

Women and **FAIR TRADE**



Fair Trade helps farmers and artisans use their skills and expertise to break out of the cycle of poverty. Turning a simple exchange of goods into a human connection that benefits all participants, Fair Trade prioritizes the livelihoods of artisans and small-scale farmers. In particular, Fair Trade benefits women.

As mothers, wives, community members, and economic actors, Fair Trade gives women new opportunities to prosper.



Martin Luther King, Jr. once said that before we finish our breakfast each day we have already depended on half the world. So, when was the last time you thought of a coffee farmer when you ordered your daily double espresso at the local coffee shop? Or remembered that your chocolate bar actually originates from a bean on a tree somewhere in the tropics? And who is behind that lovely woven basket you bought on sale at the store last week? Through our purchases of the products we use every day, we are connected to more people and regions of the world than we often ever realize.

But many of those with whom we share the connection of our daily “needs” are literally living in a state of economic crisis. The prices that cocoa and coffee farmers receive for their products are unpredictable — sometimes dipping far below their costs of production. Some small-scale farmers are forced off the land where their families have farmed for generations, leaving behind farming methods that are sensitive to biodiversity and the environment. Many then make the difficult choice to migrate to overcrowded urban areas or take jobs as workers on industrial plantations where

deforestation and the use of hazardous chemicals are the rule. Similarly, many producers of manufactured goods around the world do not have the protection of labor unions or effective labor laws to ensure their rights. Conditions are far from ideal — long hours with no paid overtime, long distances from home, no childcare, and unsafe working environments.

Fair Trade, on the other hand, offers an alternative opportunity to exchange goods in a way that promotes care of both the worker and the environment. By purchasing Fair Trade products, we are closely connected with the workers and producers of our products — we know that they receive fair prices and their methods are environmentally sustainable. They know that we value their labor, experience, and commitment to quality.

WOMEN AND FAIR TRADE

Fair Trade offers unique benefits to communities — among them, the fact that women, who are often marginalized in the global economic system, are full participants in Fair Trade cooperatives. Consequently, they are able to capture Fair Trade's economic and social benefits in the same way as men.

Seventy percent of the world's 1.3 billion people living on less than \$1 a day are women or girls. Because women make up just a bit over half of the world's population, this figure demonstrates serious inequalities in the global economy. Women work longer hours for less pay and in worse jobs than men in every country in the world, according to the International Labor Organization (ILO). Even when they are doing the same work, women make, on average, only two-thirds what a man would make.

Women suffer acutely in situations of economic vulnerability. Some employers seek opportunities to maximize profits by paying women extremely low wages and demanding long working hours. In agriculture, there is sometimes a distinct difference between a woman's job and a man's job in the fields. Women's work is often deemed less important than men's work. Consequently, women work under more difficult conditions, earning less respect, notoriety, and pay. In manufacturing, employers often take advantage of the fact that women in the workplace are less likely than men to unionize or otherwise protest working conditions because of the relatively few alternatives they may have in terms of wage labor.

Fair Trade standards were developed as a way to guarantee the human rights of those involved in all levels of global trade from the producer to the consumer. In Fair Trade, producers are viewed not only as workers, but also as community members, citizens, and family members. Consumers can do more than just consume quality products — they can become educated agents for trade justice. The goal: to establish and maintain strong community ties to promote the dignity of each person. With Fair Trade, community is both local and global.





WOMEN'S WORK

Women around the world are working outside of the home with increasing frequency. While outside employment has allowed some women to make marginal improvements in their livelihood, these small changes often come with the cost of considerable hardship in the workplace. Today's global supply chains require a flexible workforce — one that can bend to the demands of constantly changing market demands. A clothing factory in Asia working to meet the demands of a major U.S. label might require long hours of unpaid overtime from its workers without offering them a permanent contract, health benefits, or any hope of promotion. Similarly, women working in industrial agriculture are frequently hired on temporary contracts, working long hours for poverty wages while being exposed to harsh chemical fertilizers and pesticides.

