



Hivos Women@Work Campaign:

Women Leadership Project

PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY AND DECENT WORK IN
HORTICULTURE SECTOR IN EAST AFRICA

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Background

Despite women being the majority of the workers in flower farms on **average 60–70%**, they remain under represented in senior leadership and decision making positions and are absent as owners majorly due to social-cultural and economic issues.

Low education levels, lack of confidence, assertiveness or interest in leadership, societal and cultural norms have been cited by 2016 Hivos Women Leadership baseline study as some of the reasons for this situation. In addition, limited knowledge of their rights, the “double burden” of women’s unpaid care work and women’s reproductive roles are also some of reasons women have not ascended to higher positions of leadership. Further, sexual and gender based violence remains unexplainably high due to the women’s vulnerability in society.

Additionally, because of their vulnerability in society, some women end up in casual sexual relationships with uncommitted men leading to a growing trend of single mothers. This aggravates their weak position and end up accepting any job available to provide for their children.

The challenge

The corporate entities within the horticulture sector have put in place policies for directing their internal systems and structures. The policies however are inadequate according to studies undertaken in ensuring they comprehensively push for promotion of gender equality and women’s empowerment in the farms. The policies have been found lacking in facilitating women entry into leadership positions during recruitment and hiring, internal promotions, in performance appraisal processes, and the mere absence of grading of tasks characteristically undertaken by men and by women.

A Hivos 2016 Baseline Study Report: **Women’s Leadership in Horticulture Sector** (mainly flowers and vegetables), conducted in Kenya, Uganda, and Rwanda revealed gender inequalities in the horticulture sector exist:

- Majority of women in the sector are concentrated in the unskilled labour force which is least paying, with job insecurity due to casualization of most tasks for unskilled workers. Their vulnerable positions at work exposes them to sexual exploitation. They are at times unaware of their employment rights and benefits which increases their levels of vulnerability.
- Traditional gender roles of women such as picking, sorting and packing in horticulture are characteristically dominated by women and those jobs are largely poorly paid.





60 - 70%

**Number of women
in flower farms
who remain under
represented in senior
leadership and decision
making positions**

- Men tend to be involved in activities that generate more income at the higher ranks of the value chain or involve use of machinery and equipment.
- Women are less represented in decision making positions, with their numbers decreasing as one goes up higher in the value chain into middle level management and senior management levels. Those in leadership positions are mainly at supervisory level.
- Women face entry barriers to participating in the export sector, which is viewed to demand a higher level of literacy, access to credit, knowledge and skills to increase value of products. As such, few women operate as entrepreneurs owning large pieces of land, processing facilities or right connections.
- General resistance and attitude towards female leadership due to socio-cultural norms, and low motivation among women to become leaders.
- Weak mentorship and coaching programs for women compared to those between men that are often more strategic, practical and career oriented.
- In Kenya, many of the workers revealed that domestic violence is rife in households of farm employees, especially those who live in communal housing provided by the employer. The workers intermarry and their problems often spill into the workplace. There is extensive abuse of substances, especially alcohol among the male migrant workers who indulge in casual or noncommittal relationships. This acrimony among workers disrupts relations and production and a comprehensive intervention is needed to address gender inequalities at personal and interpersonal levels.
- Men were found to have more informal job opportunities that are more paying such as in construction and transport, and with restricted mobility for women due to security reasons they tend to take what's easily accessible (working as general workers) even when this cannot satisfy their family needs. According to baseline study, few women are in supervisory and management roles notably in Uganda and Rwanda, with examples of women who are directors in Kenya and Rwanda being shared.
- Gender stereotypes and gender roles guide managers in allocation of work at the farm: 'If any work needs a lot of energy, speed or commanding, we are likely to choose a man because of the way they are naturally made'. Anything that needs education, strength, toughness, then men are preferred to women. There are also masculine jobs like being in the cold store, spraying and fertigation.

Why women's leadership in the horticulture sector

Women lead even without knowing they are leaders. Many of these women take on roles at their work place and communities which would normally be identified as leadership positions.

Under Hivos Women Leadership project in Horticulture sector, leadership is defined as:

'Someone who, at work, can inspire and empower others; form relationships and work with others; be assertive; lead by example; make decisions; mediate and negotiate; believe in themselves; have emotional intelligence; have the ability to communicate well; and have the ability to find solutions to challenges'.

Available research on women leadership seeks to provide evidence of the link between a company's share of women in leadership positions and its financial performance and organizational health. However, majority of available evidence tends to concentrate on barriers to women's seeking leadership positions or concentrate mainly on counting the number of women elected or appointed in government or institutions. While such knowledge is necessary, localized approaches lack to understand extent to which women's presence in decision-making spaces facilitates the mainstreaming of a gender perspective into policies. This is one aspect the women leadership project seeks to focus on.

