



Dining for Women

Food For Thought: October 2011

Theme: Economic Development Through Fair Trade

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"Before you've finished your breakfast this morning, you'll have relied on half the world."

-- Martin Luther King

"Fair trade is not about charity. It is a holistic approach to trade and development that aims to alter the ways in which commerce is conducted, so that trade can empower the poorest of the poor. **Fair Trade Organizations seek to create sustainable and positive change in developing and developed countries.**" --Fair Trade Federation

"Investing in women is probably the single best investment that can be made in the developing world." --The Economist¹



The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are eight objectives designed by the UN to improve social and economic conditions in developing countries by the end of 2015. **Each month we focus on the MDGs impacted by our theme and our monthly featured project.** This month we highlight:

MDG #1 Eradicate extreme poverty & hunger



The world is on track to meet the MDG target of halving the proportion of people living on less than \$1 a day between 1990 and 2015. However, even if these positive trends continue, in 2015, roughly 920 million people would still be living under the international poverty line of \$1.25 a day.

MDG #3 Promote gender equality & empower women



Women are largely relegated to more vulnerable forms of employment. Women are over-represented in informal employment, with its lack of benefits and security. Top-level jobs still go to men — to an overwhelming degree

What is Fair Trade? Fair Trade is “a growing, international movement which ensures that producers in poor countries get a fair deal. This means a fair price for their goods (one that covers the cost of production and guarantees a living income), long-term contracts which provide real security; and for many, support to gain the knowledge and skills that they need to develop their businesses and increase sales.”²

Many fair trade-certified co-ops are organized, staffed and run by women, providing them with financial independence for the first time and transforming their communities.

--[Global Citizens 4 Change](#)

According to Fair Trade Federation research, **76% of Fair Trade production is done by women.**

When you support Fair Trade, you invest in:

- Empowering workplaces which respect and actively solicit women's opinions.
- Capacity building to help women develop their skills and independence.
- Fair wages that take into account the hard work needed to create the quality pieces you enjoy.
- Equality between men and women and dignity for all. ³

By supporting companies that are fair trade-certified, we send a clear message that we are not interested in cheap goods that devalue women's labor.

--[Global Citizens 4 Change](#)

This month's featured program, Mercado Global, is a Fair Trade organization empowering indigenous women in Guatemala's highlands by connecting their artisan cooperatives to sales opportunities. Sales and training programs help Guatemalan mothers break the cycle of poverty and gain skills and support. Mercado Global's distinctive Fair Trade collections demonstrate the power of partnership to change the world, one purchase at a time. Their exclusive products combine exceptional Mayan craftsmanship with modern design.



Mercado Global currently works with 31 indigenous women's cooperatives throughout Guatemala's western highlands.

- Find fully-committed Fair Trade companies throughout North America: <http://www.fairtradefederation.org/index.php>
- Find fully-committed Fair Trade companies around the world: <http://www.fairtraderesource.org/change-the-world/buy-fair-trade-products/>
- Shop Mercado Global: http://shopmercadoglobal.org/shop/index.php?main_page=index&cPath=9

Questions for Discussion

1. Are you a fair trade shopper? What are the last fair trade items you purchased?
2. Regulated fair trade vs. *laissez-faire* free trade: One criticism is that fair trade prices artificially inflate prices above the market value without doing anything to address real problems, such as oversupply. The more tea available for purchase, the lower tea prices drop. Critics argue that all fair trade regulations do in these circumstances is prop up underperforming farming or manufacturing practices. Do you agree or disagree with regulated fair trade?
3. When a big corporation boasts about a small ethically-minded change (a gas company puts solar panels on filling station roofs) so it can get away with doing everything else (selling gasoline) just as it did it before, this is called “greenwashing.” Can you think of examples of companies that “greenwash”?

Voices From the Women We Serve

The following interviews and photographs were provided by Mercado Global.

“Mercado Global, more than anything else, has been a great help. Before, we artisans had no work. There was no market for our crafts; we could find no one to sell to...Mercado Global came and gave us a way to sell our crafts. This has been a huge support for us and our families.”

-- Adriana Morales



“For the artisans of Atitlan it has been a great help to be able to work with Mercado Global – the orders we have worked on have helped us support our families.”

– Candelaria Tacaxoy



“My favorite thing about working with Mercado Global is the support they have given to me and the other women from my community.” --Estela Quisquiná (at right)



— Changing the world one dinner at a time

Sources:

¹ The Economist, *A guide to womenomics: The future of the world economy lies increasingly in female hands*, April 12, 2006. www.economist.com/node/6802551.

² "Make Trade Fair - Oxfam International. Web. 1 Sept. 2011. <<http://www.maketradefair.com/en/index.php?file=25032002111113.htm>>.

³ WFTO." *WFTO - Home*. Web. 2 Sept. 2011. <http://www.wfto.com/index.php?option=com_content>.