



FAIRVOICE KENYA 2020

**REPORTING ON THE IMPACT
OF COVID-19 ON FLOWER FARMS**

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YOU WANT**



FAIRTRADE



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

East African flower sales were hit hard at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. At Fairtrade, we are committed to bringing worker voice to the front of supply chain conversations, so we designed a research pilot to understand how workers are experiencing the current crisis.

FairVoice is an innovative qualitative data collection solution which draws insights directly from workers. The empowering FairVoice methodology trains participants to be 'reporters' and share information via their mobile phones. Soon after the COVID-19 crisis hit, we designed and piloted this approach with four Fairtrade flower farms in Kenya. Workers were set a series of assignments to explore the impact that COVID-19 was having in their lives and communities.

FINDINGS

Workers reported on the huge loss of flower sales due to reduced orders and challenges accessing air freight, resulting in workers going on compulsory leave and flowers being discarded. With social distancing measures implemented in Kenya, workers were unable to return to work as normal as fewer people could be on-site at any one time.

Loss of income through less (or no) work has caused stress and strain for many households. This was exacerbated by money having to stretch further, as dependants lost jobs and children no longer in school needed resources at home. Local businesses also suffered, with many closing for some months of the year due to the nationwide lockdown early in 2020. Workers on the farm, as well as those who have businesses in the community, have had to turn to loans during this time. This has left many with debts that they must now repay, despite the continued challenges in the economic climate.

These strains have in turn led to negative impacts on mental health, in part due to the anxiety arising from financial issues. There is also a shame and stigma associated with the disease itself, and a real fear of catching and spreading COVID-19. Moreover, relationships were tested during the lockdown. Workers report the breaking down of marriages, with some resulting in divorce. For others who migrate to the flower farms and were unable to travel home due to national restrictions, there was a prolonged period of separation from their families. Those workers reported how difficult that was for them.

The research brought to light the challenges associated with the schools being closed. Final-year students were unable to graduate and others lost out on a large part of their education. A shift to online teaching left behind those in families who could not afford this. With schools closed, many reporters commented on the impact for young people, with growing concerns on the long-term effects this may have. Others reported concerns that even as schools reopened, the fees will be a struggle with such little income in 2020.

With regards to support received, the role of the Fairtrade Premium has been significant. In 2020, worker-run Fairtrade Premium Committees on certified flower farms have been allowed to distribute up to 100 percent of their Fairtrade Premium funds as direct cash distributions to workers. Normally, cash-out of the Fairtrade Premium for certified flower farms is a maximum of 20 percent. This has allowed the Fairtrade Premium Committees to respond to the crisis very quickly. As a result of these changes, over half a million Euros have been distributed across the Fairtrade certified flower farms that have opted to use this, supporting workers to buy food and health equipment, and helping cushion the reduction of wages during a critical time.

The reports received through FairVoice conveyed an appreciation of the Fairtrade Premium. The fact that it helped provide food and PPE was clearly extremely valuable to workers and their families. Farm management and a government scheme also helped with food provision support, and the workers also credited the role that farm management played on raising awareness. However, the workers' need for support going forward came through clearly. Extra help for children's education, housing costs, food and health were cited as priorities by workers. They also stated that finance was needed – whether credit or emergency funding. Other issues mentioned by several reporters included the need for a communication campaign on COVID-19 and healthy living.

NEXT STEPS

Whilst the challenges faced by the flower sector during COVID-19 have been relatively well documented, the lived experience for workers has been less so. FairVoice has enabled us to fill that gap and identify valuable learnings we can take forward.

Many of the insights provided in this report can be incorporated directly into the 'Building Resilience in the Flower Industry' project, co-funded by the **Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) Vulnerable Supply Chain Facility (VSCF)**. The Fairtrade Foundation, together with MM Flowers, received funding from the VSCF, Co-op, M&S and Tesco, to set up this project to support flower farms and vulnerable workers in Kenya. This includes awareness campaigns, nutritional gardens, alternative income support and additional trainings.

As Fairtrade, we will take these learnings from FairVoice and bring them to the market as part of our work to **raise awareness**. **Sourcing and buying Fairtrade flowers** is of paramount importance during this time. The Fairtrade Foundation is committed to growing the volume of flowers traded in the UK market as Fairtrade, and FairVoice has provided the insights to help us advocate for action.

We therefore urge all UK shoppers and businesses who can, to source Fairtrade flowers.

INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 AND KENYAN FLOWERS

Flower sales in East Africa were hit hard at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. In early March 2020, retailers in the UK and Europe reduced their flower orders to prioritise essential goods, flights were grounded, and governments banned public gatherings – including weddings – as well as limiting funerals. The falling sales took their toll on a sector with very narrow margins. Even with some recovery in demand, transport challenges and severe weather conditions prolonged the situation. Export costs have increased due to high air freight costs, while adverse rains have caused the spread of pests. The Kenya Flower Council estimates that it will take a year for the sector to recover. Flower workers are vulnerable due to a number of factors, including food insecurity, lack of PPE, poor access to hygiene, lack of transport and job insecurity – all exacerbated by low or no wages and non-existent savings. Fairtrade Africa estimates that over 90 percent of workers have been affected in some way over the last few months.

At Fairtrade, we are committed to bringing worker voice to the forefront of the conversation, so we designed a research pilot to understand how workers are experiencing the current crisis. This report summarises the findings from this initial work.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

WHAT IS FAIRVOICE?