Our solution

A lack of belief in women's own value, worth and ability through our patriarchal structure tempers women's ambitions and holds women back especially out of fear of violence and intimidation, loss of reputation due the stigma attached to women seeking leadership positions and the expectation that women's role is at home as well as loss of wages if they speak up against their employers.





The project aims to work with many female leaders to provide opportunities to develop their leadership skills, bring an understanding of their leadership role, recognition of their leadership style, including inbuilt personalised strategies for upcoming women leaders in the sector. While having more confident women won't necessarily eliminate the unconscious bias, Hivos believes that empowering more women can help call out bias when they see it, put themselves forward for elective positions including in union leadership, develop courage to voice their opinions and provide the much needed role models and mentors to inspire other women and girls. This mentorship for women workers will also be derived from women who have risen to senior management positions who the women leadership project also targets.

Additional to building the skills sets in women, the project will work with sector management teams to bring gender consciousness in their actions, in systems, structures and policies key to running of the organisations.

The Hivos Women leadership project is implemented in Uganda, Kenya and Rwanda. This is in partnership with Akina Mama wa Afrika (AMwA) and Uganda Workers Education Association (UWEA) in Uganda, Rwanda Workers Trade Union Confederation (CESTRAR) and Rwanda Women's Network in Rwanda, and the African Women Communication and Development Network in Kenya (FEMNET).

The project objective is to advance women's leadership and representation in decision-making processes in the horticulture sector in Eastern Africa by addressing both strategic and practical issues that hinder women's progress. This will be realized through:

1. Strengthening the leadership capacities of women workers and their representatives; and that of management staff in partnering farms in the horticultural sector in Eastern Africa. The project anticipates an increase in the number of women in leadership positions influencing changes at personal level and farm level policies and practices.
2. Promotion of gender responsive work place policies and decent work for better recognition and respect for women workers' rights and improvements in their welfare and working conditions. Specifically, there will be close collaboration with farms to review and strengthen their internal institutional policies to be more gender responsive. A model gender equality policy will be developed in close collaboration with horticulture sector players for their adaptation and adoption.
3. Strengthening the collective voice of women in trade union movement and promoting the interests of members, especially women workers' rights.

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4. Influencing national, regional and international processes on gender equality and decent work. Specifically, the project will work closely with respective national governments on their commitments on Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 on gender equality and empowerment of women and girls and SDG 8 on economic growth and decent work.
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About Hivos

Hivos is an international non-governmental organization that seeks new solutions to persistent global issues. With smart projects in the right places, Hivos opposes discrimination, inequality, abuse of power and the unsustainable use of our planet's resources.

The Women@Work Campaign

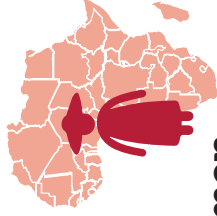
Founded in 2012, the Women@Work Campaign aims to contribute to decent work for women who earn their living through global production chains, most notably: Flowers, fruits and vegetables grown for the export market. The Campaign involves partners in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Ethiopia and Rwanda for Eastern Africa; Zimbabwe, Zambia and Malawi for Southern Africa. It enlists both local and international partnerships (CSOs; businesses; governments, certification bodies, trade unions, media and citizens), working together to improve workplace conditions for women.

The Campaign has adopted a number of strategies, including: Promoting an effective, results based social certification regime; contributing to law and policy reform; building capacities of workers and workers' representatives to influence workplace policies and practices; and, promoting engendered Corporate Social Responsibility.

People Unlimited

Only **5%** of African Women make it to the very top in corporate – hence remain under represented at every level of the corporate ladder, non-management and senior management.

(Women Matter Africa Report by McKinsey & Company, 2016)



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Unequal power relations between women and men continue to affect women's capacities to effectively participate in decision making.

Women remain disproportionately affected by poverty, discrimination and exploitation exemplified by the fact that they are mainly in insecure, low-wage and constitute small minority of those in senior positions.

Greater involvement of women in leadership and decision-making over time will lead to Impact level changes for women in leadership and decision-making, access to economic opportunities, education, and decent work. Women workers will directly be empowered to take up leadership positions

SOURCE: HIVOS

#womenatworkcampaign



89%

of women's jobs in Africa are informal sector and as a result they are not covered by labour relations laws.

They
have no
minimum
wage

neither do
their jobs
bring social
protection

They
have no
maternity
benefits

nor old age
pension.



On average

60–70% of workers in

horticulture sector are **women**, but remain underrepresented in leadership especially at senior management and as producers / growers.

