

Effectiveness of Social Audits for Human Rights Due Diligence of Business in Ethiopian Flower Sector

An Abstract of the Thesis By

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Over the past decades, contentions of business human rights violations have been reported by different human rights organizations, NGOs, news outlets. The human right abuse of corporations has caught the attention of the UN. Which led to the development of UN guiding principles in 2011 and the formation of the UN forum on business responsibility for human right (BRHR).

The guiding principle has three frameworks which proclaim; states have to protect human rights, corporations are responsible for respecting human rights, and victims should have access to remedy. Which changed the perception that human rights is not only the langue of state and UN but also the business. More importantly, the central point UNGPs focused on Human Rights Due diligence (HRDD). As it is a process to be undertaken to identify, avoid, or mitigate, actual and potential human right impacts caused by a business in its supply chain. Before HRDD came to picture, how a business responds to human rights violation is by engaging in social audit to show that company is complying with required standards and get certifications as a responsible business which pays attention to the rights workers and the community at large.

In the absence of strict government regulation and inspection, Social Audits play the role of a private self-regulatory mechanism. Unfortunately, when incidents like fire, building collapse and modern slavery were reported with in certified and audited supply chains of garment and food industries, it created a growing concern as to the effectiveness of social audits as a tool in detecting, reporting and mitigating human rights abuses. So, based on these issues at hand, this thesis wanted to do a case study in Floriculture sector of Ethiopia.

The Ethiopian flower sector has quite a reputation for poor working conditions with a meager wage. Ironically, the industry highly depended on social auditing schemes of different codes of conduct and standards of local like EHPEA code and international such us Fairtrade Global GAP. Which certify that the flower farms are doing something to respond to the human rights impact they are causing while growing flowers. Therefore the following research question formulated: Howeffective are social audits to ensure respect for human rights of workers in the Ethiopian flower industry? In answering the research question, the thesis used the UNGPs framework of protect, respect, and remedy. By singling out corporates responsibility to respect as a framework of analysis and linking it with what constitutes HRDD as farms adhere to their responsibility to respect human rights using the social audit as a tool. Qualitative data were collected, took place, and a total of 16 interviews with farmworkers, social auditors, and farm manager from 3 different flower farms dated from April - July 2019. The thesis answered the research question by concluding that social audits are ineffective to promote respect for the right of workers as they are not inline and missing elements of HRDD. Then the research

gives policy recommendations for government to involve in the regulation of farms and endorsement of UNGPs to have due diligence in place and also reform for social auditing industries to do their job correctly and ethically.

Key words: UNGPs, Social Audits, Effectiveness, Human Right Due Diligence, Ethiopian Flower Farms.