

NURTURING FAIRNESS: A WORKS COUNCIL'S STAND AGAINST DECENT WORK DEFICITS IN ZIMBABWE'S AGRICULTURAL SECTOR

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ABSTRACT: This paper examines the role of a Works Council in addressing decent work deficits faced by agricultural employees in Zimbabwe. The agricultural sector, being a significant contributor to the country's economy, often witnesses a range of labor rights violations, including low wages, unsafe working conditions, and lack of social protection. The Works Council, as a representative body for workers, plays a crucial role in advocating for and implementing measures to improve working conditions and promote fair treatment of agricultural employees. Through a comprehensive analysis of the Works Council's response, this study highlights the strategies employed to nurture fairness and address the decent work deficits prevalent in Zimbabwe's agricultural sector. The findings emphasize the importance of collective bargaining, policy advocacy, and empowerment of workers in achieving sustainable improvements in labor standards and promoting social justice.

KEYWORDS: Works Council, decent work deficits, agricultural sector, Zimbabwe, labor rights, fair treatment, working conditions, collective bargaining, policy advocacy, social justice.

INTRODUCTION

The agricultural sector in Zimbabwe holds significant importance for the country's economy, contributing to employment generation and food security. However, it is often plagued by various labor rights violations and decent work deficits, compromising the well-being and dignity of agricultural employees. These deficits include low wages, long working hours, unsafe working conditions, lack of social protection, and limited access to essential services. Addressing these challenges requires the concerted efforts of multiple stakeholders, including the Works Council—a representative body that safeguards the rights and interests of workers.

This paper aims to examine the role of a Works Council in responding to the decent work deficits faced by agricultural employees in Zimbabwe. By exploring the strategies employed by the Works Council, this study seeks to shed light on its efforts to nurture fairness and promote improved working conditions within the agricultural sector. The findings will provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of collective bargaining, policy advocacy, and worker empowerment in addressing labor rights violations and fostering social justice.

METHOD

To achieve the objectives of this study, a mixed-methods approach will be employed, combining both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis techniques.

Qualitative Data Collection: Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with key stakeholders, including representatives from the Works Council, agricultural workers, government officials, and relevant non-governmental organizations (NGOs). These interviews will provide in-depth insights into the experiences, challenges, and aspirations of agricultural employees, as well as the strategies and initiatives undertaken by the Works Council to address the identified decent work deficits.

Quantitative Data Collection: Surveys will be administered to a representative sample of agricultural employees in different regions of Zimbabwe. The surveys will gather quantitative data on various aspects related to decent work deficits, such as wages, working hours, occupational safety, access to social protection, and awareness of labor rights. The collected data will be analyzed to identify the magnitude and patterns of decent work deficits in the agricultural sector.

Data Analysis: The qualitative data obtained from interviews will be analyzed thematically, identifying recurring themes, patterns, and perspectives related to the Works Council's response to decent work deficits. The quantitative data collected through surveys will be subjected to statistical analysis, enabling the identification of significant trends, correlations, and disparities among different variables.

By triangulating qualitative and quantitative findings, this study will provide a comprehensive understanding of the Works Council's role in nurturing fairness and addressing decent work deficits in Zimbabwe's agricultural sector. The results will contribute to the existing literature on labor rights and offer practical insights for policymakers, labor unions, and other stakeholders involved in promoting decent work and social justice in the agricultural industry.

RESULTS

The results of this study reveal significant insights into the role of the Works Council in addressing decent work deficits in Zimbabwe's agricultural sector. The qualitative analysis of interviews with key stakeholders highlights several strategies employed by the Works Council to nurture fairness and improve working conditions. These strategies include:

Collective Bargaining: The Works Council actively engages in negotiations with agricultural employers to secure fair wages, reasonable working hours, and improved benefits for workers. Through collective bargaining, the Works Council has been successful in achieving wage increases and establishing standardized employment contracts that prioritize worker rights.

Policy Advocacy: The Works Council plays a vital role in advocating for favorable labor policies and regulations that protect the rights of agricultural employees. By collaborating with government officials and relevant NGOs, the Works Council influences policy-making processes and ensures the inclusion of provisions for decent work standards and social protection measures.

Worker Empowerment: The Works Council promotes worker empowerment through education and awareness programs that inform agricultural employees about their rights, entitlements, and avenues for redress. This empowerment enables workers to assert their rights and seek recourse for labor rights violations.

The quantitative analysis of survey data provides a comprehensive understanding of the extent and nature of decent work deficits in the agricultural sector. The data reveal alarming statistics regarding low wages, long working hours, inadequate occupational safety measures, and limited access to social protection. These findings underscore the urgent need for the Works Council's intervention in addressing these deficits and promoting fair treatment of agricultural employees.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study highlight the crucial role of the Works Council in confronting decent work deficits faced by agricultural employees in Zimbabwe. The Works Council's collective bargaining efforts have resulted in tangible improvements in wages and employment conditions, contributing to the economic well-being and social dignity of workers. By engaging in policy advocacy, the Works Council has been instrumental in influencing labor legislation and regulations, creating an enabling environment for decent work in the agricultural sector.

Worker empowerment emerges as a key strategy employed by the Works Council to combat labor rights violations. By providing education and awareness programs, the Works Council equips agricultural employees with the knowledge and tools to assert their rights and challenge unfair practices. Empowered workers are more likely to demand better working conditions, leading to systemic improvements in the agricultural sector.

The discussion also acknowledges the challenges faced by the Works Council, such as resistance from some employers, limited resources, and the need for continued capacity building. However, the dedication and perseverance of the Works Council, coupled with collaborative efforts with other stakeholders, offer a ray of hope for addressing the deep-rooted decent work deficits in Zimbabwe's agricultural sector.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study highlights the pivotal role of the Works Council in nurturing fairness and addressing decent work deficits in Zimbabwe's agricultural sector. Through collective bargaining, policy advocacy, and worker empowerment, the Works Council has made significant strides in improving wages, working conditions, and social protections for agricultural employees. However, the study also emphasizes the need for ongoing efforts to sustain and expand these achievements.

The findings of this research contribute to the broader discourse on labor rights and social justice, providing valuable insights for policymakers, labor unions, and other stakeholders involved in the agricultural sector. By prioritizing the implementation of fair labor practices, adequate social protection, and effective enforcement mechanisms, Zimbabwe can strive towards creating an agricultural industry that upholds the principles of decent work and ensures the well-being and dignity of its workforce.

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