FairVoice is an innovative qualitative data collection solution which draws insights directly from workers, designed and developed in partnership with On Our Radar, a specialist group of journalists, technologists, digital storytellers and development practitioners with expertise in building reporter networks and technology for connectivity. Together we implemented an empowering methodology that trains participants to be reporters and share information via their mobile phones.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

- **Tech and connectivity set-up** – A toll-free number is set up in Kenya and a content dashboard is created to receive, manage and send information and messages.
- **Participant sign-up** – The toll-free number is promoted on the farm (through existing Fairtrade committees, posters and key staff members), encouraging workers to self-nominate to take part as a reporter by messaging or calling the number.
- **Participant training** – Those who registered are sent five to six mini-modules to complete on their phone. These take the form of one to three-minute audio files or an online training platform.

- **Mentoring** – An existing community reporter in Kenya works with mentors on each farm who help motivate community reporters and troubleshoot any issues. Successfully trained reporters are assigned a mentor. Mentors are self-selected workers on the farm.
- **Reporting** – Reporters are set assignments to share their insights or to reach out to their communities (in person or remotely via mobile chats depending on the lockdown situation) to report on their situations and experiences on certain topics and issues. They can also submit other concerns, ideas and news as and when it's important to them. This information is submitted via mobile and is received in the content dashboard. Reporters can feed in messages in English or Kiswahili. They can send in written answers, or videos and audio files. The dashboard manager can respond directly with the reporters to ask follow-up questions. For each successful week of reporting, reporters will receive a credit top-up on their mobile phone to cover their costs. All information is anonymous and confidential. We also monitor for any safeguarding risks during the process.*
- **Analysis and feedback** – Messages from the dashboard are analysed to find insights and trends. Using NVivo qualitative data software, a grounded theory analytical approach was used to code the reports and explore the key themes. This approach means that any trends and 'theories' are developed from the patterns in the data after data collection, rather than testing an existing hypothesis that is created before data collection. At the end of the project these insight summaries are sent back to reporters.

WHO TOOK PART?

We had over 60 active reporters across four farms, with eight mentors. Over 65 percent of reporters sent five messages or more, and over 40 percent sent 10 or more. All reporters received certificates for completing the project. Engagement was high throughout the project, not just in the number of reports but also in the quality of the reporting.

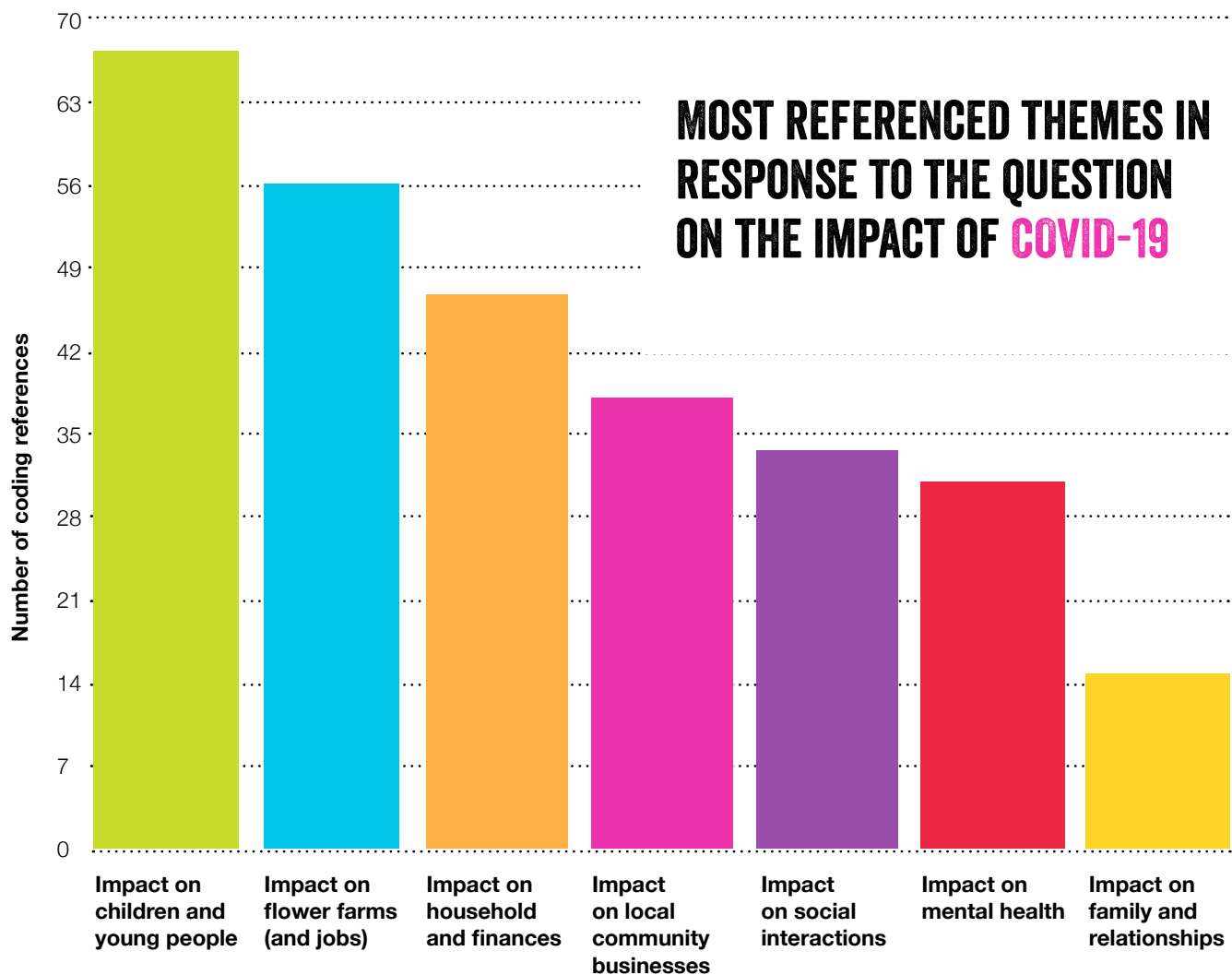
RESEARCH FINDINGS

As this project was focused on worker voice, the findings will be explained and narrated using only the stories and words from the workers, with extracts chosen that best represent the key trends that were found in the data. Reporters' full names have been substituted with initials.

