



Putting women at the centre of the conversation

A pilot to promote Women's Economic
Resilience Within The Flower Sector In Kenya

By Ufadhili Trust
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Kenya is one of Africa's leading producers and exporters of cut flowers, and is ranked fourth globally after the Netherlands, Colombia, and Ecuador, according to World's Top Exports (2021). Nationally, the flower sector is one the country's largest foreign exchange earners, and employs over 500,000 directly, with over 70 percent of the workforce within the sector being women, according to the Central Bank of Kenya and the Kenya Flower Council (KFC).

Despite its contribution to the country's economic growth, the flower sector continues to face a myriad of issues and challenges. In 2020-2021, the sector was severely affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. However, with the reopening of the economies and global markets, and the rolling out of vaccination programmes by the government of Kenya, the sector is now on the path to recovery. One of the areas where the sector is lagging behind is on women's economic empowerment and resilience. Consequently, there is the need to ensure that, more women get promoted to take up leadership/decision making positions within the labour intensive sector.

It is on this basis that a pilot project/initiative was launched in Kenya in 2021. Dubbed, The "Drawing the Line"(DTL) and Collaborating for Impact (CFI), the initiative, seeks to identify the key issues that women face in the workplace, by taking a women-centred approach in determining sustainable solutions. The initiative is a partnership between Women Win, the Kenya Flower Council (KFC), flower farms and women's rights organisations (WROs)/non-governmental organisations (NGOs).



Kimberly Schoenmaker, Programmes Coordinator, Win-Win Strategies, one of the Women's Win brand, explains what the DTL exercise entails; "Drawing the Line (DTL) is a methodology that we use a lot at Women Win and Win Strategies, and it is a play-based women centred methodology to hear from the workers themselves. We bring together women workers, to discuss their main priorities and challenges that they are facing at their workplace".

The results of the DTL exercise are used to create projects, "Collaborating for Impact" (CFI) initiatives within the farms, and this involves the participation of the WROs/NGOs – who are experts in women rights issues. The participating organisations are; FEMNET, Haki Mashinani, Workers Rights Watch, Fida Kenya, Ufadhili Trust, and Eselle group.

Clement Tulezi, the Chief Executive Officer of the Kenya Flower Council (KFC), notes that the sector is very open to collaborating with different stakeholders, particularly, women-led organizations. He notes; "Every day, we realise that we have emerging issues, and as a progressive industry, we cannot bury our heads in the sand. One of those areas is gender; specifically women empowerment. It is always a pleasure for us to work very closely with women-led organisations...and look at areas such as women empowerment, gender mainstreaming, violence, women rights at the farm and within the environment in which they work."



The project is being implemented in several flower farms in Kenya. One of the participating flower farms is Laurel Investments Limited, based in Olkalau, Nyandarua County on the greater Naivasha flower growing zone. Lydia Macharia, the human resource manager, notes that the farm has already initiated remedial measures to address the issues identified and prioritized by women workers. She adds that, the DTL/CFI initiative can also be replicated in other farms within the sector. Lydia, says; “The DTL exercise is highly recommended for other farms, because it has a bottom-up management approach, which engages the workers and brings out even other issues.”

At Florensis farm located in Naivasha, Florence Obonyo, the human resource/sustainability officer notes that, their goal of participating in the DTL/CFI initiative, was to make strides towards the realisation of the sustainable development goals (SDGs), particularly goal 5 on gender equality; one of the priority areas for the company. She adds that the issues prioritized by the women workers are currently being addressed by the farm.

For the sector to be more sustainable then, some of these initiatives by the stakeholders, such as the Drawing the Line (DTL) and Collaborate for Impact (CFI) need to be replicated throughout the sector in dealing with issues affecting their workers, notes, Salome Odera of Haki Mashinani – one of the WROs working within the sector. Salome says: “The DTL tool is a statement of 22 cards, and each of these cards address different issues that workers may have. Other farms can come on board, and take the DTL tool, implement with their workers, and it will create solutions that cut across all the flower farms. ”

Women Win emphasizes the importance of adopting the shared value approach, since it is possible to create meaningful partnerships that contribute to sustainable women's economic empowerment and resilience initiatives. Furthermore, the different initiatives, such as the Drawing the Line tool in combination with Collaborating for Impact initiatives and gender mainstreaming work, do not have to be sector and/or region-specific initiatives, but can be adapted to fit a wide range of sectors and contexts. For example, recently, Women Win adopted a similar approach, in its women's economic empowerment work within the tea sector in Kenya.



