

# GENDER EQUITY IN THE BANANA INDUSTRY: A GLOBAL WOMEN'S STRATEGY MEETING

9-10 December 2015

Fairtrade International, Bonn, Germany



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Report to funders: **Fairtrade Deutschland**



## Meeting summary

A global strategy meeting on gender equity in the banana industry was funded by **Fairtrade Deutschland** and hosted by **Fairtrade International** (FI) in their offices in Bonn on December 9 and 10, 2015. The meeting was coordinated by members of the **Working Group on Gender of the World Banana Forum** (WBF) and aimed to enable women to collectively develop strategies towards gender equity as part of the broader objective of the WBF to create an industry which is economically, environmentally and socially sustainable.

The meeting was attended by women leaders from trade unions and small producer associations from **Latin America** (Ecuador, Colombia, Honduras, Guatemala and Panama), **Africa** (Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire), the **Caribbean** (Guadeloupe) and the **Philippines**. Information was also shared by women representatives from the Windward Islands and Cameroon. A number of representatives from European NGOs also participated (Banana Link, Banafair and Peuples Solidaires) as well as the International Union of Food, Hotel and Allied Workers (IUF), the Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations (in their role as Secretariat of the World Banana Forum) and expert representatives from Fairtrade International, Fairtrade Deutschland and the Fairtrade Foundation. The meeting was conducted in English, French and Spanish.

## Challenges experienced by women workers and producers

The meeting provided an opportunity for these women leaders to sit face-to-face and discuss the challenges experienced by women workers and producers, including discrimination on employment and in the workplace, the gender pay gap, health and safety risks (especially for pregnant and nursing mothers), gender based violence and sexual harassment and the 'triple burden' of women's responsibilities at work, home and for childcare. These issues are common to women in the majority of producing countries.

*"Improving the situation for women is a difficult task, but an important one. We need to focus on the gender-based discrimination at home and in the workplace and on maternity rights to allow the women who have the courage to become workers and producers to also become mothers."*

Adela Torres, SINTRAINAGRO, Colombia

Presentations were given by women leaders on the initiatives of their organisations towards gender equity and Decent Work within the banana industry. Key learning was shared; on the incorporation of clauses on gender in Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBAs) in Latin America, the pilot project on



women's employment being implemented by Chiquita in Panama, gender education programmes delivered by the IUF and local unions in Africa, and small producer initiatives in the workplace and local communities towards women's empowerment and the diversification of employment opportunities for women, among others.

### Opportunities for collective campaigns and actions

Participatory education methods were used to facilitate discussions between women from the various producing regions on opportunities for collective campaigns and actions, and in particular ways to push forward gender as a cross-cutting theme within the activities of the World Banana Forum and its three working groups on social, economic and environmental issues.

These recommendations for action will be incorporated into the work plan of the Working Group on Gender of the World Banana Forum (WBF), as well as the individual programmes of the participating organisations at a local and regional level. A key activity on this collective agenda will be the preparations for a multi-stakeholder global women's meeting to precede the next global conference of the World Banana Forum in late 2016.

### Global research

To inform these strategy discussions significant research had been conducted in 2015, within the framework of the WBF, on women's employment levels across the industry, the diverse roles of women workers in production, key issues for women in the workplace and at home and existing union and company initiatives towards gender equity within the industry. The key findings of this global research - and its three regional reports for Latin America, the Caribbean and Africa - were presented and integrated throughout the meeting discussions.

