to make banana production a more attractive offer for women workers through creating 'women friendly' workplaces. GEL management states that issues for women workers are 'of paramount interest' to the company as efforts are made to fulfil the gender requirements of the ILO Convention 111 on elimination of gender discrimination and improvements in conditions for women workers. There were therefore a number of gender related clauses incorporated into the GAWU/GEL collective agreement including:

- Equal pay for equal work
- Maternity Protection (as stipulated in the Labour Act 651 and in compliance with ILO C183 & MDG 4&5 on reducing child death & maternal mortality) plus extra rest periods before and after delivery above the legal minimum
- Company provision of a special bus support system for pregnant women
- Specialised medical support for women workers, in particular pregnant women and mothers, and their children.
- Respect of Articles 55 in Labour Act which prohibits pregnant women from undertaking in activities that deal with chemicals and working longer than 8 hours per day.

This agreement also of course provides an important platform for dialogue between the company and the union (whether GAWU or ICU) enabling the union to raise the needs and demands of their women workers members.

Gender training and the promotion of women's leadership

Particular advances in gender training and providing leadership skills for women have been made over the last two years as a result of collaboration between the IUF, Banana Link and local trade unions through a Comic Relief funded project 'Securing Decent Work in tropical fruit export production'. As part of this collaboration IUF's Africa's Women's Project Coordinator has been carrying out a number of gender training initiatives on the ground with workers and local trade union leaders in Ghana (GAWU) and Cameroon (FAWU). These education activities have also been supported by women trade union education experts from the UK trade union movement who have facilitated local workshops on gender and are helping to develop gender specific training for women and male workers in collaboration with local union leaders.

¹⁹ (Cooper A. & Quesada V., 2014)

These project activities have been complemented by the IUF's 'Women's Leadership programme' which operates in 16 African countries, including Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire. The objectives of the project include:

- increased women's participation in trade unions
- women's participation at all levels of trade union structures
- women's rights in national legislation, and regional/ international labour and human rights conventions
- addressing specific safety and health needs of women
- building confidence and skills of women in collective bargaining participation
- the promotion of ILO Conventions relevant to women.

Within this programme many women in the banana industries in both Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire have been trained in leadership, and Cameroonian women workers have also benefited from the sharing of experiences through the project.

As an example, the impact of these union capacity building programmes in Ghana includes the development and adoption by GAWU of a formal policy on gender. The central objective of this policy is to raise awareness amongst both women and men within the organisation through regular gender training programmes, with the overall aim of empowering potential women leaders who can bring about transformational change, including pushing forward gender issues within collective agreements such as that with GEL. The union is leading by example by reviewing its constitution to incorporate gender equity towards 40% participation of women in all union structures, including the CBA negotiation committees.

In Cameroon training for women workers has led to work to create FAWU's first Women's Committee which will focus on identifying training needs for women, such as the need to educate women about how to apply for maternity leave noted earlier. There are plans to establish committees across all workplaces in all three sectors in which FAWU organise. Another key aim of the women's training programme over the next year is to identify and build the leadership capacity of potential candidates to stand in the staff representative elections in 2016 and this increase the proportion of women staff representatives.

Under the umbrella of the IUF, the trade unions organising workers employed in the African banana export industry have created a regional coordination of banana worker unions (similar to that of COLSIBA in Latin America) entitled the IUF Banana Network in Africa (IBANETA). The object of this platform is to share experiences on issues including gender and to strengthen bargaining through collaboration and solidarity.

5. Conclusions

When sharing ideas on the need for gender equity, participants in a women's workshop in Cameroon reflected on the necessity to have built-in measures – for example specific union, company or certification policies that promote women's employment and empowerment - to compensate for historical and social disadvantages and to challenge the culturally ingrained attitudes of both women and men towards gender equality. One workshop participant stated *'We need to encourage women to change their attitude and take up leadership positions both in trade unions and within the workplace to ensure their views are incorporated into decision making'*.