You can find information about each key trend as a top-line summary of the analysis, as well as further explanations or additional information, in the footnotes. Some additional graphics from the analysis process have also been included to explain trends across data.

* Fairtrade International Safeguarding Policy can be accessed [here](#)

THE IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 CRISIS ON FLOWER WORKERS IN KENYA



“COVID-19 PANDEMIC HAS BROUGHT POVERTY, LONELINESS, SHAME, LACK OF JOBS, DEPRESSION, DIVORCE AMONG COUPLES AND OUR ECONOMY’S COLLAPSE... (LN)”

IMPACT TO THE FLOWER FARMS (75 REPORTS)

Analysis across the reports showed that the impact on the supply chain during COVID-19 had both personal and business implications. For the flower sector, the changes required of farms to maintain social distancing, the drop in market demand and challenges with transporting orders had repercussions on the farms' operations and for the workers' jobs and finances.

'In March 2020 it was confirmed things changed for the worst... the government issued a nationwide lockdown, wearing of masks, social distancing and sanitising for everyone. The company did its part, they put water and sanitiser at strategic places where everyone can access, there was also [an] awareness programme to help workers understand the importance of social distance, wearing of masks and sanitising. This came with reduction of the workforce so as to keep distance in the greenhouse. Many workers were sent on compulsory leave to create space, work was done in shifts, especially at the pack house. In the office just those offering essential services remained.

“ORDERS DROPPED EVERY DAY, PRICES AT THE AUCTION WERE AT THEIR WORST EVER, WE DUMPED THOUSANDS OF ROSES EVERY DAY AS WE DIDN'T HAVE ANY MARKET.”
(JWN)

'The sales for flowers kept dropping as we were faced by lockdown in various countries and [the] flight ban. Orders dropped every day, prices at the auction were at their worst ever, we dumped thousands of roses every day as we didn't have any market. The flight cost went super high and the few flights available were first come first serve. With all this craziness our clients were affected too and the prices came down for our products too... The company couldn't cope with losses one after another, so they sent workers finally for unpaid leave to be able to cope with the situation...

The dumping was so saddening, a lot had been put [into the production] and seeing it all thrown away felt like we were 'throwing' out our own livelihood. The tension every morning being the one to break the news of what we have lost the previous day wasn't easy. Calculating the production and maintenance loss was disheartening. I could only imagine what the investor was going through. That energy to work hard was lost, workers kept asking, 'Will we survive this?' A question no one wanted to answer...' (JWN)

FINANCIAL IMPACT (100+ REPORTS)

As a result of the impact at farm level, reporters highlighted the negative impact that this had on their jobs and financial situation. Many talked about having to take unpaid leave and the subsequent salary reductions. With such a sudden and dramatic change in finances, this meant many families had to seek alternative strategies, such as returning to rural homes to save costs.

'First when the COVID-19 crisis hit, it really affected most employees. Each employee was given unpaid leave for 14 days in shifts. We were really affected as we had to depend on the half pay for the first month. Life became hard [for] many families, we had to struggle to get food and also paying rent and other bills.' (TM)

'These sudden changes have actually torn me apart, am now always unstable financially... I personally had to go back to reserve, left my family, my wife and two sons there and came back to Naivasha to seek for the job again... my wife lost a well-earning job completely from another farm, now it's only me working and all the money I earn goes to food alone – not able to save anymore. This has killed my vision and dreams...' (JT)

'Financially I was affected the moment our company gave us unpaid leave, I was not able to meet my family expense because my salary was cut to a half pay. I was forced to adjust and reduce our daily expenditure to half, which is so stressing.' (RNS)

'COVID-19 affected me so much because I had already paid school fees and upon closure of schools I felt so sad because I incurred loss. Foodstuff prices went so high whereby it became so hard to even afford a kilogramme of maize flour.' (JNW)

'Most of my friends I could witness they had nothing to eat at all and others had only a meal in a day as a result of them being laid off from work. I used to share what little I have but it was really tough, especially the last two months as most have already exhausted the little dues that we paid.' (ENJ)

IMPACT FOR FAMILIES AND RELATIONSHIPS (68 REPORTS)

Linked to the financial impact on households, many reporters discussed the social and emotional impact on relationships and family separation, with a number of reports discussing the growing number of divorces.

'It's a social nightmare, families got locked down from each other for months, some still are, relationships and marriages haven't been the same since. Many homes have been broken up, relationships cut short because, I mean you can wait but eight months... that's a long time to function without worrying, anxiety, doubts...' (JWN)

WHAT BLOWS MY MIND, IS WHEN I SEE FAMILIES AROUND ME LOCALLY DIVORCED DUE TO COVID-19. THE COMMUNITY IS NOW FULL OF CRISIS... (JT)

'This goes to other people, whom I know have even separated with their loved ones, this was because the pandemic brought in financial challenges, so they could not manage their relationship, whereby it forced them to quit from it...' (AP)

'Sometimes I thank the Lord Almighty that though my family is away from me, it's not broken up to now but I don't know if this still goes on. What will happen of my family now that I financially unstable? What blows my mind, is when I see families around me locally divorced due to COVID-19. The community is now full of crisis especially young marriages are now unstable for the unexpected is happening.' (JT)

'Listening to my fellow workmates' opinions and also on my own opinion, we feel heavy-hearted about our families' wellbeing. This is because most of our families are set up in rural areas, where we can't travel to see how they are faring on due to lockdowns in the country. It has been no easy time for any of us.' (AM)

