

GENDER EQUITY IN THE BANANA INDUSTRY: A GLOBAL WOMEN'S STRATEGY MEETING

**DECEMBER 9-10, 2015
BONN, GERMANY**

**IUF EXPERIENCE IN BANANA AND
OTHER INDUSTRIES IN AFRICA**

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OUTLINE

- IUF GLOBAL
- IUF REGIONAL
- IUF WOMEN'S PROJECT
- IUF WORK IN BANANA INDUSTRY

WHAT IS IUF?

- The International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF) is an international federation of trade unions representing workers employed in
 - Agriculture and plantations
 - The preparation and manufacture of food and beverages
 - Hotels, restaurants and catering services
 - All stages of tobacco processing

WHAT IS IUF? (Cont'd)

- The IUF is currently composed of 409 trade unions in 126 countries representing a combined representational membership of over 12 million workers (including a financial membership of 2.6 million). It is based in Geneva, Switzerland.
- From its founding in 1920, international labour solidarity has been the IUF's guiding principle. This principle is implemented through:
 - building solidarity at every stage of the food chain
 - international organizing within transnational companies (TNCs)
 - global action to defend human, democratic, and trade union rights

WHAT IS IUF ? (Cont'd)

Strengthening Affiliates

- The IUF exists to strengthen member unions through mutual support

It does this through:

- Assisting affiliates in organizing drives and in conflicts with employers and governments
- Coordinating and implementing solidarity and support actions:

WHAT IS IUF ? (Cont'd)

- Sector-wide organizing
- Research and publications
- Promoting women's equality at the workplace, in society and in the trade union movement
- Trade union education programs to help build the strength and independence of affiliated unions

WHAT IS IUF ? (Cont'd)

Regional Structures

- Regional Organizations of the IUF exist in Africa, Asia/Pacific, the Caribbean, Europe, Latin America and North America.
- The regions are autonomous, and pursue independent activities in close collaboration with the IUF and its governing bodies. In addition to the statutory regional organizations, sub-regional bodies exist to coordinate activity at that level.

WHAT IS IUF ? (Cont'd)

Africa Region

- In Africa, IUF has eighty-two(82) affiliate Organisations in 28 countries.
- Within the 28 countries, 16 countries benefit from a Women's project.

IUF AFRICA WOMEN'S PROJECT



IUF AFRICA WOMEN'S PROJECT (Cont'd)

Objectives Of The Women's Project

- To recruit and organize more women into Trade Union
- To have more women in decision making bodies of the Trade Union at all level from the Local to the National
- To get gender issues such as pay equity, women's health and safety at the work place, free from sexual harassment and violence into the mainstream union agenda.



IUF AFRICA WOMEN'S PROJECT (Cont'd)

Objectives Of The Women's Project

- To build confidence and capacity of women union member to take part in all union activities especially in collective bargaining.
- To raise awareness of women's rights that do already exist in National Laws and international instruments and to build stronger campaigns to get them implemented with a particular focus on the ILO Convention 183 - Maternity Protection, C189 Decent work for Domestic workers.

IUF AFRICA WOMEN'S PROJECT (Cont'd)

IUF WOMEN'S WORK

- Equity at the work place
- End to sexual harassment
- Better maternity protection
- End to insecure jobs
- Better health and safety rights



IUF WORK IN BANANA INDUSTRY

- IUF serve as facilitator in a BananaLink project dubbed “Securing Decent Work in Tropical Fruit Export Production”
- This project is benefitting two African countries that is Ghana (GAWU), Cameroon (FAWU)
- Education and Training, Research, Gender specific work are the activities that we are implementing

Trade Unionists strategise to empower banana workers

By NOELA BISONG

Just one more year to go to the end of the three-year Comic Relief Project, Trade Unions are currently evaluating the road covered and what still lies ahead, for complete success of the project.

The project which has as purpose to empower and educate banana workers to improve on their living standard, is being organised within two trade unions, FAWU (Fako Agricultural Workers Union) in Cameroon and GAWU (General Agricultural Workers Union) in Ghana.

During a three-day workshop which recently held in Limbe (January 21-23), stakeholders drawn from FAWU, GAWU, Banana Link and IUF, met to assess selves and put in strategies to effectively empower and educate workers in the banana sector.