Despite the variations between countries and companies, the African case certainly shows that gender does not need to prevent companies from employing women to work in banana operations both in the packhouse and the field. Similar work patterns could therefore be adopted in other banana producing countries where this employment practice is less common. It is however important to have greater understanding of why Compagnie Fruitiere subsidiaries tend to restrict women's work in the field – in comparison to other national companies – and hence have the lowest rates of women's employment within the region. Responsible for 80% of banana exports in West and Central Africa, Compagnie Fruitiere dominate banana export production in Africa and therefore a change in their practices and a leadership role in prioritising the provision of Decent Work for women would have a significant impact on the industry.

Further research is needed amongst both workers and trade union leaders to analyse both the positive and negative impacts of women working in the field to assess if this is an employment strategy that should be promoted on an international level. There is also of course the wider issue of whether the banana industry is providing 'Decent Work' for women in the African region, as discussed in section 3 of this report 'Key issues for women workers at the workplace and at home'. Indeed any initiatives working towards the increase of women's employment (by giving them greater access to field tasks) need to go hand in hand with ensuring 'women friendly workplaces' that provide equal pay and respect women's specific health and safety needs during pregnancy and whilst breastfeeding as well as childcare responsibilities, risk of sexual harassment and need of technical training.

Addressing the findings of this research could also have a positive impact on the low production levels across the region. In Cameroon, for example, recent research showed that 88% of workers with children at one national company had been absent in the previous year due to lack of childcare (Larson V. & Watkins S., 2014). The same report also showed that the 'average worker' is absent 46 days per year due to work related injury or illness. There is therefore a real need, and opportunity, for workers, their trade unions and employers to work together to resolve these workplace issues – both for women and male workers – for the benefit of all industry stakeholders. The positive example of the advances made within the framework of the GEL/ GAWU Collective Bargaining Agreement could provide some important learning in this respect.

The creation of IBANETA, as supported by the IUF, could provide an important platform for the sharing of learning on both union and company practices across the region. This initiative will of course also be able to learn from the innovative activities towards Decent Work for women workers as championed by the COLSIBA Women's Committee and its women union leader members, as detailed in the Latin America report within this publication. But the success of these initiatives in Africa and elsewhere of course depends on women being present in the workplace, and being empowered through and by their unions to actively engage, in negotiations and dialogue with companies at national and international level.

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Terminology

ASSOBACAM Association of Cameroon Banana Producers

BAM Banana Accompanying Measures

BOH BOH Plantations Limited

CBA Collective Bargaining Agreement

CDC Cameroon Development Corporation

CIAGAH CI-Dignité Agricultural and Food workers Federation affiliated to the Confederation of Food and Drink Industries, Hotel and Allied Worker Unions, Dignité, in Côte d'Ivoire

CSR Corporate Social Responsibility

COLSIBA Latin American Regional Coordination of Banana & Other Agro-Industrial Worker Unions

DISAWOFA Divisional Syndicate of Agricultural Workers for Fako, Cameroon

EC European Commission

ECV Equatorial Capital Ventures

ETU Ethylene thiourea

FAWU Fako Agricultural Workers Union (Cameroon)

FLO Fairtrade international

GAWU General Agricultural Workers Union of Ghana TUC

GEL Golden Exotics Limited

IBANETA IUF Banana Network in Africa

ICU Industrial and Commercial Workers Union, Ghana

IDH The Sustainable Trade Initiative

ILO International Labour Organisation

IRET The Regional Institute on Toxic Substances

IUF The International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Association

NGO Non Governmental Organisation

PPE Personal Protective Equipment

PHP Plantations du Haut Penja

SATAM Syndicat Autonome des Travailleurs de L'Agriculture du Moungo

SCB Société d'étude et de développement de la Culture Bananière

SDEAPEM Syndicat Départemental de l'Agriculture Pêche et Élevage du Moungo

SDLAMP Syndicat Départemental Libre de l'Agriculture et Plantation du Moungo

SPM Society of Mbanga Banana Plantations

SYATRAPBM Syndicat Autonome des Travailleurs des Plantations Bananières du Moungo

