

REPORT TO ESCOR

Title:

Gender and Ethical Trade in Export Horticulture: South Africa, Kenya and Zambia

Principal Researchers:

Dr Stephanie Barrientos (Institute of Development Studies)

Dr Catherine Dolan (University of East Anglia)

Dr Anne Tallontire (Natural Resources Institute)

Research Project: R7525

April 2001

BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

There has been a rapid growth in ethical trade over recent years. An increasing number of companies have adopted codes of conduct to cover employment conditions in their supply chains in developing countries. Private sector mechanisms have become an important means of addressing bad conditions and poor wages in export production, forming another arm in policies to alleviate poverty amongst the 'working poor'. Many of the export sectors covered by codes of conduct have very high levels of female employment, and the gender sensitivity of codes will be important in ensuring the needs of both female and male employees are addressed. Yet gender is an aspect that has been largely overlooked in both research and policy analysis on ethical trade.

The Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) has played a pivotal role in promoting ethical trade within the UK. Seven supermarkets are members of the ETI (one other participating without full membership), and all the main UK supermarkets are now applying social codes in their supply agreements for own-brand and fresh produce (fruit, vegetables and flowers). Given the dominance of the multiple retailers in the UK food market (supermarkets account for 80% of market share), most developing country exporters of these products to the UK are now required to apply codes of conduct. A similar trend is also taking place throughout supermarkets in Europe.

This project examined the application of codes of conduct in export horticulture (fruit, vegetables and flowers) from South Africa, Kenya and Zambia¹ to the UK, focusing specifically on the gender dimension of codes. Horticultural production is expanding in all three countries as an important part of their export policies, and the European market (including the UK) is their main export destination. Employment in the sector is significant in the main horticulture producing regions, and in all three countries the majority of this employment is female (ranging from 53%

¹ The original proposal was to examine export horticulture in South Africa, Kenya and Zimbabwe. Initial research was carried out on Zimbabwe, and is reflected in the attached Research Paper, but due to the land seizures in the country, we were advised by DFID not to pursue our fieldwork there. As a result we substituted Zambia as the third case study country approximately one third of the way through the project. Zambia is not such a significant horticultural exporter (although the sector is growing), but it gave us the basis for comparing differences in the application of codes across countries.

to 75%). Women tend to be concentrated in more insecure temporary work where poorer conditions are found and men in more secure and permanent work.² The codes of conduct being introduced by UK and European supermarkets are thus of significant importance if employment conditions are to be improved in the sector, especially for those in temporary and seasonal work. Although only introduced in recent years, there are already numerous codes covering the horticultural and foods sectors, and they are evolving in a fairly uncoordinated way. This research, carried out during the course of one year, set out to map and provide an initial assessment of the development of codes in the sector, and particularly the extent to which gender concerns are being addressed within the process.

Project Aims and Objectives:

The aims and objectives of the project set out in the research proposal were to:

Provide a comparative examination of the gender implications of codes of conduct in the export horticultural sector. Identify the extent to which gender-specific concerns have been (a) incorporated into existing codes of conduct and (b) addressed in the process of code monitoring and verification by stakeholders in horticulture in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Kenya.

This project sought to achieve its aims through the following objectives:

1. To assess the gender relevance of codes in agricultural sectors (both company and industry), identifying the extent to which gender-sensitive criteria have been incorporated.
2. To map key institutions and stakeholders involved in the process of code formulation, implementation and monitoring throughout the horticultural supply chain in both the UK and Zimbabwe, Kenya and South Africa, and to identify relevant stakeholders who have *not* been integrated into the process thus far.
3. To undertake a comparative assessment of the factors that have facilitated and/or hindered the incorporation of gender concerns by stakeholders involved in the process of code formulation.
4. To develop an appropriate analytical framework for evaluating the gender dimensions of codes and labour standards.

This research was proposed as the first phase of a two-phase project. Phase I focused on a comparative analysis of the process of implementing codes of conduct, and facilitated the setting up of the next phase of the project. A further Phase II application will be submitted to DFID. It would further extend the research through a comparative gender assessment of codes of conduct at the producer level in the same countries, by examining their effects on both levels of employment and conditions of employment (which Phase I did not address). It would also examine concrete mechanisms through which stakeholder participation and gender sensitivity in the auditing, monitoring and verification of codes may be improved, in order to advance a more gender-sensitive policy framework for ethical trade. Once completed, it is planned to publish a book which combines the research from Phases I and II of this project.

² See the draft working paper attached to this report for full details of the research.

