

A lush green tea plantation landscape with a white speech bubble overlay. The background shows rows of tea bushes in the foreground, a large tree on the left, and a dense forest of taller trees in the background under a clear sky. A person is visible working in the tea field on the right.

How we're making a difference

Addressing gender & gender based violence issues in the Kenyan tea industry



the sustainable
trade initiative

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The challenge

Since 2008, companies in the Kenyan tea industry have been taking action to address GBV, which has led to improvements and awareness. Although there has been significant progress, peer-to-peer cooperation and learning on the issue has been limited. Challenges remain around awareness of GBV and GBV policies within the workforce and among smallholders, and numerous cases are suspected to be unreported. Multiple parties in the sector have also expressed the need for a safe space for GBV survivors: a place outside of the plantation, where they can find medical, judicial, and police support.

Key gender empowerment milestones in Kenya:



Convening the Gender Empowerment Platform (GEP)



Upscaling gender work in Kenya to benefit tea communities internationally



Reaching 65,000 direct beneficiaries by 2020

Our approach

To address the complex and sensitive social sustainability issue of gender discrimination and violence, IDH convened producers, technical experts, and civil society organizations under the Gender Empowerment Platform (GEP). GEP members are: Unilever Tea Kenya, James Finlays Kenya, Eastern Produce Kenya, Kenya Tea Development Agency, Sotik Tea, IDH, Ethical Tea Partnership and Gender Violence Recovery Centre. UN Women provides technical support to the GEP.

Representing the majority of the companies in the Kenyan tea industry, the GEP has the ambitious goal to significantly reduce the occurrence of GBV, as well as to increase women's empowerment in the Kenyan tea industry, by 2020.

To this end, stakeholders identified three priorities for the program, which are addressed through the GEP, as well as through field-level projects with co-funding from IDH:

- 1. Prevention:** Aligning training and awareness-raising materials for different target groups
- 2. Enablement:** Ensuring an enabling policy environment to address gender and GBV issues for tea value chain players
- 3. Response:** Creating a safe space in Kericho for plantation workers, smallholders, and their community members



Improving sector governance

The establishment of the GEP and program development have been a highly participatory process, and buy-in and trust from all key stakeholder has been instrumental in formalizing the program priorities and GEP structure. This has created an enabling environment for tea companies to cooperate on promoting gender equality and addressing GBV in the sector, laying the foundation to start work on the establishment of a safe space in Kericho County.

In the global tea industry, the GEP is one of the first multi-stakeholder platform to facilitate discussions, take actions, and share learnings around issues of workplace sexual harassment and gender equality. Instead of aiming to establish a sector-wide policy on gender, the GEP is the enabling environment for companies to seek peer-to-peer advice in changing their own business practices and to progress joint activities. Contributing to this was the 2018 IDH4Gender cross-learning event between the flower sector in Ethiopia and tea sector in Kenya.

Since the topic of safe spaces was identified as one of the 3 priorities of the GEP in 2016, IDH has undertaken significant convening work to realize this goal. Working with relevant GEP and expert organizations a proposal was co-developed for a safe hub in Kericho county. During this process it became apparent that for the safe space to succeed, long-term sustainability - what happens after the safe space structure is established and IDH and partner involvement comes to an end - is absolutely crucial.

In September 2019, it was decided to discontinue this activity. This decision was made in light of the challenging market conditions in the global tea market, as well as the modality and mechanism of the safe space the GEP arrived at didn't work out within the scope and timeline for delivery by 2020. In the last year of program implementation, we will focus on documenting these lessons learned and accelerating joint GEP activities where possible.

Beyond Kenya: A sector-wide gender policy in Malawi

As part of the Malawi Tea 2020 program, we worked with the tea industry to formalize and launch a sector-wide gender policy in 2017, where expertise from work done in Kenya played a critical role. Policy is now being implemented on all estates, and member committee meetings provide a platform for engagement. IDH continues to support through strategic advice and funding, ensuring new learnings from the GEP are scaled to other tea-growing regions.



Output

Gender Empowerment Platform (GEP) in convened

Outcome

Successful cooperation with governments and other partners: enabling environment for discussions and policies on gender and GBV

The safe space structure is created and embedded in Kericho

Impact

The GEP is a well-functioning partnership and is recognized as a thought-leader on gender equality and addressing GBV in the Kenyan tea sector and beyond



Advancing Business Practices

Through peer-to-peer advice, networks, and sector-level connections enabled by the GEP, the aim is that members strengthen their GBV prevention and response mechanisms, as well as embed and integrate gender equality and policies on GBV throughout the business structure and their corporate strategies.

