

MAKING A DIFFERENCE:

# THE GENDER EMPOWERMENT PLATFORM

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



the sustainable  
trade initiative

**Beginning in 2008, companies in the Kenyan tea industry started working with IDH to address gender-based violence (GBV). At the start of this cooperation, both the workforce and the smallholders had limited awareness of GBV and GBV policies; this may have left numerous cases unreported. In addition, multiple parties in the sector have 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.**

Together with its partners, IDH has been working to significantly reduce the occurrence of GBV in the Kenyan tea industry by addressing issues such as awareness, female leadership and financial literacy. To this end, IDH has convened the Gender Empowerment Platform (GEP), a sector-wide platform where tea companies and civil society players were able to collaborate.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To evaluate the results of the GEP and the efforts made by all platform members throughout the 2016-2020 evaluation period, IDH commissioned an independent impact evaluation. The Achievements and Reflections in this publication are based on the findings of the study. The evaluation took place between November 2020 and March 2021 and included close to 80 respondents from private sector companies, tea workers, CSOs and gender experts.

This report is written and produced by:  
**IDH, The Sustainable Trade Initiative**

# THE APPROACH

To address the complex and sensitive social sustainability issue of gender discrimination and violence, IDH has convened tea producers, technical experts and civil society organizations under the GEP.

The GEP was launched in 2017 with the following members, representing the majority of the companies in the Kenyan tea industry: 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 has provided technical support to the GEP throughout the entire period.

The GEP partners have worked towards an ambitious goal: reducing the occurrence of GBV, as well as increasing women's empowerment in the Kenyan tea industry by 2020.

To this end, stakeholders have identified three priorities to be addressed through the GEP as well as through field-level projects with co-funding from IDH:



## PREVENTION

Aligning training and awareness-raising materials for different target groups



## ENABLEMENT

Ensuring an enabling policy environment to address gender and GBV issues for tea value chain players



## RESPONSE

Creating a safe space in Kericho for plantation workers, smallholders, and their community members



Through establishing gender committees and gender champions in 5 factories, we have seen increased dialogue on gender issues at the factory level, increased awareness of GBV issues amongst workers and strengthening of reporting structures.

- Sudi Matara, Head of KTDA Foundation

# ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE GENDER EMPOWERMENT PROGRAM



**85%** OF KENYAN TEA COMPANIES

IN A LEADING AND AGENDA-SETTING PLATFORM ON GENDER EQUALITY AND GBV



**1<sup>ST</sup> EVER GENDER POLICIES AND COMMITTEES IN TEA FACTORIES**



**28.7%**

REDUCTION IN GBV REPORTED INCIDENTS



**17,500**

PLANTATION WORKERS AND...



**50,000+**

SMALLHOLDERS REACHED



**€2m+**

PUBLIC AND PRIVATE INVESTMENT IN GBV PREVENTION



**1<sup>ST</sup> EVER ROADMAP AND COMMON TRAINING MANUAL**

TO ADDRESS GBV IN KENYA



**3,000**

WORKERS AND...



**20,000**

FARMERS BENEFITED FROM FINANCIAL INCLUSION PROJECTS



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# REFLECTIONS

Sharing learnings, good practices and experiences around addressing GBV and gender issues in the supply chains is critical to the success of any such initiative. This is the exact peer-to-peer learning that has been facilitated within the GEP. Now, GEP members want to share their learnings to contribute to other programs.

**THE GEP HAS BEEN A FUNCTIONAL MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PLATFORM THAT COULD HAVE BENEFITED FROM A BROADER VARIETY OF STAKEHOLDERS BRINGING ADDITIONAL TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCES**

The GEP has been built on collaboration, trust and pursuit of a common agenda through a participative process involving the tea companies. These elements are critical when tackling such a sensitive and complex issue as GBV that promotes gender mainstreaming. The GEP has incentivised tea companies to implement a sector-wide common agenda and has elevated the conversation on mainstreaming gender among leading tea-producing companies in Kenya.

GEP has proved its effectiveness as it was set up by IDH, but it could be beneficial to include more stakeholders in future sector-convening efforts. For example, including tea buyers and additional CSOs and/or government agencies could have leveraged additional technical expertise and resources towards the implementation of activities in the Kenyan tea industry GBV reduction initiative. This decision should be made on a case-by-case basis; bringing in additional stakeholders could elevate the conversation on mainstreaming gender in the sector, but it could also reduce the efficacy and trust of a platform.