IMPACT FOR LOCAL BUSINESSES (58 REPORTS)

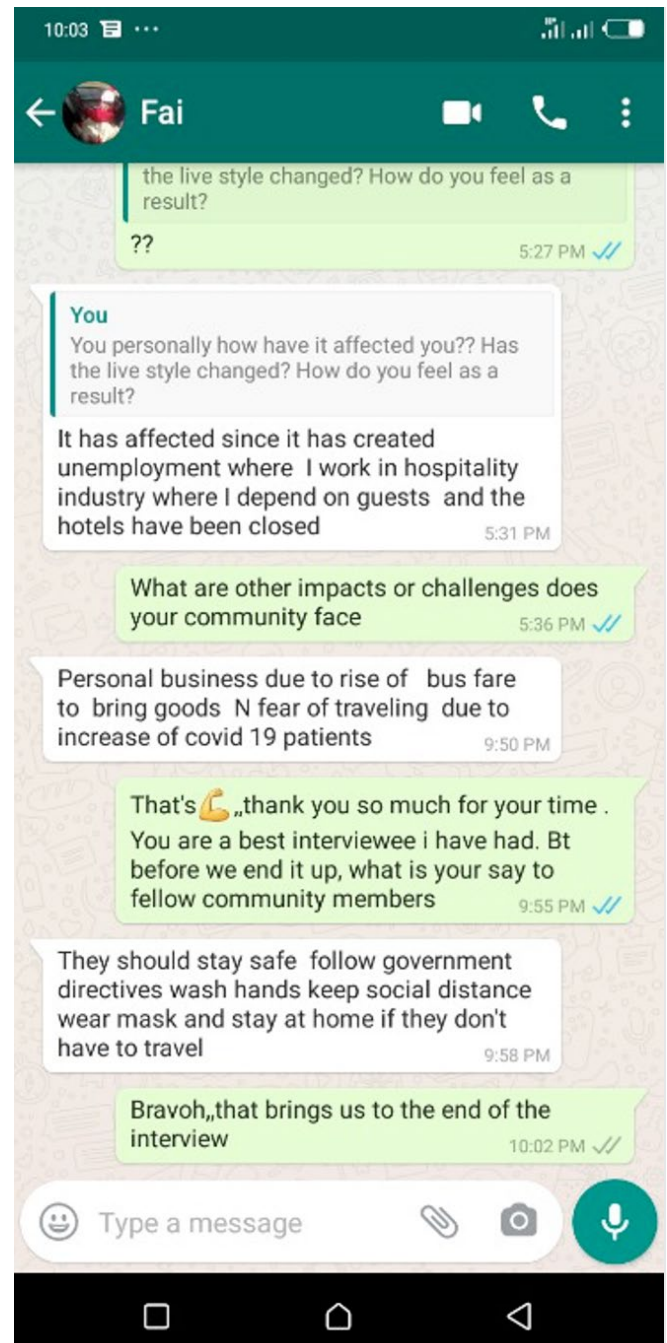
Alongside the challenges with jobs on flower farms, reporters also articulated the difficulties facing local businesses as a result of lockdown.

'To explore the impact of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) on small businesses in my community, I have conducted a survey of more than 12 small businesses for a period of four days. Across the sample, 41.3 percent of businesses reported that they were temporarily closed because of COVID-19. A far smaller number (1.8 percent) reported that they were permanently closed because of the pandemic. By contrast, only 1.3 percent reported that they were temporarily closed for other reasons; 55.5 percent reported that they were still operational but under the regulations...

Small businesses had been heavily affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, due to the closures and reduced working hours recommended to curb the spread of the virus... the risk of closure was negatively associated with the expected length of the crisis. Moreover, businesses had widely varying beliefs about the likely duration of COVID-related disruptions.' (JS)

'Businesses like salon, barbershops, hotel and transport sector were far much affected as they were no longer making profit but loss; most of the families depending on those businesses were forced to have one meal a day and others slept hungry. Others had loans or other projects that were forced to stop and it is never going to be easy to recover the loss.' (ENJ)

'Some due to closure of the businesses have ended into a pit of depression due to high count of losses, especially if they were owing some loans to the bank or other financial institutions.... uncertainty have also hit the minds of these businesspeople because they are no longer sure of the future of their businesses.' (GW)



FairVoice reporter interviewing a member of the community remotely

IMPACT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE (99 REPORTS)

A key trend that emerged from the reporting on the impact of COVID-19 was the closure of schools. Reporters discussed how this was leading to negative outcomes for young people, as well as the additional financial challenges at household level.

‘The government directives for lockdown early March meant that all institutions of learning were shut down and students sent home indefinitely. [The] majority of [these] institutions are packed up with many students, thus the whole social distance theory would not be possible. The worst disappointed were the candidates/senior year students sitting for their exams late this year. It really hurts to have worked hard for years only to wake up one morning with a shattered dream...

After the second month and the cases of COVID-19 kept up, the government arranged online classes so the students could continue to learn at the comfort of their homes as they wait. One thing though – nobody actually thought through this online idea. It was/is with good intentions but not everybody can/will afford this service... online studies means you need either a smartphone or a computer. My question, even though I may like my children to study, without food how do they? Do we buy charge card/airtime charge cards and exorbitant electricity bills instead of food? Secondly, those who relocated to rural area, most don't have electricity to use the laptops/computer even to charge the phones! The nightmares parents are going through has no end.’ (JWN)

“ONLINE STUDIES MEANS YOU NEED EITHER A SMARTPHONE OR A COMPUTER. MY QUESTION, EVEN THOUGH I MAY LIKE MY CHILDREN TO STUDY, WITHOUT FOOD HOW DO THEY? DO WE BUY CHARGE CARD/AIRTIME CHARGE CARDS AND EXORBITANT ELECTRICITY BILLS INSTEAD OF FOOD?” (JWN)

