



**GENDER  
AND DEVELOPMENT  
IN PRACTICE**



**GÖTEBORGS  
UNIVERSITET**

# FAIRTRADE AND GENDER



**FAIRTRADE**

**November 30th 2018**

**School of Global Studies, University of Gothenburg**

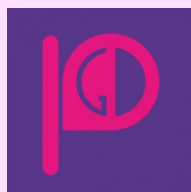


**Göteborgs  
Stad**

Workshop organised by  
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Lisa Sutton and Regina Mattsson on behalf of GADIP,  
Gender and Development In Practice

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## INTRODUCTION

On 30<sup>th</sup> November 2018, Edmé Dominguez Reyes and Nema Vinkeloe, with the help of Lisa Sutton and Regina Mattsson, organised a workshop on Fairtrade and gender. The workshop was held at the School of Global Studies at the University of Gothenburg, and there was a total of 11 participants. The invited participants were representatives from different actors working with Fair Trade<sup>1</sup> in Gothenburg; the aim of the workshop was to discuss how to increase interest in Fair Trade, how Fair Trade impacts women as consumers and producers and how we can work to promote Fair Trade that empowers women in all different stages of trade.

## BACKGROUND

For the past decades, international trade has been characterised by neoliberal ideas and procedures, pursuing efficiency, competitiveness, profit and growth. It has been argued repeatedly, particularly by the feminist academic literature, that the present economic system generates considerable negative consequences, especially for the more vulnerable groups of society; further, critique toward the neoliberal economic system has argued that women and men are affected differently by international trade and that women run a greater risk of being exposed to the negative consequences of trade than men. The Fair Trade movement was established as a response to these negative consequences and emphasises human rights, decent working conditions, fair wages and gender equality. The movement includes a great number of organisations, both on local and global levels, seeking to implement Fair Trade between regions and countries. Several of these organisations particularly emphasise gender equality and gender issues and actively seek to improve living and working conditions for women producers. Yet, women producers still face obstacles and discrimination, which in turn counteracts societal development concerning women's living conditions, health and economic situation on individual, societal and global levels.

## AIM

GADIP (Gender and Development in Practice) is a network for feminists within academia and activist organisations, seeking to establish a forum where researchers and activists can meet and engage in dialogue around gender and development issues in Sweden and abroad. For this project, GADIP wanted to invite actors working with Fair Trade in Gothenburg and its surroundings to a workshop to discuss international trade, Fair Trade and gender. The aim of the project was to highlight and discuss the effects of free trade and Fair Trade for women as

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<sup>1</sup>In the following text, 'Fair Trade' refers to the fair trade movement and its concept of trade at large, whereas 'Fairtrade' refers to the actor Fairtrade International

producers and consumers. The workshop sought to facilitate discussions on how different actors can engage in (international) trade that does not disfavour women and other vulnerable groups but instead promotes gender equality, prosperity and justice. In this way, we wanted to create a forum for sharing experiences, where the following questions were reflected on and discussed:

*How can more equal and fair trade relations be created?*

*How can interest for Fair Trade increase; how can Fair Trade become a norm?*

*How has the certification Fair Trade City influenced Fair Trade in Gothenburg?*

*How can women's rights be protected through Fair Trade; how can women as producers be strengthened by Fair Trade?*

Another goal of the workshop was to formulate a plan of action, by exchanging knowledge and collecting experiences, for how actors in and around Gothenburg can engage in trade that actively seeks to establish trade relations that promotes women producers' and consumers' rights, autonomy and empowerment, both in Sweden and abroad.

### **Participants**

Jannic Andersson, Divine Chocolate Scandinavia AB / The House of Fair Trade

Pia Hagman, Sackeus AB

Tone Westlund, Göteborgs Stad

Kristina Eberth, Göteborgs Stad

Anna Fernmo, Thrive AB

Fiona Sjöberg, Thrive AB

Lynn Tallvod, Thrive AB

Edmé Dominguez Reyes, University of Gothenburg and GADIP

Nema Vinkeloe Uuskyla, GADIP

Lisa Sutton, GADIP

Regina Mattsson, GADIP

### **OUTLINE**

The workshop started with Edmé and Nema giving an introduction to the project. Edmé presented GADIP as an organisation; what we work for and how, which international networks GADIP is a part of, and the recent projects that GADIP conducted. Nema gave a brief presentation on gender and trade; how critique of neoliberal international economy has highlighted the exploitation of women in (international) trade, how the Fair Trade movement emerged as a response to neoliberalism, and how Fairtrade International (the probably largest Fair Trade organisation today) seeks to ensure that women and men enjoy the same benefits of Fair Trade and Fairtrade certification. She presented her master's thesis in Global Studies



on the production of Fairtrade certified cocoa in Côte d'Ivoire, the world's largest cocoa exporter, and discussed in what way international trade affects women and men differently and if and how Fair Trade may promote gender equality.