**“ The type of conversations we have with the companies have really progressed since the start of the GEP. Through the GEP platform we have been able to create a safe atmosphere for constructive conversations and insightful exchanges on how GBV issues are being dealt with in one plantation versus the other.**

- Judith Fraats, Senior Program Manager at IDH

**WHILE FIELD-LEVEL PROJECTS CAN BE CONSIDERED SUCCESSFUL, GBV REMAINS A COMPLEX ISSUE TO ADDRESS WITHIN THE SCOPE OF A 5-YEAR COLLABORATION IN A PLATFORM**

GEP partners have made noticeable improvements on GBV prevention, gender-rights awareness, female leadership and financial inclusion. This is reflected in the reported reduction of GBV cases and the testimonies from beneficiaries.

Patriarchal, cultural and societal norms underlying GBV and gender inequality are deeply rooted in our society. While field-level activities have proven largely successful, GBV and gender inequality require a longer timeframe to be fully addressed. GEP partners will continue working towards this pursuit through their own company structures. It is important to recognize that there will be issues beyond the scope of actions of partner companies (both individually and together as in the GEP) that must be accounted for when measuring progress.

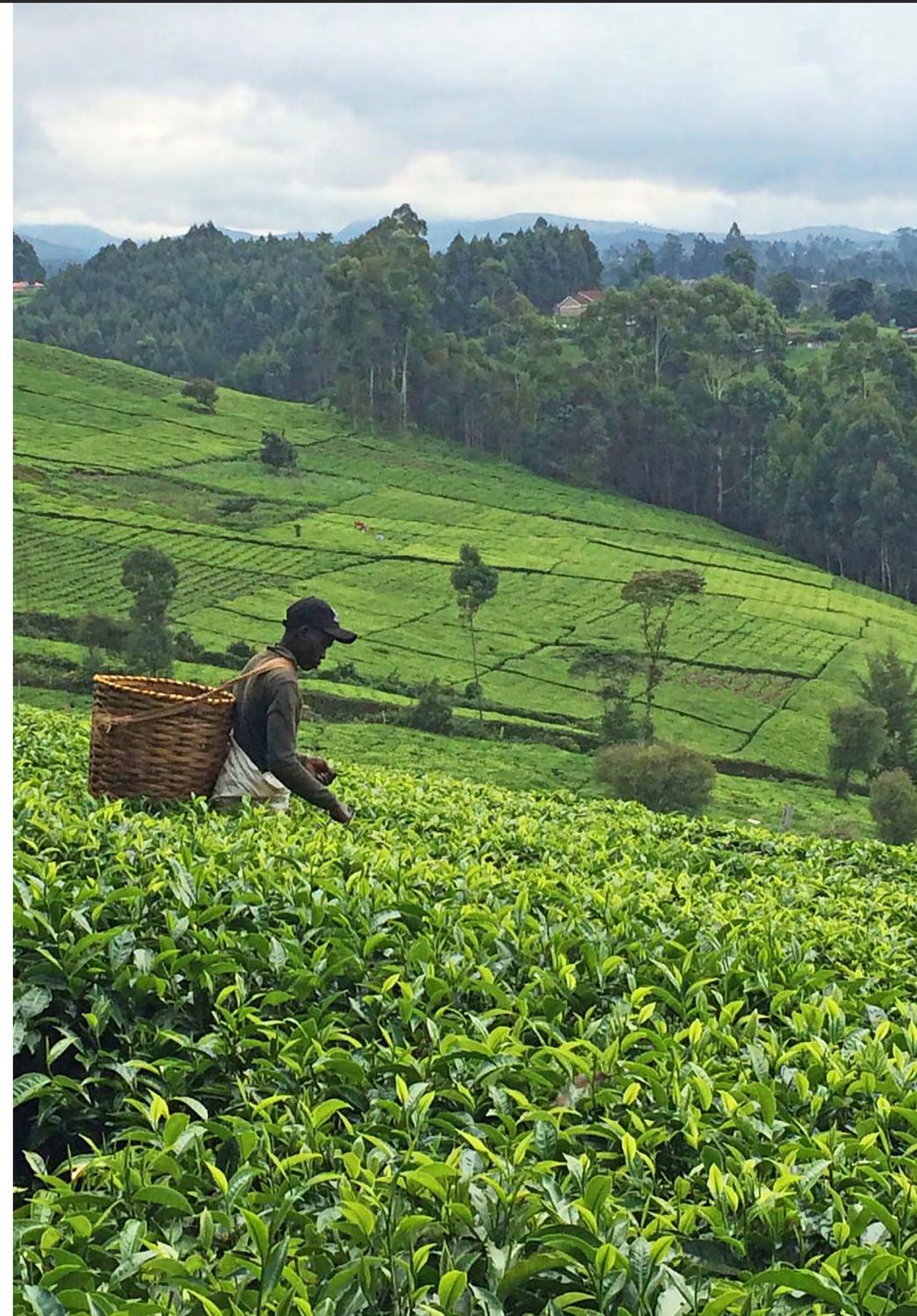
**THE NECESSITY FOR A SAFE SPACE HAS BEEN CLEAR AND THE SAFE SPACE STRATEGY WELL-FORMULATED, BUT UNRESOLVED ISSUES RELATED TO THE FEASIBILITY AND LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY OF THE DELIVERY MECHANISM HAS RESULTED IN LIMITED PROGRESS**