From reports presented during the meeting, both FAWU and GAWU highlighted as achievements, success in empowering workers on their rights, increased membership, workers now more conscious of financial management, reduced sexual harassment, duty conscious, reduction in long working hours, reduction in accidents, improved working relationship between workers and management, gender rights and responsibilities etc.

Talking to The SUN, FAWU General Secretary, Charles Mbide said "It is generally known that work in the banana sector is so tedious and very demanding and that it involves the



Trade Unionists deliberating to revamp strategies, during meeting at FAWU head office in Limbe

usage of chemicals, so a project like this make workers to know exactly what their rights are and also to see how they can improve on productivity".

In Cameroon, the project is being implemented basically in three banana plantations; Boh, CDC and PHP Tiko section.

Talking specifically on the reduction in working hours which is a landmark achievement of the Comic Relief project, Charles Mbide said "before, workers used to close very late; about 11pm and get up for the next day at 4am; we found that to be very uncomfortable as it was affecting production negatively, so we tried to negotiate with management for them to understand that it was not good for workers to stay for very long hours in the plantation, and this has been resolved in some of the plantations".

However, Charles Mbide noted that the challenges are still many, "the pro-

vision of PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) is still a problem, most of the workers go without adequate PPE, we are working on that and also on how management can provide essential working materials".

Also, other trade unionists said the project was quite tedious as it involves a lot of field work, where they deliver talks to the workers in order to empower and educate them so that they can effectively improve on their living and working standards. Thus, they requested that the period should be extended.

Explaining the possibility of the extension of the project, Jacqui Mackay, International coordinator of banana link said "We can ask the funder if they will consider continuation of the funding, but we will have to be able to present to them good reasons and what we think we will achieve with more funding. Nonetheless, there are other opportunities that have been secured to ensure that FAWU works with other stakeholders to improve the social and environmental standards of workers".

Jacqui Mackay told The SUN that the current success is very high in terms of the efforts the trade unions are putting in empowering their workers, "they are doing everything they

can to ensure that workers are aware of their rights and responsibilities. There is also a very good relationship between FAWU and the management which is beneficial to all, and management, workers and the union are all seeing how much can be achieved for everybody in the banana sector, when people work together and understand everyone's needs and responsibilities".

IUF WORK IN BANANA INDUSTRY

Issues on Women in Banana Industry

- Low employment of women
- Low wages
- Long working hours
- Health and Safety
- Lack of child care facility
- Low representation of women in trade union and leadership



IUF WORK IN BANANA INDUSTRY

Achievements

- Increase of women in the negotiation team
- Union prioritize advocacy work
- Collective bargaining on gender work e.g. maternity protection
- Negotiating for better child care and nursing facilities
- Almost 40% of women representation at leadership level as seen at the FAWU congress, Cameroun

IUF WORK IN BANANA INDUSTRY

Achievements

- Banana Link is capacitating women in the sector with the aim of developing communication skills and empowering them to educate their fellow workers about rights in the workplace.
- Comfort Ashilley, a union representative who had received education during a previous visit, delivered an inspiring Health and Safety training session to more than 100 workers.



IUF WORK IN BANANA INDUSTRY

Achievements

- IUF is collaborating with FairTrade to enhance workers rights at the banana sectors
- A more systematic mechanism between IUF and concerned affiliates and Fairtrade International which could oversee the application of the Hired Labour Standard and discuss areas of mutual concern.

IUF WORK IN BANANA INDUSTRY

Achievements

- Against this background, Fairtrade International in collaboration with Fairtrade Africa organised a seven-day “Train the Trainers on Training Packages on the Fairtrade Standards for Hired Labour” from October 26 to November 1, 2015 at Arusha, Tanzania. The aim of the course was to develop a network of trainers to deliver the Hired Labour Standards training programmes for Fairtrade Certified Companies. Three IUF Africa Team members participated, namely Adwoa Sakyi, Omara Amuko and Mopholosi Morokong.

IUF WORK IN BANANA INDUSTRY

Challenges

- Women still face low employment in banana sector
- They suffer Gender Based Violence and Sexual Harassment
- Women in the sector work long hours and receive low wages
- Health and safety are not secured for the women
- Nursing mothers do not benefit from child care facilities

**THANK
YOU!**