This was followed by a round of presentations, where all participants briefly explained what company/authority/agency they represented, what role they have therein and in what way they engage with gender and Fair Trade. Following this, all participants debated the questions they received along with the invitation in a discussion moderated by Edmé and Nema. The discussion raised numerous issues and questions and touched on several topics related to gender, trade and Fair Trade. Toward the end of the workshop, everyone engaged in a brainstorm on how we may continue and develop a cooperation and collaboration on these issues, how interest for Fair Trade can increase and how we can work for the protection of women's rights within conventional and Fairtrade certified trade.

## DISCUSSION - SUMMARY

The participants shared their experiences on working with Fairtrade certified goods and the challenges that consequently arise. The discussions of the workshop are summarised below, collected in some recurring themes.

### *Interest for Fairtrade*

There is a growing interest in Fair Trade. Gothenburg received its Fair Trade City certification in 2011 and since then, the city has sought to incorporate Fairtrade certified products in all the municipality's endeavours. The Fair Trade City certification implies that the municipality applies ethical procurement and ensures that there is a wide range of ethically sourced and Fairtrade certified products in shops, cafés, hotels, restaurants and workplaces. The Fair Trade City certification thus facilitates the establishment of Fair Trade as a norm in the municipality. The workshop discussion suggested that Svenska Kyrkan, the Swedish Church, has been an important actor for bringing Fair Trade into the mainstream; even before the establishment of Fairtrade International, Svenska Kyrkan sought to support ethical trade that does not exploit producers. Svenska Kyrkan remains a major purchaser of Fairtrade certified products. The participants all agreed that consumers nowadays are more and more aware and conscious of the products they purchase and what kind of production and industry they support. There is a growing interest among consumers to shop ethically; the price is not always the only or major factor deciding what products are in demand. The fact that consumers are interested in under what circumstances different items are produced is decidedly positive for Fair Trade, since it thereby may reach more people.

### *Clientele*

Pia Hagman, representing Sackeus AB, remarked that the majority of their customers purchasing Fairtrade certified coffee are middle-aged women – they seem to have the largest interest for and possibility to buy Fairtrade certified coffee. Pia emphasised the coffee cooperative Unicafec in Peru that grows organic and Fairtrade certified coffee; more than a quarter of the cooperative's members are women and it is from Unicafec that Sackeus imports the coffee for their brand Eguale Women's Rights Coffee. This product seems to be particularly popular among the female customers of Sackeus. Sackeus' clientele does not only consist of individual customers; the company also has agreements with cafés and shops – the Eguale product range is available in every Coop Forum and Coop Extra in Sweden, as well as in a large number of ICA Kvantum and ICA Maxi shops. Pia noted how difficult it is, as a wholesaler of Fairtrade certified goods, to compete in price with other products – even if demand decreases or there is poor harvest, Fairtrade certification guarantees that the farmers obtain a minimum price for their goods, which might increase the price gap between a Fairtrade certified product and a non-certified product and thus further impedes sales of Fairtrade certified products.

Jannic Andersson, representing Divine Chocolate Scandinavia AB / The House of Fair Trade, disclosed that their largest cocoa exporting partner is a cooperative in Ghana, and that they seek to encourage women to become members and acquire positions and responsibility on the board. She emphasised how Fairtrade certification primarily ensures that working and production conditions are above a minimum level, but that the real force to influence and change the present system and improve the conditions for male and female farmers originates not from Fairtrade but from the cooperatives and their members themselves. Divine Chocolate Scandinavia AB / The House of Fair Trade are chiefly importers, careful to support suppliers actively engaging with issues related to fair working conditions, decent wages and employs a production that promotes human rights and gender equality. The goods imported by Divine Chocolate Scandinavia AB / The House of Fair Trade are distributed in individual shops (coffee and handicrafts) and cafés and coffee shops (chocolate). Moreover, Divine Chocolate Scandinavia AB / The House of Fair Trade runs a web shop for retailers and private customers.