‘Their future is going to be difficult because many children will not go back to schools because many parents have been sacked and they don't have any income to send their children back to school.’ (JIA)

‘Our children's future is falling with a thud. Without education or poor education: no future. I feel that our children's future will be full of poverty, crime and ignorance for some lack basic education due to COVID-19...’ (JT)

‘One of the community member whom I interviewed said and I quote, ‘COVID-19 have widened the gap between the rich and the poor, this means that children of the rich will continue with their education after COVID while the poor children's future have been dimmed by Covid since most of them won't be able to go back to school ...’ (TAO)

STIGMA AND FEAR OF COVID-19 (41 REPORTS)

There was a key trend identified across the reports of a growing stigma in rural communities about COVID-19, with a feeling that those in more urban communities were at risk of high transmission.

‘COVID-19 crisis led to stigma and discrimination. I went home, to a rural area last month. Surprisingly one of my aunts and some neighbours when they saw me they ran away since they believe all the people from the urban areas are affected. So to me I took it negatively because I thought I am now neglected in the society. Now I am too much worried because I know that is a misconception and myth for them and it will take time for them to understand.’ (RC)

SOCIAL DISTANCING AND HEALTH AND SAFETY (43 REPORTS)

A number of reporters talked of the new measures in place for maintaining COVID-19 secure working practices and the challenges of social distancing in the community.

‘The company is really trying in so many ways to improve the situation in the company. One, by providing masks and sanitisers to all workers. Two, by installing water tanks and soap to workers to wash their hands. Three – enough buses to maintain 1.5 social distance and to make sure no workers loses his/her job.’ (JIA)

‘We really miss the normal way of handshake, warm hugs, kisses, sharing food.’ (JSi)



IMPACT ON MENTAL HEALTH (122 REPORTS)

Analysis across the issue of mental health showed that the key areas discussed were financial stress, parental worries, worries and uncertainty about the future, and extreme depression.

‘Sincerely, I may not have been infected by COVID-19 but the impacts of its outbreak has put me on [the] wall and struck my mind. Substantially, I have nothing left, no asset at all and unstable financially... life has become bitter, at work during lunch time, am filled up with stress and depression when am able to access food yet my other family members may miss. When I separated with my family, I have never had peace... I now live alone to cope with the expenses, hence lack of total responsibilities. I am disturbed and wonder if am not a good parent as mine were, I ask myself what my family think of me now that I do not fully support them.’ (JT)

‘So far I am so much worried when will life go back to normal, when will my children go back to school, for how long will this last, when will I stop worrying because as for now I can see most of us are not wearing mask; am I safe at all?... Am so much worried that it causes me sleepless nights just thinking about when will I be able to go back to the way it used to be.’ (ENJ)

“ I WAS FEARFUL ABOUT SECURITY OF MY JOB IF THE SITUATION REMAINED THE SAME. IN FACT I FELT LIKE THINGS WERE FALLING APART IN MY LIFE. ” (TAO)





GENDER (36 REPORTS)

A gender lens was applied to the reports during the analysis to uncover key trends from the reports in this area. The main emerging issues related to unemployment, the impact on young girls as a result of school closures, and how some women viewed the financial challenges as a setback to altering perceptions of women in society. It should be noted that there were also reports articulating the gendered role of men within the household as the main breadwinner, and the sense of failure that some men felt at not fulfilling this expected gender role.

‘Women are losing their jobs. The pandemic and measures to prevent its spread are driving a disproportionate increase in women’s unemployment as compared to men and also decreasing their overall working time...’ (KK)

‘Groups that are already disadvantaged, such as adolescent girls, experience the greatest risks and impacts when their education is interrupted. Governments must take steps to mitigate the effects of school closures on girls, boys and their families by ensuring education continues.’ (JS)

COVID-19 HAS SET US ALL BACK IN COUNTLESS WAYS. BUT FOR GIRLS IN CRISIS ACROSS THE WORLD, IT’S DONE MORE THAN JUST SET THEM BACK. IT’S UNRAVELLING DECADES OF PROGRESS... IT’S KEEPING GIRLS FROM EVERYTHING THEY’VE WORKED SO HARD FOR. LET’S STAND WITH GIRLS IN CRISIS. (JS)

‘Most expectant mothers feared for their lives since they could not go for check-ups in hospitals. They feared they were to be put in quarantine if they developed signs and symptoms of the virus...’ (RW)

I WANTED TO START DRIVING HEAVY TRUCKS AS ONE WAY TO ENCOURAGE MY FELLOW WOMEN THAT WHAT A MAN CAN DO A WOMAN CAN DO BETTER... (RC)

‘In African community, we as ladies are undermined and denied right to own big assets. We are only believed to be housewives, so in this case, am really passing through a tough situation... Now my daily life is full of quarrels because I can’t support my family in full. But no matter the difficulties, low earnings and all the discouragements on my way, I will overcome the challenges and be able to change my story... last year I was one of the beneficiary through Fairtrade and I finished driving course in kids technical college Naivasha... I wanted to start driving heavy trucks as one way to encourage my fellow women that what a man can do a woman can do better – gender encouragement. I hope with God’s grace COVID-19 soon shall come to an end and I shall move ahead of my dreams.’ (RC)

WILL I HAVE CHANGED MY STORY AS AN AFRICAN WOMAN? (MN)

‘Before the crisis, I had a very good earning which helped me meet my family needs, save, plan for my future and even do anything I could think of... I am now earning a very small amount which can’t cater for my all needs... I keep on asking myself, asking myself, “Should I give back the plot* to the organisation so that I may earn my all salary?” and if I do so, will I have changed my story as an African woman?’ (MN)

* On some Fairtrade farms, Premium has been used to support women by providing loans for plots of lands in their own names to build housing. In many communities, it is difficult for women to acquire land in their own name. Loan deductions are paid back over three years.

