

Project Report

ACTION TO SUPPORT WOMEN WORKERS WHO WERE TEMPORARILY SUSPENDED IN URABA, COLOMBIA

September 2015 - February 2016

Funded by: **UIA Charitable Foundation**

Implementing partner: **SINTRAINAGRO**



Background

Fierce winds in 2014 [devastated the banana sector in Uraba, Colombia](#), and a large number of women were temporarily suspended from their jobs. In response the women's secretary of SINTRAINAGRO requested national and international aid. UIA funding received in 2015 has been used to support the following activities.

Activities

1. Workshop on the 'socialisation of negotiation' and a mini market for the women who were suspended from work

18/19 September 2015 in Apartadó - 101 participants (95 women, 6 men) / 19 September 2015 in Carepa - 68 participants

After we began the collective bargaining process with employers in July, we held a workshop focusing on the agreements made with the company from which the women would also benefit. These workshops were held in the four municipalities, explaining the agreements and the rights they were entitled to.

A marketplace (pictured) was also set up providing basic goods to the affected women, divided into two groups so that it was easier to display and deliver the goods.



2. Seminar on 'psychosocial accompaniment' addressing the consequences of the suspension of working contracts

5 October 2015 - 156 participants (123 Women, 3 men, 30 children)

The objective of this activity was to raise awareness of the vulnerability faced by women due to the lack of income during the months when they were not earning a salary, and how they could get through such a situation. [Exposure to psychosocial hazards](#) in the workplace not only produce psychological and physiological damage to individual employees, but also produce further repercussions within society - reducing productivity in local/state economies, corroding familial/interpersonal relationships, and producing negative behavioural outcomes.

Risks include Increased worker vulnerability due to globalisation and poor work/ life balance. The participants were very grateful for the help they received from the trade union and they welcomed the

the work done by Banana Link, supported by the UIA. The union used a methodology that encouraged active and dynamic participation to get members out of their routine, and, as such, they were also able to participate in these activities with their families.

3. Seminar to raise awareness of and understanding about the collective bargaining agreements

28 October 2015 - 48 women participants - workers from the four municipalities, from the farms most strongly affected by the hurricane.

The negotiations between the company and Sintrainagro ended in June, after which the union continued to raise awareness of the achievements that were won for women workers. The seminar (pictured) provided a space to inform women about these agreements - in particular the 6% wage increase, the working hours and the funds for education and housing - and enable any questions to be answered.



4. Purchase and delivery of school supplies for the children of women who were suspended from work, allowing them to keep up to date with their homework and succeed in exams

10 December 2015 - 267 participants (141 women/girls, 126 men/boys)

For the development of this activity (pictured) we held a recreational day where the mothers of the children could attend. The event also had entertainers, games, ice-creams and lunch. Then the school kits were handed out to the children.



5. Creation of a fund to help the women

A fund was created to enable the union to continue to provide support to the women who were suspended as well as others who were going through financial or health difficulties. It will also fund additional training and empowerment activities for women workers.

6. Other activities

25 November 2015 - 289 participants (170 women, 19 men)

Four forums were held in the four municipalities of the banana production area, in partnership with the women's secretaries of those areas. These meetings were held on the Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. Statistics were presented at these events on the number of women who were victims of domestic violence or rape. In these events the union highlighted the lack of protection offered to these women victims by the government authorities responsible for these issues.

Likewise, on 6 March, 2016, SINTRAINAGRO held an event to commemorate International Women's Day with the participation of more than 450 women, men, girls and boys in the town of Apartadó.

Results of these activities

The women feel very grateful for this support in resolving their problems. Also some of the women workers changed their attitude towards the company as they had felt discriminated against when they or their colleagues had their contracts temporarily suspended. In addition, they were able to get to know each

other and form friendships so they can stay in contact.

Problems discovered

The truth is that one key problem was the communication with some of the women who went to stay with their family members so we did not have any way to communicate with them. However, when they returned, we were able to get them involved in the project. Other problems were that we noticed was that many of the women worried about the debts they had as a result of bank loans, paying rent or paying for public services.

Dissemination of information

We announced these activities through 'permission letters' which we had agreed in the Collective Bargaining Agreements and through our workers' committees in each of the banana plantations.

The results were positive because we have achieved the implementation of the programmed activities, so this support has been very valuable for the continuation of our objectives. These activities were published in our newspaper *De sol a sol*:

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SINTRAINAGRO
NOVIEMBRE 2015

Departamento de la Mujer de Sintrainagro entrega

mercados a trabajadoras licenciadas de las fincas bananeras



El Vicepresidente de Sintrainagro, Gilberto Torres Espitia, da la bienvenida a las mujeres



Mesa principal del evento organizado para las mujeres que fueron licenciadas de fincas bananeras

El Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Industria Agropecuaria, Sintrainagro, en cabeza de Adela Torres Valoy, Coordinadora del Departamento de la Mujer, entregó mercados a trabajadoras licenciadas de las fincas bananeras, en un emotivo evento que se realizó en el municipio de Apartadó, Antioquia.

En la instalación del certamen se hizo presente el Vicepresidente de Sintrainagro, Gilberto Torres Espitia, quien felicitó a las mujeres por creer en la organización sindical. Reveló que 600 trabajadores han sido licenciados, entre ellos madres cabeza de familia, para lo cual pidió trabajar de la mano para sortear las dificultades que se presentan en las fincas bananeras.

