

# THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF BUSINESS & MANAGEMENT

## Rights of Workers under Ethiopian Labour Law: The Case of Adami Tulu and Ziway Flower Investments

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### **Abstract:**

*Ethiopia is of the largest country in Africa, hosting foreign direct investment. Consequently, the presence of different foreign companies has been creating job opportunities in addition to bringing different economic benefits. In this regard horticulture is one of the areas that have realized the country's development ambition. However, there was strong labour and environment concern with this economic activity. This research paper attempted to examine the implementation of labour rights based on national law and international standards, in selected areas, Adami Tullu Jido Kombolcha Woreda, Oromia Regional State (Central Ethiopia). For this purpose, the study focused on basic employees' rights including the right to form association, occupational safety, wages and legality of termination of employment and associated issues. The study has employed mixed approach, qualitative as well as quantitative methods to collect and analyse data. In order to collect primary data 125 sample workers selected for interview and 300 workers were provided questionnaires; furthermore, focus group discussion conducted with selected employee and employees' associations. Primary data were collected through semi-structured interview, questionnaires, focused group discussion, including key informant interview with selected participants. Secondary sources including laws and books were collected from library and web sources. The findings of the study revealed that the insufficient wages, poor occupational safety, weak trade union and job insecurity. Consequently, there were dissatisfaction and reluctance by employees and government stake holders to address grievance at a grass root level which in turn significantly affect the industrial peace.*

**Keywords:** *Employment relation, investment, employees association, labor proclamation, flower farm*

### **1. Introduction**

According to UNCTAD's world investment report, 2018, Ethiopia is of the largest country in Africa, hosting foreign direct investment. This high inflow of foreign investment is due to adherence of liberal economic policy which attracts foreign investment by granting different investment promotions and protections including providing fertile lands with low price, guaranteeing against expropriation, allowing duty free importation of capital goods and repatriation of capital and profits for foreign investor, and so on (Ethiopian Investment Proclamation, 2012)

As a result, many foreign investments moved to the country and started investment in different economic sectors. Particularly, the country has become the destination for horticulture industry and elevated the country the fourth largest flower exporter in the world and second largest in Africa next to Kenya (Taylor, 2010, EHPEA, 2011). Hence, this industry has played a leading role in job creation, particularly for female who accounted for seventy five percent of the total employment in this sector (ibid).

Despite the economic benefit derived from industry, recently there were growing social and environmental concerns associated with the sector. As Frank and Cruz (2001) nicely put the economic benefit was derived at the expense of social and environmental interests. According to this research, the chemical has the character to be accumulated in breast of the female organ and affects the female in addition to infants who feed breasts. This again has negative social and economic implications in the country detrimental to benefit acquired (Ute, 2013).

Furthermore, there were manifested abuses of labour rights including poor safety and health standards, low wages, and ban to form trade union, illegal termination, and so on. According to one study conducted in the area, the industries had poor health and safety provisions, including poor provision safety clothing, poor hygiene, refusal to provide drinking water (Smith et. al, 2004). Moreover, the employment created by industries was temporary and discriminatory treatment of workers in payment of wages for same job, poor government supervision, and weak judicial right enforcement, (Nigatu, 2010). Local government agencies particularly Labour and Social Affairs offices of the study area were not competent enough to control unfair and illegal labour relations. The workers were with low educational status and as well as easily exposed to different labour abuses. There was also reluctance by government to enforcing adherence to labour, health and safety standards that are also part of the wider debate about developing countries adherence to core labour standards and efficacy in enforcement of comprehensive national labour laws and judicial procedures (Pahle, 2011).

### 1.1. Host Country Benefit Derived from Flower Industry

Developing countries including Ethiopia need foreign capital to increase the living standards of their people. Domestic sources may not be adequate to fulfil developmental aspirations. For this it would be necessary to adopt liberal policy and by providing different investment incentives and guarantees (Davids and Driel, 2005, Wick, 2010). Hence, trade liberalization encouraged developing countries to diversify into labour intensive high-value agricultural exports such as horticulture and floriculture to achieve economic growth.

