

# **FINAL REPORT TO SSR**

## **ETHICAL TRADE IN AFRICAN HORTICULTURE – GENDER, RIGHTS AND PARTICIPATION**

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**Research Project:**

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### **BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES**

The aims of this project were to analyse how ethical trade can enhance the economic and social rights of women and men workers in the export horticulture industries of Kenya, Zambia and South Africa; and to identify best practice in implementing gender-sensitive ethical trade based on worker and stakeholder participation.

Employment in the African export horticulture industry is predominantly female, with women concentrated in informal (e.g. temporary, seasonal, casual and contract) work, where poorer conditions are found. Codes of conduct aimed at addressing labour practices and employment conditions in the sector have been underway since the late 1990s. These codes were the focus of a preliminary first phase project on gender and codes of conduct in African horticulture undertaken by Barrientos, Dolan and Tallontire (2002). The first phase provided a mapping of codes in the sector and an initial assessment of the extent to which gender issues were included in the development of codes. It found that a plethora of codes were introduced in the sector, coming from European supermarkets, importers, exporters and trade associations, but that the extent to which code content addressed gender concerns was highly variable.

Phase II built on these findings by focusing on the process of code implementation. This was a wider collaborative study also involving: Diana Auret (AEAAZ Zimbabwe), Karin Kleinbooi (CRLS South Africa), Chosani Njobvu (INESOR Zambia), Maggie Opondo (University of Nairobi, Kenya) and Sally Smith (Research Officer, IDS Sussex).

By 2002, codes of conduct were well established in Kenya and Zambia, and were in the process of filtering down from exporters and large growers to an increasing number of producers in South Africa. We were thus undertaking the research at a time in which codes were sufficiently advanced to investigate the process of code implementation and the extent to which gendered employment concerns were being identified in the implementation process.

The objectives of this project, as set out in the application to DFID, were to:

1. Extend the conceptual framework to support a gender analysis of ethical trade drawing on gender, rights and capabilities approaches;
2. Examine gendered needs and rights of employees in the sector, as identified by employees themselves, especially by more vulnerable groups such as temporary workers;
3. Assess the extent to which these gendered needs and rights are being, or could be, addressed through (a) worker participation and (b) wider stakeholder participation;
4. Examine how the evolving process of code development, monitoring and verification can be made more gender sensitive through participatory processes; and
5. Consider how ethical trade and complementary national and international policy can jointly contribute to enhancing the economic and social rights of workers.

As the research progressed, it became clear that despite the often good intentions of producers and exporters to improve labour practices, poor employment conditions persisted. As a result, the project became more focused on issues of participatory social auditing (PSA), and mechanisms of stakeholder participation in the auditing process. The importance of this focus was supported by preliminary findings that indicated that standard forms of assessment and social auditing, which were underway to a different extent in all three countries, were ineffective in identifying social issues. Not only were workers, especially temporary and seasonal workers, largely unaware of codes (even though all the farms in our study were implementing them), but standard social auditors and assessors rarely engaged with workers during the auditing process. As a result, the process was failing to pick up many gender issues (e.g. harassment and discrimination) that we found were of particular concern to women workers. In all three countries, our research helped to stimulate interest in participatory social auditing as a way to bring the perspective of workers into the process of code implementation. Di Auret, who led this aspect of the work in our research team, was asked to undertake PSA training or audits in all three countries after completion of the fieldwork.

This project proved to be very timely. Problems arising from the implementation of codes were beginning to emerge during the process of our research. This was most prevalent in Kenya, where a local NGO issued a complaint to the UK Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) about abuses of workers' rights on flower farms, including issues of gender discrimination and harassment. This triggered media interest in the issue, and a greater concern in Kenya with gender issues in the implementation of codes, which our research was addressing. In South Africa, awareness of codes, and the need to address issues of racial (less gender) discrimination was motivated in part by fear that if the sector was not proactive, it could be liable to similar tensions as emerged in neighbouring Zimbabwe.

