

# 'Securing Decent Work in tropical fruit export production'

Summary of evaluation report  
May 2016



This is a summary of the evaluation report of '**Securing Decent Work in tropical fruit export production**'; a three year project funded by Comic Relief. The General Agricultural Workers Union of Ghana TUC (GAWU), the Fako Agricultural Workers Union (FAWU), the International Union of Food Workers (IUF) and Banana Link delivered this project in Ghana and Cameroon. The project worked towards two outcomes:

- educating and empowering workers to negotiate living wages and working conditions; and
- building the capacity of the union to engage in dialogues with national and international supply chain actors.

As well as documenting the progress towards meeting the two main project outcomes, the evaluation provides important insights into how and why such a difference was made. In terms of achievements, the evaluation noted observable changes in attitude and approach within both unions, and found the project to be highly successful in meeting many of the project indicators.

The following sections summarise some of key elements of the project which led to such positive outcomes.

## **Participatory and accessible training and education to ensure sustainability**

One of the core reasons for project effectiveness was the approach taken towards educating and training workers and union representatives. Feedback from workers and educators and through observations revealed that the participatory methodologies were critical in ensuring active engagement from men and women who may have little or no education. The premise behind the approach was that people already have the answers but need access to peer group discussions to draw these out. In this sense the participatory approach was both educational and empowering.

Some of the characteristics of the training and education which were integral to its success included small group work, the use of visual aids, role plays and case studies. For example, body mapping was

employed as an interactive, visual technique to encourage workers to consider the harmful effects of inadequate PPE (Personal Protective Equipment). Other techniques, such as the PIP (Problem, Investigate, Plan) method were useful in encouraging union reps to be more reflective and fairer to both parties when carrying out their role as mediators between workers and management.

The training manual developed followed a basic four step framework (aims, task, report back and evaluate), which union reps could easily replicate when designing their own training courses at the end



of the project. The aim is for a group of reps to follow a 3 day course, starting with a basic introduction to their role and concluding on day 3 with training to train others. Sustainability was at the heart of all the project training initiatives although there were concerns that gender specific work might be more difficult to sustain.

### Focus on women and gender

In many ways the project's emphasis on gender led to the greatest difference. Empowering women in training and making them more aware of their rights as workers led many to assume leadership roles as staff representatives, as well as access the maternity benefits they were entitled to. Gender training enabled discussion about gender roles and the negative impacts of sexual harassment. Positive steps were made in encouraging men to care about issues such as domestic violence in the home, and sexual harassment at work. As a result of gender training, workers and representatives came to view gender as a topic for personal development rather than a topic to resist or defend their position on. There is also evidence that work on gender caused union members to view women in leadership positions more favourably, especially in relation to negotiations with management where 'gentle' and 'sober' women were seen as more likely to succeed.

Whilst in general the gender work had a positive impact on the realisation of project objectives, the external evaluator noted that sexual harassment at work was still a hidden problem due to cultural and social norms preventing the reporting of incidences. In light of this and the positive feedback from the women in the workshops, it is recommended that gender training should remain a part of both FAWU and GAWU's long term strategy.

### Receptivity of participants and management – Fairtrade certification and relationships with unions

Another factor contributing to the outcomes achieved was the receptivity of both participants and management to improving practice. Since most of the participants lacked a formal education, they appeared welcoming and appreciative of opportunities for training. As for management, the evaluation found Fairtrade certification to be an incentive for banana companies to become more receptive to the unions and keener to improve working conditions on the plantations. The relationship between unions and management involved in the project is largely cooperative and it was observed that Fairtrade certification further improved collaboration and trust between the two bodies. Most company management were happy to release workers for training, understanding the benefits such as the improvement of health and safety practices at plantation level.

## International connections

The international nature of the project was one of the things which had the most impact on FAWU (less so on GAWU as its union leaders were already well-connected). Contact with other unions and visits to other plantations allowed those involved to gain an insight into how working conditions have been improved in different countries. The visit to Colombia in year 2 gave the unions the opportunity to learn about the benefits of working shorter hours and of avoiding aerial spraying of pesticides while workers were in the fields.

## People and persistence

The skills and persistence of those involved in the project played a key role in the achievement of both outcomes. Many of the women in particular had strong skills in organising; convincing people to participate and getting things to happen. The quality of the volunteer led research as well as the strength of collaboration between Banana Link, GAWU and FAWU were also found to be important contributing factors to the project's positive impact. This strong collaboration was essential in overcoming some of the challenges posed, including addressing practical problems such as the poor roads and dire traffic around Accra. The evaluation praised Banana Link for the organisational feat of bringing people together for training and international meetings; especially for getting people from the partner organisations to Europe and Colombia. Finally, scrupulous monitoring of the financial aspect of project ensured that everyone had what they needed to participate.

## Emphasis on monitoring and evaluation

Throughout the project period the external evaluator worked closely with partners and beneficiaries to produce, test and use accessible monitoring tools. These methods were integrated into the project work from the start to enable ongoing learning from the information captured. A 'Journey of Change' is a 5 stage measure of progress towards the intended outcome of empowered workers and representatives devised for the project which was particularly effective tool either over a series of activities or after a single training event. By using coloured dots on a flipchart instead of names, the Journey of Change could be used to give a whole group instant visual feedback whilst keeping individual progress anonymous.



## Further information

The full evaluation is available on request as are the reports of annual field research conducted in Ghana and Cameroon. To view a film capturing the voices of participants describing project impact, please visit [www.bananalink.org.uk/empowering-workers-and-unions-africa](http://www.bananalink.org.uk/empowering-workers-and-unions-africa).

## Journey of Change for workers (including representatives)

<b>5</b>	<b>Leadership</b> At this step you are well informed and confident and are also starting to influence and support others. You are developing negotiating skills and getting involved in a leadership capacity.
<b>4</b>	<b>Well-informed and confident</b> At step 4 you have a good understanding of your main rights as a worker and are motivated and confident to make sure you receive them. As a result, you are empowered and it is not easy for anyone to exploit you. For many people this is the end of the journey. Some may want to be leaders.
<b>3</b>	<b>Realising implications and learning</b> Here you have realised the connections between the working conditions and some of the problems you are facing or that the conditions are not right. You are learning more about your rights and starting to deepen your understanding. You want things to change. You do not know how to get change to happen but you participate and ask questions. You join the union at this point, if not before.
<b>2</b>	<b>Aware but timid</b> At step 2 you are just aware of some of your basic rights as a worker, or maybe you are aware for the first time that you do have rights and that there are people working to maintain and improve those rights. But you are not confident to assert those rights or maybe you do not believe you will be listened to, so you lack confidence and need support.
<b>1</b>	<b>Ignorant and timid</b> This is the starting point where perhaps no one has told you about your rights as a worker or you have not been able to engage with this issue. Perhaps you are too busy working, or afraid you will lose your job or not meet your targets or you were not able to read and understand the agreement well.

### Further information and contact

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