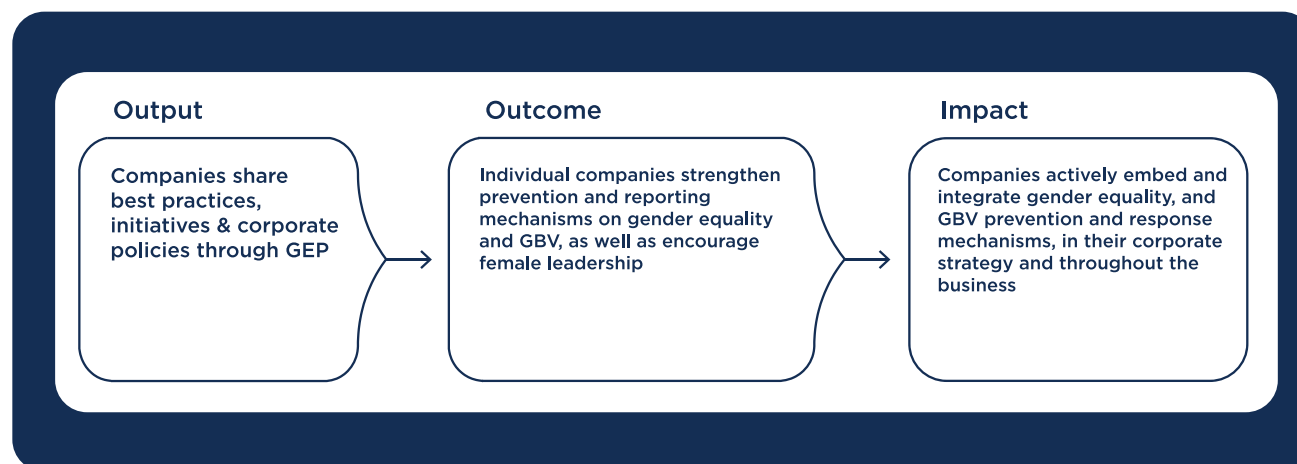
To support this goal IDH has developed, together with the GEP members, a Plantation Roadmap and a Common Training Manual for companies. The Common Training Manual is now used by three producers in field-level interventions. On other plantations, revisions and improvements were

already underway, as some producers had already taken the initiative to critically review their policies and business practices prior to the convening of the GEP.

To formalize the participation of the producing companies in the GEP and effectively measure changes, IDH encourages partners to sign a commitment to report on their progress towards the goal of significantly reducing the occurrence of GBV. To date, three producers have signed. The goal is to extend this commitment to all private sector GEP members, but it is not an easy ask as the results, although confidential, can easily be taken out of context. There is no comparable sustainability initiative in the tea sector that includes a commitment on such sensitive issues for their members.

Beyond Kenya: Taking business practice learnings from tea to new sectors

IDH and partners are using the efforts undertaken in Kenya to strengthen their gender agenda at a cross-country, cross-sector level. In Malawi and India, we work through multi-stakeholder partnerships to change business practices on addressing gender, GBV and sexual harassment. In both countries, partners are asked to report on the same KPIs as are used by the GEP. Events such as the IDH4Gender cross-learning event also serve to make country-level insights globally effective.



Increasing Field-level Sustainability

Under the GEP a number of field level projects are being implemented by GEP members. Project implementation focuses on GBV prevention and response, female leadership and financial literacy. All GEP members identified a lack of financial literacy and balanced household decision-making as one of the causes of GBV. This is especially relevant at smallholder level, where discussions on addressing GBV focus on the household and farm level.

Owing to industrial strikes in the tea industry in October 2017, field-level projects only kicked off properly in the first half of 2018. Currently, four projects are run under the GEP (co-funded by IDH): two estate-level projects and two projects addressing smallholder farmers.