In each of three countries the involvement of stakeholders from outside the industry is being considered as a means of addressing problems in code implementation identified during our research. These took different forms. In Kenya, the Horticultural Ethical Business Initiative (HEBI), a local multi-stakeholder organization, was set up in direct

response to the above incident. The Kenyan workshop that formed part of this research project provided a timely forum for dialogue between members of the research team and other local stakeholders, many of whom were also involved in HEBI. In the Zambia workshop, participants (aware of developments in Kenya) also discussed closer collaboration with NGOs, who had largely been outside the process of code implementation. In South Africa, during the course of our research, the Wine Industry Ethical Trading Initiative (WIETA) was set up as an outcome of the ETI wine pilot in the country. Although the wine and horticulture sectors are separate, some producers are engaged in both. The South African research workshop stimulated dialogue, particularly between some industry leaders and NGOs, as to the feasibility of pursuing a similar route in horticulture.

The project was facilitated by the co-operation of exporters, producers, NGOs, trade unions and workers in the research. Exporters and producers (on whom we depended for access) were particularly keen to participate in the project, both to demonstrate their commitment to ethical trade issues but also, in some cases, to better understand employment problems and how code implementation could be improved. This ease of access greatly enhanced our ability to investigate the gender dimensions of code implementation from the perspectives of all actors involved in the process, and to engage with workers in an open way.

## **METHODS**

The research methods employed were divided into three stages:

1. In the first stage we developed the conceptual framework initiated in Phase One of the research in relation to gender rights and participation. A joint workshop was held with all key researchers from the UK, South Africa, Kenya and Zambia, to discuss the analytical framework and develop a common methodology for fieldwork.
2. The second stage entailed fieldwork in South Africa, Kenya and Zambia. In each country we drew up a purposive sample of employers selected from farms and packhouses that were implementing codes. This process ensured that there was coverage of the full range of codes applied in each country. All employers were interviewed, using a semi-structured interview schedule, to identify how codes were being implemented and the extent to which gender issues were being addressed.

The main focus of the fieldwork was interviews and focus group discussions with workers. In each country, a sample of workers was drawn from a roster of employees provided by the companies. The sample (80-100 workers in each country) ensured a representative distribution of gender, ethnicity, position and employment status. Worker research involved:

- Worker interviews to explore individual needs profiled by gender, age, ethnicity and employment status using a semi-structured schedule.
- Focus groups with all participants in the individual worker interviews (approximately 15 focus groups per country) using participatory methods. Focus

group discussions were a particularly useful tool for testing which PSA methods might be most effective in an actual auditing process.

3. In each country (South Africa, Kenya, Zambia and the UK) we also undertook stakeholder workshops with non-government organisations, trade unions, auditors, employers, and government officials. These workshops allowed stakeholders to participate in collaboratively assessing how the specific needs raised by marginal workers in the research might be addressed by codes, and how worker and civil society participation could be enhanced in the process, particularly through the development of local multi-stakeholder initiatives within ethical trade.

These research methods proved effective in addressing the aims and objectives of the research. Producers and workers were generally very receptive and interested in participating in the research. All the stakeholder workshops were well attended (around 40 participants in each African country and 65 in the UK). They stimulated lively discussion on the numerous gender issues that the research identified (including embedded discrimination and sexual harassment on farms). In particular, they fostered discussion and proposals on how these issues could be addressed, and how the stakeholders themselves could move forward in enhancing the local implementation of codes.

## **FINDINGS**

The aim of the research was to identify how codes can address the gendered needs and rights of workers in African horticulture. It found that despite the positive steps that producers have taken to comply with codes, a number of employment problems persist, most of which have gender dimensions. Furthermore, while codes can be effective instruments to raise the standards of permanent workers, they generally overlook the conditions faced by men and women in insecure forms of employment (temporary, casual, migrant and seasonal), which often form the majority of the horticulture workforce. Women workers in particular are adversely affected by issues such as sexual harassment, discrimination, excessive compulsory overtime and lack of childcare facilities. Their concentration in non-permanent forms of employment, and lack of representation in workplace committees and trade unions, make women more vulnerable to workplace abuse, and constitute significant barriers to them claiming their rights as citizens and workers. At the same time, the fact that women face these barriers is a reflection of their position in labour markets and the wider society. Deeply embedded social and cultural norms, which legitimate unequal gender relations, are transferred to the workplace and influence the way women are perceived and treated by their employers and supervisors.

