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# **Summary findings and recommendations of gender research**

**2015**

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# Research aims

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**Through questionnaires and workshops research captured the daily experience and knowledge of women and their organisations to identify the proportion of women workers and small producers and the tasks they undertake in the banana export industries in Latin America, the Caribbean and Africa.**

**The multiple challenges faced by women employed in the sector are outlined and analysed to recommend ways in which women can escape the 'sticky floor' (where they are stuck in the lowest paid jobs and living in poverty) through the increased provision of Decent Work. The situation of small producers is also analysed.**

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# Women's employment rates

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Overall women comprise less than a fifth of the global workforce.

However there are enormous variations between and within countries in each region.

<b>Ecuador</b>	<b>Guatemala</b>	<b>Colombia</b>	<b>Honduras</b>	<b>Nicaragua</b>	
12%	16%	7%	30%	27%	
<b>Surinam</b>	<b>Dom. Rep</b>	<b>Windward Islands</b>	<b>Ghana</b>	<b>Cameroon</b>	<b>Cote d'Ivoire</b>
40%	12.5%	45%	14%	21%	6%

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# Reasons for variations

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**Different beliefs about women's capabilities rooted in historical cultural experiences affect opportunities for and patterns of employment in the packhouse and field. It is speculated that cultural factors would be expected to lead to higher rates in West and Central Africa than found.**

**In Africa women commonly assume a multitude of tasks in the field (except harvesting) and most notably in Cameroon which has one of the highest rates of women's employment in the industry. In Latin America only a small number of women undertake field tasks, light ones, directly impacting on the number of women active in the industry. Overall the highest proportion of women economically engaged in the sector is in the Caribbean. In the Windward Islands women undertake all tasks.**

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# Reasons cont.

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**Different patterns of migration within regions with areas of higher migration tending to have higher proportions of women employees/producers.**

**Lack of informal and formal training opportunities for women to gain employment or achieve promotion.**

**Reluctance to hire pregnant women.**

**Different attitudes/policies of corporate actors.**

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# Challenges of increased field work

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**Examples of companies in Africa and small producers in the Windward Islands show gender does not have to be a barrier to women working in the field and that women could take on more field tasks in other banana exporting countries.**

**However, gender stereotypes of women based on cultural perspectives and beliefs can challenge the ability to increase women's representation in the workforce.**

**Greater engagement in field tasks poses challenges because of the physical demands of some field tasks and an increasing risk of women being exposed to agrochemicals including during pregnancy and when breastfeeding.**

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# Common challenges for women

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**For both women workers and small producers these include:**

**The stress and demands of 'triple burden' as salaried worker, home maker/domestic worker and carer for family members (plus extra responsibilities in the case of union representatives)**

**Lack of access to childcare**

**Sexual harassment**

**Lack of education and training before and during employment**

**Lower earnings than men. For workers this is mainly due to women being excluded from technically more difficult/more physically demanding tasks.**

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# Common challenges cont

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**Poor OHSE in an industry with exceptionally high use of agrochemicals poses gendered risks to women's reproductive health. Pregnant women and nursing mothers especially vulnerable.**

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# Good practice

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**Examples of innovations towards Decent Work for women banana workers include the initiatives of**

**the Women's Committee of the Chiquita/ IUF/ COLSIBA Regional Agreement**

**Fairtrade International Hired Labour standards**

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# To conclude

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**One of the key obstacles to increasing women's employment in the global banana export industry is a failure to provide equal opportunities for women in the workplace because of the gendered nature of tasks, especially in Latin America**

**There is an urgent need for employers to involve women workers and their unions in a full assessment of their current division of tasks, identifying to what extent these are based on the real physical demands as opposed to habit or working culture, and whether they can be revised**

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# Further conclusions

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**There is a need to further explore the situation of women small producers who in research reported many of the same challenges as women workers.**

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