Due to the perishable nature of flowers, major flower producers have historically been near the main consumers. In recent years production centres have moved to places with comparative advantages of trade, i.e. relative abundance of labour (Mano 2011). In this process the traditional producers have shifted from flower production to trading (ibid). This relocation of labour-intensive industries to developing countries with abundant unskilled and cheap labour, was largely motivated by neo-liberal trade thinking "the lowest cost to operate" in order to meet competitiveness in global market (Taylor, 2010). Accordingly, cheap labour is among the production factors that attracted global horticulture producers to African countries because operations such as planting, harvesting, grading, and packaging traditionally require hand labour (Mano & Suzuki, 2011).

East African countries such as Kenya and Ethiopia, for example, are among the leading exporters of flowers to EU countries which accounts for the largest share of global flower market (Ripken, 2010, Mano and Suzuki, 2011). Accordingly, for countries like Ethiopia relocation of flower industries have presented the opportunity to diversify the economy into high value agricultural exports such as horticulture. This has enabled the country to achieve economic growth mainly increased foreign exchange earnings in addition to employment opportunities (Gebreyesus, 2010).

### 1.2. Possible Threats and Opportunities in Flower Farm Industries

The presence of flower industries in developing countries has brought positive and negative repercussions in the social and economic life of the concerned countries. On one hand, it has created employment opportunities, brought capital and so on (Tanya and Olga, 2007). On the other hand, there have been growing concerns about labour abuse and environmental damage. In this regard, developing countries deliberately relax labour and environmental standards to attract foreign investments, and this would affect environment and human rights (Fuchs and Lederer, 2007, Dolan, et al., 2003, Ute, 2013). Particularly, due to weak bargaining power and unethical behaviour of host country officials, foreign companies abuse workers through payment of low wages, unsecured job, limited social benefits and right to form association (ibid). This was the common challenge in developing countries including Kenya and Ethiopia associated with flower industry (Leipold and Morgante, 2013). Studies documented on flower industry in Ethiopia further depicted the manifested existence of low wages, sub-standard working conditions, forced overtime and insecure employment (Weldeghebrael, 2010). More importantly, this industry is characterized by increasing women participation in the labour force, but they were low-paid, engaged in part-time and casual positions (Standing, 1999). Inadequate maternity leave, discrimination and occupational segregation were some of the challenges that women face in flower farms (Leipold and Morgante, 2013). Consequently, the foreign companies were following deeply rooted domestic gender bias and perceptions in the hosting countries (ibid). Hence, gender segregation was reported with men occupying skilled and permanent positions and women engaged in unskilled, casual and insecure positions (Weldeghebrael, 2011). In this view, the majority of women who work in the flower farms were mainly involved in labour intensive jobs that required limited skill such as harvesting, packing, tending beds, watering and so on. This problem was aggravated by poorly enforced labour and social regulations in the developing countries (Taylor, 2010). Compliance to labour standards has been a direct link with good governance and democratization process of each country.

### 1.3. Features of International and National Labour Standards

To begin with Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR 1948), it recognizes core labour rights including the right to form association, minimum wages, safety and health work condition, and working hours. The International Community has recognized core labour rights including the right to form association, minimum wages, safety and health work condition, and working hours since 1948. (UN, UDHR). Following this, International Labour Organization (ILO) has been established by International Community to monitor and advise member States on labour rights in addition to initiating and defining core labour standards. Accordingly, it lays out conventions and recommendations that establish basic standards on labour rights. In this regard ILO 'declaration on fundamental principles and rights at work (ILO 1998) is a major achievement in establishing internationally recognized labour rights agenda. This declaration was adopted by 174 member countries in order to promote and realize four core labour standards of the declaration.

ILO technical standards further define conditions of employment that are essential to protect the basic rights of workers including the right to a living wage, working hours a safe and healthy workplace and employment relationship with social protection (ILO, 2014). In this regard, freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining (Convention No. 87 & No. 98); (ii) elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour (Convention No. 29 & No. 105); (iii) the effective abolition of child labour (Convention No. 138 & No. 182) and (iv) the Elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation (Convention No. 100 & No. 111) (ILO, 2014), are some of the international labour standards that to be mentioned.

