

Case Study 5.1

Ethical Trading Initiative: Equal Treatment training for managers, supervisors and workers

Following revelations of extensive sexual harassment in the agriculture sector, the Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) introduced a training programme for managers, supervisors and workers on equal treatment and preventing sexual harassment. The training aims to help managers and supervisors improve their people management skills and collaborate on improving equality in the supply chain.

Training course for managers: A half-day course for managers provides information about the business benefits of recognizing and understanding discrimination and sexual harassment and how they relate to workers' rights. In addition, information is provided about international standards and legal frameworks for workers' rights, managers' roles in promoting the equal treatment of workers in the workplace and how supervisors can be supported through the development and implementation of action plans.

Training course for supervisors: The two-day course gives participants an understanding of discrimination and sexual harassment, and how to promote the equal treatment of workers. It is designed to help supervisors define their role in their organizations, their rights and responsibilities and those of the workers that they supervise. The course is designed to encourage a culture of respect in the workplace, prevent and manage discrimination and sexual harassment, implement workers' rights in daily business and develop skills to be a good supervisor. Tools are given for working with managers and in developing an action plan to bring about real change in the workplace.

Training course for workers: Workers are provided with information and awareness about discrimination and sexual harassment, and workers' rights and responsibilities. Workers are important in setting the standards for respect and dignity as an integral part of workplace culture. Along with managers and supervisors, workers also have a responsibility to uphold the policies which protect their rights, including appropriate workplace behaviour towards their colleagues.

The training sessions are followed up by a joint action-planning meeting and by support to develop and implement relevant human resources policies.

ETI drew out the following key lessons from the programme:

- *Building trust through respect is an essential prerequisite to effecting change:* the role of the programme manager in first gaining the trust of the employers and then providing continuity, technical advice on labour law and other support to the facilitators was seen by participants as crucial to the success of the programme.
- *Sensitive, participatory training for managers, supervisors and workers is unique and highly valued:* participatory sessions, including role-plays, helped bring out personal experience of sexual harassment and discrimination. This needs to be handled very carefully so that participants are able to process and deal with these revelations appropriately.
- *Change happens at a personal level before it can happen at enterprise level:* participants, including the facilitators themselves, reported that they had been personally affected to a greater or lesser extent by the programme. One manager reported "the training was like a wake-up call. It was very important because you can't keep doing everything the same as you have done all the years. There were a lot of things I learned in the training that I needed to work on, like communication."

- *Supervisors and workers spoke of changes in their self-awareness, in their behaviour towards one another and in their expectations of how they should be treated.* Participants talked about realizing that they had been treated or had treated others in the past without respect.
- *The business benefits of the programme were that better communication led to less conflict – this may take time to emerge but should not be underestimated.* The business benefits of equal treatment of workers may not be easy to measure in the short term but are more evident in the medium and longer term.
- *Deeply entrenched cultural attitudes on gender... can be exposed by training but will take longer and more work to change.* ETI's impact assessment found that "a significant proportion of women are able to define sexual harassment correctly and are therefore more aware of what it is." However, it was also clear that gender relations are still male dominated and that both women and men have not fully internalized what sexual abuse and harassment really mean and that it is not acceptable. Training should therefore form part of a longer-term strategy to develop and implement strong human resources policies and to transform attitudes in the workplace.
- *Learning from the ETI training programme in South Africa:* in South Africa the ETI training programme for managers, supervisors and workers has been adapted and delivered by the Wine and Agricultural Ethical Trading Association (WIETA), a multi-stakeholder South African non-profit voluntary organization which promotes ethical trade in the wine industry value chain. Stakeholders include producers, retailers, trade unions, non-governmental organizations and the government. For further information about ETI and WIETA training see: http://www.wieta.org.za/wieta_training.php