If codes are to enhance the rights of all workers, including women, they must be implemented in a gender-sensitive way. The current focus on 'snapshot' auditing has generally failed to move implementation beyond a surface assessment of working conditions to the identification and resolution of issues that are of greatest concern to workers. Participatory social auditing has the potential to create a more dynamic and problem-solving approach, through involving workers at every stage of the implementation of codes, including (and especially) during feedback and decision making regarding remediation. While social codes can be an effective tool for improving working conditions, this is unlikely to occur if the process of code implementation fails to identify poor employment practices and issues of greatest concern to workers.

At the same time, if codes are to bring sustainable and widespread improvements in labour conditions, participatory social auditing can only be one component in a wider process of social change. Ensuring workers' rights requires leveraging a range of mechanisms, including national legislation, international labour standards, and the efforts of various stakeholders. There is growing recognition, including among supermarket buyers in the UK, that a multi-stakeholder approach to code implementation, incorporating *local* private sector, civil society, trade union and government bodies, may have greater potential to effect improvements, particularly in its capacity to ensure representation of the interests of marginal workers and women. WIETA in South Africa and AEAZ in Zimbabwe provide useful models of locally-owned multi-stakeholder initiatives oriented toward a continual process of workplace improvement, which are being adapted in countries like Kenya.

Northern stakeholders also have a critical role to play in ensuring gender-sensitive implementation of codes. Support for participatory social auditing and local multi-stakeholder initiatives, as well as the provision of guidelines and education on gender issues and perspectives, could potentially transform what has to date been a largely gender-neutral approach into one that incorporates the gendered needs and rights of all workers.

Finally, an important aim of this project has been to explore the link between the policy and analytical aspects of ethical trade. The approach initiated in the first phase of the research and further developed in the second phase has been a gender value chain approach. This approach integrates a gendered analysis of the labour force (based on the division between productive and reproductive labour) into the value chain approach. The division between productive and reproductive labour underpins limitations in the reach of codes as they extend down value chains. This stems from the fact that codes are largely oriented toward addressing productive (paid) rather than reproductive (unpaid) labour. However, for most women, who are predominantly temporary and seasonal workers, this is an artificial separation. Women continue to assume responsibility for childcare, food provisioning, and housework yet lack the employment security and benefits (e.g., childcare, overtime, maternity leave, and sick leave) that would facilitate these reproductive roles. Indeed, many of the employment issues faced by women are compounded by the vulnerability of their employment position. These issues are often deemed beyond the 'bounds' of the labour rights covered by codes of conduct. At best, benefits extended by codes to vulnerable women workers (such as child care) are a product of a paternalist approach, which offers no accountability to women or men as agents in the process of code implementation. Participatory social auditing, and the representation of "informal" (mainly women) workers in multi-stakeholder initiatives, can help to break down some of the barriers that women and men in insecure employment face in expressing their concerns, thereby enhancing their rights through codes of conduct.

Thus, for codes of conduct to be truly effective, there must be a *continual process* of change with an ultimate aim of fostering a work environment where the social and economic rights of workers are respected. Gender discrimination is deeply embedded in employment practices as well as the wider society, and will only be addressed through a process of awareness raising and worker engagement. Participation and local organization provide the potential for vulnerable workers to contribute to this change by

expressing their concerns, and places greater obligation on employers implementing codes of conduct to address those concerns.

## **DISSEMINATION**

A range of dissemination activities have taken place linked to this research as the project has progressed:

**BBC Interview** (December 2002) – Stephanie Barrientos was interviewed, as a result of her participation in this project, on Ethical Trade on BBC Radio 4 ‘World Tonight’.