### Meeting outputs

#### Output 1. Global priority areas for action:

- Barriers to women's employment – low levels of formal education and workplace training, restricted roles for women in the workplace, employment discrimination (perception of women as 'high cost' employees), the burden of the 'triple day' (work, household and childcare duties)
- Health and safety for women on plantations, especially pregnant women and nursing mothers
- Gender-based violence and sexual harassment in the workplace
- Low wages (both due to unequal pay and women typically doing lower paid and more precarious roles)
- Lack of awareness on gender issues and women's rights issues amongst male colleagues and also wider industry
- Lack of women representation in union leadership and Collective Bargaining negotiations

***"There is a strong belief that there are roles for women and roles for men. We need to raise awareness on the different roles that women are capable of doing in the workplace to reduce discrimination and increase employment opportunities."***

Juliet Arku-Mensah, GAWU, Ghana

## Output 2. Tools for action/example initiatives:

*To be shared with all participants in English, French and Spanish.*

### **COLSIBA Latin America**

- Regional agenda for women 2015-2016 (with 6 thematic strategies addressing priority issues)
- The work of the Women's Platform for Protest to support the implementation of gender clauses in Colombia, Honduras, Nicaragua and Guatemala
- Three books on women's rights in the Latin America banana industry 'El Poder de las Mujeres' by Dana Frank, 'Lo que hemos vivido: Luchas de las mujeres bananeras' by ASEPROLA and COLSIBA and 'Derechos y Reveses' by Clara Gomez Valasquez
- Specific examples of health and safety problems faced by women workers across the region
- Educational leaflets and publications for women workers

### **SINTRAINAGRO Colombia**

- The 21 'Demands for women workers' that can be used to define union priorities
- The 9 principal achievements made by SINTRAINAGRO for women workers in CBA's

### **SITRAIBANA Panama**

- The ongoing activities of the Chiquita/ COLSIBA/ IUF pilot project including:
  - Analysis of H&S risks for women workers in pack-house and field
  - Clause on sexual harassment with workers and company and for inclusion in CBA's
  - Company employment practices towards the hiring of more women

### **FESTAGRO Honduras**

- The 12 gender specific clauses in company CBA's
- Local fundraising initiatives for training activities for women

### **IUF Africa**

- Women's project educational resources on gender and health and safety

### **CLAC Latin America and the Caribbean**

- Educational materials from Banelino (Dominican Republic), SOPPEXCCA (Nicaragua) and the Gender school pilot project (El Salvador)

### **UROCAL Ecuador**

- Update on the UROCAL Institutional Gender Equality Plan and it's educational resources

### **FAWU Cameroon**

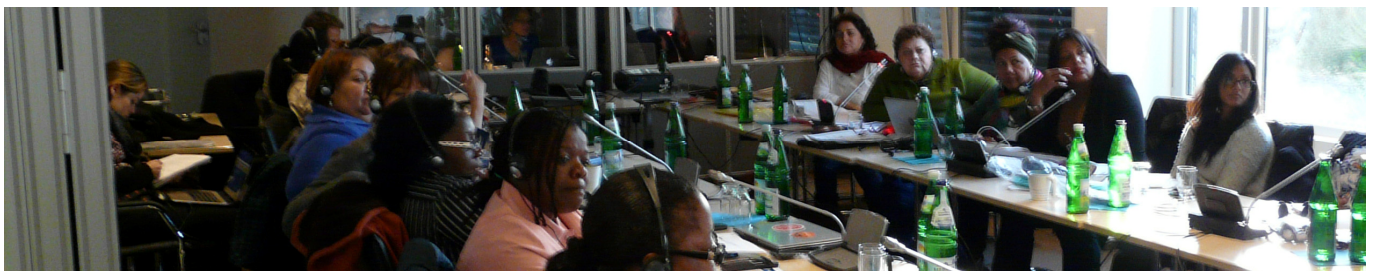
- Leaflets on maternity rights for women workers
- Educational resources on gender and health and safety

### **Fairtrade International**

- Fairtrade school for women in leadership: module on creating cohesion among women in leadership

### **Other potential tools to be researched:**

- Education materials on non-violent communication by Dr Marshall Rosenberg (ex-Director of Educational Services for the Center for Nonviolent Communication)







### Output 3. Preparations for a multi-stakeholder Global Women's Meeting

Through a participatory activity women participants contributed to the initial planning of the multi-stakeholder women's meeting to precede the WBF Conference in late 2016. This meeting will bring together women representatives of all industry stakeholders engaged in the WBF, with a particular focus on fruit companies, retailers and certifying bodies.

