

**Assessment of the Economic and Working Conditions of the Cut
Flower Farm Workers in Ethiopia, a Case of Bahir Dar City**

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DECLARATION

I, YESUF Yohannes Mekonnen (Student ID 52115611) hereby declare that the contents of this Master's Thesis are original and true, and have not been submitted at any other university or educational institution for the award of degree or diploma. All the information derived from other published or unpublished sources has been cited and acknowledged appropriately.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

CSA	Central Statistic Authority
EHPEA	Ethiopian Horticulture Producers and Exporters Association
ETB	Ethiopian Birr
EU	European Union
EWCTU	Ethiopia Workers Confederation Trade Union
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FDRE	Federal Democratic Republic Ethiopia
FUPI	Federal Urban Planning Institute
ILO	International Labor Organization
ITC	International Trade Center
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MoFED	Ministry of Finance and economic Development
MoLSA	Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs
NGOs	Non- Governmental Organizations
PPE	Personal protective Equipment
SAP	Systems Applications and Products
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
USITC	United States International Trade Commission
WTO	World Trade Organization

Abstract

Despite its significant contribution to the national economy and the creation of job opportunities, the cut flower industry in Ethiopia is still challenged by its working environment. There is a growing concern among farm employees and the public about the working conditions in the industry. Furthermore, the inability of farm sites to implement core labor standards and national labor proclamations, and the lack of governmental commitments about implementing labor, health and safety standards, all cause problems for the industry. These issues and debates about Ethiopia flower farming form the background for this thesis to analyze the socioeconomic impacts of flower industry development in the Bahir Dar area of Ethiopia. Specifically, the impacts of flower farm job opportunities affect worker life improvements, health and safety conditions on the farm, and how to develop strategies for low wage farm employees were analyzed. The study employed a qualitative case study research method for data collection and analysis, and a simple random sampling technique was used to select respondents. Semi structured interviews were used to collect primary data.

The findings indicate that the working environments in Ethiopian flower farms are described by violation of workers' rights, lack of social dialogue, low wages and inadequate safety procedures. Many farm workers are living in poverty because their monthly wage does not meet their household needs, and they have to support these low earnings through some risky strategies. Among the farm workers close contact with chemicals is still a crucial issue; the main concerns derived were inadequate provision of safety materials for employees handling and using hazard chemicals.

In addition, the farms do not provide adequate and proper information and training to employees about hazardous chemicals. Many farm employees lack knowledge on labor rights and essential labor proclamations that are highly relevant to them. Overall, working conditions on the flower farms reveal the challenges to obey national labor proclamations and ILO core labor standards. Regardless of the Ethiopian government's efforts to create favorable conditions and attract flower farm investment, these were inadequate when it comes to implementing labor legislation. The findings of this study are expected to provide a well-grounded description of the practices of cut flower farms in terms of their social and economic impact. This research will improve the knowledge of all stakeholders about the difficulties that farm employees face. It may also encourage government and management to be more aware of the concerns, and it can initiate the implementation of occupational health and safety guidelines and enforcement procedures at flower farms in Ethiopia.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Cut flower farming in Ethiopia has substantial social and economic benefits but this fast-growing industry is claimed by workers to have several social and economic concerns. This study is aimed at assessing economic and working conditions of cut flower farm workers in Ethiopia. In particular, it explores the opportunities in flower farming and the impact of wage income levels on the livelihoods of employees who are working on these farms. It has also studied the labor, health and safety conditions and guidelines appropriate to this activity. Finally, cut flower farms adherence to labor laws, government office efficiency in enforcing national labor laws and the ILO core labor standards were also analyzed.

1.1 Background of the Study

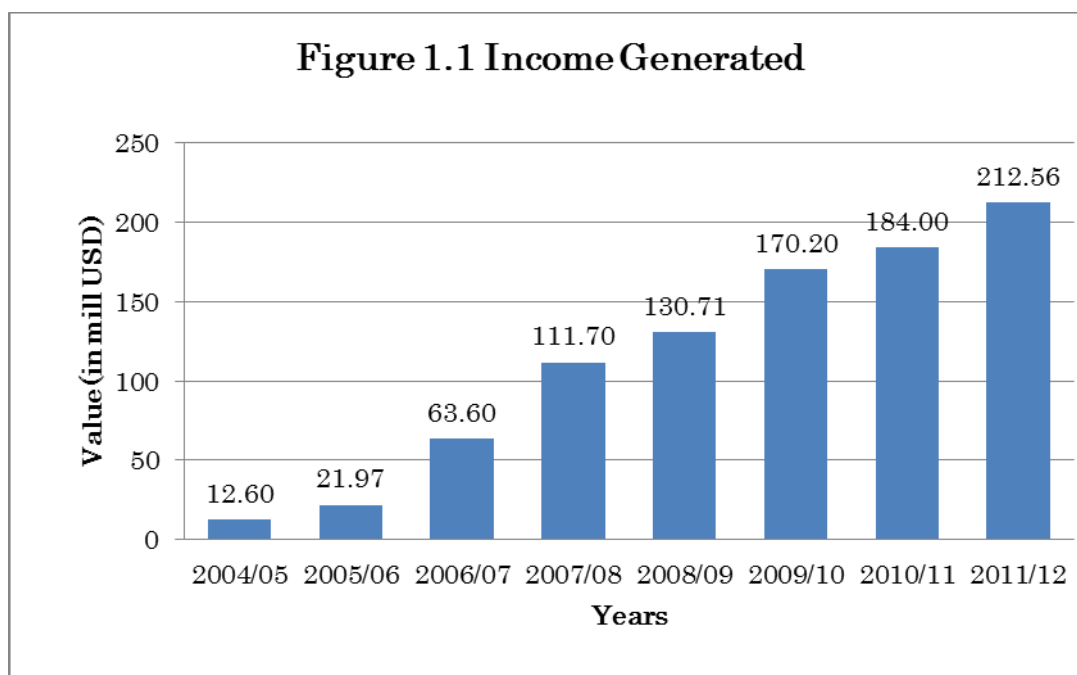
The cut flower farming sector is a dynamic and rapidly growing global industry, which has attained important development results during the past few decades. Worldwide demand of cut flowers is estimated at a remarkable € 30 billion per year, with the leading markets in Europe and North America (Milco, 2010; Florian and Abebe, 2015). Since the 1990s, flower farming has been moving from the markets in the western world to those in developing nations where more favorable weather conditions

and lower labor and production costs are available. Accordingly, the new centers of cut flower farming are in developing countries; for example, Colombia, Kenya, Ecuador and Ethiopia. Currently, this sector is one of the main export industries in those countries (Maxwell, 2001; Eswaran and Kotwal, 2006). It has better comparative advantage than ‘traditional’ agriculture and reduces the huge gap in technology between developing and developed nations, while at the same time creating massive job opportunities. This is because the flower industry needs higher technology relative to the ‘traditional’ agricultural sector, and greater labor inputs at the production and post-harvest stages. Furthermore, the industry supports the improvement of trade earnings as it diversifies the export base of the country. This is essential to developing countries like Ethiopia, which is highly dependent on ‘traditional’ agriculture (Florian and Abebe, 2015).

For many reasons, Ethiopia has a relatively better comparative advantage than other countries in the development of floriculture. The favorable climatic conditions of the country for the cultivation of many flower varieties, the widespread favorable soil types, high altitude weather and geographical natural advantages, form suitable environments for the production of higher quality flower types. Furthermore, the country's geographical proximity to the Middle East and European markets contributes

to low transportation costs and facilitates the timely delivery of fresh high-quality products to market. There is also the availability of cheap and trained labor force. These key advantages are encouraging local and foreign investors to invest in the floriculture industry in Ethiopia.

According to the EHPEA (2013) report, coffee, pulses and oil seeds, gold, chat and horticulture export products are the main foreign revenue earners for the Ethiopian economy. The horticulture sector generated, for instance, 265.52 million USD in the 2011/2012 fiscal year. This is a massive increment when compared with the 28.55 million USD foreign earnings in the year 2004/2005 (Fig 1.1). In the foreign revenue generated, the contribution of floriculture was 80 percent (212.56 million USD) of the total in the 2011/2012 fiscal year. In addition, the industry has generated over 180 thousand jobs, of which the majorities (85 percent) were for women. The sector has shown a significant development over the last few years, and it delivers numerous social and economic benefits to the nation. Among the African flower exporting countries, Ethiopia is the second largest flower exporter next to Kenya.



(Source: EHPEA, 2013)

Although the floriculture industry in Ethiopia has substantial social and economic benefits, it suffers from social concerns and core labor standards and national labor proclamation implementation problems (US/Leap and ILRF, 2007; Nigatu, 2010, Ute, 2013). US/Leap and ILRF (2007) highlight the problems related to the flower farm sector: these include “lack of training on safe chemical use and appropriate safety equipment and lack of recognition of labor rights”. In addition, there has been inadequate implementation of core labor standards and national labor proclamations on the farms, and it has been pointed out that there is a lack of governmental commitment to the implementation of labor, health and safety standards (Nigatu, 2010, Ute, 2013).

1.2 Aims and Objectives of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to examine the economic and occupational health and safety effects of flower farm development in the Bahir Dar region of Ethiopia, and to discuss the existing problems in this industry. The specific objectives were:

1. To analyze the economic benefits and values of the flower industry in relation to worker life improvements.
2. To examine the labor standards and working condition practices in Ethiopian flower farms.
3. To study which occupational health and safety rules have been put in place and to what extent have they been executed.

1.3 Main Theoretical Background

Several studies conducted specifically in developing countries suggest that the cut flower industry has problems in relation to labor rights and conditions. Key concerns include working conditions, wages, and freedom of association (Taylor, 2010; Tanya & Olga, 2007). Findings from developing nations such as Kenya, the largest exporter of cut flowers in Africa, have shown that a range of challenges persist in relation to regulatory frameworks covering labor conditions and labor rights despite the country's export successes. The studies revealed that job insecurity, manipulative labor practices,

low wages, miscarriage of the implementation of health and safety rules, and renunciation of the labor right to organize in trade unions are the concerns that persist in the cut flower industry (Hale & Opondo, 2005; Leipold & Morgante, 2013).

The successful development of the Ethiopian cut flower industry's involvement in the global market also brings related concerns in relation to work conditions, such as questions of health and safety, as well as gender concerns. Studies have documented evidence of poor working conditions, forced overtime, minimum wages, and insecure employment. Besides these health and safety rules implementation problems, the absence of basic facilities, extensive discrimination in promotion, denial of worker's rights to organize in trade unions, and failure to properly implement health and safety rules are the main concerns that persist in the cut flower farms (Getu, 2009; Nigatu, 2010; Weldeghebrael, 2010).

1.4 Main Methods

This research is a qualitative case study that explores an organization, which in this case is the cut flower farm. The study examined the economic and occupational health and safety effects of flower farm development in the Bahir Dar region of Ethiopia. The research population for this study consisted of workers involved in different sections of the flower farms in the Bahir Dar city area. Because of the number

of employees and their production experiences, of the 5 flower farm exporters in the city, only two flower farms were used for the case study; one domestically and the other one foreign owned.

