



Food and Agriculture
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World Banana Forum (WBF)

Working together for sustainable banana production and trade
Task Force on Gender Equity (GE-TF)

WEBINAR

‘Improving our understanding of the gender pay gap (GPG) in the banana industry’

Report of the WBF Task Force on Gender Equity (GE-TF)

Tuesday, 20 October 2020


1. Welcome by the WBF Secretariat

On behalf of the World Banana Forum¹ (WBF) and its Task Force on Gender Equity (GE-TF), hosted by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) through the WBF Secretariat, **Mr Victor Prada, FAO**, welcomed participants to the third in a series of four thematic webinars.

The series focuses on priority issues for women workers in the banana industry. The 20 October webinar, ‘Improving our understanding of the gender pay gap (GPG) in the banana industry’, was coordinated in conjunction with Banana Link. It focused on, *inter alia*, ways to integrate GPG issues into living wage and living income initiatives.

Mr Prada explained that although the next International Meeting on Gender Equity – which was to be held together with the Fourth Global Conference of the WBF – was originally planned to take place in June 2020 in

¹ Established in 2009, the WBF’s mission is to enable collaboration between stakeholders to work towards pragmatic outcomes for the betterment of the banana industry; and to achieve consensus on best practices regarding workplace issues, gender equity, environmental impact, sustainable production and economic issues. Since the inception of the WBF, gender equity has been central to its activities which have included the production of regional economic reports to highlight working conditions for women workers as well as global meetings focused on enabling women’s representation along the supply chain. The most recent of these international meetings was held in Geneva in November 2017, together with the Third Global Conference of the WBF, where the following five key priorities were identified: women’s employment opportunities, women’s empowerment, gender pay gap, sexual harassment and gender-based violence, and occupational health and safety of women workers. For more information, refer to <http://www.fao.org/world-banana-forum/working-groups/social/gender-equity/en/>



Berlin, it was postponed until 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This year, as an alternative to the in-person meeting, this series of four webinars, funded by FAO, provides an opportunity to continue the important work of the GE-TF.

The final webinar in this series, which will take place in November, will examine the impacts of COVID-19 on women workers and producers in the banana industry. The first webinar in this series, in July, discussed challenges and best practices for the occupational health and safety (OHS) of women workers in the banana industry, while the second webinar in September focused on sexual harassment and gender-based violence in the banana industry.

2. Introduction by the chairperson

Ms Camila Reinhardt Hurtado, FAO, noted that living wages and the GPG have been core issues for the WBF for many years. In 2014/15, an in-depth study was conducted by the GE-TF that focused on women's employment in the banana sector across Latin America, the Caribbean and Africa. Global and regional results related to women's representation in the workforce were presented, highlighting specific inequalities women face, including with regards to remuneration.

In the study, potential underlying causes of these inequalities were identified and included women's unequal access to opportunities, poor access to education, and gender stereotypes that may shape company wage structures so that men work in higher paid roles. In addition, another factor relates to women's reproductive roles, which can often limit their ability to work as they tend to take on family and household responsibilities. These factors in turn pose several challenges, including the need to promote women's involvement in decision-making roles, since women's needs are often not taken into consideration in the workplace.

Ms Reinhardt Hurtado emphasized that the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated some of the inequalities faced by women workers in the banana sector, including the GPG. To address these issues and move towards fair and equal remuneration for both female and male workers, the GE-TF seeks to raise awareness of the issue in the banana industry and to integrate it into WBF activities, particularly those of the Working Group 02 on Distribution of Value.

For the past 10 years, the aforementioned working group has focused its activities on fair and living wages for banana workers. It has examined wage ladders in different countries and explored methodologies to calculate living wages. Ultimately, after members of the Global Living Wage Coalition joined forces to adopt a common methodology for living wages, known as the Anker methodology, members of the WBF supported these efforts and collectively adopted the Anker methodology under the framework of the WBF.

To date there have been several living wage studies conducted using the Anker method in banana exporting countries. However, these studies have lacked a gender dimension. The GE-TF has thus continued to work with the working group to ensure that a GPG analysis is incorporated into ongoing and future living wage and living income activities.