In the estate-level projects, close to 17,500

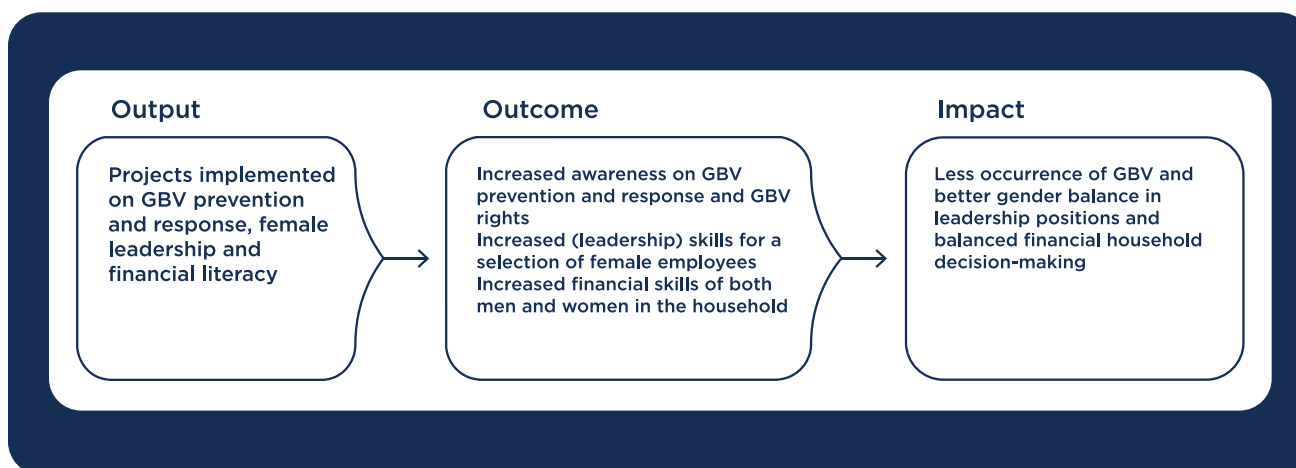
workers have been reached on topics related to GBV awareness, rights and policy awareness, and financial inclusion. The topics addressed in the field-level projects contribute to changes in business practices, such as the implementation of female leadership trajectories, training of employees on reporting structures, and financial literacy.

At smallholder level, the aim is to reach around 50,000 individuals by 2020, through a holistic economic empowerment and financial inclusion project, as well as strengthen reporting mechanisms in five smallholder factories. Capacity-building of extension staff is also an important focus point.

IDH expects to be able to reflect on project outcomes by the end of the program in 2020.

Beyond Kenya: Field-level projects in Malawi and India

Using expertise from Kenya, we are supporting field-level projects in Malawi and India addressing workplace safety and GBV awareness in the broader community – primarily through dedicated gender interventions and changes in business practices. In India, the program reaches more than 250,000 beneficiaries to tackle a broad range of issues affecting vulnerable groups in the tea communities. In Malawi, parallel to the launch of the sector-wide gender policy, 1,100 facilitators are being trained on GBV and policy awareness, and will be further rolled out in 2020.



Next steps

Despite progress achieved so far — including the set-up of this first-ever multi-stakeholder platform on addressing GBV and female leadership, creating a safe learning environment in which producers can engage in peer-to-peer learning, and co-developing several interventions on field-level impact — there are several challenges ahead.

Addressing a long-term, cultural issue through business

GBV and sexual harassment are complex issues. Causes are often rooted in culture and addressing these should be a multi-stakeholder effort. Working on this is therefore not an easy task. IDH has set the ambitious goal of 'significantly reducing the occurrence of GBV in the Kenyan tea industry by 2020', in a sector that until 2016 did not publicly discuss these issues. Unlocking and proving field-level results through the project, preferably at outcome level, will be important for the success and impact of the program. However, achieving the goal of the GEP will be challenging within the current timeframe. It is also important to note that raising awareness, as well as addressing GBV and gender issues, results in higher levels of case reporting. As such, a spike reporting is anticipated before numbers stabilize.

Accountability of the Gender Empowerment Platform

The first step towards meaningful change in business practice is the voluntary participation of companies in the GEP. However, the commitments of parties to the GEP are based on non-binding agreements. In order to keep members committed to the goal of the GEP, it is important to think through ways to further evolve the platform. Buyer involvement could add an additional accountability mechanism, but needs to be done in consultation with producing companies. There is potential to scale the GEP to tea origins beyond Kenya, such as Malawi and India, to further build on addressing this issue in the broader tea sector.

Conduct a third-party program evaluation to capture learnings

The process of establishment of the GEP as well as implementation of activities has been a continuous learning process for the GEP members. Also, it might take more time than anticipated at the start of the program before we can see impact on the ground. It is therefore important that an independent, third-party evaluation of the program will take place and that learnings are documented. These learnings can be used in the work IDH is doing on gender beyond Kenya and beyond the tea sector and will be shared with the wider public.