Specific outputs include:

- A draft list of invitees
- Key items for the draft agenda
- Concrete ideas on how to involve companies, governments and other WBF members in the meeting preparations

The Working Group on Gender of the World Banana Forum will make use of these outputs in planning for the meeting and will call on local organisations to assist with the follow up with local contacts.

### Output 4. Recommendations towards industry level change:

- Input into ILO discussion towards a new Convention on Gender-Based Violence in the workplace. The IUF will facilitate input from women banana workers and leaders into the agenda of the ILO expert group that is being set up, and in turn keep partners informed of the process
- Develop a strategy on sexual harassment and the industry wide implementation of the Chiquita/ COLSIBA/IUF Clause on Sexual Harassment (to be used as an example of best practice for others to adopt)
- Strengthen women's participation and leadership in their organisations; share awareness raising materials between organisations / countries, promote solidarity and the sharing of experiences between women leaders, create regular spaces and platforms (local, regional and industry level) for women capacity building programs and leadership workshops
- Promote women's education and training in the workplace; share education and training materials and expertise between organisations / countries, share funding ideas for local education programmes and support dialogue with companies to encourage the provision of women's education and training.
- Continue to put pressure on, and engage in dialogue with, companies to ensure that they are actively involved in discussions and platforms addressing gender issues
- Strengthen links between consumer and producer country civil society organisations towards joint campaigns to promote the rights of women in the banana industry
- Establish permanent round-table discussions with producing country national authorities for health and social security to help strengthen the process of improvement of legislation, implementation and monitoring on the health of women workers
- Create and strengthen women committees in unions and other industry structures and platforms to ensure that women issues are put on the agenda

- Ensure that women leaders are active in all three Working Groups (WGs) of the World Banana Forum, as well as its governance structures by:
  - keeping women leaders regularly updated on Forum activities and projects
  - ensuring that they have the language support required to engage in all activities (and that all key documentation is accessible in English, French and Spanish)
  - providing regular training to empower and increase the capacity of women to engage in WBF structures
  - ensuring mainstreaming of gender through all three WGs so that gender impacts are fully understood and considered in all areas of WBF activity

## Evaluation

The evaluation was carried out through a participatory activity – all delegates were asked to respond to the following questions:

### 1. What have you learnt (through your participation in this meeting)?

- I know more about the work of the WBF and its working groups
- That women have the power to act
- The employment of women is a key priority
- That many women in the world are ready to fight for less advantaged women and colleagues
- That we should join trade unions and take bigger decisions
- That we're stronger united
- That there is good willingness from participants towards constructive solutions
- We have excellent ideas and strategies to share and build on
- I understand better the necessity for women to participate in the WBF structures
- How to improve and advance gender issues in the banana Industry
- That we can share and learn from each other, strengthening us to face all obstacles we face in our work
- I have learnt that there are many problems in the other countries too

### 2. What will you do next?

- Keep working towards mainstreaming gender in all activities related to my work
- Meet with my colleagues and explain the process we are currently building, and to where it could bring us, to try and involve them in the next WBF event.
- For my organisation, I will commit to strengthen the family / household economy by supporting productive projects led by mothers
- Inform my federation's leaders and the women committees about the results of the meeting
- We need to communicate about this meeting through the provided space and share the information with my organisation.
- Do more research to fill the gaps in information
- Going forward, I commit to work within FI to support any action that may be possible based on FI skills

*"It is a challenge to put the proposals into practice, but it is very important to have some concrete ideas for practical actions. We can continue to work together on these actions thanks to skype, internet... but it was really good to have the opportunity to meet physically, face-to-face to enable us to have a truly strategic discussion."*

Adwoa Sakyi, IUF Africa



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