

JUNE 2008

Global Horticultural Workers' and Environmental Rights Network (GHOWERN)

Announcement of network formation

A new network for the promotion of horticultural workers' social, labour and environmental rights has been formed by East and Southern African trade unions and NGOs working in the sector. The network is expected to expand throughout Africa and to make links with organisations throughout the world.

Network Vision

A horticulture sector in which social, labour and environmental rights and freedoms are observed and respected.

Background

The continued abuse and violations of workers' and environmental rights in the horticulture industry has been the focus of work by organisations in East and Southern Africa for the past five years. The project 'Promoting the Rights of Women Workers in African Horticulture' was set up to counter labour rights abuses and was implemented by partners in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Zambia with coordination and advocacy provided by Women Working Worldwide in the UK. Project activities included: action research into labour rights conditions on farms; training of trainers and workers on labour rights, gender rights and international supply chains and international and national advocacy.

Project partners worked productively with a number of stakeholders and achieved the following outcomes:

Unionisation of approximately 6,000 workers; training of over 6,000 workers; increase in use of written contracts and provision of maternity leave; decrease in use of casual labour; decreased incidences of sexual harassment; improved health and safety processes and equipment; establishment of permanent multi-stakeholder groups; improved relations between farm management and workers.

Whilst some farms have been very cooperative in recognising the rights of workers and the environment, there is still much work to be done to tackle continuing issues such as low pay, long hours, lack of permanent work, lack of access to benefits, exposure to dangerous chemicals and sexual harassment. Persistent environmental concerns such as water depletion, water pollution and use of dangerous chemicals also remain urgent issues in relation to the horticulture industry. In order to develop long term solutions to these issues across national borders, the project partners as well as partners from Ethiopia have agreed to work together as a permanent network.

Objectives

To raise awareness and fight against violations and abuses of horticulture workers' social and environmental rights and freedoms in the horticulture sector by:

- Coordinating members' activities and monitoring the implementation of members' core functions related to the network vision;
- Engaging members through unified lobbying and advocacy strategies;
- To support members to plan network activities into their organisations' strategies and projects;
- To link with other networks, collect and disseminate information to members;
- To ensure improved working relations between NGOs (CSOs) and Trade Unions nationally, regionally and internationally;
- Generally to perform any such duties relating to the above core objective.

Network membership

Currently the network has the following members:

- National Union of Plantation and Agricultural Workers (NUPAWU) – Uganda
- Uganda Horticultural and Allied Workers' Unions (UHAWU) – Uganda
- Uganda Workers' Education Association (UWEA) – Uganda
- National Union of Plantation and Agriculture Workers (NUPAW) - Zambia
- Workers' Education Association of Zambia (WEAZ) – Zambia
- Kenya Plantation and Agriculture Workers' Union (KPAWU) – Kenya
- Kenya Women Workers' Organisation (KEWWO) - Kenya
- Tanzania Plantation and Agricultural Workers' Union (TPAWU) – Tanzania
- The national Federation of Farm, Plantation, Fishery and Agro-industry Trade Unions (NFFPFATU) - Ethiopia
- Forum for the Environment (FfE) – Ethiopia

It is expected that the network will expand to incorporate members from other key horticulture export markets.

Management

The network has a steering committee composed of ten people drawn from the member organisations with a secretariat based in Nairobi, Kenya.

For further information please contact the coordinator:-

Network Coordinator
3rd Floor Mirage Plaza
Mombasa Road
PO Box 61068 – 00200
Nairobi – Kenya
Email: kewwo@wananchi.com
Tel: +254 (0) 20605528/29
Fax: +254 (0) 20605525