This webinar presented an opportunity to learn about different GPG initiatives, thereby allowing the GE-TF to expand its knowledge and raise issues on the GPG, and to in turn integrate these into the work of the WBF.

3. Summary of panel discussions

The webinar featured contributions from expert panellists from Fairtrade International, the Anker Research Network and Global Living Wage Coalition (GLWC), the International Labour Organization (ILO), and COLSIBA. Feedback was also shared by other participants whose questions and related experiences on the issue of the GPG in the banana industry further enriched the multi-stakeholder discussions of the WBF.

3.1 Gender equity in agricultural supply chains

By Wilbert Flinterman, Fairtrade International

Mr Wilbert Flinterman, an expert on labour conditions and global supply chains, presented the work of Fairtrade International on gender equity in agricultural supply chains.

Mr Flinterman noted the high importance of this topic and that according to Fairtrade International, the GPG needs to be addressed in order to achieve wage improvement. He emphasized that Fairtrade International is joined in this goal by many organizations including the WBF and others in attendance at the webinar.

According to Fairtrade International, women are not sufficiently recognized as important actors across supply chains. Moreover, women are disproportionately impacted, not only by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, but also by climate change. All too often, says Fairtrade International, there is no fair compensation for their work, they are often subject to human rights violations, they are overrepresented in low paid jobs, and they face both physical and non-physical barriers.

Fairtrade International aims to promote women's decision-making along supply chains and to encourage meaningful engagement in all areas to support decent work.

This year, Fairtrade International signed the Declaration for Gender Responsive Standards and Standards Development of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). The Declaration, which now has 64 signatories, aims to provide a practical framework for standard bodies and seeks to make the standards that they develop, and follow, gender responsive.

While important, the declaration is only part of the solution. Partnerships with others engaged in GPG activities in active and tangible ways are vital.

Capacity building is also fundamental to addressing the GPG. **Mr Flinterman** shared a useful framework that points to four types of access women workers require:

- ♀ A wider range of jobs
- ♀ Education
- ♀ Representation
- ♀ A safe workplace

Used as a framework, these types of access make it easier to assess whether all necessary topics are being covered to make a difference in women's working lives.

Mr Flinterman noted that Fairtrade International has many programs, including the Women's School of Leadership, which promotes women as leaders in both farm and household management, and a training program on living wages with some members of the WBF in Ghana.

Mr Flinterman contends that the most sustainable solution for establishing women's workplace rights is collective bargaining, preferably with women themselves negotiating on issues important to them. In many banana producing countries, collective bargaining systems are often absent. This is highly problematic since collective bargaining is a fundamental pillar of decent work. He stated that collective bargaining achieves solutions that cannot be found through legislation or in standards (although the latter provide an enabling framework). It is a sustainable and appropriate tool to be used to address the GPG.

Fairtrade International supports the dissemination of knowledge on this topic together with instruments to address the issues. The organization has supported researchers Sally Smith and Martha and Richard Anker, authors of the Anker methodology for Living Wage measurement, to produce a technical module on defining and addressing GPGs.

3.2 An introduction to the Anker living wage gender module

By Martha Anker, Richard Anker and Sally Smith – Anker Research Network / Global Living Wage Coalition (GLWC)

Ms Martha Anker began by stating that she, Richard Anker and Sally Smith have been working together for more than a year on a gender module for living wages. **Ms Anker** said that wages, work, and gender are highly interrelated, and while Anker living wage studies have not explicitly addressed gender issues to date, the new gender module will:

- ♀ provide guidance and tools on how to conduct a gender analysis of prevailing wages and a living wage in specific economic sectors and workplaces;
- ♀ enable the identification of programs and policies to close the gender pay gap and gaps to a living wage that are relevant to a range of stakeholders, not just employers; and
- ♀ fill a lacuna in existing knowledge and practice on gender pay gaps in global supply chains.

Ms Anker explained that while they originally designed a gender neutral living wage methodology, they also aimed to explore where the gender gaps are, and why they exist. Fairtrade International has funded the gender module that aims to answer those questions and it was presented for the first time during the October webinar.