All ILO member states which have ratified the core conventions and unanimously agreed to respect labour standards. The declaration points out that these rights are universal and apply in all countries regardless of their level of economic development (ILO, 2014). Nonetheless, developing countries adherence to core labour standards and efficacy in enforcement of comprehensive national labour laws and judicial procedures persisted as a challenge (Hale and Opondo, 2005).

The reasons for non-adherence of labour standards by developing countries can be many including bad governance, poor democracy, and poverty. On the other hand, due to the problem of enforcement of international laws, ILO lacks strong sanction mechanisms in the event of violation of labour standards (Ibid).

#### *1.4. Ethiopian Laws Governing Employment Relations*

This section explores Ethiopia's commitment and realization of core labour standards based on legal and policy documents as well as work undertaken on the topic under scrutiny. In this respect, International standards, Constitutions, Labour Proclamation, collective and individual labour agreements can be cited as basic laws. Ethiopia is one of signatory countries of ILO's core labour conventions (ILO, 2014).

The Federal Constitution Ethiopia, 1995, recognizes international core human rights principles including labour standards as an integral part of the law of land. Similarly, labour law which is the primary means of state intervention goes in conformity with the international labour standards. In this regard Proclamation No.42/1993 was the first law that adhered market-oriented economy, and the recent one Proclamation No.377/2003 was further amended to include freedom of association and protection of unions from interference by public authorities including protection from cancellation. The current labour proclamation protects women and men equal right to employment and related entitlements such as equal pay for equal work, promotion and pension entitlements. There are also gender specific issues included in policy and legal frameworks such as the right to 30 days of prenatal and 60 days of maternity leave with full pay.

The Criminal Code outlaws sexual harassment and prescribes imprisonment of the perpetrator (Art. 625). In this regard the national labour proclamation and criminal code meet international gender sensitive legal instruments such as Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) which is laid out to deal with specific problems of women. Even though Ethiopia ratified international labour conventions and adapted in to national labour proclamations, there are challenges when it comes to adherence and implementation to core labour standards, this will be discussed under the following section.

#### *1.5. Features of Labour Condition in Oromia Regional State*

The research site is located at central Ethiopia of Oromia Regional State, East Showa Zone of Rift valley region, in Adami Tullu Jido Kombolcha Woreda, Oromiya Regional State. Due to suitability in terms climate and proximity to the centre many horticulture investments were located in the outskirts of Addis Ababa and in the Rift Valley, in Oromia Regional State (Mano and Suzuki, 2011). Consequently, many international companies have been undertaking huge investments projects in selected research areas.

The area selected for this study covers 1403.3 km<sup>2</sup> with a total population of 141,745 (in 1997) of which more than 70% lives in rural areas (OESPO, 2003). The livelihoods of local farmers mainly depend on mixed farming of crops and livestock (OESPO, 2003). There were 43 administrative Kebeles covering about 80% of the total Woreda area; towns, military camps, private investors and other companies occupy the remaining 20%. From the total area, 45% was cultivated, 30% was used for grazing and woodlands, 7% were marginal land (OESPO, 2003).

The area was one of a high concentration of flower farms due to presence of Lake Ziway which used for watering of farm. It hosts the biggest flower farm in Ethiopia, including Sher Company, owned by Duch nationals (Tadele, 2012). For instance, this company seized 480 hectares of land since 2005 with 11,000 employees, of which 76 % were women (EHPEA, 2011 and Woreda Labour office data, June, 2018). Hence, this activity was one of the sources of livelihood in the area.

The Oromia regional government, where the majority of the flower farms were located, has entered agreement with flower growers to provide labour from surrounding community (Weldeghebrael, 2010). However, the majority of the respondents (70%) relocated their place of residence and were migrants coming from various regions throughout the country. The result indicated that there has been an exceptional level of labour mobility to the newly established flower farms in the Rift Valley area. A significant proportion (90 %) had chosen to work in the specific farms depending on the same sources of information in relation to salary, benefit packages, labour practices and provisions. In this regard (Mano and Suzuki 2011) reported domestic and personal networks as playing important role in disseminating information about employment opportunities across flower farms in Ethiopia.