Representatives from the retail company Thrive AB recounted how a growing number of young people are interested in Slow Fashion, a movement advocating environmentally friendly fashion. Thrive AB strives to spread what they call Conscious Fashion by selling garments that have been produced in a way that protects humans, animals and the environment. The products sold by Thrive are organic, environmentally friendly, Fairtrade certified and vegan.

The Fair Trade City certification may have contributed to turning Fair Trade into a norm by making Fairtrade certified products an integral part of cafés, restaurants, shops and work

places. Yet, it remains difficult for importers and distributors to sell Fairtrade certified goods, since they cannot compete in price with non-certified goods. Although the quality of certified products may be superior, price is still a significant variable in municipalities' procurement.

### *Social sustainability*

The different dimensions of sustainability were discussed by the workshop participants, and several noted the importance of acknowledging that ecological sustainability should not be the only dimension pursued. It seems like consumers feel like they have to choose between ecological, economic and social sustainability when they decide what products to buy and which brands and companies to support. Expanding the issue of sustainability to also cover social sustainability – meaning secure employment, decent working conditions, fair wages, gender equality, fair and equal distribution of income, profit and resources, and equal access to education, employment and political participation – was highlighted as a key measure. Representatives from Thrive AB emphasised how ecological sustainability is the primary and often sole focus in the fashion industry. Fairtrade certified and environmentally friendly goods are thus seen as opposed, or are set against each other, compelling the consumer to choose between protecting the environment or the people producing the goods. Since pollution and the destruction of the environment is present in political and societal discourse to a much larger extent than social sustainability, many consumers choose to prioritise ecological sustainability.

### *Certification: Organic vs Fairtrade?*

There is a wide range of certifications and marks that facing consumers. There is no global mark for organic produce but a variety of different marks and certifications that are used differently by different actors. Fairtrade International has several marks that has different implications depending on the product that carries it. Moreover, many companies have designed marks of their own that adorn their products – how these marks affect the working conditions and the production circumstances of the product is unclear, and it is evident that labelling products in this way is done primarily in order to increase sales since companies know that customers demand certified products. This is confusing for consumers who are not seriously familiar with the requirements for marks and certifications and it becomes increasingly difficult to tell which marks are reliable and truly make a difference for producers and the environment. There is no real conflict of interest between Fairtrade and organic certification, although Fairtrade does emphasise the social aspects of production and trade whereas organic is primarily interested in how the production impacts the environment. Fairtrade certification does entail a number of requirements concerning the environment, such as prohibiting hazardous chemicals or pesticides and establishing guidelines on waste management. This remains unknown by most consumers, leading them to tend to choose organic over Fairtrade certified.

### ***Responsibility and consumer power***

One of the biggest challenges facing Fair Trade today is that it is competing with conventional trade on the neoliberal market's conditions. Initially, this challenge also faced organic produce, but over time, organic products have become an integral part of goods available in stores. Moreover, for most consumers, organic does not compete with non-organic since consumers are aware of the differences between them. However, the issues addressed by Fair Trade are rarely acknowledged; safe terms of employment, decent wages and fair working conditions should in conventional trade be ensured by employing CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility). The constant pursuit of profit and efficiency drives many companies to seek to reduce the cost of production as much as possible, often resulting in worsened working conditions, wages far below the minimum, dangerous work environments and the use of chemicals and pesticides that are hazardous for both humans and the environment. All of this is done to increase competitiveness and survive in the neoliberal market economy. As a consequence, CSR remains largely ineffective, making Fair Trade a necessary alternative to conventional trade. The responsibility to ensure fair and humane working conditions should unquestionably reside with the companies producing, importing and selling goods, but when they fail to achieve this it seems to be up to consumers to demand better production and trade conditions. Consumers can exercise power toward companies by asking questions, demanding answers and improvements, and change their consumer behaviour. When demand for organic goods increased, more and more companies chose to add or completely switch to organic production in order to continue selling their products; the same should be achievable with Fairtrade. Consumer power is certainly limited – it might feel like a daunting task for the individual consumer to influence global trade patterns. It is therefore important to establish a solidarity that not only connects consumers and producers among themselves but also establishes a relationship between consumers and producers over country borders.