In this case study, a total of 30 informants (twenty-three women and seven men) from the two flower farms participated, and these respondents were selected using a simple random sampling technique. The information was gathered through semi structured interviews. Based on the size of the farms, twenty and ten participants were selected from “Farm 1” and “Farm 2” respectively. In addition, key informant interviews were carried out with management representatives and the leaders of labor unions from the two flower farms.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The floriculture industry in Ethiopia is blamed by various stakeholders from academia, the independent research community, and nongovernmental organizations for social and environmental problems. David (2002) explains that the flower industry is utilizing a variety of chemicals, including fertilizers, insecticides, fungicides, nematodes, and plant growth regulators, most of which may cause severe human health problems. Employees are continuously exposed to these highly hazardous chemicals, and several descriptions of severe health problems such as skin allergies, headaches, respiratory and

eye problems (Bin, 2014) are published in the literature. Therefore, the growth of flower farms in the Bahir Dar region may have an impact on the occupational health and safety conditions of flower farming workers.

While some researchers have studied other issues in the Ethiopian cut flower farming sector, there is a lack of studies of the economic and working conditions of cut flower farm workers in Ethiopia. Thus, this study was designed to address the economic benefits and working environments of flower farm workers, while also covering employee occupational health and safety guidelines and enforcement measures as described above in the industry in the Bahir Dar region.

Therefore, the findings of this study are expected to provide a well-grounded description of the practices of flower farms and their social and economic characteristics. Specifically, the study examines the working conditions of farm employees in the industry. Second this research may improve the knowledge of all stakeholders about the difficulties that farm employees face. Finally, its findings may encourage government and management to be more aware of these concerns and initiate the implementation of occupational health and safety guidelines and enforcement procedures at flower farms.

1.6 Organization of the Thesis

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter one describes the background, objectives, methods, and significance of the study. Chapter two reviews the literature and is organized in accordance with the main topics examined. Chapter three discusses the research methods that the study employed to collect and analyze both primary and secondary data. Also it provides the scope, limitations in addition to ethical considerations of the study. Chapter four presents the study findings and discussions, and Chapter 5 provides a conclusion.

Chapter 2: Research Context

This chapter reviews the theoretical background of the development and growth of this industry over the past few years, both globally and in Ethiopia. It includes the existing socioeconomic opportunities and challenges to the actors involved in the flower industry, particularly the employees in the flower farms. It also highlights what would be decent working conditions, national and international labor standards, and finally presents workers safety issues.

2.1 Trends in the Cut Flower Industry

2.1.1 The Global Cut Flower Industry

Many studies indicate that the flower industry generates job opportunities typically for workers in developing countries who have low educational backgrounds and experience, and that the majority are females (Dolan and Sorby, 2003; Aguila et al., 2009). In Colombia for example, it creates more than 100,000 direct employs, of which the majority are females (Aguila et al., 2009). In Kenya, the sector provides 90,000 direct jobs, of which seventy-five percent are taken by females (KFC, 2012). Such enormous job creation ability has a vital role as a pathway to eradicating poverty in developing nations. Because of this considerable job opportunity that it provides, and its

substantial national economic development impact, international organizations like the World Bank support the development of flower farms in developing nations (World Bank, 1996; Dolan and Sorby, 2003).

For many years flowers have given much cheerfulness to people all over the world, since flowers have special gift to bring happiness when someone is feel downhearted or ill, people use them to signify aspirations and love (Shepard and Holland, 1854). While many of the ancient traditional and religious representations have vanished, the public still uses flowers in their time-honored representations. Societies globally recognize that flowers inspire human feelings and boost the eminence of people life happiness more than other gifts or words (Belwal and Chala, 2008). This recognition has been directed to boosting the demand for flowers and other ornamental plant products throughout the globe. Nowadays, flowers are commonly used for ornamental purposes at ceremonial occasions (memorial days and weddings); for gifts on several events (Christmas, Easter, New year, Valentine's day, Mother's day, and Fathers' day); for expression of love, compassion, wish, or esteem; and to glorify victory and achievement (ibid).

The production of cut flowers has a long history. They were found at the founding of Dutch auction and greenhouse markets in The Netherlands in the 1600s, and in the

mid-1700s in the USA (Campos, 2002). Since then, the cut flower industry for commercial purposes has developed a global market. Colombia, USA, and The Netherlands are the main cut flower producing countries in the world at present. Before the 1970s, local producers met the world's cut flower demand; since the 1970s the global flower markets mainly depend on imports (USITC, 2003).

Currently, the USA, certain countries in Europe, and Asian countries are the greatest cut flower customers; making up more than ninety percent of the world market (ITC, 2012). Because of the additional disposable income in the emerging new markets (East Asian countries, China, India, and Eastern Europe), demand is rapidly growing. As a result, many developing nations such as those in South America, the Middle East and East African counties are becoming the major producers and exporters of ornamental plants and cut flowers products (Figuerola et al., 2012; ITC, 2012). However, even though there has been a decline in domestic cut flower production over the past few years, the world's largest flower auction market is still located in The Netherlands. 50 percent of the cut flower trade occurs in The Netherlands alone, and this country remains dominant in the international cut flower and ornamental plant market (Figuerola et al., 2012). In addition, The Netherlands is a major trader of flowers to the EU market by producing and importing flowers from developing countries, and it is a considerable

exporter of flower products to different nations throughout the globe.

The increasing consumption of cut flowers in the global market, access to labor (skilled and unskilled), and fertile land in many developing countries (African, Asian, and Latin American countries), the consistent development of convenient commercial transportation services, and enhancements in carriage and handling of easily perishable products like flowers, are the main reasons for new actors to become involved in the global cut flower market (Dolan and Sorby, 2003; USITC, 2003). Among the cut flower exporter African nations, Kenya and Ethiopia lead the supply to the EU market (Table 1.1).

Table 1.1 Sources of Cut Flowers Supply to EU from Non-EU Countries

Exporting Country	€ 2006	Rank	€ 2009	Rank	Change	€ 2010	Rank	Change
Kenya	312,841	1	328,858	1	5.1%	328,133	1	-0.2%
Ecuador	100,138	3	120,649	2	20%	131,392	2	8.9%
Colombia	114,109	2	109,012	3	-4.5%	114,473	3	5.0%
Ethiopia	21,782	6	90,313	4	315%	110,411	4	22%
Israel	78,541	4	63,535	5	-19%	65,047	5	2.4%
Uganda	20,481	7	25,117	6	23%	22,715	6	-10%
Thailand	20,058	8	20,148	7	0.4%	19,676	7	-2%
Zambia	12,336	11	16,772	8	36%	17,617	8	5.0%
South Africa	13,987	10	14,096	10	0.8%	15,796	9	12%
Zimbabwe	23,383	5	14,971	9	-36%	15,688	10	4.8%

(Source: ITC, February 2012)

The global demand for flower products has increasing rapidly since the early 1980s. While the Netherlands remains the main cut flower supplier and importer,

developing nations (for example Colombia, Ecuador, Kenya, Ethiopia, and Uganda) have become intensely involved in the world flower markets. Besides a social and economic development role for the country, the employment opportunity is a vital component. High labor-intensive sectors like floriculture may create employment opportunities in the rural areas of developing countries (Riisgaard, 2009).

However, there are a lot of public claims about flower farming and its handling processes, especially relating to the amount and type of agrichemicals used by the flower farms that have a potential cause of serious health and environmental impact (Riisgaard, 2009; Hansen, 2013). Occasionally, farm workers are forced to do their jobs without any safety equipment, and they suffer from many types of work-related health problems, while overall the labor conditions tend to be hard. Given these poor flower farming practices, a few customers in developed countries have started to purchase social and environmental friendly products (ibid). A product conforming to high standards required by customers in several nations is a huge task for flower producers (Riisgaard, 2009; Hansen, 2013). Since this study concerns the Ethiopian cut flower industry, the next topic presents the expansion and growth of this industry in Ethiopia.

2.1.2 The Ethiopian Cut Flower Industry

The Ethiopian economy is highly dependent on the agricultural sector, which accounts for nearly half of the country's GDP (MoFED, 2012). Eighty five percent of the people make their income from agriculture, and the sector generates 90 percent of total foreign currency earnings (ibid). Even if the livelihood of the majority of Ethiopians relies on the land, the country remains largely fertile unexploited land. Following the setting and implementation of favorable alternative packages by the government, domestic and foreign companies have established many flower farms in different parts of the country (EHDA,2011; MoFED, 2012).

To the extent that suitable climatic and environmental conditions are important, Ethiopia is one of the best destinations for farming cut flowers. This is attributed to three main reasons: first, the country is naturally gifted with landscape characteristics of high altitude and vast unexploited arable land; second, the Ethiopian government investment policy has a major role for the exponential growth of cut flower farms; and third, apart from the policy and natural reasons, global attention lies in helping the country as an attractive destination for the industry. This is based on the availability of labor; with about 99 million people, Ethiopia has an abundant and unused human resource (World Bank, 2016). The floriculture industry is tremendously labor intensive

in general and highly dependent on unskilled labor, which is abundantly available in the country.

For developing countries like Ethiopia, the relocation of the flower industries has offered the opportunity to diversify the economy into high value agricultural exports such as horticulture. Adapting this diversification strategy and achieved stunning production development by the country has been successful, which in turn has allowed achieving economic growth - essentially better employment opportunity and foreign exchange earnings (Gebreeyesus & Iizuka, 2010;). The expansion of the cut flower industry in Ethiopia has in particular improved women's participation in the labor market (EHPEA, 2012; Gebreeyesus & Iizuka, 2010).

The Ethiopian Horticulture Producers and Exporters Association (EHPEA) has also had a crucial role in the development of cut flower industries in Ethiopia. This is a nongovernmental organization established in 2002. The association has the remit to represent the government and to tackle producers' problems (EHPEA, 2014). Subsequent to the EHPEAs establishment; further encouragement was offered to horticultural product cultivators and exporters. Among the major successes of EHPEA in 2008 was the launching of the Ethiopian Horticulture Development Agency (EHDA) (EHDA, 2011). This state agency was established to support flower producers and

provide all essential inputs to the horticulture industry to ensure the sustainable and fast growth of the sector (ibid).

The EHPEA has members representing 110 horticultural producers, and is getting stronger with time and extending its horizons. It is the main representative of members on different issues at the national and global levels during social dialogues, and addresses all matters related to member farms. Furthermore, the association contributes by providing capacity development, training and consultative services to all its member farms (EHPEA, 2014).

In Ethiopia Flower farming is developing as one of the growing sub sectors, with enormously fast development and successful diversification to modern export products. In recent years government enticements, and local and foreign private investment in the Ethiopian flower industry has been increasing, and its role to the country's economy has become substantial. These socio-economic opportunities and some of the impacts, such as labor conditions, workers health and safety, are the main concerns of this study. Therefore, in the next sections the social and economic issues in the flower farming industries will be discussed in detail.