SUPPORT RECEIVED (143 REPORTS)

'First of all, much thanks goes to Fairtrade in general for the support and kind[ness] they provided especially during this period of COVID-19. Personally, just to mention, some of the things we were provided with were foodstuffs like maize flour (12 packets of 2kgs), wheat flour, rice, sugar, cooking fat, salt and bar soap. As we are now, they have also provided us with some face masks and hand wash buckets with soap in the farm.' (EW)

'Another support was from our Bigot Fairtrade Premiums that helped us to pay house rent for our families because we did not have enough money to sustain our families during the difficult time of COVID-19.' (JIA)

‘The government through Members of County Assembly came through by giving foodstuff to these people, though I might want to point out it wasn’t enough – too little too late – but we do appreciate the little they got.’ (JWN)



Reporting on the impact of COVID-19 on flower farms | 11

FUTURE SUPPORT NEEDED (141 REPORTS)

Analysis across the reports discussing the need for any future support showed that schools and education were the most frequent area discussed, due to worries about school fee costs when the schools reopen during a period of financial constraints. Many reporters also mentioned support for housing, with rent support as well as the building of new houses/plots. The theme of health also featured across a number of areas, including PPE for COVID-19, as well as other areas such as family planning. Loans for setting up small businesses as a diversification option were also frequently cited.

'The emergency we are facing now is right now the government has announced the reopening of school and for now no parent is ready to take their children back to school because they do have any resources. Many parents are still paying debts, others don't have job and many of them were not ready for now, because the government has announce every parent to buy masks and sanitisers to their children, transportation, school shoes and uniforms and for now, no parent has the money.' (JIA)

'Constructing houses for members, they bought plots to settle that issue of rent. My hope is that I see members being supported in construction houses in their plots to call home and also to be supported to be self-reliant.' (NC)

'Most communities consider ladies to be weak. Now Fairtrade Premium should help most ladies who have been undermined in their communities to change their life styles... for example if supported to get more plots and given loans with no interest automatically, the female child shall be respected and their dignity

shall not be undermined. This is because they will own title deeds by their names.' (RC)

'The Government needs to prepare henceforth a kind of kitty for such emergencies that have no time limits so as to help in essential/basic needs (food water and medicine...).' (JWN)

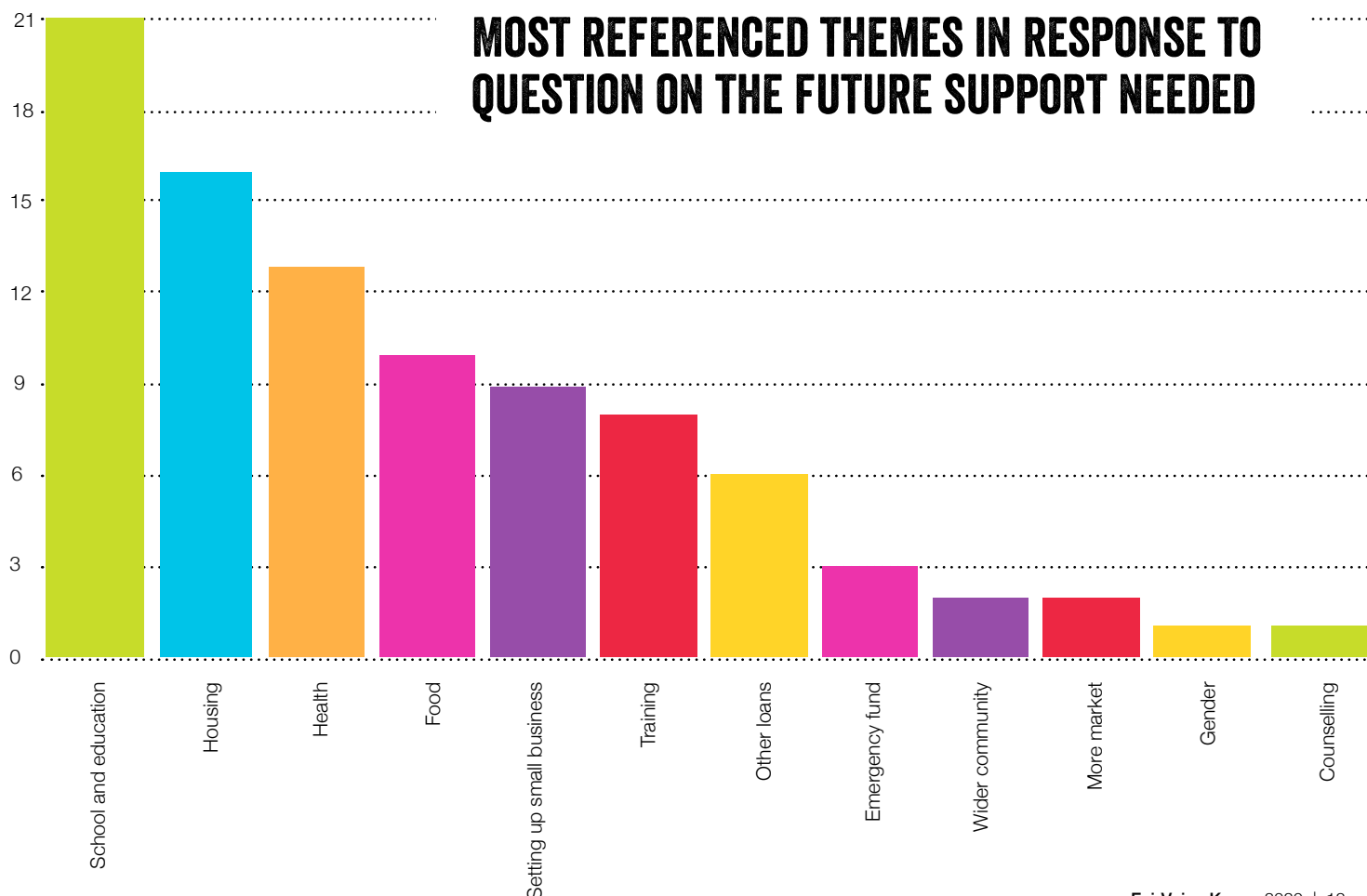
'Stronger companies need to plan for business continuity now, this is important solution because it is improving our experience and motivation in our work place.' (KK)

'I urge, urge the Fairtrade Premium to at least allocate emergency funds when planning for the annual budget plan, this [I] am sure will be able to handle any emergency that may arise.' (NMo)

'My idea is to create more awareness to the community and in farms [and] also in families that COVID-19 is real, that we need to follow directive measure from government ministry of health always advise us to follow up. In different ways it will be good as FairVoice team to be allowed to do awareness in farms and community so that people get more awareness and protect themselves.' (SB)

'Another solution is that educational program on general health to be insisted. For example healthy eating, if all the people could [have a] balanced diet, their immunity shall be okay. This will be attained if people can be thought on how to utilise the small piece of land to create nutrition garden. From there we shall get more food using locally available materials rather than buying expensive food...' (RC)

MOST REFERENCED THEMES IN RESPONSE TO QUESTION ON THE FUTURE SUPPORT NEEDED



CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

This research pilot was hugely successful at eliciting insights into realities faced by flower farm workers throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. The challenges faced by the flower sector have been relatively well covered, but the lived experience for workers has received less attention. FairVoice has enabled us to fill that gap and identify valuable learnings we can take forward.

It is clear that the workers and the local communities have faced huge financial and emotional challenges, and been placed under significant stress over the last few months. The Fairtrade Premium has played a critical role in helping workers, as have farm-led and government support provisions, but it is clear that further support may be needed as the longer term impacts of COVID-19 continue.

As Fairtrade, we are able to take these learnings from FairVoice and bring them to the market as part of our work to **raise awareness**. This report is part of that action, as well as webinars hosted with key supermarkets to directly share learnings with them. Bringing the worker voice to key supply chain actors is a vital way to ensure recommendations and learnings can be applied within the industry.

Sourcing and buying Fairtrade flowers is of vital importance during this time. The Fairtrade Foundation is committed to growing the volume of flowers traded in the UK market as Fairtrade, and FairVoice has provided the insights for us to advocate for action. Not only are the sales crucial to keep workers employed, but the extra Fairtrade Premium (10 percent on FOB) is critical. The Fairtrade Premium has been utilised to a large extent for emergency support in 2020, reducing the ability of the fund to support with school fees and other projects it normally backs. Buying Fairtrade flowers during this time not only replenishes the funds, but directly helps workers in the areas they identified during this research:

- Help for education, through co-finance for school fees.
- Help with access to finance and loans, as the Fairtrade Premium is often used as a micro-credit facility on the farms for the workers.
- Help with houses, so that workers are removed from the insecurity of the rental market when income is so low. On Longonot, for example, the Premium has been used to purchase land for workers to own, and they can slowly repay the Fairtrade Premium Committee over time. In particular, this has helped women own land for the first time. All of these needs were clearly articulated through FairVoice, and the Fairtrade Premium can support on these areas.

We therefore urge all UK shoppers and businesses who can, to source Fairtrade flowers.



Secure funding to scale up FairVoice. There is great potential to build on the successes of this pilot and expand the FairVoice project. We have created a network of citizen journalists in this project, who can in turn mentor and train up others in their communities and on other farms to report. Not only does this create a long-term source of insights that can be continuously acted upon, but it also provides a network for sharing messages and raising awareness should another pandemic strike. We can also use these insights to feed into our on-the-ground support and trainings offered to the flower farms by the Flowers Team at Fairtrade Africa on an ongoing basis. The Fairtrade Foundation is now working to secure funds for this scale up.



Many of the insights provided in this report can be incorporated directly into the **VSCF 'Building Resilience in the Flower Industry' project**. We will do this by:

- Running an awareness campaign as requested by workers.
- Providing farms with nutritional gardens to feed workers on-site, and worker households with kitchen gardens to help feed their families. This will alleviate the pressure on wages to cover these costs. Many of the reports in this project referenced the need for support on this.
- Understanding viable alternative income-generating activities to reduce the reliance on the existing supply chain, which led to such a dramatic shock at the start of the pandemic when orders shifted. This will help the farms stay operational by diversifying their portfolio and therefore keep workers employed, as well as provide workers with skills outside of the farm should they lose their job again. This was a need that FairVoice brought to light.
- Providing additional trainings on gender, which was referenced as a challenge throughout FairVoice.

Finally, by publishing this report, we hope it will provide any organisation working in the flowers sector with the insights and information needed to inform your activities and approach.