Establishing a safe space in Kericho has not succeeded as it has been initially envisioned in the GEP priorities. The safe space strategy has been well-formulated. Furthermore, it has benefited from the meaningful participation of all GEP members and from initial commitments made by the Kericho county government. However, the design has lacked mechanisms for assuring its feasibility and long-term sustainability. Amidst challenging market conditions in the global tea market, it has been decided to discontinue this platform activity. Several GEP companies have advanced the safe space agenda within their respective organizations; this has led to the establishment of safe spaces across multiple tea communities.

The impact research has offered insight into actions that should be considered when establishing future safe space structures. First, there is a need for more clarity around the roles & responsibilities of the various stakeholders involved in the governance structure, particularly that of the private sector players and the local government. Second, the overall engagement of the government could have been explored in a more deliberate manner and incorporated into the safe space structure. The research does acknowledge that the cooperative design of a safe space is a complicated process. It is therefore pleasing to see the success of the establishment of safe spaces across tea communities by multiple GEP partners.

**“ Under the Gender Empowerment Platform, Finlays has continued to partner with the government both at the National and County Level in strengthening prevention, mitigation and response to GBV, and is proud to have completed the construction of the child Protection Unit at Kericho Police Station.**

- Simeon Hutchinson, Managing Director, James Finlays Kenya



## CONCLUSION

The GEP has been a well-functioning partnership that has created an enabling environment for discussions, cooperation and activities to address GBV. We are proud to have seen noticeable improvements on GBV prevention and gender rights awareness of workers, female leadership and financial inclusion. Despite the many challenges, it is encouraging to know that the work under the GEP contributed significantly to the reduction of GBV occurrences in the Kenyan tea industry. The work is not yet finished but we will incorporate the many lessons learnt throughout this program into our future initiatives. Our mission is to continuously improve the way IDH and industry partners tackle GBV.

## NEXT STEPS

The GEP ran until 2020 and all the field-level projects for the GEP formally ended in June 2021. IDH will continue working in the tea sector on gender equality and women's safety during the 2021-2025 period as follows:



### SCOPING THE CONTINUATION OF GENDER EFFORTS IN KENYA AND WIDER EAST-AFRICA.

This work will build on the GEP and [Malawi Tea 2020](#). We will either continue under the umbrella of the GEP or will replicate and scale the Women's Safety Accelerator Fund from India to East-Africa.



### IMPLEMENTATION AND SCALING OF THE WOMEN'S SAFETY ACCELERATOR FUND (WSAF). WSAF ENABLES A SAFE AND EMPOWERING WORKPLACE FOR WOMEN WORKERS.

Through [WSAE](#), investing companies address gender-based violence in agricultural value chains with a combined investment of €2 million to date. The goal is to implement the UN Women Global Women's Safety Framework in Rural Spaces and to ensure that 'all women and girls are socially, economically, and politically empowered in rural spaces that are free from sexual harassment and other forms of violence.' WSAF focuses on local ownership and on providing the tools, technical assistance and specialised services to strengthen prevention and response mechanisms. IDH acts as fund manager for WSAF. Initial funders are Unilever, Tesco, the Ethical Tea Partnership and IDH. Currently, WSAF is openly looking for other investors. The Fund will initially benefit over 200,000 women tea workers in Assam (India) and IDH is exploring options for scaling to other sectors and regions.



**We have initiated the Women's Safety Accelerator Fund to enable safe and empowering workplaces for women workers.**

- Marc Engel, Chief Supply Chain Officer, Unilever



## FIND OUT MORE

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[Roadmap for GBV prevention and response for plantation management](#)

[Common Training Manual Addressing gender-based violence in the Kenyan tea industry](#)

[James Finlays Kenya, Unilever Tea Kenya & IDH on enhancing financial inclusion and female leadership of workers](#)

[KTDA & IDH on economic empowerment and household decision-making of smallholders](#)

[The Tea and Flower Experiences: cross-learning event 2018](#)

[Financial Inclusion for Workers Including a Gender Lens](#)

[Women Safety Accelerator Fund Gender Empowerment Platform](#)