2.2 The Socioeconomic Significance and Impacts of the Cut Flower Industry

The opportunities in the globalized market for traditional agricultural

commodities have declined for many developing countries, and this has led many to adopt value added agricultural export products to increase the amount and variety of production, and realize economic growth. During the past couple of years, these exports have created substantial job opportunities, generated large sums of foreign currency, and assisted agricultural production technology and skills transfer (Frank & Cruz, 2001; Dolan & Sorby, 2003). In developing nations, the development of high value agricultural export products has a vital role in connecting developing nations and international product markets (Dolan & Sorby, 2003). Floriculture is one of the major high value agriculture export products. International development organizations such as the World Bank and national governments encourage the flower industry and consider this sector as an alternative to tropical crops such as coffee, palm oil and bananas (ibid). Cut flowers need suitable temperature conditions (between 10 to 25⁰C) for at least 10 hours per day. They also need land, water and labor: and most developing countries particularly tropical nations have an abundance of these resources. These geographical advantages of developing nations have become a means to achieve fast economic development (Frank & Cruz, 2001; Dolan & Sorby, 2003).

Research in several developing nations, including Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), has revealed that high value agricultural products have a positive impact on job

opportunities in local communities (Davis et al., 2009). Rising wage labor opportunities in many rural areas are helping to improve poor rural dwellers lives; this is an effective means of eradicating poverty in developing countries (Weinberger and Lumpkin, 2007; Davis et al., 2009). Because of this high labor demand, the flower industry is held to create substantial job opportunities and, thus, could improve rural area economies and reduce poverty (Dolan & Sorby, 2003; Weinberger and Lumpkin, 2007). From these labor market opportunities local communities, specifically women, have been able to earn as smallholders and as wage employees.

The high participation of new investors in the flower industry is said by government officials to give employment opportunities by offering new jobs and the development of basic services for the local communities. However, it also generates foreign earnings, and contributes to a country's GDP growth (World Bank, 1996; MoFED, 2006). Nevertheless, because of weak financial markets the benefits to developing nations are very minimal in this area. In fact, several researchers argue that the relationships between human development, economic and foreign investment are weak (Reiter & Steensma, 2010).

Recently many developing countries have developed infrastructure in poor rural areas through strategic reforms, and helped these areas diversify from traditional

farming systems to high value agricultural production and large investment (World Bank, 2005). Public investment can help an area get ahead in infrastructure development; for example, in clean water, schools, health centers, roads and electricity. The contribution of the private sector in the development process has also enabled some communities to provide better public services to rural areas (Reiter & Steensma, 2010). The private sector especially participates in the capacity building programs of local communities by providing training and awareness creating activities (Pessoa, 2008; Chatterjee, 2009).

Studies of the socio economic impacts of the flower industries has revealed that although cut flower production development and exports can be a substantial boost for economic growth, they might not always bring standard working conditions and better welfare for flower farming workers (Dolan, et.al., 2003; Tanya & Olga, 2007). Dolan, et, al. (2003) and Ute (2013) argued that in the context of response to the requirements of “Systems Applications and Products” (SAP), and in using competitive advantage to attract FDI, developing nations had to make concessions that lead to flexible measures in relation to labor standards. However, the normal response shows that such measures are usually characterized by low quality and insecure jobs, low wages, and limited social benefits and legal rights. While labor condition concerns in the flower industry

sector have developed since 1990s, the above-mentioned features of labor conditions have hardly changed over decades (Tanya & Olga, 2007; Riisgaard, 2009). This study tries to explore the reasons behind the persistence of low labor standards and labor conditions in flower farms, with emphasis on the context of Ethiopian cut flower farms.

2.3 Decent Working Conditions

2.3.1 Framework for the Analysis of Decent Working Conditions

Decent work is described as productive working environments supporting human dignity, liberty, and safe and fair opportunities for men and women to get decent work. It includes rational earnings, safe work places and social protection (ILO, 1999: p.3; p.17). In spite of the difficulties in clearly defining dignity at work, there appears to be important features here that are generally identified as two essential contributors to this definition. First, the objective factors of equality, security, just reward, voice and well-being, and second there are subjective factors integral in a consideration of human dignity, equally accessible in moral philosophy, of independence, sense and respect. In organizational studies, these objective and subjective factors might be helpful in identifying the dimensions of the dignity framework (Bolton, 2007). Features of dignity at work are respect, security, equal opportunity, autonomy, meaningful work, and voice.

Many people in developing nations live in poverty, but this is not only due to the

lack of jobs, but also many are working in hazardous working conditions informally where wages low and jobs unsecured (ILO, 1999). Individuals around the world consider the four essential characteristics of work as identified by the International Labor Organization. These are job opportunities, rights, security, protection, and social dialogue (ILO, 1999). In the situation of the lack of these basic principles, countries, enforcement institutions, trade unions, companies, the public and other interesting parties face difficulties in knowing how one sector is faring compared to another (Anker et al., 2003).

The decent work concept shows that inadequate employment means work environments that are unacceptable to society (ILO, 1999; Anker et al., 2003). The foremost unacceptable kinds of jobs are child labor and forced work (ibid). Job security is an essential part of decent work, since for most people losing their occupation has serious implications. This situation includes layoffs, and upsets and makes unusable accumulated human capital (Anker et al., 2003). Also, job security involves fair treatment (equality of opportunity in employment and occupations), not only providing safe working environments and security for all employees, but also including the absence of discrimination (ibid).

Social dialogue refers to several kinds of discussion or negotiation among

workers and employers on matters of common concern associated with work, social, and economic policies (Lehndorff & Haipeter, 2011). At the company level, social dialogue improves the bargaining power of employees, saves jobs from being relocated abroad in exploration of low-cost labor, and improves compliance to standards while enforcing regulations. It also increases the contribution of different groups in the decision making process. Thus, the capability of workers to organize freely to defend their interests and their ability to negotiate with employers is a vital element of decent work (ILO, 2010b: p.87; Lehndorff & Haipeter, 2011: p.20). Forms of employment that are characterized by a lack of rights, insecurity, absence of social dialogue, and lack protection which results in low wages and occupational injury are referred to as *risky* work. These kinds of precarious job make employees more exposed to poverty (Evans, 2009).

The essential rights and principles at work listed by the ILO declare that ‘decent work’ at the industry level is a key concept that should be guide the development of a labor friendly environment. It promotes four basic issues: creating equal and better employment and income opportunities; promoting rights at work; ensuring a healthy and safe working environment for all; and encouraging stakeholder contribution in labor rights and related decision making. For the development of definite and reliable labor

regulations in developing countries ‘decent work’ is substantial. In many developing nations, the livelihood quality of workers, working environments, and the implementation of labor rights do not progress at the same rate as their industrial development.

2.4 Labor Standards

Among the member states, international conventions are legally binding documents. In defining the basic labor standards ILO plays a fundamental role. As a result, it sets out conventions and recommendations that form the basic standards on labor rights. In this regard, “the ILO declaration on fundamental principles and rights at work” (ILO 1998) is a key to establishing an internationally recognized labor rights agenda (Hale & Opondo, 2005; Tanya & Olga, 2007; Pahle, 2011). 174 ILO member countries have adopted this declaration to promote and realize the four basic labor standards: (i) “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 labor” (Convention No. 29 & No. 105); (iii) “the effective abolition of child labor” (Convention No. 138 & No. 182); and (iv) “the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation” (Convention No. 100 & No. 111). To protect workers’ basic rights, ILO technical standards define supplementary

essential employment conditions that include working hours without forced overtime, the right to a living wage, and to a safe and healthy working environment (ILO, 2016).

All ILO member countries have ratified the basic conventions and universally agreed to respect labor standards. Regardless of their level of economic development the declaration mentioned that these rights apply in all signatory countries (ILO, 2016). Nevertheless, developing nation's observance of essential labor standards, their effectiveness in the execution of comprehensive national labor laws, and associated legal processes persist as a challenge. In the process of defining labor standards the ILO plays a fundamental role but, when it comes to implementation, particularly in cases of violation of labor standards, it lacks strong sanction mechanisms (Hale & Opondo, 2005; Pahle, 2011).

2.4.1 International Practices

Although nations ratify universal labor conventions and adapt their national labor proclamations, obedience to basic labor standards and efficiency in complete execution of labor laws persist as the main concern. Hence, ratification of labor standards do not ensure execution because in cases of violation of core labor standards ILO does not have sanction mechanisms: instead it depends on volunteer amenability and peer pressure (Chan, 2003; Pahle, 2011). There are different perceptions of country

compliance to core labor standards, and the respective measures to be taken against countries deemed to be failing to uphold core labor standards. Thus, labor standards and working conditions in developing countries tend to be lower than those in developed countries (Chan, 2003; Tanya & Olga, 2007).

Developed country unions and businesses argue that low labor standards are being used as development strategy that results in unfair trade competition. In developed nation's poor working conditions and minimum labor wages are considered as a threat and affect labor conditions (Chan, 2003; Gibbon & Riisgaard, 2014). Human rights groups also promote the idea that lack of workers' rights to organize and to be involved in collective bargaining are the undelaying causes of low labor standards. This moral argument asserts that the human rights of workers in developing countries are being violated, and they are limited from obtaining a fair share of the product of their labor. Thus, unfair labor practices in developing countries have been presented as problematic on both economic and moral grounds (Dolan, et al., 2003; Pahle, 2011).

However, developing nations contend they are dedicated to improving core labor standards by constructing frameworks on their competitive advantage of having relatively available labor forces to attract labor intensive industries and attain economic growth. However, it is often the case that their current economic conditions are a barrier

to effectively implementation of fundamental labor standards. Nevertheless, they declare that labor standards are generally improving and will continue to develop along with economic growth through global trade (Pahle, 2011; Tanya & Olga, 2007; Ute, 2013). In addition, trade unions in developed nations and comments about unfair business competition are considered as having risen out of a commitment to protection than out of a genuine concern with the wellbeing and rights of workers in the global south (ibid).

The efficacy of the implementation mechanisms of international core labor standards has also stayed debatable. There are different opinions and a lack of consensus about policy measures to be taken to improve labor conditions in developing countries, and against those countries deemed to be failing to uphold core labor standards (Chan, 2003). The trade-labor relationship specifically using business units in reaction to violations of core labor standards is usually referred as ‘social clause,’ and has been suggested in various sessions of global trade policy agendas that ensure the level-playing field in international trade in addition to bringing fair competition to the acceptable level of labor standards. Private social standards and labeling initiatives as well as self-regulatory codes of practice are also promoted as alternative mechanisms towards the realization of improved labor conditions in developing countries (Chan,

2003; Gibbon & Riisgaard, 2014).

All the information presented above shows that the argument over a nation's devotion to core labor standards and the relevant actions to be taken against countries reasoned to be failing that maintained core labor standards, continues to be controversial. Social clauses, private social standards and self-regulatory codes of practice are alternative mechanisms towards the realization of better working environments in developing nations, and have revealed the potentials of the relevant alternatives in addressing labor practices and improving work conditions. Nonetheless, recognizing a practical alternative with a significant system of implementation, and bringing in structural impact remains open to further international debates and negotiations given the ethical, economic and political interests of the many countries, businesses and other stakeholders involved.

2.4.2 Ethiopian Labor Legislation

Contemporary labor laws are dedicated to protecting workers well-being simply came in to operation through the growth of the status of the employee in every consideration in modern industrial development. In Ethiopia until recently, the main source of labor law, the Labor Proclamation No. 42/1993 was developed in the post socialist period; designing the overthrow of the centralized state economy in favor of a

market oriented, diversified society (Tadesse & Admassu, 2006). Ethiopia has ratified the general principles of labor rights, and ILO's core labor conventions are also an integral part of the constitution (ILO, 2016). In determining the national labor proclamation No.42/1993, International labor standards have remained helpful. The country's House of People's Representatives (parliament) has also ratified 12 technical conventions that are prominent in protecting the right of employees. These include the right to association 1919 (No.2), the minimum age convention 1981 (No. 138), the occupational safety and health convention 1981 (No. 155), and the termination of employment convention 1982 (No. 158). This latest national labor proclamation No.377/2003 was effective from 26 February 2004, and further amended to add freedom of association and protection of unions from interference by public authorities (Nigatu, 2010; ILO, 2016; Tadesse & Admassu, 2006).

Despite the fact that Ethiopia has ratified these international labor conventions and adapted its national labor laws, the country has been criticized several times by the ILO Committee of Experts, which has noted serious inconsistencies with the national labor proclamations, and that there are challenges to adherence to the core labor standards. Studies of the labor conditions and practices of work in Ethiopia have revealed that labor conditions tend to be low. This is because of two main reasons:

firstly, due to the changes made in at the beginning of trade liberalization there are lower standards in labor regulations and laws; and secondly, there is also a lack of capacity for effective implementation of the existing labor laws (Tadesse & Admassu, 2006; Ute, 2013; Weldeghebrael, 2010). Likewise, when evaluating the Ethiopian labor laws in the framework of the above mentioned international labor convention; labor conditions and working arrangements tend to be more flexible, typically in areas such as minimum wages, hours of work, and health and safety (Nigatu, 2010; Ute, 2013).

The current Ethiopian labor law does not propose minimum wages by declaration. Generally, wages and contract terms are determined by collective agreements or by the worker contract of employment, or by the employer interest. Regarding the termination of employment, the labor proclamation opens the possibility for prejudiced and subjective sacking, as it states that contract terms can be terminated without notice on the basis of disputes at place of work and/or employee manifestation of loss of capacity. Even if the labor laws provided rights to strike there is a lengthy bureaucracy, so to materialize this there are also many lists of restrictions about unofficial walkouts. All these things finally discourage the employee's right to strike (Tadesse & Admassu, 2006; Nigatu, 2010; Ute, 2013).

Studies of the labor law in Ethiopia have noted that, when compared to other

developing countries, working hours, occupational health and safety, termination and accompanied remunerations and/or costs are different. The labor proclamation is too general and vague, and it also lacks specified enforcement mechanisms. Thus, in the Ethiopian context, where labor legislation can be weak; labor standards personified in ILO codes, joined with related international conventions, would be substantial mechanisms for improving and ensuring the quality of employment.

2.5 Occupational Health and Safety

Healthy working environments and safety at work are among the most important values of individuals, societies and nations. Therefore, occupational health and safety is a crucial strategy to ensure the health of workers, and it also has a specific involvement in employee motivation, productivity, quality of products, and job satisfaction. This subsection gives an overview of occupational health and safety practices in developing country flower farms, specifically in Ethiopia, and further examines the ability to implement existing legal and policy frameworks.

The causes of occupational safety and health problems include difficult chemical, physical, biological, psychological, and ergonomics environments; for example, Greenhouses that use massive amounts of agrichemicals that affect human health, safety, and working environments. Because of their high-level exposure to agrichemicals,

flower farming workers are also categorized among those at a high risk of occupational health problems¹. Among the common issues, workers health and safety condition problems across flower farms include insufficient training on health and safety procedures, lack of provision of and use of personal protective equipment (PPE), and the level of follow up on reentry intervals after pesticide applications (Armstrong, 2008; Marcela, et al., 2012,).

To address the above-mentioned issues of working conditions and occupational health and safety standards the ILO and member countries have adopted several polices (Magauzi, et al., 2011). However, according to Dolan et al. (2003), Magauzi et al. (2011), and Marcela et al. (2012), the adoption of ILO guidelines and standards did not bring substantial realization of safe and healthy working environments throughout flower farm areas. In recent years the development of the flower farm industries in Ethiopia has led a wider application and use of fertilizers, pesticides and greenhouses (Hanssen, et al., 2014). Research findings about occupation health and safety practices across flower farms workers in Ethiopia present various challenges, and show that these actions may be causing adverse health effects. Workers on flower farms had high incidence of respiratory and skin symptoms, with increased prevalence among females

¹ “Flower workers are constantly exposed to high levels of extremely toxic chemicals, and many report serious health effects, including skin rashes, respiratory problems, eye problems, and miscarriages” (Holt and Watson, 2008).

who worked in the greenhouses. Furthermore, the provision of PPE and required facilities were inadequate given the level of workers exposure to pesticides. There has also been limited training and follow up on the use of PPE and compliance to flower farms safety procedures such as reentry rules to greenhouses following spraying (Getu, 2009; Nigatu, 2010; Hanssen, et al., 2014,). This was demonstrated in the low level of awareness and attitude of flower farm workers on safe pesticide handling practices (ibid). Various levels of exposure to pesticide have been reported to causing chronic respiratory problems given short re-entry intervals and inadequate PPE (Mekonene & Agonafir, 2002; Hanssen, et al.,2014).

Ethiopia has enacted the convention on occupational health and safety (No.155) to respect and protect the worker's right for a safe and healthy working environment (Nigatu, 2010, Getu, 2009). In addition the Ethiopian government has ratified a safe and healthy working place policy. Labor proclamation No.377/2003, Article 92 No. 2 and 3, describes the compulsion on employers.² However, even if Ethiopia has developed policies and regulatory frameworks that substantiate with ILO guidelines and standards,

² Article no. 2: "Take appropriate steps to ensure that workers are properly instructed and notified concerning the hazards of their respective occupations and the precautions necessary to avoid accident and injury to health; ensure that directives are given and also assign a safety officer; establish an occupational safety and health committee" (FDRE, 2004).

Article no. 3: "Provide workers with protective equipment, clothing and other materials and instruct them of its use" "...Employees are by law required to strictly follow all safety precautionary steps and accident prevention measures, and have the right to ask for proper training and protective clothing. Likewise, Employers have a duty and responsibility to provide work place safety training and protective clothing, keep posters and safety guidelines in visible and high traffic areas, ensure everybody understands and follows safety instructions, regularly check proper functioning of equipment and installations, enforce chemicals are properly labeled; sorted; and stored; used; and disposed in accordance with manufacturers' guidelines" (FDRE, 2004).

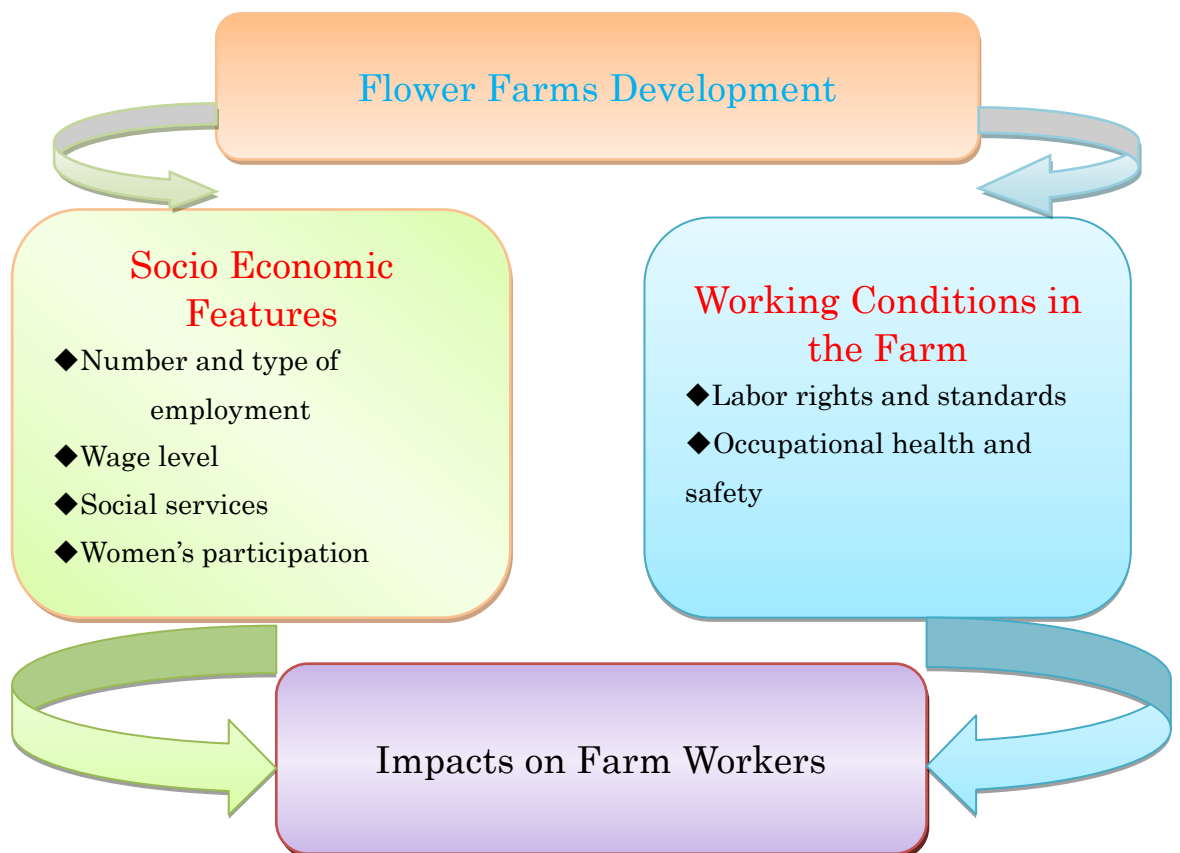
flower farms were not fulfilling standards with regard to chemical storage, use and disposal conditions. In addition, poor and unsafe fertilizer, pesticide and greenhouse management are common in flower farms (Getu, 2009; Nigatu 2010; Hanssen et al., 2014). As regards the existing health status of flower farm workers, firms are not forced to make health checks compulsory at the beginning of work, and there are no periodical health checkups on flower farm workers, so their health conditions remain unregistered (Nigatu, 2010; Hanssen et al., 2014). Female workers are highly engaged in the greenhouses but the chemicals used in these industries mean they are exposed to sex-related reproductive health effects especially when pregnant (ibid).

In the view of these results, harmful and unsafe practices on the flower farms might cause serious health problems, and that compromises the flower farm worker's rights to health. This indicates that there are shortcomings in terms of compliance to policy guidelines and international and national standards. The responsible government bodies i.e. the Ministry of labor and social affairs (MoLSA) and their affiliates at regional and district level appear reluctant to enforce the policy measures, possibly because they are poorly resourced in terms of both financial and human resources.

2.6 Synthesis and Research Questions

To explore various development matters and find the important relations between cut flower industry growth and its impacts on workers, a theoretical background was developed (Figure 2.1). This shows the association between cut flower farm expansion strategies and their impacts on employees. The main components of this framework are the socioeconomic implications such as employment opportunities, wage level and women's participation, and the working environment on the flower farm.

Figure 2.1 a Conceptual Framework for Assessing the Effects of Cut Flower Industry Growth on Workers



To study the economic and working conditions of cut flower farm workers in the Bahir Dar area of Ethiopia, the framework presented above draws on the key principles and concepts of rural livelihood diversification strategies proposed by Ellis (2000), the social impact assessment (Becker and Vanclay, 2003), and the decent industry work (ILO, 1999). Based on this framework, the researcher investigated and analyzed data collected from flower farm employees, labor union leaders, and administrators.

The literature review provides a clear but brief background to the concepts raised in this study of the economic and working conditions of the cut flower industry. Flower farming is currently the fastest growing in the Ethiopian economy, supporting the traditional hard currency earners from agricultural products like coffee, pulses and oil seeds, and bringing new employment opportunities for the unemployed. Despite the rapid growth rate of this industry, much remains to be understood about its impact on the working environments, labor standards, and the occupational health and safety conditions of flower farming workers.

Thus, the main purpose of this research was to study and analyze the economic, occupational health and safety impacts of the cut flower industry growth in the Bahir Dar region of Ethiopia on its workers. Specially, it examined the economic benefits and values of flower farmworkers. Secondly, it explored the working conditions within the

industry based on employment opportunities and labor standards. Finally, it investigated the occupational health and safety guidelines and enforcement procedures that have been implemented by the industry. For this purpose, the following research questions were raised:

1. What are the economic benefits and values of the flower industry that affect their worker's life improvement?
2. What are the labor standards and working condition practices on Ethiopian flower farms? and
3. How occupational health and safety rules are put in place, and to what extent are they executed?

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

This study used a qualitative research approach as the principal method to collect, analyze and interpret primary data, and to conceptualize the socioeconomic impact of the flower industry. Miller et al. (2012) advocate qualitative research as an appropriate method for the acquisition of knowledge through the use of interactive systems, thus enabling the researcher to secure respondents' experiences, opinions, and outlooks. This approach helps to examine and recognize multiple outlooks under natural social conditions. Furthermore, qualitative research serves to develop information that collects the expression of ideas and opinions of individuals. It can therefore gain a more thorough comprehensive understanding of personal judgments than quantitative research that is restricted to stated questions and fixed answers.

This chapter demonstrates the methodology used in conducting the study; covering the research design, the nature of the study population, clarification of the target study groups for this study. It also presents the sampling procedures employed to recruit study subjects for data collection. Furthermore, this chapter allows a brief report and justification of the data collection instruments, and the methods used in the process of analyzing the qualitative data.

3.1 Case Study Research Design and Data Collection

This research is a qualitative case study that examines an organization, which in this case is a cut flower farm. The study examined workers socio-economic opportunities and the implications of the industry. To depict the effect of employment opportunity in worker's life improvement and the working conditions within the flower industry in Ethiopia, following Marshall and Rossman (2011); case studies of two flower farms were employed and information was collected through semi structured interviews. The information from the interviews was collected during January and February, 2017.

A research design is the overall structure of the inquiry required to obtain answers to research questions; it organizes the blueprint for the collection and analysis of data that addresses the study objectives (Kothari, 2004). From different types of research design, a case study is the most frequently used method in qualitative research. It is used as an approach to study that incorporates a practical analysis of a definite existing occurrence within its natural situation by combining many sources of evidence (Robson, 2002:178). A case study is a comprehensive assessment of a definite situation which could be an organization and is a common strategy used to acquire a concrete picture of the data and the developments being endorsed (Robson, 2002; Ghauri & Grønhaug,

2005). Saunders et al. (2009) note that the case study approach has a substantial capability to provide answers to ‘what?’ and ‘how?’ research questions.

Case study data collection methods employed can be many, and are likely to be used in combination. They include observation, interviews, questionnaires and documentary analysis to provide primary data (Saunders et. al, 2009). In addition, company reports and records such as financial, production, marketing and competition reports (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2005) may be used.

3.1.1 Sample Design and Selection

This study was conducted by collecting data using qualitative research techniques. The research population for this study consisted of workers who are working in different sections of the flower farms in the Bahir Dar city area. Bahir Dar is the capital of the Amhara National Regional State in the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. It is located at 11°5’30” North and 37°23’30” East on the southern side of Lake Tana, the largest Lake of Ethiopia (Oy, 1999; FUPI, 2006). The city covers an area of 16,000 hectares. The location is a suitable landscape, and a favorable climate, to produce different agricultural products in (FUPI, 2006). According to the population and household census of 2007, the population of Bahir Dar is around 220,350.

Because of the number of their employees and their production experience, of the

5 flower farm exporters around the city, two farms were used for the case study; one domestic and one foreign owned farm. For anonymity, from this point onwards I use numbers to represent the flower farms. Accordingly, they are presented as “Farm 1” and “Farm 2”. In this case study, a total of 30 informants (twenty-three women and seven men) from the two flower farms participated, and participants were selected by using simple random sampling techniques. Based on employee numbers, twenty and ten participants were selected from “Farm 1” and “Farm 2” respectively. In addition, key informant interviews were carried out with management representatives and the leaders of labor unions from the two flower farms (Table 3.1). Data collection was carried out for two months between January and February, 2017.

Table 3.1 Number of Respondents from two Flower Farms

Division (position)	Farm 1		Farm 2		Total
	Female	Male	Female	Male	
Human Resource (Head)	-	1	-	1	2
Production (Head)	-	1	-	-	1
Labor Union Leader	-	1	-	1	2
Workers from Different Sections	16	4	7	3	30
Total	16	7	7	5	35

3.1.2 Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews are widely used by many social researchers; because for them a flexible and openly designed interview is more likely to elicit the genuine

viewpoint of respondents than a firmly standardized interview (Bryman, 2012). The general guiding questions forwarded by the researcher enable him/her to access each interviewee's implicit knowledge. Following Flick (2006) the ultimate objective of the semi-structured interview is to make this implicit knowledge explicit in a way that can be used for further interpretation.

This study employed a semi-structured interview with an interview guideline (see Appendix One) to employees, management representatives, leaders of labor unions and official personal from the two flower farms. Interviews were assembled in individual employees, management representatives, leaders of labor unions and official personal from the two flower farms were facilitated by the researcher and correspondents besides taking notes by the researcher. The amount of time allotted to each interview was 30 to 45 minutes. The guideline helped to generate valuable information from the participants.

Data collection in social research now has multiple possibilities with the use of new technology, such as Skype. "With the use of the Internet for research, a researcher's reach is potentially global, data collection is economical, and transcribing is no more difficult than cutting and pasting" (Markham 2008: p. 255). Because of a time and distance concern the interviews for this study were carried out using Skype and e-mail

interviews.

3.2 Data Analysis

Data analysis makes a comprehensive structure out of the information and dialogues about the subject under exploration (Stewart et al., 2007). Informant answers were recorded into a separate file (complete with translation from Amharic to English), and an excel data-base was set up to analyze the quantitative data. The outcome of this preliminary analysis process was a reduction in the sheer volume of data into selected categories. This helped the researcher to put all the data from each question together, as well as to identify consistencies and differences from individual responses. Finally, the information related to each theme was summarized and the differences and similarities of responses within the same category were described. Identification of general patterns in the data and connections within and between the identified categories was also part of this process. The main findings from interview and literatures are presented in Chapter Four.

3.3 Ethical Considerations

In the process of conducting social sciences research, where subjects are conscious of research workers, the values of social research around treatment of the subjects of study and the activities that researchers should or should not do are among

the most important points in relation to ethics in research (Bryman, 2012 p. 130). The potential participation of people in research can affect their lives directly or indirectly. Because of this, scholars point out that those researchers must take note of issues such as consent, ethics, and power relations (Miller et al., 2012). In collecting the necessary data for this study, all protocols in ethical research were considered. Starting with first contact, respective official representatives of the two flower farms were advised about the recruitment of sample subjects for the study. They were also advised that this research was part of a master's study program, and that data would be used only for academic purposes. The managers were well-informed of when and where the researcher would interview the sample of workers.

During the interviews, the researcher informed each interviewee about the purpose of the study. Participants were informed that their contribution was voluntary and they had the right to drop out at any time. Hence, in this study respondents were briefed about the purpose to seek their informed consent. Furthermore, the researcher guaranteed all the participants that all the information they provided would remain confidential and anonymous.

3.4 Scope and Limitations

Regarding this study there are some limitations that should be recognized. First,

this research is dealing with very sensitive issues about flower farm working conditions and compliance to legal frameworks and codes of conduct. There is a lack of transparency from government officials, flower farm administrators and labor union leaders in this area. The second limitation is with the extent to which the findings can be used to make broad generalizations because variations exist between different flower farms beyond the specific study area. Given the sample size and the number of flower farms in the country, it is necessary to treat this study as a case study from a representative area of the country. Conclusions can be drawn, as noted above, but must be treated with caution.

Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion

4.1 Major Social and Economic Implications

The first section of this chapter is aimed at addressing the first research question:

What are the economic benefits and values of flower industries that affect worker's life improvement? It attempts to present the general characteristics of flower farm workers, the economic impact of the industry, and the employment benefits and career development experiences of workers in the flower farms.

4.1.1 General Characteristics

The tables below summarize the general characteristics of the employees of the two flower farms in the Bahir Dar area. Table 4.1 gives the demographic characteristics of sampled employees; Table 4.2 presents educational levels, and Table 4.3 indicates workers characteristics by division or section.

The age composition of workers in both farms ranged between 18 to 38 years. The interviews showed that a large proportion (65%) of the workers were under twenty when they started to work in the farms. This indicates that the workforce in both farms were young, with a mean age of 24.17. The mean family size of the employees (2.94) is smaller than the national average of 4.8 and regional averages of 4.9 reported by the

Central Statistical Authority (CSA, 2008).

Table 4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Sampled Employees

Flower Workers Characteristics	Bahir Dar Area	
Mean Age of workers (year)	24.17	
Average Family size	2.94	
Marital Status	Single	Married
Percentage of Workers	70	30
Gender	Male	Female
Percentage of Workers	23	77

(Source: from respondent's response for the interview)

About 30 percent of the respondents were married (Table 4.1). Among those who were married, a sizable proportion indicated that they got married after they joined the farms, and had their spouses working at the same farm or another farm. The labor union leader of “farm 1” also mentioned that there is a general trend of workers to get married after they join a farm for economic reasons, as their wages are not adequate to meet their basic needs. In addition, a sizable proportion of respondents who were single lived either with their parents or with their siblings who also worked in flower farms, in order to share their living expenses.

About 77 percent of the employees were women, who mainly work in the green house and the pack house (85%). The trend of women working in green houses and packaging sections is similar to the figures reported by several studies in different

countries (Ute (2013) and Taylor (2010) in Ethiopia, Leipold and Morgante (2013) in Kenya, and Rissgard (2009) in Tanzania). It also appears that jobs in both farms were segregated according to traditional gender roles, in which men tend to specialize in skilled jobs while women mostly performed relatively low or unskilled jobs.

Thus, despite the fact that the flower industries have given women employment opportunities, they remain at the lower level of the industry's labor force. According to Ute (2013) this situation is associated with the low social status of women as compared to men in Ethiopia, especially in rural areas. Interviews with officials at both farms show that this happens to be the normal trend, even though there had not been any specific gender preference made while recruiting employees. In contrast, Ute (2013) reported there is a perception among employers that women more compliant, nimble-fingered and careful, and thus better qualified for the routines involved in flower production.

Table 4.2 Education Level of Workers

Education Level	Male	Female	Percentage
1 to 4	1	3	13.33
5 to 8	1	2	10.00
9 to 10 complete	4	17	70.00
10 +1 and above	1	1	6.67
Total	7	23	100

(Source: from respondent's response for the interview)

The educational levels of workers in both farms was found to be relatively low and there was no significant variation in education level between female and men workers in the two flower farms. Of the workers sampled, 23% had attended elementary school, 70% had completed high school, and 7 percent had attended vocational school. These figures indicate that workers in both farms with low levels of education had mainly dropped out from elementary and high school.

Table 4.3 Occupation Characteristics

Sampled Employees by Division and Gender			
Division	Male	Female	Total
Green House	2	11	13
Pack House	1	8	9
Chemical Sprayer	1	-	1
Irrigation	2	-	2
store	-	3	3
Supervisor	1	1	2
Total	7	23	30
Occupation Characteristics			
Descriptions		Average	
Experience before present Job in year		0.40	
Current experience since employment in year		2.10	
Working hours per day		8.20	
Transportation time per day		2 hours	

(Source: from respondent's response for the interview)

The sampled workers in the flower farms can be categorized to six major groups based on the respective sections they have worked in: green house, packing, crop

protection (sprayers and irrigation), store persons, and supervisors. Interviews with the green house workers confirmed that the daily work in this section involved activities such as weeding, pruning, cleaning and harvesting. In the packing houses, sequences of processes were undertaken, starting from sorting the bulk of flowers arriving from the field, to packing buckets of flowers ready to be stored in the refrigerator room. Crop protection (i.e. spraying of agrichemicals), irrigation (mixing of fertilizers, other necessary ingredients for flowers growing and monitoring the water lines) were entirely performed by men. The majority of the sampled farm workers did not have previous experience; only 18% of employees had prior work experience before they joined their current occupations. Their work experience ranged from five months to four years (Table 4.3). Both farms provide a transportation service to its employees from Bahir Dar city to the farms. The average transportation time per day for a round trip from home to flower farm is 2 hours (Table 4.3).

4.1.2 Economic Impact

Table 4.4 shows the daily income level of farm employees and their proportion of receiving that wage³. The flower farms pay wages monthly for workers, with an average daily rate of ETB 29.83 (1.32 USD) to ETB 115.49 (5.11 USD) per day. Nearly 84 percent of farm employees get ETB 45.20 (two dollars) or less per day. Only workers in

³ “Wage” is defined as regular payment to which the worker is entitled in return for the performance of the work that he/she performs under a contract of employment” (FDRE, 2004:pp.2468).

a higher level, for example division heads and managers are making between ETB 56.50 (2.5 USD) and ETB 124.30 (5.5 USD) a day (Table 4.4).

Table 4.4 Wage Level per Day (8 hours) and Savings per month

USD/day	ETB/day	Staff (Percent)
≤ 1.50	≤ 33.90	56.67
1.51 – 2.00	33.91 – 45.20	26.67
2.01 – 2.50	45.21 – 56.50	10.00
≥ 2.51	≥ 56.51	6.66
Savings (average)		
	USD/month	ETB/month
Male	7.52	170
Female	12.39	280

(Source: from respondent's response for the interview)

There were no wage differences between women and men flower workers for a similar job. Only the small number of female supervisors earned more than those women working in the green house and packing sections. The majority of the women performed jobs that required limited skill and received lower wages. There are few jobs that require skills, and many workers remain in low standard jobs with low wages and limited benefits throughout their working life. The wage difference between men and women was justified by the fact that men either engaged in skilled jobs such as technicians, or worked with direct contact with chemicals, which was considered more dangerous (Nigatu, 2010).

Almost all the respondents were completely reliant on wages from the flower

farms. Employees explained that they used their salary mainly for consumption of food, house rent, support to their families, and educational expenses. Food and rent were the primary costs incurred, at around 80% of monthly wages. The remaining 20% is distributed for fuel (charcoal and fire wood), family support, schooling expense, savings, and so on. In addition, respondents said that with their wages they found it difficult to provide for the basic necessities, including food, housing, healthcare, clothing and transport. Frequently, workers were faced with falling short of money for emergencies such as medical expenses. The respondents' mentioned repeatedly that depending on wages from the flower farm provides them hardly enough income for the whole month.

Flower farm worker wages and their wealth levels are very low. Only 10 percent of workers have their own house. Thirty percent are living in their parents' houses. The majority of flower farm workers (60%) live in a rented house, while 15% of these are living in common housing owing to their low wage levels. Most farm employees do not have savings, because their monthly wage does not meet their household needs. The interviews showed that flower workers adopted various strategies to supplement monthly wages; like informal businesses such as petty trade, selling food and local liquor, as well as working in the construction sector. These are the common strategies used as additional sources of income to supplement monthly wages. Most of the

respondents were dependent on such additional income to supplement their wage from flower farms. A woman who works in the Farm 1 packing house section, and a man who works in the Farm 2 irrigation section stated that:

“It is too difficult to depend on my wage from flower farm to cover my family expenses for the whole month because the wage I received monthly is low. There are so many expenses you have to pay for food and house rent over, no more money for my additional expenses. For survival in my spare time, I do selling food and local liquor to neighborhoods to supplement my monthly wage. (A woman who works in Farm 1 green house, 2017, translated from Amharic),” and

“It has been two years since I start working here. I can only say that I am living by it; however there is nothing improved in my life whatsoever. Till now I do not saved money. Sometimes I was afraid what would be my fate if I will suffer by serious sickness any time. Currently I have a temporary part time job in construction during my spare time that helps me to cover other living expenses. (A man who works in Farm 2 irrigation section, 2017, translated from Amharic).”

Reducing various expenses and number of meals per day, working for a long time

per day through the whole month without a break for extra income, or taking credit on food items from small nearby shops, were also reported by the respondents as the common mechanisms required to make ends meet. Some of the respondents mentioned that they put aside a minimum amount of savings (Table 4.4) from their wages and additional informal business income. The savings that are made go to emergencies, household furniture and upgrading electronic equipment.

4.1.3 Employment Benefits and Career Development

The respondents confirmed that both farms provided a permanent employment contract on completion of 45 days of probation. This provides them with sense of job security, and addresses their major concern of securing work for the future. However, respondents who participated in this study had worked on average only for 2.08 years, and, along with the flower farms management representatives claimed that employee turnover issues existed. The farms invested huge amount of money on training employees, thus if subsequently trained workers leave their job this would cause major losses for the company.

During the interviews, farm workers explained that having a permanent work term contract did not always lead to job security. There are cases of layoffs and termination of contracts without compliance to the terms and conditions, especially in

cases of conflict with supervisors and management. When it comes to compensation during layoffs or in cases of work related injury, respondents complained that there exists a lengthy legal process, and compensation was minimum and unfair. Respondents mentioned that there were also cases of intimidation to prevent them from complaining further or seeking compensation. The interview results also indicate that company disciplinary and grievance procedures were not followed, and this resulted in a feeling of job insecurity among farm workers.

As stated by both farms management representatives, workers on permanent contracts were provided with legally required employment benefits and provisions for pensions, and paid annual and maternity leave. Each worker is permitted to take fourteen days for periodic leave with pay in their first year of service. The amount of paid annual leave increases with each service year to a maximum leave given of twenty-one days. In this regard, the flower farms conform to Ethiopian labor proclamation No.377/2003 that outlines worker rights to periodic leave with pay (Ethiopian Labor Proclamation No.377/2003).

Both farms provided permanent workers with access to health care at government owned clinics for on job injuries and other emergency situations. Employees were required to cover drug expenses, were granted leave without pay, and when sick leave is

issued, treatment at public health centers. In both farms this medical care did not include other family members. However, while flower farms created access to health facilities, respondents claimed that it was not adequate to ensure proper health care for workers and their families. Experiences from the fair trade certified flower farms in other developing nations like Kenya and Tanzania showed that these are required to provide workers and their families with access to proper treatment, health care and education (Riisgaard, 2009, Leipold & Morgante, 2013).

As stated in the Ethiopian labor law, section six, Article 88, “every pregnant woman is entitled to three months of paid maternity leave, one month of pre-birth and two months of post birth leave” (FDRE, 2004). As stated by the Human Resource managers of both flower farms, the farms abide by this law; despite the fact some women respondents were uninformed about these benefits. Respondents from both farms said that there is no worker rest room. The majorities of workers takes breaks and eat lunch around the green house. They have inadequate access to drinking water, wash rooms and toilet facilities, and these are sited far from some of the working places. Furthermore, the results indicate that not much has been achieved when it comes to enforcing the employment benefits and provisions stated in the country’s labor law, and that challenges remain in social service provision such as housing, transport, health

provision for workers' families, and day care facilities.

Training and performance based compensation were recognized by most firms as crucial for increases in productivity and efficiency as well as in improving quality. These not only allow employees to make more income and do less repetitive work, but also enhance work productivity and efficiency on the farm. Nonetheless, interviews with employees from both farms showed that most take the inadequate training and opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills elsewhere that are provided by supervisors or peers upon employment. Packing house employees stated that they would like to have more information and training about their job so as to adopt new methods and minimize the risks that they face, such as reduced hours on the job or retrenchment, because of damage to flowers during packaging.

Interviews with workers indicate that their work position mostly remain the same throughout their stay in the farm, and there was almost no opportunity to go up the hierarchy of employment positions to upper supervisory levels, and thus increase their wages. For the majority of workers promotion is related to being considered for frontline supervision, section head or gaining a better working position. As stated by the production manager of Firm1 promotion is based on both merit and length of service. However, some respondents in this study reported that supervisory and junior

manager-based promotions are assessments based on favoritism. Employees also claimed that the flower farms occasionally assign junior management positions to workers who have worked in other companies before them, even though they have been on the farm for a shorter time.

The majority of workers claimed that this trend was especially common for those with low levels of education even after they gained years of experience. In this regard, other studies have argued that, even if flower farms created job opportunities for unskilled workers, the majority of them remained in low-position jobs because their unbalanced share in labor intensive increases their possibility of remaining in the same position. Moreover, their low level of education also stops them from taking further opportunities for training and education (Leipold & Morgante, 2013, Ute, 2013, Tanya & Olga, 2007).

However, the study found that flower farm workers suggested that the industry is helpful, as it provided stable income and job security, particularly in comparison to their previous situation as unemployed, small business operators, and/or subsistence farming. Thus, the job opportunity in flower farms added something to their life, at least it supports them financially. However, flower workers highlighted their concerns with low wage levels: their wage was not enough to provide the necessities needed for an

acceptable standard of living for the workers and their families. The wage they earned for their contribution at the flower farm was not even close to what they deserved. In addition, workers claimed that work positions remained the same regardless of the number of years worked because of a common trend of favoritism, which makes it difficult to earn promotion and thus increase their wage levels.

Results from other studies related with the World Bank (World Bank, 2008), argue that creating wage labor in the local economy is an effective mechanism for reducing poverty in African countries. Nonetheless, from the results of this study it can be verified that the livelihood lost due to land expropriation has not been compensated for by income generated through wage employment in the flower farms, given the low wage level and poor working conditions. The study found that there was a clear age screening during recruitment in the flower farms. The local and aged people removed from their land, with insignificant compensation, were intentionally debarred from employment. This is because of two main reasons: first; farm manager's view older people as less productive and less flexible workers; second, tense relations exist between flower farms and the local community.

4.2 Employment Rights and Social Dialogue

To answer the second research question: **What are the labor standards and working condition practices in Ethiopia flower farms?** This section presents the findings about flower workers knowledge relating to employment rights, the EHPEA code of conduct, and their work contract. It also presents social dialogue results among employees, and between employers and workers to improve and influence work related issues.

4.2.1 Awareness of Labor Rights and Standards

The study assessed workers knowledge of the national labor law. Of all the respondents only four had been informed about the national labor law from their high school and college study on civic education. A few respondents had been given an orientation on the basics of company code of conduct when they were hired by the firms. In contrast, a large proportion of flower workers had no previous formal occupational experience and awareness of national labor laws. Most of them learned about the basic rights and responsibilities informally from their supervisors and friends.

Interviews with the human resource manager of Farm 2 and the production head of Farm 1 revealed that information like a summary of the code of practice regulations were displayed on the notice board. Also, they mentioned that efforts have been made in

disseminating information about national labor proclamation No.377/2003 and the EHPEA code of conduct for different sections. In addition, both farm's labor union representatives mentioned that they have organized some awareness creating programs for their members in relation to the national labor law, and employee and employer relationships, in conjunction with the district labor and social affairs office. Despite such efforts there was found to be a gap of knowledge among flower workers about labor laws. Apparently, there might be incompatibility between the awareness creating mechanisms used and worker levels of understanding. According to the interviews, almost all the respondents have signed contract terms with their respective firms. However, flower workers knowledge of the details of their contract varied greatly from one to the other. It was apparent that some of the respondents did not know and had never read their contract terms. This might be associated with the low level of educational background among workers on the flower farms. Even among those who were educated, respondents stated that it was difficult to easily understand the legal terms used in the contract, and their interpretations. This indicates that worker knowledge about core labor rights and standards and their responsibilities is low. There were also unproductive flower firm and labor union efforts on awareness creating programs.

4.2.2 The Labor Union

The interview with both farm human resource managers showed that the labor union was established with the support of the district labor and social affairs office and the EWCTU. However, a high proportion of workers are not familiar about the role and functions of a labor union. There is inadequate formal communication between employees, union leaders, and administrations. Members of the labor union contact their representatives in case of problems, but according to the union member representatives in the Bahir Dar area, flower farm employees are afraid of retribution from management and reluctant to develop membership and uniting behind the union to create a powerful labor union. Furthermore, the labor union representatives themselves are not enthusiastic about pursuing and recruiting new members to form a powerful union; fearing retaliation during performance evaluations, loss of promotion, and losing their jobs.

Respondents also suggested that the bargaining power of labor unions with management in relation to wages, working conditions and incentive systems tends to be weak. Because of this, farm workers are not interested in becoming a member of the labor union. And some of them mentioned that they cannot afford to pay contributions for a union which has not been proactive in protecting members' interests. Therefore,

the general lack of trust and interest in labor unionization among flower workers in Bahir Dar is related to past experiences, and the condition of the labor unions in both farms is poor. This agrees with the MOLSA (2009) report that indicates labor unions at a national level are very weak.

Regarding farm disciplinary and grievance handling guidelines, respondents stated that procedures weren't completely executed, particularly in cases of job termination and workplace conflict. Workers who have awareness about the national labor laws and company codes of conduct said that the farms did not comply with all the compulsory items in the code of practice and collective bargaining agreements. Respondents from the two flower firms also mentioned that layoffs were common in personal conflict cases with supervisors, and these did not follow formal administration procedures. Since supervisors tend to have sole power in treating labor in whatever way they want, they use their authority to influence decisions. Unfair dismissal was common among those who are illiterate, as these groups of workers were rarely aware of their labor rights:

“When the workers went to talk with the labor union representatives they were enthusiastic to listen to them and had good discussions. Whereas when the union leaders brought employees’ issues to administration, they were hesitating and even sometimes reported the contrary just to please the managers. (A woman who works in Farm 1 packing house, 2017, translated from Amharic).”

Farm employee interview results also revealed that workers get disciplinary measures during the time they try to claim their rights. The labor union does not have the power to intervene and protect the union members because labor union representatives were afraid of losing their own jobs if they challenge management. Because management has more power than labor unions, workers criticized the fact that written laws were not implemented fully, and it that was difficult to hold the firm to its promises. Among respondents there was also a common belief that in cases of conflict the level of established personal relationship with supervisor matters more than being a member of the labor union. In contrast, the human resource managers of both farms explained that there has been a smooth relationship with the respective company’s trade union. In addition, the firm provides financial and administrative support to make the union strong and actively engage in the growth of the company’s productivity.

4.3 Occupational Safety and Health

To address the third research question: **How did it occupational health and safety rules are put in place and to what extent are they executed?** and the working conditions in Ethiopian flower farms, this section presents the general safety conditions, knowledge and practices in the use of agrichemicals, the protective measures taken by flower farms to care for employees who have had chemical contact and related health problems in the flower farms in the Bahir Dar area. Finally, this section assesses the compliance of flower farms to national labor law regarding the efforts of the government to implement existing law.

4.3.1 Farm Occupational Safety Measures

Farm 2 employs an occupational safety and hazard expert. In both farms only some workers have been given first aid training by the regional Workers Confederation Trade Union and/or Ethiopian Red Cross Society branch officers. The two flower farms management representatives revealed that some safety guidelines are posted in specific places, and that the companies frequently provide training for workers who are working in high-risk areas. Occupational safety and hazard workers have also participated in EHPEA training to improve their awareness about general safety issues and measures. Workers who are working in high risk areas having direct contact with chemicals

participate in training programs about safe handling, storage and usage of hazardous chemicals. Regardless of the above mentioned efforts outlined by management representatives, the majority of respondents said that their safety conditions in the firms are risky, as they have close contact with toxic chemicals.

This study also considered the type of chemicals⁴ used by the selected flower farms in the Bahir Dar area and the preventive measures introduced to protect workers from hazardous chemicals. The results show that the farms were all using classified chemicals (I, II, III and IV) in different proportions. Almost all the farm worker respondents in this area stated that they have a close contact with agrichemicals. Some respondents claimed they did not use any safety materials all the time. Workers who are not using Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) said that they were informed by their supervisors to do so as they are working in hazard chemical free environments. Even some of the respondents who are using PPE stated that their concern in receiving substitutes for unreliable PPE, and using poor quality protecting materials. As a result, some farm workers prefer working with their own safety materials or they often work without wearing any safety equipment.

Flower workers who work in different units have direct contact with

⁴ The WHO classification of chemicals indicates that “class IV chemicals are not hazardous, Class III are slightly hazardous and Class II are moderately hazardous for humans under normal usage. However, Class I chemicals are extremely hazardous or highly hazardous to humans and are known to cause cancer, suppress body enzyme activity, and inflict miscarriage and infertility” (WHO, 2009).

agrichemicals during storage and mixing (pre-application), application, and re-entry stage after pesticide spraying. For prevention and immediate identification of flower workers levels of exposure to hazardous agrichemicals need to be examined by regular medical checkup (Hanssen, et, al., 2014). However the interview results with farm management were verified that all farm workers did not undertake pre-employment medical checkups. Worker respondents also confirmed that there is no kind of medical checkup except when someone gets sick in cases of severe health problems. Therefore, in the two flower farms around the Bahir Dar area there was no formal procedure set up to confirm that flower workers were fit for the current job position, and to find out additional information about their health.

Relating to training on health and occupational safety practices, workers replied that they had general orientation sessions about some safety procedures at the beginning of their employment. The labor union representatives of both farms also mentioned that they posted copies of safety guidelines at the entrance of greenhouses on notice boards. Thus, this study suggests that the majority of farm employees have no adequate awareness about safety measures and occupational hazards related to harmful chemicals usually used in flower farms. Furthermore, workers do not understand the meaning of posted guide lines, warning signs and the need to differentiate between safe and risky

areas. These results indicate that there is a gap in awareness creating, and a lack of enthusiasm in application of the occupational health and safety guidelines. Similarly, studies on health and safety in Ethiopia and other developing countries reveal that flower farm worker knowledge of agrichemical handling practices and compliance to safety procedures tends to be low (Marcela, et al., 2012; Hanssen, et, al., 2014). Workers who are working in such a risky environment, without general safety knowledge, might have serious health problems. When asked about their health situation since employment, several workers reported job-related health problems, mainly those who have close contact with hazardous chemicals. These were different types of sicknesses such as headaches, coughing, respiratory illness, and skin rashes.

Also, according to the interviews, both flower farms also do not give serious attention to female workers' maternity leave during and after pregnancy. Pregnant farm workers who have signed contracts get less than four weeks maternity leave. However, article 88 of the 2003 Ethiopian Labor Law⁵ gives a better benefit for them, and this provision does not seem to be properly implemented at the flower farms.

4.3.2 Availability and Use of Health and Safety facilities and Materials

Regarding the availability of facilities, respondents reported that the farm

⁵ Article no. 88: "an employer shall grant leave to a pregnant woman worker without deducting her wages, for medical examination connected with her pregnancy". Sub title 3 of the same Article also points out that "A woman worker shall be granted a period of 30 consecutive days of leave with pay preceding the presumed date of her confinement and a period of 60 consecutive days after her confinement" (FDRE, 2004).

cafeteria services, cabinets to keep personal belongings, toilets and bath room's accessibility were not proportional to the number of workers, and were poor quality concerns. Some respondents suggested that common bathroom facilities were used by many departments and personnel, such as those from the spraying section. Furthermore, both flower farms had no resting area and clothes changing rooms, most of the time workers use tree shade to take rest during breaks.

The majority of the flower farm workers in the Bahir Dar area stated that they have a close contact with hazardous chemicals either directly or indirectly. Nearly half of them stated they did not use any safety equipment at all. Those who are not using PPE reported that the farms did not provide the required uniforms and preventive materials for employees who were believed to be at a lesser risk of chemical exposure. Packing house and green house workers were given hand gloves and uniforms; for those who did spraying the farms provided waterproof wear, gumboots, hand gloves, face masks and eye goggles. However, some of those using PPE discussed the problems in getting substitutes for used PPE, and that they are forced to use poor safety materials of low quality that easily absorb heat. Some workers like irrigators stated that the PPE easily hold temperatures and that this causes some overheating health problems, which aids in the absorption of chemicals and make protective clothing very uncomfortable to

use. As a result, they prefer working with their own clothes:

“The farm doesn’t provide us adequate protective clothing and required safety materials. We had only one change of worn-out protective clothing such as waterproof wears, gumboot, hand gloves, face mask, and eye goggle. We spent long hours for spraying in the green house then, we are highly exposed to hazardous chemicals over close contact that will cause the potential danger to our health. (A man who works in Farm 1 sprayer, 2017, translated from Amharic).”

On the other hand, the interviews with the human resource managers of both farms revealed that different sections were provided with various types of PPE’s based on their requirements. The sections of the flower farms in in the Bahir Dar area considered as high risk to agrichemical contact were provided with suitable safety equipment and closer supervision, to ensure appropriate use of the required equipment. In both farms, men were appointed in sections where mixing and spraying takes place, where is direct contact with agrichemicals. While women employees worked mainly in the greenhouse and packing house. The human resource officials of both farms confirmed that these sections were less prioritized when it comes to both provision of PPE and supervision of its use. Likewise, officials in both farms stated that the major challenges in health and safety are related to misuse of the PPEs among workers, and

failure to comply with the instructions. This indicates that flower workers have a lack of awareness and knowledge on health and safety, and that this is a challenge. But, it also shows the low level of training, surveillance and inspection undertaken by the flower farms.