Ms Sally Smith explained that the module is structured in two major sections that seek to demonstrate where men and women are positioned in the workforce in terms of wage differences:

Structure of the gender module: Part I

Understanding and addressing gender pay gaps in a sector or workplace of interest

- ♀ understanding the gender context of a study location and country;
- ♀ developing a gender profile of the workforce in the sector or workplace of interest;
- ♀ assessing the gender pay gap and gap to a living wage, and reasons for this, in the sector or workplace of interest; and
- ♀ identifying possible gender-related measures to close the gender pay gap and gap to a living wage.

Structure of the gender module: Part II

Gender aspects of Anker methodology living wage estimates

- ♀ how a gender perspective is incorporated when estimating the cost of living and a living wage in a study location; and
- ♀ investigating the cost of living for highly gendered family types in study location (if relevant).

According to the analytical framework presented, there are direct and indirect determinants of GPGs at workplace or sector level which interact and intersect.

Direct determinants at workplace or sector level include:

- ♀ gender distribution of employment and wage rate by occupation/activities/grade;
- ♀ proportion of supervisory and management positions held by women;
- ♀ time worked by women and men;
- ♀ types of employment and contracts for women and men;
- ♀ forms of wage payment and provision of benefits for women and men; and
- ♀ type of overall workforce (e.g. mostly low paid, mostly female, mostly unmarried, etc).



Indirect determinants at workplace or sector level include:

- ♀ employment policies and practices (such as for remuneration, recruitment, training, promotion and dismissal);
- ♀ workplace culture (e.g. gender awareness, violence against women) and grievance mechanisms;
- ♀ representation of women in worker organisations and in industry/sector associations; and
- ♀ collective bargaining at enterprise or sector level.

Indirect determinants at society or economy level include:

- ♀ social norms and attitudes;
- ♀ gender distribution of unpaid care work;
- ♀ amount and type of education and skills by gender;
- ♀ violence against women and girls;
- ♀ legal employment protections for women workers, low wage workers and workers in non-standard forms of employment;
- ♀ state support for workers with parental/care responsibilities;
- ♀ representation of women in state social dialogue institutions (e.g. minimum wage committees);
- ♀ enforcement of anti-discrimination and employment laws; and
- ♀ macroeconomic policies and strategies.

Indirect determinants at global level include:

- ♀ market and value chain dynamics;
- ♀ trade and investment policies; and
- ♀ human rights and sustainable development initiatives.

In practical terms, **Ms Smith** explained, the gender module is designed for flexible use. New living wage studies could include some or all aspects of the gender module, depending on the interests of stakeholders. In study locations with a completed living wage study, the gender module could be added on. Part I of the gender module could be used outside the context of a living wage study to measure GPGs in standalone study. The aim is to make the gender module publicly available, like the Anker living wage methodology.

Ms Smith concluded by stating that they are now seeking opportunities to pilot the gender module, and participants can contact her if they are interested.


3.3 International Labour Organization (ILO) methodology and work on the gender pay gap in agriculture

Rosalia Vazquez-Alvarez, International Labour Organization (ILO)

Ms Rosalia Vazquez-Alvarez began her presentation with a discussion of the GPG across the world. On average, across the world, women are paid about 20 percent less than men. In banana producing countries, she continued, this percentage is even higher. Women tend to work at the low end of income distribution, and are often single-headed households with several children.

Furthermore, economic and social consequences, particularly in low and middle-income countries, have led to a situation in which many women are at the low end of the wage distribution in low paid, informal jobs. The GPG contributes to household inequality and poverty. The greater the inequality, **Ms Vazquez-Alvarez** noted, the weaker the social cohesion.

In terms of GPGs in the banana sector, it is difficult to estimate since specific industry data is not available. To understand the GPGs in the banana sector, data can be used that reflects the agricultural working conditions in countries that are large producers of bananas for export. For example, in countries with significant banana production, the participation of women, compared to men, is low.



A method to calculate the GPG, explained **Ms Vazquez-Alvarez**, is to group wage employees by occupation and education. Take, for example, homogenous groups that can be compared, where the homogeneity has been achieved with the factors 'occupation' and 'education'. Estimate the GPG in each group. Take the weighted average between all groups. The result is the **factor weighted gender pay gap (FWGPG)**, a method first applied by the ILO which shows that overall, the GPG is consistently positive across countries.²

The **FWGPG in agriculture** can also be estimated. Overall, evidence is found to show there is a GPG in agriculture, including in countries that are significant banana producers (even if it has been estimated comparing workers with similar occupation and education).