The results of the interview and focus group discussion indicates that young people who form the majority of work force in flower farms found it difficult to make a living in their original place of residence. This was mainly because they cannot be sure if they would get sufficient land from their parents as it was becoming difficult to gain access to land in Rift Valley area. According to studies there was a general youth unemployment or underemployment in rural substance farming areas because of decreasing chances of getting access to land from their parents (Rahmato and Assefa, 2006). As a result, young people are becoming landless and migrating to towns in search of other alternative employment opportunities (ibid).

There regular working hours were eight hours on both farms with six consecutive workdays within a week. There was one-hour lunch break and one day off within a week. Working hours were further stretched to twelve hours during peak production seasons and before holidays like Mother's Day and Valentine's Day. This went against the labour laws that states "workers shall have the right to appropriately defined working hours, breaks, leisure, and periodic leave with pay, paid public holidays" (Article 18, 3). Other studies also showed flower workers were subject to long working hours with low pay justified with seasonality of the industry (Tanya and Olga, 2007).

## 2. Finding and Discussion

### 2.1. Labour Rights Conditions in Both Farms (Ziway and Tulu Flower Farms)

#### 2.1.1. Condition of Employment

Employees in flower farms can be categorized in to four major groups based on the respective sections they have worked: green house, packaging, crop protection, transport and maintenance. According to the interview with the production managers in AQ Roses each Greenhouse measured an average of one and half hectares of land and managed by five greenhouse workers with up to five plant beds each. Interviews with the flower workers confirmed that the daily work in this section involved activities such as weeding, pruning, cleaning and harvesting. In the packaging houses sequences of processes were undertaken starting from sorting the bulk of flowers arriving from the field up until packing buckets of flowers ready to be stored to refrigerator room. Crop protection (i.e. spraying of agrochemicals), irrigation (mixing of agrochemicals and monitoring the pipes), transport and maintenance were smaller sections that were entirely occupied by men.

In relation to condition of employment announcement and contract mainly follow informal approach. According to result of interview 73% of employee joined the labour from informal information acquired from friends. It was a common practice in the flower cutting industry for workers seeking employment to assemble at the farm gate every morning for the search of a job. The manager or representative of the manager would then come and hand-pick the number of workers he or she requires for the day. The persons picked will then be employed under daily labour basis and with time may either become fixed term or permanent, depending on the 'satisfaction' of the management with the worker's performance. It may also result in the loss of the job if management considers the new employee's work 'unsatisfactory'. In such employment relation as perceived from FGD no matter how employees who served for more than 45 days attained status permanent employment right this was not practiced in clear manner particularly where the workers had low knowledge of employment laws.

According to workers interview result, the level of education of workers was mainly primary school education. Lack of sufficient land to engage in farming and low levels of education were the main reasons to work in flower farms. Results of focus group discussion also showed that flower farms were also attractive source of employment because they provided a stable income in contrast with uncertainties involved in subsistence farming and the informal sectors, despite the fact that working conditions and employment rights according to participants view were at risk (FGD 1 and 2).

Women in particular mentioned that they have been able to capitalize on employment opportunities in flower farms because they used to get employed as domestic servants as the first job in urban centres. There was a gender disparity in education as traditionally parents in rural areas choose sending boys to school than girls because they attach less value of female education in their future life (Chuta and Crivello, 2013). Girls are also more likely to drop out of school because of factors such as early marriage and abduction (ibid). Women respondents' mentioned their level of education remains as a major challenge to upgrade their current job and join other skilled employment sectors such as textile factory after they migrated to the urban centres.

#### 2.1.2. Employment Security

The employment Security is one of the pivotal rights guaranteed in Ethiopian Labour Law. No matter how this fact reality from FGD and questionnaires analysis revealed less job security in flower farm industry. About 90 % of employee has no knowledge of fundamental contents of Labour law. Employees in this work relation subject to illegal termination without notice on condition of minor reason and force major absenteeism from work. The other factor which exacerbates the problem was inability of employees to bring their case to regular court for legal remedies.

