

LEARNING BRIEF: REFLECTING ON LESSONS LEARNT FROM THE GENDER WORKSTREAM OF BUILDING RESILIENCE IN FLOWER SUPPLY CHAINS

Fairtrade and MM Flowers partnered with the Co-op, Coventry University, Food Network for Ethical Trade (FNET), Marks & Spencer, Tesco, and Women Working Worldwide to design and implement the *Building Resilience in Flower Supply Chains* project. The project has reached over 6,000 direct beneficiaries through the provision of health packages, gardens (kitchen, shared worker and nutritional), gender training, alternative income generation, farm diversification and almost 100,000 indirect beneficiaries through a COVID-19 communication campaign, all within Kenya. Its expected long-term outcome is that flower farm workers will be protected, and the flower industry will be fairer and more resilient.

This project is funded by the Vulnerable Supply Chains Facility (VSCF), a rapid COVID-19 response fund set up by the UK FCDO, and managed by Mott MacDonald Ltd. The Facility has partnered with 16 UK retailers supporting over 100 suppliers across Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Myanmar, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe to provide economic, social, and health benefits to around 1 million women and men direct and indirectly.

- **The *Building Resilience in Flower Supply Chains* project was designed to support the immediate needs of Kenyan flower farms and workers created by the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as developing long-term sustainability measures at farm and buyer levels.** The project started in August 2020, when the pandemic had already been going for around six months.
- **Women are estimated to make up between 60 to 75 percent of the workforce on Kenyan flower farms.** In order to establish the immediate needs of women during the pandemic, research was carried out as part of the project on the 'Impact of COVID-19 on women and girls in Kenya'. This informed the development of a 'Practical Gender Toolkit' and a 'Gender Awareness and COVID-19 Training' programme.¹
- **The research showed that the pandemic has widened inequality gaps and also highlighted how the pandemic has affected women much more than men.** Women have little to no economic security and social protection, such as health insurance or savings. Therefore, they are likely to experience economic shocks more profoundly than their male counterparts in times of crisis such as that of the COVID-19 pandemic. Women are also less likely to have access to, and control of, productive resources and properties, such as land for housing and food. Food insecurity was exacerbated during COVID-19 especially as food prices doubled, markets were closed, children were not fed at school and transport costs soared.²

¹ All available at: <https://www.women-ww.org/resilience-in-kenyan-supply-chains>

² Capital News, (2020). <https://www.capitalfm.co.ke/news/2020/12/christmas-rushupcountry-buses-double-fares-over-covid-19-with-50pc-capacity/>



- Cases of gender based violence have risen during the pandemic.³ One farm worker interviewed for the project research stated:

There has been ... increased domestic violence because men who have lost their jobs are either drinking all day or are around all day and are taking out their frustrations on their families... ;

Kenyan female flower farm worker, November 2020

- **Other side effects of the pandemic have included an increase in intimate partner violence due to the confines of curfews and the subsequent rise in stress levels.** Female genital mutilation incidences, cases of child sexual exploitation and child marriages have all risen, mainly due to the curfews and groups who normally support those at risk or experiencing gender based violence unable to operate, as well as school closures with the lack of care and visibility schools provide.⁴
- **We incorporated these societal and work-based gender issues into the COVID-19 awareness training** and encouraged trainers to explore them in even greater detail with their committee members and other colleagues through the use of the ‘Practical Gender Toolkit’.

ACTIVITIES

A ‘gender lens’ was applied throughout the project reflecting the central role women play within the sector. In addition, all project activities such as the Worker Voice survey and training on income generation activities were designed to include at least 50 percent women. Our COVID-19 awareness campaign featured posters and a radio programme on gender based violence.

We delivered gender and COVID-19 awareness training as a Training of Trainers (ToT) on five farms reaching 93 workers (55 female and 38 male). The training covered COVID-19 awareness and prevention, with an added gender lens, and introduced the trainers to the ‘Practical Gender Toolkit’. They were charged with cascading the training through their various committees, such as Gender, Worker Welfare and Fairtrade. All participants reported a rise in awareness of COVID-19 and the disproportionate impact it has had on women (39 knew lots about COVID before training whereas this rose to 73 after training) and an increased confidence to deliver any training (40 were ‘confident’ before training and this increased to 77 after training). However, the issues of gender inequality and sexual harassment were still raised during the training and farms will need to take steps to address these issues.



Gender and COVID-19 training of trainers at Kongoni River Farm Ltd (Longonot)

LEARNINGS

If there is one thing that working in ‘Covid times’ has taught us, it is to design programmes to be even more flexible and resilient. For example, we had to pivot from face to face to remote training by Zoom, although we did have a support trainer on the farms. Despite these limitations, with the inevitable connection issues and poor reception problems, the sessions were as interactive and engaging as they could be.

All training and awareness campaigns need to have a ‘gender lens’ applied in order to fully tackle deep-seated inequalities within the workplace and highlight the societal issues that stop people from fulfilling their full potential.

³ Flow et al 2020 <https://psyarxiv.com/eafwu/>
⁴ As above

For example, while the reporting of sexual harassment cases on farms has declined over the past 10 years there is still a worrying level of gender inequality on the farms in pay, progression and behaviours. For example, men on all the farms raised concerns over how their female colleagues dress and women workers reported harassment by male colleagues as being commonplace. This perception was a common occurrence and was raised by most participants across all farms. It would appear that there is still basic gender awareness work to be done.

NEXT STEPS

We are building on our learnings and will be promoting gender-sensitive grievance procedures and mapping gender pay gaps and living wage on selected flower farms. In addition, the funding for the development of simple gender training tools in local languages needs to be explored. The use of innovative and visual ways to explain complex issues worked well and should be incorporated into other training programmes.



Gender and COVID-19 training of trainers at Kongoni River Farm Ltd (K-Gorge)

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Before conducting similar trainings, properly identify the needs of the group – both men and women.
- Select the most relevant approach to reach and influence their behaviours.
- Employ alternative engagement activities such as participatory action and theatre, to embed changes and cover all learning styles.
- Take account of polarity in views and ensure these voices are engaged and discussed.
- Where necessary have single sex groups within the training or separate sessions as some women do not like to speak out in mixed groups and some issues are culturally sensitive.
- Use established channels of communication on the farm or community and ensure the influencers and disseminators are included, to improve the reach.
- Use practical initiatives that bring financial gains to women, such as income generating activities.
- Encourage peer-to-peer learning – where one farm committee could host another, or chairs of committees share learnings.
- Show how the awareness and learning can be applied in everyday life, at work and in the wider community.
- Include a variety of mediums from posters to SMS, radio and videos in training programmes.