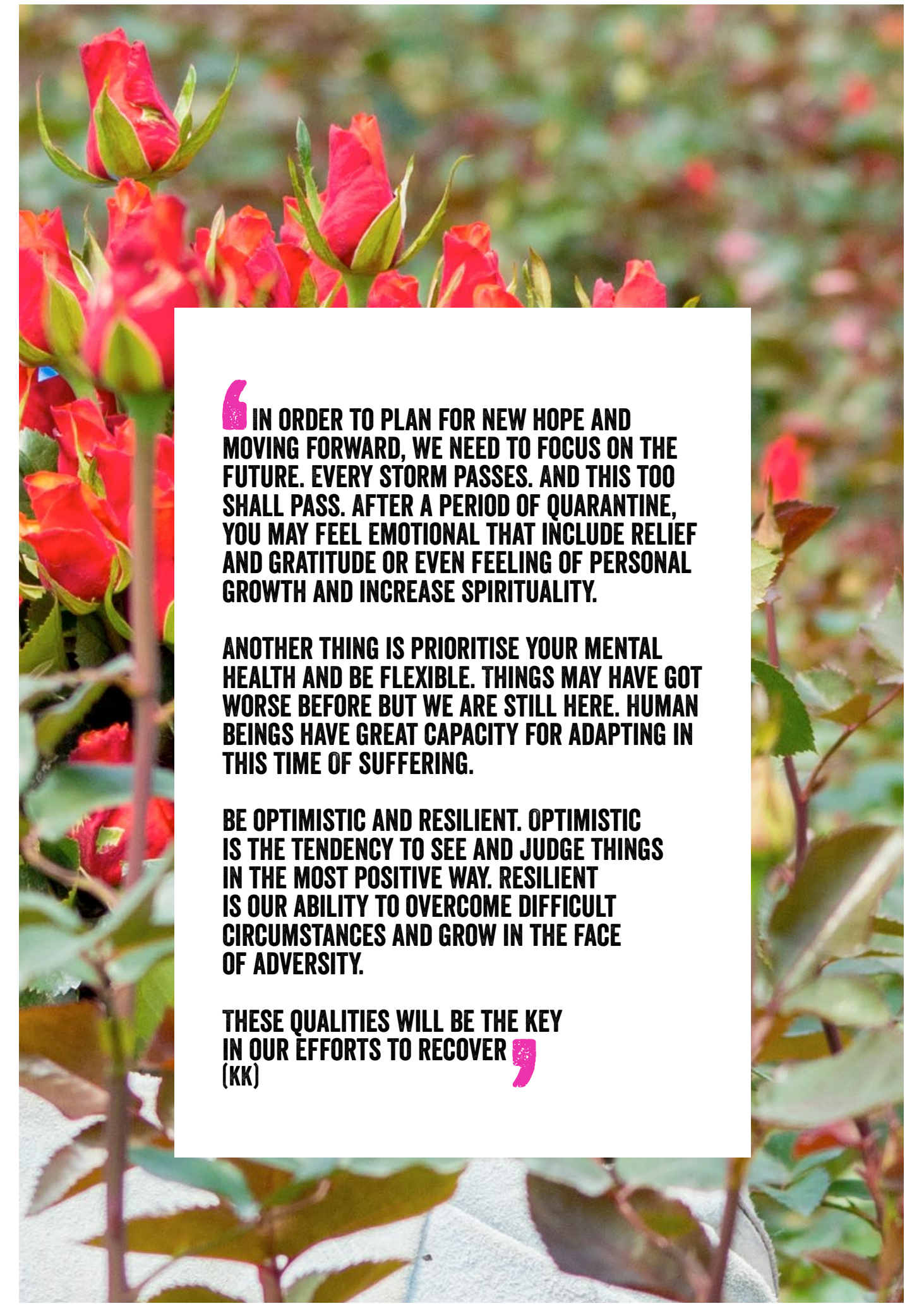
If you are interested in knowing more about Fairtrade flowers, including how you can support FairVoice or source Fairtrade during this time, please email flowers@fairtrade.org.uk

THE VULNERABLE SUPPLY CHAINS FACILITY (VSCF) IS A RAPID COVID-19 RESPONSE FUND SET UP BY THE UK FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE (FCDO), AND MANAGED BY MOTT MACDONALD LTD.

THE FACILITY HAS PARTNERED WITH 20 UK RETAILERS AND INTERNATIONAL BRANDS SUPPORTING 131 SUPPLIERS ACROSS BANGLADESH, ETHIOPIA, GHANA, KENYA, MYANMAR, TANZANIA AND ZIMBABWE, AND WILL PROVIDE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND HEALTH BENEFITS TO AROUND ONE MILLION WOMEN AND MEN DIRECTLY AND INDIRECTLY.

THE FAIRTRADE FOUNDATION, TOGETHER WITH MM FLOWERS, RECEIVED FUNDING FROM THE VSCF, CO-OP, M&S AND TESCO, TO SET UP THE 'BUILDING RESILIENCE IN THE FLOWER INDUSTRY' PROJECT. THIS PROJECT SUPPORTS FLOWER FARMS AND VULNERABLE WORKERS IN KENYA.





“ IN ORDER TO PLAN FOR NEW HOPE AND MOVING FORWARD, WE NEED TO FOCUS ON THE FUTURE. EVERY STORM PASSES. AND THIS TOO SHALL PASS. AFTER A PERIOD OF QUARANTINE, YOU MAY FEEL EMOTIONAL THAT INCLUDE RELIEF AND GRATITUDE OR EVEN FEELING OF PERSONAL GROWTH AND INCREASE SPIRITUALITY.

ANOTHER THING IS PRIORITISE YOUR MENTAL HEALTH AND BE FLEXIBLE. THINGS MAY HAVE GOT WORSE BEFORE BUT WE ARE STILL HERE. HUMAN BEINGS HAVE GREAT CAPACITY FOR ADAPTING IN THIS TIME OF SUFFERING.

BE OPTIMISTIC AND RESILIENT. OPTIMISTIC IS THE TENDENCY TO SEE AND JUDGE THINGS IN THE MOST POSITIVE WAY. RESILIENT IS OUR ABILITY TO OVERCOME DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES AND GROW IN THE FACE OF ADVERSITY.

THESE QUALITIES WILL BE THE KEY IN OUR EFFORTS TO RECOVER”
(KK)



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farms participating in this project.
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ON OUR RADAR



FAIRTRADE