On the question of how to tackle the GPG in the banana sector in a concrete way, **Ms Vazquez-Alvarez** explained that, to begin, empirical data must be collected to determine the existence and extent of wage discrimination in a given sector. In addition, action can be taken among women and men, even before they enter the labour market: for example, the promotion of the education of young girls and women in banana producing communities.

After women and men are already in the labour market, specific steps can be taken: occupational segregation can be reduced; transparency measures on wage determination can be taken; gender neutral evaluation pay practices can be carried out at the enterprise level; work-life balance measures can be implemented; collective bargaining and social dialogue can take place; and the informal economy can be formalized.

Implemented in 2017, the Equal Pay International Coalition³ (EPIC) accelerates and provides support for the achievement of SDG 8 Target 8.5 (equal pay for work of equal value). Founded by UN Women, ILO, and the OECD with members from governments, academia, and businesses, it is a peer-to-peer exchange platform to promote the exchange of knowledge and tools to help reduce the GPG across the world. Specifically, EPIC supports and guides its members and institutions to progressively adopt measures and policies to reduce the GPG at the enterprise level.

Becoming involved in EPIC is another way that industry stakeholders can help close the GPG in the banana sector.

*A brief video on the GPG by EPIC was played following **Ms Vazquez-Alvarez's** presentation.*

3.4 Wage negotiations and collective bargaining for closing the gender pay gap in the banana industry


Selfa Sandoval, COLSIBA/SITRABI

Ms Selfa Sandoval began by emphasizing the importance of using collective bargaining to address the GPG. Over the last 73 years, her trade union, COLSIBA – where she is coordinator of women's work – has achieved a great deal in terms of women's wage equality in banana producing countries and regions with trade unions. While there is still a GPG in these regions, overall it is a slight pay gap. On the other hand, in banana producing regions where there are no trade unions, there is a large GPG. For instance, she explained that where there are no trade unions, men earn more than women despite laws that include equal pay and minimum wage.

To take the example of Guatemala, **Ms Sandoval** explained, women are vulnerable to the GPG. In the banana sector, there is a group of workers dedicated to field tasks, who are almost always men, and who receive

² For more information regarding the methodology and its application to the agricultural sector, particularly focusing on major banana producing countries, please refer to the accompanying document produced by Ms Rosalia Vazquez-Alvarez, *Improving our understanding of the gender pay gap in the banana sector*.

³ EPIC is the Equal Pay International Coalition. Led by the ILO, UN Women, and the OECD. The Coalition's goal is to achieve equal pay for women and men everywhere. By bringing together a diverse set of actors with different areas of focus and expertise, EPIC supports governments, employers, workers, and their organizations to make concrete and coordinated progress towards this goal.



relatively higher pay. There is another group that works in packing stations, which is where most women work, and that receives relatively lower pay. This segregation of work contributes to the GPG in the banana sector in that country.

Ms Sandoval highlighted the expertise COLSIBA has in collective bargaining processes. The trade union has organized Latin American regional meetings to strategize its position on collective bargaining, a process which often does not take women's needs into account. At these gatherings, women come together to analyse the context of contracts in efforts to identify any and all clauses that relate to women. Initially, they found only a few clauses (related to maternity and breastfeeding), but nothing that referred specifically to women's needs across the board.

As a result, **Ms Sandoval** explained, women participants of the COLSIBA regional meetings decided to launch the Platform for the Defence of Women Banana Workers (PDWBW), which developed 29 clauses that aim to improve conditions of women workers in Latin America. Thus far this platform has served as a guide for each country where COLSIBA works. It provides the basis for women to negotiate their own clauses to put on the negotiating table, and today they have been able to include 26 out of the 29 clauses in collective bargaining agreements in Colombia, Guatemala, Honduras and Panama.

Ms Sandoval added that this result and others is not only due to the efforts of women, but also to the efforts of those men who have changed patterns at work and even within COLSIBA.

She added that it is only through trade unions and collective bargaining that workers can pursue their interests and improve the GPG.