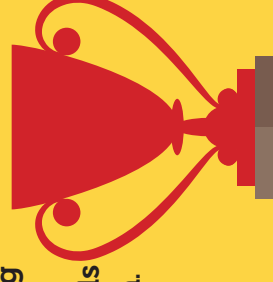
Hivos believes:

- > Enhancing leadership skills and opportunities
- > Supporting women to overcome barriers to leadership
- > Confronting limiting attitudes towards women in the workplace
- > Empowering firms to prioritize gender diversity will enable women to build their competence and seek leadership positions



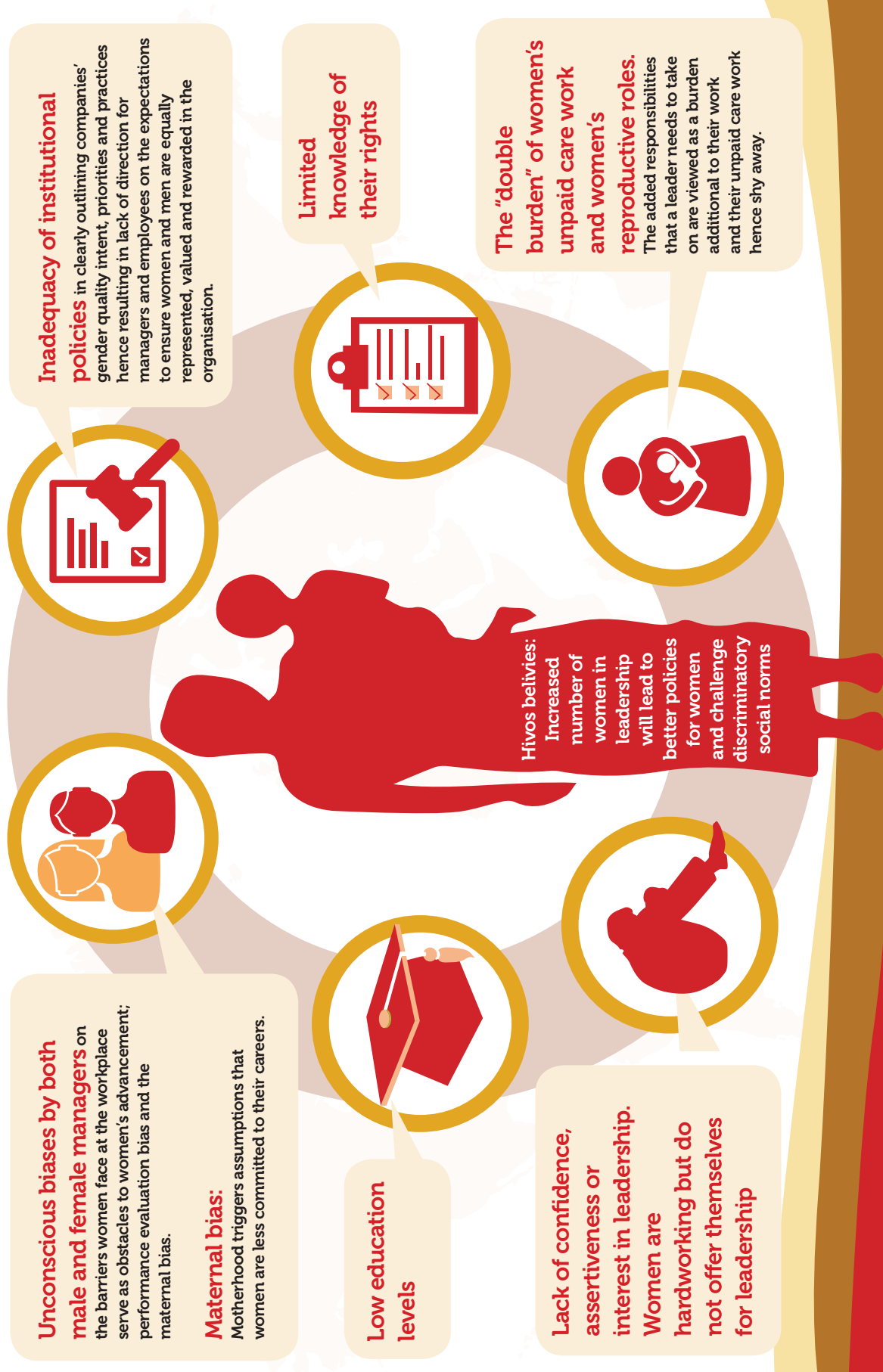
Support for change

will be created in the working environment through dialogue, training and rewards system.



Challenges of Women getting into Leadership

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SOURCE: HIVOS

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Implementing partners:

