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IMPROVING SAFETY AND HEALTH IN THE AGRICULTURAL GLOBAL SUPPLY CHAINS - A VISION ZERO FUND PROJECT

Results report

June 2025



Co-funded European Union

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture is one of the three most hazardous sectors of activity. Every day, agricultural workers are exposed to a wide range of occupational risks. However, they often lack a clear understanding of these risks and may not have the knowledge or resources to prevent accidents and injuries related to occupational safety and health (OSH).

From March 2024 to May 2025, the International Labour Organization's (ILO) Vision Zero Fund (VZF) worked with ILO constituents—governments, employers' and workers' organizations—and key sectoral stakeholders to conduct research and learning activities aimed at promoting OSH in the coffee and sugar cane supply chains.

Through interventions at the global level and in Brazil, Colombia, and Uganda, the Fund sought to strengthen the enabling environment for safe and healthy working conditions in agricultural supply chains—promoting social dialogue and supporting efforts to reduce workers' exposure to OSH risks at the workplace level.

The project, co-funded by the European Union, successfully reinforced global, regional, and national frameworks to advance the fundamental right to a safe and healthy working environment for all workers in the coffee and sugar cane sectors.

COFFEE SUPPLY CHAIN

At the **global level**, the project implemented **innovative approaches** to advocate for the fundamental right to a safe and healthy working environment. Through a series of **promotional and educational activities**—such as [#CoffeePeople documentary](#)¹ screenings paired with panel discussions, a [photo exhibition](#), targeted [awareness raising campaigns](#), and interdisciplinary [thematic webinars](#) showcasing good OSH practices from ILO constituents—the project ensured that OSH remained a priority for key stakeholders.

¹ In June 2024, Barista Magazine featured the documentary as one of the “5 Coffee Documentaries Worth Watching”.



At the **national level**, the project deepened engagement in **Brazil and Uganda** by implementing **awareness raising** initiatives, facilitating **research**-based sectoral dialogues, and delivering **capacity development** sessions. These efforts culminated in the publication of two factsheets outlining how coffee cooperatives can be empowered to take a more active role in promoting OSH and other fundamental principles and rights at work.² Research findings highlight contextual challenges and unique opportunities for OSH improvement, offering actionable recommendations to guide future interventions.

Activities were implemented in close collaboration with sectoral organizations—such as the International Coffee Organization (ICO) and the International Women's Coffee Alliance (IWCA)—as well as complementary ILO projects operating within the same supply chain.³ This **collaborative approach** helped generate more robust and sustainable outcomes.

² Available [here](#) and [here](#).

³ Including [CLEAR Supply Chains](#), [Nossa Voz](#) and the [Prevent and Combating of Slave and Child Labour in Minas Gerais](#) projects.





SUGAR CANE SUPPLY CHAIN

The project successfully reinforced stakeholder commitment to OSH within the Colombian sugar cane supply chain. Through a combination of targeted [research](#) and multi-stakeholder dialogue, it facilitated the adoption of a **sector-wide commitment** to OSH. One of its key outcomes was the development of SHIELD, a [structured training package](#) designed to drive OSH improvements across Colombia's sugar cane sector, with potential for broader application beyond its borders ([participants' manual](#) / [trainers' manual](#)).

REPLICATION OF METHODOLOGIES AND TOOLS TO OTHER AGRICULTURAL SUPPLY CHAINS

A key objective of the project was to promote the replication of its methodologies and tools beyond the originally targeted sectors. By actively engaging in national and international events, the project fostered cross-sectoral learning and exchange, encouraging adoption in additional supply chains such as **cocoa**, **tomato**, and **chili peppers**. This broad outreach raised awareness of OSH and established a strong foundation for sustained action and the wider dissemination of **good practices across agricultural sectors**. As a result, the project has contributed to making OSH a sustained priority in agricultural supply chains, extending its impact well beyond the initiative's lifespan.