Increasing numbers of women need to be wage-earners to cover a family's financial burdens such as school fees and medical bills, yet women in the workplace almost always bear additional burdens at home. Women around the world spend twice as much time as men on unpaid activities. Particularly in rural parts of the developing world, providing childcare, educating the children, cleaning the home, and preparing meals for the family are only a few of a woman's major responsibilities. Many women also grow food in their gardens to supplement the family diet. This work — part of the "economy of care" — is unpaid, time-consuming, and exhausting, yet it is of paramount importance to the health and well-being of the family.

But women should not just be seen as victims of global inequalities. Women are often the ones who can offer the most effective solutions for poverty reduction. By focusing on women and the important roles women play in caring for the entire community, development planners are learning that investments in women's well-being often have far-reaching positive effects. According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), when women have direct control over income, they tend to spend it on the family, particularly on the "nutritional security" of more vulnerable family members. The empowerment of women is key to raising child nutrition levels, improving distribution and production of food, and enhancing the living conditions of rural, poor, and vulnerable populations.



LWR'S FAIR TRADE PROJECTS

Through the LWR Fair Trade Projects, women have new opportunities for economic success. The following stories are of a few empowered women who represent the fact that Fair Trade's positive impact on women benefits an entire community.



According to the Fair Trade Federation, seventy percent of Fair Trade artisans are women, many of whom are the sole wage-earners in their homes. Unlike most jobs that women might hold in manufacturing where they are forced to travel great distances and work long hours in dangerous conditions, a woman's participation in a Fair Trade cooperative is about more than just her production capacity. Fair Trade tenets place value in what employed women can do to strengthen their communities.

Rayuda Manikyu, member of the Godavari Delta Women's Lace Artisan Cooperative in Narasapur, India, is the sole wage earner in her family. The Godavari Delta lacemakers are members of a cooperative designed and successfully operating in a way that puts women in charge of their own work. In the Godavari region, women are often considered to be second-class citizens and abused when their families cannot afford to pay their marriage dowry. Schooling for girls is rare and marriages are often arranged before women hit puberty. Lacemaking is one of the few jobs available for women. When Rayuda joined the cooperative, her monthly income nearly quadrupled. Her family now eats two square meals a day instead of just one. Benefits of membership in the cooperative include medical care, health insurance, savings accounts, and eye care. In addition, she says, "I have freedom of expression, chances of participation in society affairs, and decision making along with other members."



Suraya Juma, a Sudanese refugee in northern Uganda, also uses handcrafts as a way to support her family. Due to the protracted conflict in Sudan, many refugees have lived in the camps for years. As a member of the International Widows Association for South Sudanese Refugees in Uganda (IWASSRU), Suraya uses skills she learned from her grandmother to weave brightly-colored baskets and trays. In addition to creating income-generating opportunities through craft production and agriculture, IWASSRU operates an orphanage that shelters 30 children, sponsors a foster program for 300 children, and offers educational opportunities for disabled children. Suraya, speaking for the women of IWASSRU, says, "We want to improve our living standards and support our families. Coming together allows us to help each other solve our problems — together we have a stronger voice."

To provide vital income to women artisans like Rayuda and Suraya, place your order today from the LWR Handcraft Project. To request an LWR Handcraft Project catalog, call 1-888-294-9660 or visit lwr.org/handcraft. *The LWR Handcraft Project is a partnership with A Greater Gift, the handcraft program of SERRV International.*



Kuapa Kokoo, the cooperative that produces the cocoa used in Divine Chocolate for the LWR Chocolate Project, uses Fair Trade premiums in ways that directly benefit the lives of its members, investing in water quality improvement and sanitation. Although women and men often have different roles in agriculture, women's work is just as grueling and often even more time-consuming. Specific attention to women's needs, though, has paid off. Kuapo Kokoo has used its Fair Trade premiums to purchase machines that reduce time-consuming and labor-intensive work. Saved time and energy can go into women's other responsibilities, such as gardening or family care, or much-needed repose.