4.3.3 Employee Perceptions of Working Conditions

Flower workers are considered among those at a high risk of occupational health harms because of direct or indirect contact with hazardous agrichemicals (Mekonene & Agonafir, 2002). Thus, employees in flower farms are required to have a basic understanding of general health and safety matters to know the appropriate safety guidelines and measures. Nevertheless, flower farm workers in Bahir Dar area tend to have inadequate knowledge of the basics and significance of work-related health and safety issues. Interview participants identified various job-related health and safety problems such as headaches, coughing, skin rushes, respiratory illness, sinus and vomiting.

Some respondents perceived that the health problems were associated with their work conditions - mainly contact with various agrichemicals, standing in a static position for long hours in the greenhouse and packing house, and their own lack of knowledge. Problems in working conditions and health and safety practices, and various

health problems among flower workers, were also found in other related studies in Ethiopia. The incidence of respiratory and skin health problem symptoms, kidney infections, and swollen feet was identified among flower workers who stand for long hours (Mekonene & Agonafir, 2002; Hanssen, et, al., 2014). Nonetheless, during interviews respondents stated that the flower farms did not give much attention to employees' safety and health, as they seem to be reluctant to be taking corrective actions to improve some of the essential amenities, and provide adequate health and safety equipment. Instead, the farm managements give more emphasis to protecting for the flowers from damage and plant diseases as well as increasing productivity than the creation of safe and healthy working conditions for workers.

The interviews showed that while flower farm employees understood that most of health problems they faced were work related, for them to get such kinds of certificate from appropriate health practitioners who express their actual health conditions was a big challenge. The workers claimed that in this regard, farms did not support and encourage them. This behavior has the aim of avoiding extra costs that would be incurred by the firm. Respondents usually mentioned visiting health centers when they get sick, but they often fail to get appropriate treatment. The employees were expected to cover their health examination and drug expenses. Some of the respondents did

nothing or/and used low price traditional medicines or/and treated themselves with free local medications such as holy water, because they could not afford to cover health problem and related expenses.

Among the employees that had previous work experience in different firms, the majority reported that their prior work-related conditions were better than their present ones. The main concerns in the flower farm context were the absence of protective materials, very tough working conditions, high workloads, and a lack of respect for workers' rights. A high number of employees stated that there has not been any improvement in working conditions, and they thought the working conditions in the farms had worsened through time to time.

In general, there was no appropriate way to create and ensure whether flower workers were fit for their current job position when they start the job, or the formulation of baseline data about their health conditions. The findings also indicate that flower farm workers have low level of knowledge and awareness about safe agrichemical handling practices, and a lack of devotion to health and safety guidelines. This pattern was attributed to inadequate training at the flower farms along with weak government follow up and monitoring systems. Regarding the availability of health and safety facilities, the two flower farms provided insufficient facilities that were not suitable for

the safety of the employees. In addition, the provision of PPEs was inadequate and workers did not use the PPEs properly, which in turn has consequences for the level of several health problems.

The results from other studies also suggest that even if Ethiopia has ratified legal and policy frameworks, implementing the existing rules and regulations is difficult because the responsible government body is poorly organized, and there are the limitations of human and financial resources (Nigatu, 2010; Ute, 2013). Given the financial constraints of the country, occupational health and safety inspection and enforcement is not a prime concern to MOLSA in the allocation of its budget. Furthermore, the flower industry makes such a substantial contribution to foreign exchange earnings and job creation for the country that the government is forced to adopt a flexible approach in regulating occupational health and safety practices in this sector.

In summary, flower farms have created new jobs for those workers who have less opportunities for getting formal wage employment in other sectors, but most farm employees are restricted to low earnings and do not have savings, because wages do not meet their household needs. Therefore, farm workers have adopted various strategies to supplement their monthly wages (informal businesses such as petty trade, selling food

and working in construction sector are the common strategies). In relation to social dialogue, the labor unions capability to influence the enforcement and proper implementation of labor rights is reported as weak. In general, there is lack of confidence among workers in the flower farms towards organizing themselves and forming stronger trade unions.

Even though numerous attempts have been made by the Ethiopian government to create good working conditions and attract flower farm owners, the results indicate that insufficient efforts have been made in controlling farms, and regulating their working conditions and their compliance with national labor laws and ILO core labor standards. There is an absence of systematic inspection and control over the farms in the Bahir Dar area by the state due to poor organization of administrative resources, and a lack of well trained and skilled human resources at the regional and national level.

Chapter 5: Conclusions

The socioeconomic opportunities brought by cut flower farms, their impact on workers livelihoods who are working in this industry, and the general working conditions practices in the Bahir Dar area of Ethiopia were studied. This study addressed the following three main research objectives:

1. Economic benefits and the values of flower industry affect worker's life improvement;
2. The effectiveness of the labor standards and working conditions practices in Ethiopia cut flower farms; and
3. Implementing the existing occupational health and safety regulations.

The flower farms in the Bahir Dar area provide a crucial support to the local and national economy by creating massive job opportunities and increasing female participation in the labor market (77%). Similar figures have been reported by Ute (2013) and Taylor (2010). In addition, flower farms are alternative sources of employment and stable income, especially in the low economic conditions attributable to high unemployment and few available livelihood alternatives. Nevertheless, the data collected from flower farm employees indicates that their economic situations are highly insecure. The majority of flower workers are living in low socioeconomic

conditions and they adopt unsafe strategies to manage their low incomes. This finding agrees with evidence from other developing countries: the wages in flower farms do not amount to a living wage for the majority of workers and their families (Tanya & Olga 2007; Leipold & Morgante, 2013).

Many workers were assigned to their specific jobs without getting appropriate orientation and training. As a result, most of the time farm employees do not follow safety guidelines, and farms do not provide regular information about occupational health and safety risks as well as the compulsory protective procedures that must be followed when contact is made with hazardous chemicals. Use of poor quality safety materials, the inappropriate use of protective clothing and chemicals, lack of knowledge about the dangers rising from direct or indirect contact to hazardous chemicals, severely compromised workers' safety. The study shows that due to an absence of consistent compliance inspections, workers are forced to do their job in unsafe working conditions without appropriate safety materials.

The findings of this study clearly indicate that the general working conditions of flower farms in the Bahir Dar area of Ethiopia means that they fail to provide decent job opportunities for their employees. During the last couple of years, insignificant improvements have been seen in the working conditions of cut flower farms. In this

regard management is too reluctant. This industry suffers from insecure occupational practices where national labor laws are not completely implemented. The safety and health situation reflects the lack of adherence to basic and core ILO labor legislation that Ethiopia has ratified, and the low effectiveness of the implementation of national labor law. Weldeghebrael (2010) and Ute (2013) found similar situations, showing that there is a lack of capacity and resources as well as a reluctance at labor affairs offices, the government agencies charged with monitoring compliance with labor laws, to monitor compliance and enforce the basic labor rights established in the national labor proclamation. The establishments of trade unions in both farms are challenged, and employees' concerns and grievances are often neglected. In this regard, the trade unions have a weak or non-existent role in defending their members' rights and interests.

Finally, for the national labor proclamation and ILO conventions that Ethiopia ratified to be effectively implemented in the flower farms, it should be compulsory for the government to develop the capacities of labor law enforcing institutions at the federal and district levels to enable them to cope with the comprehensive range of concerns related to the rights of employees at the work place. Furthermore, it requires a continual process of creating awareness and development, coupled with the definitive aim of enhancing working conditions where the social and economic rights of workers

are respected. This requires different methods of proper training and development of employees and management, and the appreciation by administration that improving labor conditions in the flower farms may increase the productivity and quality of work. It is in the interest of all stakeholders,' including the government, management, trade unions, employees, consumers, and NGOs, to ensure that this occurs.

Because of distance, time and related resource limitations this study was not able to approach all flower farm workers statistically representative of the population and management views in the Bahir Dar area. In addition, the study faced the difficulty of getting comprehensive information on this topic, especially in accessing relevant data from government offices and authorities, because of excessive bureaucracy and lack of transparency.

This study however serves as a stepping stone for those who are interested in conducting advanced research in the field under consideration. Noticeably, it will help to enhance the researcher's knowledge of research practices and contemporary concepts and theories in this regard. It is also hoped that it offers an important lesson to stakeholders in the understanding of the practices of the cut flower farms. Particularly, the study explored the working conditions and associated concerns of flower farms, and more work should be done on the complexity of the problems in this industry. It may

also encourage government offices and authorities in their implementation of occupational health and safety guidelines and enforcement procedures at flower farms and other businesses.

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Appendix I Interview Guide

A. Personal Information

1. Age? Sex? Education Level: Family situation: (Single, Married, Divorced)
2. Are you the head of your family? Yes No If not, what member are you?
3. How many members are in your family?
4. Where do you come from? (Km)
5. Which section of the farm do you work?
Why did you choose to work in this section?

B. Experiences

1. Are you a permanent or seasonal employee?
2. How long have you worked in this company? Years
3. Have you any previous work experience? Yes No
If yes type previous years worked and position
4. How many hours do you work? per day per week per month

C. Wages and Expenditure

1. What is your salary? per day per week per month
2. Do you do much overtime work? Yes No If yes, do you get paid for it?
4. How much do you get paid for overtime work? per day per week per month
5. What proportion of your monthly wages do you spend on:
A. food.....B. housingC. transportation
D. children's educationE. saving F. others
6. How many times has your salary at the farm been increased?
7. Do you feel that your economic condition has improved or worsened since you started work at the farm? Explain.....
8. Is your income good enough to cover living expenses, if not what other mechanisms do you use to cover your expenses?

D. Benefits

1. Do you receive annual bonus? Yes No if yes, how much is it?
2. Is transport provided by your company? Yes No
3. How many days of paid leave do you receive each year?
4. How many days of sick leave do you receive each year?

5. Do you have access to paid maternity leave? Yes No
6. Does the farm provide food assistance/discounts/rations/assistance for funerals?
Yes No Explain

E. Awareness of Rights and Duties

1. Do you have knowledge about the Ethiopian labor codes? Yes No If yes how did you know? Explain
2. Do you exercise your labor and welfare rights? Yes No If yes please provide details.....
3. Can you explain your terms of employment and the process that you went through when you signed contract terms (if contract signed)?
4. Do you have any experience with regard to the causes of workers getting fired from job?
5. Are you a member of labor union, it is allowed to organize into unions, and do you think it is important to be a member?

F. Health and safety

1. Have you experienced any orientation or training on safety rules and guidelines before starting you work? Yes No
2. Do you have knowledge of occupational safety and potential health problems that may be caused by working on this farm? Yes No if yes, how did you know about it and please explain.....
3. Do you come into contact with agrichemicals? Yes No if yes, Do you wear safety equipment's? Yes No if not, why not?
4. Have you had any health problems in relation to the work that you do? If yes can you provide the details?
5. Do you feel that your working conditions at this firm have improved or worsened since you joined? Explain