



# Intervju med inspektör på FLO-Cert

Nyagoy

FLO-CERT Auditor Interview

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**Name:** Nyagoy

**Age:** 40 +

**Country:** Kenya

**Auditor since:** 2005

**Education:** PhD in Forest Tree Improvement and Genetics, worked for various NGO's based in Tanzania, Kenya and Southern Sudan (project planning, monitoring, reporting and evaluation). Since 2002 East Africa Inspector for Max Havelaar Switzerland

**Family:** married, 3 kids

## **How did you get to know Fairtrade and what made you become an auditor?**

Actually I got to know Fairtrade accidentally. Max Havelaar Switzerland was visiting Kenya in 2002 and was looking for an auditor. And they just happened to visit Caritas Switzerland, where my husband works, so he mentioned it to me. Then I had a meeting with the Max Havelaar people. And when they described to me what the work is all about and how Fairtrade effects the life of the farmers it got me interested. Also because of my background: I worked with a lot of developmental organizations. I always worked with communities. And I saw: "okay – the farmers are selling their product but at the same time get something and above that for their social and economic development." It sounded a great thing to be involved in.

### **How would you explain roughly what you are doing?**

My job basically implies two things: first for those who want to join Fairtrade I am giving a mandate by FLO-CERT to go there and to recommend certification. So basically I get to talk to the management and look at what they are doing at the management level and also at the relationship with the workers and/or members, whether it is a cooperative or plantation. And I get to talk to all the stakeholders based on the standards. I get a feeling from the workers or the members, from the management and from everybody involved how they are meeting the Fairtrade standards. And of course there is also the aspect of having to look at the environmental issues. So what I do there is using my eyes in physical inspection and to check on health and safety issues. Basically I have the standards as my reference document and then I go out there to evaluate how far or where the producer is as far as the standards requirements are. And then I report it to FLO accordingly making my recommendation.

### **How many cooperatives /plantations are you visiting in your area?**

I cover Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. So far I haven't done too many cooperatives, maybe one or two (2 in Kenya and 7 in Uganda) coffee cooperatives only. Most of my work is with flowers plantations and tea. And with tea it is also the tea factories (small farmer organizations) and tea estates.

### **When you go to a plantation or a cooperative, what is your first step. What do you do first to get the inspection going?**

In cooperatives my first contact person is the secretary manager who is basically the manager who is employed by the cooperative. So first I talk to him, then he introduces me to the board, which are directors that have been elected by the members and I interview them and do document inspection. So the first day is to spend time with these people to get a first impression of how the whole organization is run. After that they introduce me to the farmers, or rather – they give me the key to the area, because I don't go with them to meet the farmers. So I walk around and talk to the farmers confidentially without the presence of any of the directors or the manager. And I also don't take the names of the members that I talk to so that they are completely free to talk to me and tell me whatever they need. In the case of tea factories and plantations, I

also first meet with management and directors, do document inspection and talk to workers and members (where applicable) while also doing physical inspection.

**How is the emotional climate between you as an auditor and the farmers? Are they generally open or do you sometimes have the feeling they are not going to tell you all you need to know?**

That really varies from farm to farm. There are producers that are really open and that are excited about Fairtrade and see the need about Fairtrade. They are very friendly, are open to discuss with you and even point out their weaknesses. Normally what I find out is that the other group of producers, the ones that are initially quite resistant, don't fully understand the concept. They are very economical with their information or they try to stretch the truth. They look at it more or less like to 'pass the test'. So they do anything to pass the test by all means and with all measures. But that you are able to tell almost from the first day. But sooner or later when you talk to the farmers or workers and look at the documents you see where the truth lies. But the majority I must say are very receptive.

**What is the average number of days that you spend on a farm or a cooperative?**

The minimum depending on the number of workers would be 3 ½ days on site inspection. The maximum would be about 6 days. But that really depends on the number of workers or the number of members.

**As we were talking about the climate between you and the producers: does it make a difference that you are female inspector? Do you sometimes experience a lack of respect because you are a woman?**

Not anymore for me. Initially when I started it was a problem. Sometimes you walked in there and you could see that the directors or even the workers were thinking: "What does this woman want to tell us? We are not going to listen." So they tried to be very intimidating towards you. But today I know how to handle it. I'll be assertive and say: "Gentlemen, I am here to do a job, so can we please get down to it." And then with time they get to respect you. Actually the problem is not only being female. Especially with the flower plantations: a number of the owners and senior people are white. And then you walk in there as a black female (laughs).

**So it really is a problem for them although they are ready to adapt to the Fairtrade system?**

Oh yes! They sit down and try to tell you what you have to do. And what you shouldn't ask them. But within a few minutes or so I put them in their place and tell them: "See, this is just a job that I'm doing and I am not here to dominate you. "

**What would you tell somebody who wants to become an auditor? What abilities are most important to do a good job?**

Well, apart from having the basic skills you have to be very confident and very assertive. You need to be strict but not teacher-like. You should be consultative in the meetings but at the same time you need to know where to draw the line and tell them: "Okay, now we are getting off point." Many of the people you deal with are very assertive men who want to keep you as a woman in your place.

**Do you have a success story for us that really flashed you and that maybe made you proud personally?**

There are three scenarios that I would like to generalize in terms of 'what makes me happy'.

One is farms or cooperatives that I visit after a year and the management expresses that Fairtrade is really good for them, that their management system has improved a lot, that it is important to them now to plan the future and that they do things that they were initially resistant to do. It makes me happy when the management really appreciates the progress that they made through the audit, like better teamwork among themselves or a stronger holistic approach in their work.

The second one is the empowerment of workers. When you first walk in there in the first year workers are very timid, very scared of the management, they do not feel free to talk. Last year a worker on a flower plantation in Tanzania that I have been visiting for a few years now told me: "You know, Nyagoy, if it wasn't for you, I would not be sitting with the management and have them listening to me." Because now they invite him for management meetings. Today he also contributes what he has. So this is how Fairtrade is able to empower workers, to get them to this level of confidence and to let them know that they have something to offer also. That is quite impressive.

The third thing is the impact of Fairtrade projects. Here is just one example of how the farmers and the people in the villages appreciate the Fairtrade projects: last year I went to one community that just had built a secondary school. They were very excited about it and told me: “Without that Fairtrade money we would not have a secondary school here. The next secondary boarding school is 30 km away, so our kids would not have been able to go to there. We are not even able to afford national schools, but now Fairtrade has enabled us to have our own secondary school right here next door. “And just to see the joy on their faces and to really see the positive impact of Fairtrade in their lives – that makes me proud. And for them I am the face of Fairtrade and I love to take the credit for what Fairtrade does to the people. (laughs)

**Did you ever get to see childwork on your inspections?**

Not in Kenya. A few times I came across it in tea. But it is only a problem in a few cases where the children are picking tea on a school day. Over the weekend or during holidays it is not a big issue because it is not illegal.

**What are your expectations of this auditors training? What do you want to take home with you?**

The whole Fairtrade system is so dynamic and it always changes and there will be some changes in the whole auditing process during training. So I will go back home much better equipped with full understanding of what I am going to do out there in the future.