SYNAP/SCB Syndicat Agricole de Plantations de la SCB

SYNATRA/SCB Syndicat Autonome de Travailleurs de la SCB
SYNLITRA/SCB Syndicat Libre des Travailleurs de la SCB
SYNTRA/SCB-CI Syndicat des Travailleurs de la SCB
SYTATEG Syndicat des Travailleurs de l'entreprise Eglin
VREL Volta River Estates Limited

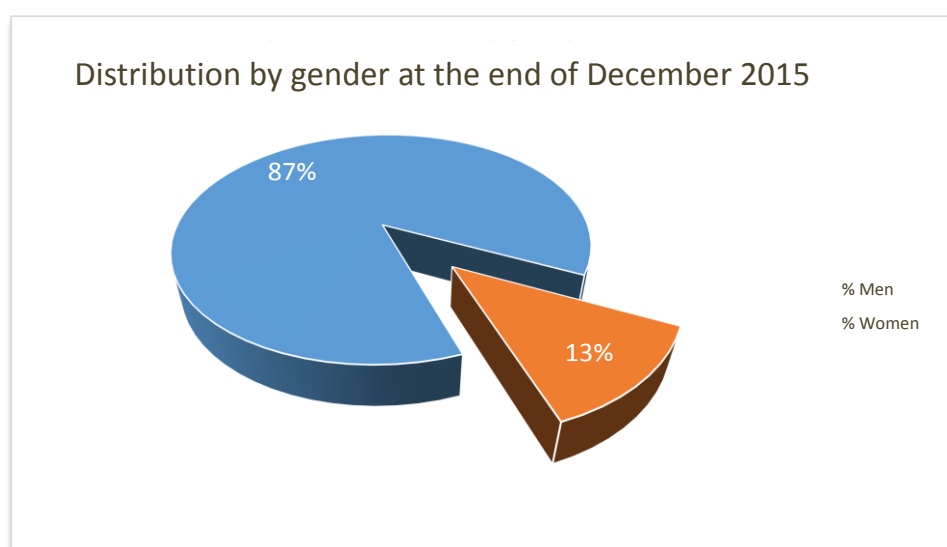
Annex 1: Additional feedback from Compagnie Fruitiere subsidiaries

a. SCB, Cote d'Ivoire: Statistics on RIGA female employment at SCB

The analysis of employment figures indicates that between 2011 and 2015 the rate of female employment was as shown in the table below:

Workforce distribution by gender from 2011 to 2015

Year	Male workers	Female Workers	Total	% men	% women
2011	5 498	646	6 144	89,49%	10,5%
2012	5 736	728	6 464	88,74%	11,3%
2013	5 647	671	6 318	89,38%	10,6%
2014	6 767	823	7 590	89,16%	10,8%
2015	6 937	998	7 935	87,42%	12,6%



b. PHP, Cameroon

Employment statistics 2011 to 2014 :

2014: Total of 6476 (5737 permanent) of which women represent 842 (742 permanent) = 13%

2013: Total of 5599 (4495 permanent) of which women represent 679 (573 permanent) = 12%

2012: Total of 5675 (4775 permanent) of which women represent 660 (557 permanent) = 11.6%

2011: Total of 5778 (3724 permanent) of which women represent 635 (468 permanent) = 11%

Comments on the regional report for West and Central Africa:

1) Regarding women's salaries

At PHP no discrimination is made in salary where there is equal ability and the same tasks are carried out by both men and women.

The socio-professional classification is identical and the bonuses that go with it are the same. Any difference to be seen in salary is due the length of service in that role in the company.

For example in sanitation roles, employees receive a quality bonus of 25,000 CFA francs regardless of gender.

The claim that women earn less than men is unfounded and is not based on any objective data relating to PHP. Men and women's salaries are comparable.