According to the national labour code, any verbally entered employment agreement shall be translated in to written form within 15 days. If not, the verbal agreement shall be deemed entered. Therefore, it does not create any problem whether an employment agreement is in written or otherwise. According to previous study conducted most of the workers in the farms were employed either as daily labourers with written contract 28% or daily labourers without contractual 35% terms of employment. Only about 27% of the workers were permanent and hence entitled to the benefits of drawing a provident fund allowance payable when employment is terminated. These workers had a signed letter of acceptance of the terms and conditions of employment under this category, which acted as their contractual agreement with the employer. The rest of the workers 10% did not know under what terms they were employed, largely because they may not have signed any contract with the employer.

#### 2.1.3. Working Hours and Over Time

According to the Labour proclamation No. 377/2003, formal working hours 8 and 48 hours of work per day and week respectively, with a successive 24 hours of rest after every six days worked and overtime is allowed in a very narrowly defined circumstances and is voluntary.

The existing challenge as responded by 80 % of employees over time payment as well as its calculation is not clear to employees. Employees doubt as to how farm managers' record and pay monthly over time payment. Labour Proclamation clearly enshrined that over time engagement is not an obligation of employee unless exigency situation happened on survival of a company. With regard to this right about 90 % of employee responded that they have no awareness on such right. On other hand representatives of employees which are 95 % of respondent clearly know such right where they failed to communicate such knowledge to employees.

Respondents also indicated that working overtime was not a choice but compulsory contrary to existing labour proclamation, especially for those who work in pack house. Overtime work was paid at almost the same rate as regular work which is against ILO technical standards that demands overtime work out of normal working hours to be paid at a different rate. However, Ethiopia has not signed the ILO conventions wage protection (Conventions 95 (1949) and overtime compensation (Convention 01 (1919) which opens a gap in enforcement (Decent Work Check, 2013). The EHPEA code of conduct requirement of overtime compensation at a different rate than normal hours might fill in this gap and potentially improve labour conditions.

Results of focus group discussion showed that there were series of tasks involved in the flower farms such as tending beds, grading, harvesting, packing, and so on. The tasks were labour intensive and required standing many long hours without a break (FGD 1 & 2). According to the respondents it was only pregnant women who get some level of treatment such as short breaks because they were considered less fit to work in the heat wave of the greenhouses and to stand many long hours in pack house.

The majority of greenhouse and pack house flower workers interviewed also verified that it was difficult to get transferred to other sections on the basis of their work conditions. In this regard, (Nigatu, 2010) has also reported that workers in the flower farms were subjected to extended working hours and such working condition was associated with health problems among flower workers that will be discussed under occupational health and safety section of this study. According to the respondents working in the green houses becomes very difficult especially during hot season in the Rift Valley area. The temperatures sometimes reach 40 degrees Celsius. Similarly, those who worked in the spraying section also mentioned that coping with the heat wave and suffocation while using mouth and nose mask made their conditions of work difficult. Contrary to this fact about 87 % of respondent has full consent for over time engagement while the remaining 13 % fill as an obligation to serve in overtime schedule. Furthermore, from analysis of FGD over time employment particularly in absence of transport facility women employees under goes Gender based violence and harassment at night.

#### 2.1.4. Sexual Harassment

In the study area 24 % of women employees responded that they experienced sexual harassment in one of its appearance. Defining sexual harassment entails a wider perspective in such a way that it covers, unwanted jokes, gestures, offensive words on clothing, and unwelcome comments and repartee, touching and other bodily contact such as scratching or patting a co-worker's back, grabbing an employee around the waist, or interfering with an employee's ability to move, repeated requests for dates that are turned down or unwanted flirting, transmitting rumours of sexual in nature and displaying sexually suggestive objects, pictures, or posters.

The other indicator from questionnaire analysis in relation to sexual harassment is identifying the source of harassment itself. Among the women which were given a questionnaire 95% theme responded that they experienced sexual harassment from co-workers male employees than immediate boss. Respondent blame managing bodies of farms in relation to employment rights rather than being source for sexual harassment.

In FGD with leaders of workers association they witnessed that though they knew occurrence of sexual harassment of women employees they give more attention to other financial benefits and occupational safety of employees. This in turn affects employment rights and injure suitable work environment creating effort for female employees.