### **Country Workshops (February - June 2003).**

The country workshops were held partly to gain stakeholder feedback, but also to disseminate initial research findings in each country. These were all well attended by a range of stakeholders. The June workshop in the UK had 65 participants from industry, NGOs, trade unions and research organizations. As noted above, workshops held in Kenya, Zambia and South Africa also provided an opportunity to present the findings of our research to local stakeholders, and to strategize together on ways forward.

### **International Conferences**

Presentations have been given by different members of the team arising out of the research at the following workshops and conferences:

- December 2002, African Studies Association 45th Annual Meeting, Africa and the Global Economy, Washington, DC (Catherine Dolan).
- May 2002, Workshop on Gender and Globalization, International Center for Research on Women, Washington DC (Catherine Dolan).
- March 2003, Environmentally and Socially Sustainable Development Conference, World Bank (Catherine Dolan).
- June 2003, Biennial Conference of the Ethical Trading Initiative, London (Stephanie Barrientos and Sally Smith)
- September 2003, Workshop on Global Value Chains, Department for Development Research, Institute for International Studies, Copenhagen, (Anne Tallontire)
- October 2003, Conference on Sustainable Trade, CSR Europe, Brussels (Anne Tallontire)
- November 2003, Women Working Worldwide Workshop, Manchester (Stephanie Barrientos and Maggie Opondo)
- November 2003, Ethical Performance Conference on International Labour Standards, Brussels (Sally Smith and Stephanie Barrientos)

### **Working Papers**

S. Smith, D. Auet, S. Barrientos, C. Dolan, K. Kleinbooi, C. Njobvu, M. Opondo, and A. Tallontire, Ethical Trade in African Horticulture, Gender Rights and Participation, UK Workshop Report and IDS Working Paper (forthcoming).

Auret, D. Participatory Social Auditing, A Gender Sensitive Approach, IDS Working Paper (forthcoming)

Dolan, Catherine, Opondo, M., and S. Smith, 2003, 'Gender, Rights and Participation in the Kenya Cut Flower Industry', *NRI Working Paper* No: 2768, Chatham: Natural Resources Institute.

Tallontire, Anne; Njobvu, C. and Smith, S., Ethical Trade in Zambia Horticulture: Gender, Rights and Participation, *NRI Working Paper*, Chatham: Natural Resources Institute, forthcoming.

Karin Kleinbooi, Di Auret, Stephanie Barrientos and Sally Smith, Ethical Trade in South African Deciduous Fruit – Gender Rights and Participation, Centre for Rural Legal Studies Paper, Stellenbosh, South Africa.

### **Journal Articles**

S. Barrientos, C. Dolan and A. Tallontire, A Gendered Value Chain Approach to Codes of Conduct in African Horticulture, *World Development*, Volume 31, Number 9, pp. 1511-1526, September 2003.

A. Tallontire, S. Barrientos, C. Dolan and S. Smith, Gender Value Chains in African Horticulture, *Development In Practice*, forthcoming [abstract accepted for special issue on Development and the Private Sector, final paper due to be submitted end of February 2004]

### **Further Proposals for Dissemination**

DFID has agreed to the publication of an IDS Policy Brief on Codes of Labour Practice and Participatory Social Auditing. This is currently under preparation.

A book, co-edited by Stephanie Barrientos and Catherine Dolan entitled 'Ethical Sourcing in the Global Food Chain' (provisional publisher Earthscan) is currently under preparation. The book is aimed at a wide audience, including policy makers, practitioners and researchers. It includes contributions on ethical and fair trade, with 3 chapters from different stakeholder perspectives (company, NGO and trade union). The book will contain two chapters specifically arising from this project. After discussion with various publishers it was felt that a book arising solely out of this project would reach too narrow an audience, and that a wider market would be reached by including dissemination from this project in a broader book on ethical sourcing in food.

Diana Auret and Stephanie Barrientos are putting a proposal to DFID and Levi Strauss Foundation to co-fund a video on Participatory Social Auditing. This would be aimed at policy makers and practitioners, with the purpose of raising awareness and providing a practical training tool to those working in the field.