2) Exposure to chemical products and negative impacts on health

At PHP it is recognised that exposure to and the handling of pesticides carries negative impacts on human health, and measures are taken to reduce and even remove them. These measures are the following:

- a) – Forbidding women from handling insecticides, nematocides and herbicides.
- b) – Preliminary training before starting a role for all workers tasked with handling pesticides.
- c) – A requirement of medical clearance for all workers tasked with handling pesticides.
- d) – The wearing of protective clothing by every worker involved with handling pesticides.
- e) - The rotation of staff handling pesticides.
- f) – Using only those pesticides approved by Cameroon and authorised in countries where the bananas are sold. These pesticides have a well-defined MRL and an MSDS.
- g) - Regular testing for cholinesterase in phytosanitary operators.
- h) – The use of hazard symbols to highlight treated plots and plots in the process of being treated.
- i) – A clearly indicated waiting time before returning to treated plots.
- j) – A clearly defined treatment schedule, which has been adapted to the sensitivity of every area involved.
- k) – The establishment of buffer zones or zones of no cultivation of up to 100 meters between plantations and sensitive areas (watercourses, hospitals, health centres, schools, churches, conurbation, markets, etc)
- e) – On a more global level, monitoring of the receiving environment is in place.

Annex 2. Methodology - Workshop structure

- Introduce the purpose of the workshop
- Break participants into groups
- Give each group the questions either in sections or altogether
- Give each group flipchart paper to write down their answers
- Go around the groups whilst they are working to answer any queries / help them to understand the questions
- Bring groups together to discuss answers either section by section or to discuss all of the answers together. Ask groups to choose someone to present answers on their behalf.
- Record any ideas that arise from discussion and include these with the answers to form a report of the workshop.

Introduction

The answers and ideas gathered from this workshop will inform a report about conditions for women employed in the banana industry in Central and West Africa. This report will be shared with industry stakeholders - other unions, small farmers, governments, fruit companies, supermarkets and any other actors involved in exporting bananas - with the aim of:

increasing women's employment in the banana industry

improving women's employment in the banana industry

Workshop questions

1. EMPLOYMENT

- a. How many workers are there in your company? How many are women? **(Please note this information may only be available from the companies/union offices)**
- b. Are there women employed in company administration or management? If so what work do they do?
- c. What kind of employment contracts are common in your company? What proportion of workers are permanent? What proportion are casual?
- d. What tasks are given to pregnant and nursing mothers?
- e. How many hours of work do you do a day? What are the legal working hours a day?
- f. How do you balance your work and your life? Do you have childcare facilities provided by the company? If yes, can you say what facilities are provided? And if no what facilities do you need?
- g. What can YOU do to improve working hours?
- h. How can we increase women's employment in your company?
 - i. Do YOU have any ideas how to improve working conditions for women in the banana industry?

2. THE UNION

- a. Is there a trade union at your workplace? What is the name of the union (s)?

b. If you are a member, why did you join the union? If you are not a member, why not? And why do you think other women do not join the union?

c. How many men and women are involved in the local leadership of your union:

- local union executive

- shop floor level – as shop steward or representative?

d. What benefits does being a union member give you?

e. what do you know about the activities of the union?

f. What are the attitudes of workers towards trade unions in your workplace?

3. WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION

a. How do you participate in your union?

b. What are the barriers for women participating in union activities?

c. How would you encourage women to participate actively in union activities?

d. Have any of you come across sexual harassment in your workplace? If so, what form did it take? What was the impact on the victim(s)? Was there any action taken to stop it?

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

What recommendations would you like to give to your

- employer
- union

to improve working conditions?

(If the plantation is Fairtrade certified there are two additional questions)

5. PREMIUM COMMITTEE

a. What is the composition of the Fairtrade Premium Committee? How many men and how many women?

b. what is the relationship between the Fairtrade Premium Committee and the union executive?