Luis Enrique Valverde, Fiscal Nacional de Sintrainagro, valoró a las mujeres por la constancia y la dedicación con sus familias a pesar de la situación que afrontan por la pérdida del empleo. "lo que construimos es lo que recogemos", señaló el dirigente, en su intervención.

El Secretario de Salud y Bienestar Social de Sintrainagro, Omar Casarubia, pidió a las mujeres convertirse en correos de transmisión de la información que fluye en el sindicato, relacionada con los apoyos y todos los proyectos

que se adelantan a favor de los trabajadores y sus familias.

El presidente del Concejo de Apartadó, Manuel Rivas, dijo que Sintrainagro cumple una labor importante en la defensa de los derechos de los trabajadores, al tiempo que deseó a las mujeres muchos éxitos en sus labores cotidianas, porque a muchas de ellas les toca cumplir las dos funciones, ser mamá y papá en sus hogares.

El dirigente social y político, Eliécer Arteaga, resaltó la labor de las mujeres diciendo que han ganado espacios de participación en diferentes escenarios, pero dijo que la situación en estos momentos para la economía bananera no era el mejor, pero Sintrainagro estaba comprometido buscando soluciones a la crisis.

Finalmente Adela Torres, Secretaria General de Sintrainagro y Coordinadora del Departamento de la Mujer, insistió en la buena disposición del sindicato para seguir consiguiendo recursos que en algo ayuden a sortear las dificultades derivadas de la problemática bananera, que se complicaron aún más con un vendaval que azotó a la región de Urabá en el pasado mes de julio. Instó a las mujeres a que se unan a los programas y proyectos que adelanta Sintrainagro.



Adela Torres Valoy, participa en la entrega de regalos a todas las asistentes



Grupo de mujeres que se gozaron la realización del evento, acompañadas de dirigentes de Sintrainagro

Testimonios:



María Mendoza, trabajadora licenciada

"No estoy haciendo nada, he tenido mucho estrés luego de quedar vacante, afortunadamente he recibido el apoyo de Confenalco y Sintrainagro. La noticia de quedarme sin trabajo fue muy dura y tiene una incidencia negativa en la economía de mi hogar, tengo muchas deudas".



Nayibe Pereira, trabajadora licenciada

"Quedar sin trabajo fue muy duro, una cosa que no esperaba, me cogió por sorpresa, soy madre cabeza de familia y mi situación es muy complicada. Luego de servir a una empresa abandonando a los hijos en la casa, se queda uno sin empleo, que tristeza".



Eris Patricia Rivas, trabajadora licenciada

"La salida de la finca me cayó como un baldado de agua fría, no tengo apoyo de nadie, sólo Sintrainagro ha estado pendiente de nuestras penurias, pido a las empresas que piensen en el trabajador que le ha entregado sus mejores años a producir y que hoy termina en la calle".



Magdalena Murillo, trabajadora licenciada

"Gracias a Comfama y a Sintrainagro hemos podido solventarnos en algo, mi situación es crítica y se agrava aún más con una deuda que tengo en el banco y que no he podido pagar. Soy reubicada y eso es aprovechado por los patronos para dejarme cesante".



Nilfida Sánchez, trabajadora licenciada

"Mi casa es de madera y esperaba arreglarla con el fruto de mi trabajo, hoy se ve truncada esa ilusión, sólo Sintrainagro me ha tendido la mano, tengo muchas deudas y me ha tocado aumentarlas pidiendo plata prestada, mis esperanzas se vinieron abajo por el vendaval".



Blanca Giraldo, trabajadora licenciada

"Es muy triste quedar sin trabajo y tener que sacar adelante a mis hijos, no tengo como pagar el arriendo. Gracias a Sintrainagro y a Adela Torres, me han ayudado para los colegios, los diarios y los uniformes, todo ha sido muy complicado desde que perdí mi trabajo".

El evento, organizado por el Departamento de la Mujer de Sintrainagro, en cabeza de Adela Torres Valoy, fue todo un éxito. Se ofreció un refrigerio, las asistentes participaron de las dinámicas y acudieron al baile para olvidar un poco la difícil situación por la que afrontan al quedar sin empleo. Sintrainagro se comprometió a seguir apoyándolas para disminuir el impacto negativo que tiene su economía familiar, al no recibir salario alguno.

Is there any need for a follow-up action for this project?

We do not believe so, but we would offer our full support with any follow up if considered necessary by the supporting organisations. There were no problems so this gives us confidence for any future supportive actions. The results of this project will be shared through the [Gender Working Group of the World Banana Forum](#) to enable other unions to learn from SINTRAINAGRO's project to support women suspended from work.



Participants in the seminar to raise awareness of and understanding about the collective bargaining agreements

"SINTRAINAGRO would like to take this opportunity to thank those who cooperated with us towards this project, without knowing the women banana workers, and made it possible for us to support them so they could continue working in the area of Urabá, Colombia. For this, we are very grateful." - Adela Torres, General Secretary of SINTRAINAGRO

All Photos: SINTRAINAGRO

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Nineteen organisations, including Banana Link, from across the world have come together to campaign to Make Fruit Fair! NGOs from Europe are working in close partnership with small farmer organisations and plantation worker unions from Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean to improve living and working conditions for the hundreds of thousands of people who grow, pick and pack the tropical fruit that we buy in our shops every day.

www.makefruitfair.org