Some of the achievements were due to trainings on necessary skills, including, how to negotiate, how to present arguments, how to establish alliances among colleagues, how to speak with assurance, and how to be visionaries. Among the achievements reached has been the possibility to celebrate and commemorate women workers on 8 March.

While there is still a large gender gap, banana sector wages in countries where COLSIBA is present have surpassed the national minimum wages and are closer to closing the GPG. This despite the fact that in many countries the law does not respect trade union freedom. **Ms Sandoval** concluded by stating that COLSIBA continues to face the challenge of organizing men and women workers to improve their social, cultural and economic conditions.

4. Q&A

Ms Alejandra Safa, FAO, commented that there is no such thing as gender neutral where human beings are concerned and that ignoring gender aspects privileges a specific segment of the population, or may reinforce gender inequalities. She asked, "Wouldn't integrating gender equality at the beginning when tools are being designed be more efficient? Is there a risk of further discrimination against women in designing "neutral" approaches?"

Ms Martha Anker responded that according to the methodology presented at the webinar, living wage is necessarily the same for women and men. In other words, the perspective is, equal pay for equal work. This is why the original study was considered gender neutral.

Ms Iris Munguia, COLSIBA/FESTAGRO, noted with interest the data from the ILO presentation. She also noted that through collective bargaining in Latin America the GPG situation has improved. However, taking the example of Guatemala, 65 000 workers in the sector are not affiliated to any trade union. As a result they are unlikely to be earning the minimum wage. Since it is common for businesses to fail to pay workers the minimum wage, the informal sector perspective is important. Related to this, gaps in women's work create a situation in which they must create other sources of income. Beyond the GPG, job stability is another factor to bear in mind. She commented that it is important to look not only at gaps in pay but also gaps in women's work.

Dr Richard Anker, Anker Research Network, responded that the information on the GPG available to date is at a high level of aggregation, while the policies applied in the field are at a low level of aggregation. For instance, in women's work there are informal contracts and formal contracts. There are a series of complex factors that determine what work women actually carry out. Through the new Anker gender module, there has been an attempt to ask the detailed questions to arrive at a more complete analysis. However, the information required for such an analysis is largely absent.

Mr Flinterman, Fairtrade International, emphasized the importance of collaboration within the WBF on the topic of the GPG. The WBF's Working Group on Distribution of Value, which focuses on activities related to living wages, is a space where stakeholders collaborate and where Fairtrade was approached to consider supporting an Anker gender module, and eventually to fund it. This was an example of successful collaboration that resulted in instruments and knowledge that benefit the entire banana industry.

Mr Prada asked **Ms Vazquez-Alvarez** whether ILO might consider working directly with banana exporting countries on GPG issues, like in the German example.

Ms Vazquez-Alvarez, responded that now is an opportunity for stakeholders from the WBF to engage with EPIC, which helps institutions to gain knowledge and to effectively reduce the GPG through its modules and other tools.

In response to **Ms Iris Munguia**, **Ms Vazquez-Alvarez** commented that the ILO has examined the effects of the formalization of workers. A large number of informal wage workers are women, many in the agriculture sector. By moving from the informal sector to the formal sector's minimum wage, the ILO has estimated that the GPG could be reduced by 4 percent. She stated that the GPG would disappear if women were paid the minimum wage.

5. Conclusion

The primary objective of this third in a series of four webinars of the GE-TF was to share knowledge on and examine ways to integrate the GPG into GE-TF and WBF activities, including living wage and living income initiatives. Examples discussed in the webinar were practical, including how to gather knowledge about and measurement of empirical evidence of the GPG, and following on that, which tools are available to workers and other stakeholders to help reduce it.

As with the issues examined in previous webinars in this series, the GE-TF will continue to pursue this question with the aim of making overall improvements in the banana industry for all stakeholders.

The final webinar, to be held during the week of 23 - 27 November 2020 (TBC), will focus on:

The impacts of COVID-19 on women workers and producers in the banana industry.

To discover the benefits of becoming a member of the World Banana Forum and to take an active role towards a sustainable banana sector, please visit:

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World Banana Forum Secretariat
Trade and Markets Division

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
Viale delle Terme di Caracalla
00153 Rome, Italy

WBF@fao.org | **www.fao.org/wbf** | **@FAOwbf**