KEY NUMBERS

+ 27,000

Outreach

people across Brazil, Colombia, Uganda, and beyond participated in promotional, training, and learning activities within the agricultural supply chain.

25

Events

awareness-raising, training, and learning events were organized.

40

Promotional materials

materials were produced to disseminate key OSH messages.

4

Knowledge products and activities

sector-specific OSH research reports published.

3

thematic webinars hosted.

A man with grey hair and safety glasses stands with his arms crossed in a sugarcane field. He is wearing a light blue long-sleeved shirt with reflective yellow-green stripes on the sleeves and chest, and dark blue jeans. The background is filled with tall sugarcane stalks.

COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES

Throughout the project, its webpages⁴ attracted over **4,500 visits**. A total of **27 social media posts** were published on Vision Zero Fund's LinkedIn channel, with the top five alone garnering more than **10,000 impressions** combined and **hundreds of clicks**. Additionally, **six newsletters** were distributed to a mailing list of **10,000 recipients each time**.

Project activities were disseminated through other channels, including the ILO social media account, the Decent Work Coalition newsletter, and sectoral magazines such as Comunicaffe International and Barista Magazine.

⁴ <https://vzf.ilo.org/projects/agricultural-supply-chains/> and <https://coffeepeople.vzf.ilo.org/>

LESSONS LEARNED

Context-specific evidence is crucial for designing effective OSH interventions. Dedicated OSH research conducted in Brazil and Uganda not only ensured the relevance of future actions but also helped build strong relationships of trust with key local stakeholders.

The OSH research revealed key cultural and socio-economic factors—such as behavioural barriers to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) use, the impact of social benefits on formal employment, and high seasonal worker turnover—that are vital for tailoring effective interventions. Distinct cooperative profiles further emphasized the need for context-specific strategies. Importantly, the research process fostered transparent dialogue with local stakeholders, building trust and laying a strong foundation for collaborative engagement in the next phase of the project.



LESSONS LEARNED

Ensuring the active involvement of both women and men in the research process is essential for the findings to be relevant and beneficial to all.

In the coffee supply chain, previous VZF research underscored the significant role women play in production as well as the challenges they face in gaining recognition. To address this, the project partnered with the Brazilian chapter of the International Women's Coffee Alliance (IWCA), ensuring meaningful representation of women's voices throughout the research. This collaboration effectively reached women across the sector, identified gender disparities, and generated valuable insights to guide gender-responsive activities.

In the sugar cane supply chain, research revealed that field and harvesting tasks—where accidents occur most frequently—are predominantly performed by men, who represent approximately 98% of agricultural workers in these roles. Consequently, male participation in training on high-risk activities provided by the project was significantly higher. Female representation, meanwhile, is more prominent in administrative (37%) and managerial (26%) positions. These findings highlight the importance of tailored approaches to address the distinct roles and risks faced by both women and men in the sector.



EVALUATION

Between May and September 2025, the project was included in an evaluation conducted by an independent consultant. This evaluation also covered the previous EC co-funded project, “Improving Occupational Safety and Health in the Global Coffee Supply Chain – A Vision Zero Fund Project.”

Key evaluation findings include:

1: Most stakeholders found the projects to have been useful in advancing occupational safety and health in the targeted supply chains and agreed that the project addressed key needs with the coffee and sugar cane sectors.

2: The #Coffee People campaign appears to have been most relevant when combined with in-country activities in Brazil, Colombia, and Uganda.

3: The projects have contributed evidence-based research that highlights key drivers and constraints of OSH in both sugar cane and coffee in Brazil, Uganda, and Colombia.

4: Gender equality has been effectively included in the project but there has been no focus on disability inclusion or the just transition to environmental sustainability.

5: The VZF has successfully built strong collaboration with other projects that has helped to maximise the potential of the projects on a small budget.

Additional findings as well as recommendations can be found [here](#).



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For more information visit vzf.ilo.org
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