Occupational Health and Safety Employees; -Occupational health includes the environment and the conditions in which the worker spends the majority of their time. These conditions are often occupation specific and hence vary in their impact on the worker. Industrial activities vary from one to another in creating particular cases of work-related disease, injury and occupational Safety measures. Employees of flower farm which are given a questionnaire around 98 % responded that they have no knowledge as well as not given information about their work-related disease or injury. However, from researcher field related observation all flower farms use variety of pesticide, chemical spray and fertilizers to which all the employees have direct and indirect contact. In nearby to flower farm the investors have established a hospital named Sher Hospital where the employees get free treatment and medication. No matter how this facility the consequence of flower farm related disease and injuries are not well studied. The employees and community particularly with work related disease 98% of respondent and 100% of FGD participants respond fill that flower cutting industry create fatal health related concern. Inhabitants particularly blame industries for their water and Environmental disaster. Despite the fact labour proclamation entails obligation on employer to ensure work environment safety the implementation of law is weak both from employers and government authority entrusted for task. Frequent utilization of safety apparatus is not strongly regulated in company as it is an obligation of employee and employer. Besides to this fact employees' association representatives responded that the task of guarantying occupational safety in flower cutting employment relation is beyond their scope of understanding. They respond that with exception to observable and common safety instruments like hand coverage, eye glass and working clothes they couldn't table to understand ultimate consequence of occupation related disease. In similar manner except an effort to treat work related injury employers also couldn't address possible consequences of work-related disease and injury for which the remedies are to be searched proactively.

#### 2.1.5. Employment Benefits and Incentives

Respondents were asked what types of benefits were given to them by their employers: medical benefits, housing and transportation or travel allowances, maternity leave, holiday bonus, provident fund and gratuity. In relation to various modes of workers incentive package and real benefits from employment 98% of employees responded that the system and benefit is discouraging and demands negotiation for benefit package. Most workers complain about the service they are

getting from farm-owned and contracted clinics for employees, benefits received were arbitrary and depended on personal judgment of the management.

Basic benefit revealed in flower cutting work relation is the opportunity for occupation contrary to this reality 95 % of employees respond that in absence of other option they engage in this work relation. Employee associations also failed to enforce basic collective agreements to protect the interest of employees. As a result of such less effort and success in many instance workers repeatedly conducted strike and violence for better work condition becomes a common phenomenon. This scenario demands employers to be more strategic and design industrial peace approach with involving employee's association.

## 2.2. Work Related Promotions

In flower cutting employment contract according to 96% respondent there is no fair and strategic work-related promotions. Both employees' and employer's association leaders strongly believe that promotions are random, not planned and without competition among workers. In some instance as understood from FGD educational status of employees are less important for status upgrading of employees because educated employees commonly lead by less educated employees.

Wage increment and similar work facilities in flower farms in most cases triggered by internal and external factors which at time violence of employees or negotiation with government authorities. The study reveals that 86% of the respondents had never been promoted. The rest 14% had experienced at least one sudden form of promotion.

This depict that promotion is unknown phenomena in such work relation where 100% of respondent unanimously respond absence of transparent and fair promotion practice is one of a source of anxiety of employees. Interview to employer association also proved such reality where the association has less bargaining power to solve such problems in planned manner. 91 % of employees which are serving for more than three years didn't given any opportunity of promotion while remaining 9 % either shifted employment position or given promotion to ease productivity regardless of concern for employees' benefits. Hence such work relation gradually ruins stakeholders' relation unless responsible organs particularly local labour and social affair offices, employee associations and employers shall give concern for industrial peace.

## 2.3. Features of Basic Work Facilities around Work Environment

In relation to basic work environment facilities 86.5 % of respondents not happy with basic work environment facilities like rest room, drinkable water, feeding room, cafeteria, sporting fields etc. The concept of such facilities was not given due concern both by employers and employees association leaders. It is fact that work environment needs to be attractive with view to enhance productivity and better industrial relations. Where work environment failed to provide mentioned basic human needs it seriously injure health and psychology of employees. In FGD conducted with employees' representatives of Sheer Flower Company they forward that providing basic facilities around work environment usually perceived by investors as extra cost on company profit. They also add that with discussion and collective bargain with employees some basic facilities like toilet, drinking water and sporting fields were full filled.