Helena Bempong supports her family on her income as a cocoa farmer. Helena starts her day at dawn, carrying seedlings on her head to her family's ten-acre farm an hour-long walk from her home. For most small-scale cocoa farmers in the world, life is hard and the prices for their product are low. Helena knows, however, that, as a member of Kuapa Kokoo, Fair Trade buyers will pay a better price for her high-quality cocoa beans.



Find out just how great justice can taste! Call 1-888-294-9660 or log on to lwr.org/chocolate to learn more about the LWR Chocolate Project. Divine Chocolate can be ordered by phone, fax, mail and online. The LWR Chocolate Project is a partnership with SERRV International.



Lutheran World Relief assisted Flora del Socorro Montenegro and other members of SOPPEXCCA — a union of small-scale coffee farmers in Nicaragua — in their transition to Fair Trade and organic certification.

Fair Trade prices means money for shoes and school uniforms for Flora's children. She has also used some of her profits to build rooms onto her family home for tourists. Ecotourism diversifies the family's income, while bringing tourists to the area to experience a coffee farm firsthand.

Four years ago, Flora began converting to organic production for her five acres of coffee trees. It wasn't easy, she says. "At first, I had to convince my husband that it was worthwhile. We spent a lot of time doing all the different tasks necessary to convert the farm into an organic agro-forestry model — digging water retention ditches, planting shade trees and setting up organic fertilizer and pest control systems. I also learned a lot about improving and maintaining the quality of my coffee — from the time it begins to flower to the drying and selection process."



Flora's success with organic production has been extremely beneficial. In December of 2004, Flora's coffee won fourth place in Nicaragua's prestigious "Cup of Excellence" coffee competition. As time goes on, Flora said, "with the reputation for quality that I have established, I'll be able to make an even better profit."

In 1997, Nicaraguan farmers from 10 independent cooperatives formed the Organization of Northern Coffee Cooperatives (CECOCAFEN) to jointly promote their high quality coffee. Nicaragua is internationally known for the unique flavor of its coffee, grown in an ideal climate — hot and humid — and rich volcanic soil. But CECOCAFEN is no ordinary coffee business. Blanca Rosa Morales, president of CECOCAFEN, explains its philosophy and how it is unique:

"We're a business, but we view ourselves as a social business. We have to focus on how to make an income, but we also have to see how to progress in social areas. Our efforts to improve the quality of our coffee must be accompanied by similar efforts to improve the quality of life for each person, family, and community."





To honor the women like Blanca Rosa and the many others around the world who are behind the continuing success of the LWR Coffee Project, a new coffee blend was created: Organic Sisters' Blend. Like all Fair Trade farmer cooperatives, both the Peruvian and Nicaraguan sources of the beans for Organic Sisters' Blend pay particular attention to the importance of women for success.

Complementing the CECOCAFEN business model for coffee production, women members of the cooperative and wives of cooperative farmers are organized in a savings and loan program to help them diversify family incomes. They are able to use what they earn to meet their families' most basic needs for added nutrition, school supplies, and clothing. These loans and investment opportunities have given many women of CECOCAFEN a chance to learn business, marketing, and credit skills.

Pour justice to the brim! To learn more about the LWR Coffee Project, Organic Sisters' Blend or any of the other coffee, tea and cocoa products available through the LWR Coffee Project, log on to lwr.org/coffee or call 774-776-7340. Products can be ordered by phone, fax, mail and online. The LWR Coffee Project is a partnership with Equal Exchange.

WOMEN IN LWR'S WORK

As Lutheran World Relief works through partners to promote community development overseas, we recognize the many roles of women in society — not only as caregivers to families, but also as breadwinners and community members. LWR does more than just talk about the equality of women or implement specific policies to promote the equality of women. We look hard at every policy and all of our programs — even the ones that seem irrelevant to gender — to consider the implications each has for women's livelihoods and their relative status in the community.



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