METHODS

This research set out to achieve its aims and objectives through a combination of qualitative research methods:

1. A comprehensive review of codes of conduct implemented in the horticultural sector identifying key components that address gender-specific interests.
2. A mapping of all the stakeholders involved in process of code formulation, monitoring and verification throughout the export horticultural supply chain in the case study countries.
3. Semi-structured interviews conducted with relevant stakeholders to assess the process through which gender concerns are considered in code formulation. These interviews addressed the following questions:
 - Do codes include gender-specific criteria? If not, why not?
 - Is compliance with social criteria limited to government minimum requirements?
 - What was the process through which gender concerns were/were not incorporated into existing codes of conduct?
 - To what extent are the processes of code formulation and implementation open to the inclusion of gender-specific criteria in codes?
 - How are the interests of marginalised workers and women incorporated into the process of code formulation/implementation?
4. A literature appraisal of frameworks for gender analysis, and assessment of their applicability to the examination of codes.

The mapping of codes proved to be an extensive exercise, as there are a large number of different codes facing producers coming from a variety of sources. Codes coming from established bodies such as the Ethical Trading Initiative and SA8000 were easily obtainable. However, we found that these codes were of less direct relevance to the horticultural sectors in our case study countries than numerous private company and sectoral codes that had been introduced. The company codes were coming from supermarkets, importers and exporters, every one differing to some extent in its wording and content, especially on gender issues. Many of these codes were part of confidential agreements with suppliers, which made access difficult, and meant we were not able to identify the source of all the codes we examined in the report (this plus the number of these codes led us to summarise company codes in the report). Sectoral codes coming from various trade associations were more easily accessible, but again there was wide variation in their content, especially from a gender perspective. In total we examined 18 codes of conduct: 2 independent, 5 supermarket, 4 importer/exporter, and 7 sectoral codes.

Mapping of stakeholders involved in or linked to ethical trade was carried out in the UK and the case study countries. Semi-structured interviews with stakeholders were carried out in order to help in our assessment of the gender content and sensitivity of relevant codes of conduct, and in order to assess the level of different stakeholder participation within the development and implementation of codes of conduct. Within the UK we interviewed 25 organisations/companies, usually in person but also by telephone and a few through written communication. Within the case study countries we interviewed 28 organisations/companies in South Africa, 21 in Kenya, and 19 in Zambia. The following is a breakdown of the number of stakeholders interviewed by country.

Breakdown of Stakeholder Interviews

	NGO	Trade union	Company	Government	Trade Association	Academic	Professional	Total
UK	6	1	10	1	1	3	3	25
South Africa	5	4	7	2	3	2	5	28
Kenya	3	1	8	2	3	1	3	21
Zambia	5	1	5	2	2	3	1	19
Total	19	7	30	7	9	9	12	93

Note: Trade unions and government are fairly centralised, reducing the need for multiple interviews

A literature survey was also carried out in relation to all relevant publications on ethical trade and labour standards, especially from a gender perspective. This included publications from NGOs, company reports, trade unions, government and multi-lateral organisations, academic journal articles and books. Much of this was 'grey literature', which we accessed through contact with key informants, or was in the form of reports obtainable via the Internet. There are fewer academic publications in this field although the number is expanding. We found that only a limited amount of published material takes a specifically gender perspective, and this tends to come from a few academics and NGOs that have a specific gender focus to their work. We also found that most of the published material took an empirical perspective, with very little analytical or theoretical consideration of the issues.

FINDINGS

Our overall findings from the research are presented in detail in the attached draft working paper, and we will only highlight some key issues in this shorter report.

Overall we found that the introduction of ethical trade is moving at a rapid pace within horticulture in South Africa, Kenya and Zambia. Codes of conduct are coming in from three directions: independent (ETI and SA8000), company (supermarket, importer and exporter) and sectoral (via trade associations). There are some moves towards harmonisation of codes (ETI, SA8000, COLEACP Harmonisation Framework), but despite this there is still little effective co-ordination of codes of conduct. Some use ILO core conventions as a basis of code formulation that gives them a degree of commonality. But other codes, especially those that are an extension of production and environmental standards, tend to be much more variable in their content. Through our mapping we were able to obtain a fuller picture of the plethora of codes facing producers. This phase of the research did not include a survey of producers and workers themselves, and we were unable to assess the effect codes were having on them, which we would hope to do at a further stage. However, stakeholder interviews revealed that the number and diversity of codes operating within the sector was problematic, and could potentially undermine the effectiveness of ethical trade.

In order to develop a more grounded analysis of the gender dimensions of ethical trade, we carried out a survey of *potentially* relevant theoretical and analytical literature around gender and development. This led us to explore gender and ethical trade from a rights based perspective, focusing not only on civil, but importantly economic and social rights. However, we did not expand on this within the research report, as our work on this approach is still at an initial phase, but we aim to develop it further at the next stage. In the report we employed a more simplified analytical framework to assess the gender content of codes of conduct based on the 'gender pyramid'. This divided employment issues into three levels: Firstly, core employment issues facing men and women that are largely covered by ILO core and related conventions, as well as

by national legislation. Secondly employment related issues that are of greater concern to insecure workers and women - who usually also have domestic and childcare responsibilities - such as reproductive rights, childcare, and transport. Thirdly underlying issues such as general access to education by men and women, and social attitudes and relations, which can affect women's position and conditions of employment within the labour force, but which are largely beyond the scope of private sector standards alone.