However great bargaining task is awaiting labour unions in full filling women related facilities like separated restroom and child care centres at work place. Researcher has observed that none of the female workers are getting such separate facilities. Therefore, there is a strong need for unions to place greater emphasis on these neglected women specific needs.

## 2.4. Economic Benefits of Employees

Any employment relation has multiple social and economic significances which originate from employer and employees' relations. In many parts of Ethiopia including specific area covered under this research flower investment is one of leading and emerging job opportunity. Taking this background, the researcher has made an attempt to measure level of satisfaction with given indicators. In Ethiopian labour law minimum wage is not fixed by law hence it is the result of bargain between employee and employer. The concept of minimum wage standard is not yet settled debate among stakeholders.

98% the flower farm employees which respond to questionnaire are highly dissatisfied with economic benefit and wage earned from employment. Some of them subsidize their life from farming activity where the rest employee undergoes miserable life condition with average monthly salary of 900 Birr or about 300 dollars. The same view shared by employees' association representatives as rate of salary need revision to improve horrible life condition of needy employees.

Given the environmental weather condition which is too hot as located in rift valley region as well as engagement in green house apparently make work conditions tiresome and incomparable with salary scale of flower farms which needs further negotiation. In existing salary scale 98 % of employees demand government intervention toward minimum wage scale arrangement negotiating with employers.

## 3. Conclusion

Employment relation of flower cutting investment is within the paradox of both opportunities and adverse aspects emanate from the investment and implementation of governing laws. With all its short coming like low salary and occupational health and safety concerns, flower farms are still leading source of employment because they provided stable income in the context of economic vulnerability which is attributed to landlessness, high youth unemployment and

few available livelihood alternatives in rural areas. The investment seeks for tripartite negotiation of employer, employee's association and government agencies. Existing relation is highly vulnerable to affect peaceful industrial relation. Particularly employment security, occupational safety, transparent promotion scheme, strength of employee's association for bargain, wage standard and over time service management are not in good status for smooth relation of employees and employers. Employees' association representatives are not competent enough to bargain with employers. The practice of utilizing collective agreement as governing law of employment relation is weak and unknown to majority of employees. The immediate and potential health related concern of chemicals used in flower cutting and packing process of employment is not known to employees. No matter how government made all possible endeavours to attract investors as economic development strategy and job opportunity of citizens, it still demands government to regulate employment relation with pertinent laws which can address the current grievance of employees engaged in flower cutting investments. In some instance as a researcher observed some of the basic questions of employees and trade unions like salary and occupational safety provisions accepted and implemented by the employer after broke out of violence and strike at a time backed by damaging machinery and equipment. To make the industrial relation peaceful and productive the relation appeal for negotiation and consensus among stakeholders on basic concerns flower farm employment relations.

#### 4. Recommendations to Enhance Employees' Rights and Productivity of Flower Farm Investment

- Strong Trade union is one of the forgotten machineries in the flower cutting employment relation hence all responsible organs advised to establish such institution for the sake of peaceful industrial relations.
- Employers are advised to rely on basic legal principles before haphazard and arbitrary termination or suspension of employment contract with their needy employees.
- Under all conditions, employees shall not resort to damaging of employer's property for minor grounds of grievances and disagreements that can be solved by either trade union or government organs responsible to ensure peaceful industrial relations.
- Employer shall give emphasis to awareness creation of safety rules including supply of information with scheme to prevent immediate and potential risks associated with specific work.
- Creating conducive work environment benefits both employees and employers hence employers shall fulfil facilities of work place such as toilet, drinking water, cafeteria, sporting field, child care canters etc which are not yet fully realized in the studied areas.
- Government organs involvement in peace building of flower cutting industry is weak though labour proclamation empowered social and labour offices for such task. Hence, the office shall act proactively to manage disagreements at grass root levels before they broke out to devastating conflict.
- In Ethiopia there are ample international conventions, policies, proclamations and regulations which govern employment relations. Although ample laws and policies they are not known and communicated to vast employees. Hence employers and trade unions shall make effort to enhance awareness of employees with pertinent laws of labour relations.

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