Within this framework, we found that the more ILO conventions used in a code as its basis, the better the coverage of the first segment of the gender pyramid. This was particularly relevant to independent codes, plus some company and sectoral codes, although there was much more variability in the latter. However, as we moved to the second segment of the gender pyramid, there was wide variability between all codes on the number and types of issues covered, with some codes covering few or none at all. No codes that we examined covered issues in the third segment of the gender pyramid. The issues addressed in the first segment of the gender pyramid were important to men and women when they were actually in paid employment (especially those in permanent employment). The issues in the second segment of the gender pyramid were of particular relevance to women and temporary workers (the majority of whom are female in horticulture). Therefore, the more a code addressed issues in the second segment of the gender pyramid, the greater its gender sensitivity.

A few of the codes we examined barely covered any of the issues in the gender pyramid, although they did make reference to national legislation, the gender coverage of which was variable between our case study countries. Most codes covered some or all of the issues in the first segment of the gender pyramid, but were weak or barely covered any of the issues in the second segment of the gender pyramid. Only a few codes of the codes had a wider coverage of issues in the second segment of the gender pyramid, although there was still variability between them. Our conclusion, therefore, in assessing all codes operating in export horticulture in our case study countries was that their gender sensitivity was at best very variable, and at worst weak or non-existent. As codes are revised, and particularly if greater harmonisation takes place between them, far more attention needs to be paid to gender issues if codes are to address the employment conditions experienced by those in more insecure work, and particularly women workers.

Content is only one aspect of the gender sensitivity of codes, which can also be greatly affected in the implementation process through the auditing, monitoring and verification procedures used. Participation in the process of monitoring and verification by civil society groups at a local level that are able to reflect the interests and needs of women, is essential in raising gender awareness within a multi-stakeholder approach. There are examples of gender-aware stakeholder participation in ethical trade, such as within the ETI pilots. But stakeholder interviews in our case study countries (none of which are a direct part of the pilots), revealed a general absence of local stakeholder participation in code implementation, even where local stakeholders with capacity and knowledge of the issues existed.

We found that the primary means of implementation of codes of conduct within export horticulture in South Africa, Kenya and Zambia was via auditing of growers either occasionally by supermarkets, or more often by their agents within the supply chain (importers, exporters or occasionally professional auditors). Stakeholder interviews revealed the potential importance and current weaknesses in auditing procedures in ethical trade. Most auditors from companies are technologists with little or no training in social auditing. In the interviews we carried out we found no examples of them consulting with local stakeholders, but we heard of examples where important gender issues were missed. Professional auditors are more likely to consult local stakeholders, and employ those with local knowledge, but their attention to gender issues remains

variable, and often poor. In conclusion, our research indicated that there is an important need to develop more systematic mechanisms for stakeholder participation in the process of code implementation by private sector companies, and that this participation needs to incorporate groups representing the interests of both female and male, temporary and permanent workers. At a practical level, there also needs to be clear guidelines for the gender sensitive auditing of codes, using local auditors who are gender aware and have an appropriate background.

DISSEMINATION

Working paper

Attached to this report is the draft of a working paper. We have sent this draft to collaborators in our case study countries, as well as two UK referees, for comment. Once we have received all comments and made appropriate amendments to the paper, it will be published as part of the Working Paper Series of the Natural Resources Institute, University of Greenwich. It will also be made available on their website, and we will ensure links are made to the paper on other relevant websites (e.g. ELDIS and the Resource Centre Data Base).

Seminar Papers and Presentations

An initial presentation on Gender and Export Horticulture was given at a workshop on Ethical Trade and Marginalised Workers in March 2000. A presentation was also given at the Ethical Trading Initiative Conference in November 2000 by Dr Stephanie Barrientos, which drew on this research. A seminar paper will be given on 6 June 2001 at the Institute of Development Studies, Sussex as part of a series of seminars on Gender and Public/Private Accountability. A further paper is planned at the DSA Conference in September 2001 at Manchester as part of the session on Corporate Social Responsibility. Initial discussions have taken place to give a presentation on the research at a seminar organised by the Ethical Trading Initiative, but a firm date has yet to be agreed.

Academic Journal Articles

Once the working paper has been produced, we plan to write an academic journal article during the summer of 2001, to be submitted to World Development the following autumn.

Dr Stephanie Barrientos, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, Falmer, Brighton, BN1 9RE. Tel. 01273 877032. Email s.barrientos@ids.ac.uk

Dr Catherine Dolan, School of Development Studies, University of East Anglia, Norwich, NR4 7TJ. Tel. 01273 593 375. Email c.dolan@uea.ac.uk

Dr Anne Tallontire, Natural Resources Institute, University of Greenwich, Chatham Maritime, Kent, ME4 4TB. Tel. 01634 883865. Email a.m.tallontire@gre.ac.uk