### ***Fairtrade and gender equality***

By establishing a solidarity that extends from consumers to producers, the interest for Fair Trade might increase, which in turn encourages more companies to engage in Fair Trade. One way to achieve this is by connecting Fair Trade with gender equality, as gender equality is a dimension of sustainability that is acknowledged as important and is pursued in numerous aspects of society today. It is far from evident that women benefit, to the same extent as men or at all, from trade – this includes Fair Trade as well. Although Fairtrade International has established a Gender Strategy for all its production it remains unclear if and how this contributes to the creation of more equal and fair societies for producers. Fairtrade still stands out by actively addressing gender in trade, since this is an aspect largely ignored in discussions on trade. By emphasising the importance of promoting gender equality among producers, it might be possible to encourage more consumers to support Fair Trade; if consumers know that they, through their purchases, support an organisation that actively promotes women's rights and possibilities, and moreover seeks to counteract poverty and gives producers an



opportunity to escape exploitation, it might be easier to increase an interest and demand for Fairtrade certified products.

### *How can the interest in Fairtrade increase?*

The workshop participants discussed concrete approaches to increase the interest for Fair Trade. Advocating for and providing information on Fairtrade was identified as a crucial first step. This might be achieved by creating networks for fair and sustainable trade, or joining already existing groups (such as Hållbart Göteborg (Sustainable Gothenburg), a Facebook group seeking to create a more sustainable Gothenburg). Creating material that can be shared on social media could be a good way of spreading knowledge and information on Fair Trade and sustainability and what individual consumers could do to support fair and sustainable trade. Ensuring that actors working with Fair Trade are visible is likewise important; we need to identify already existing contexts and events, that already have an audience, and ensure that Fair Trade is represented.

### *How can we reach out?*

In order for the interest for Fair Trade to increase, and retailers and consumers to, to a greater extent, care about under what circumstances goods have been produced and what kind of trade conditions and relations they create, actors, activists and researchers working with Fair Trade (and gender) must be visible. In the workshop discussion we arrived at the list below of contexts and activities where Fair Trade should be represented:

- *MR-dagarna*. Exhibition on human rights; international trade should be examined from a human rights perspective
- *HASS* (Handels Students for Sustainability)
- *Hållbarhetsdagar* (Sustainability Days) at the University of Gothenburg
- *Bokmässan*, book fair where authors, politicians and activists converge
- Student associations (such as Social Science Environment Student Association, SSES, at the University of Gothenburg)
- *Greenhack*
- *Business Region*
- *Göteborg & co*
- *Miljöbron*
- *Fairtrade Sverige* – develop a closer cooperation with Fairtrade through Fairtrade ambassadors
- *Fairtrade Forum* – annual event in different municipalities
- *Göteborgs kulturkalas*, street fair and culture event in Gothenburg

By cooperating with these actors and participate in these events, it could be possible to give Fair Trade more attention in the media and in public debate. Further, it would be important to contact politicians and highlight the importance of incorporating a human rights and gender

perspective in (international) trade. The issue of climate change has gone from being a grass roots movement to constituting an integral part of public discourse, but so far, there is no equivalent concerning social justice and sustainability. A very low number of people living in Gothenburg are aware that Gothenburg is a certified Fair Trade City – perhaps it is possible to organise a Fair Trade City Day that brings attention to the city's efforts when it comes to Fair Trade.

The participants noted that there is not necessarily a lack of commitment among consumers and retailers; the social commitment is not decreasing, but rather adopts new forms. A challenge facing all of us is limited time, energy and possibility to engage with and commit to different issues. A considerable number of young women are involved in social issues during their studies but must re-prioritise when they start making a career; retirees constitute another well represented group within social movements. A part of the challenge is reaching out to all people which are between studies and retirement. A considerable number of actors had been contacted for the workshop but could not participate; when one for example runs a store it is not always possible to dedicate the half of the workday to participate in a workshop. Perhaps the majority does not participate in traditional forms of social involvements – instead, a notable amount of activism is conducted on the internet and social media.

## CONCLUSIONS: HOW TO PROCEED?

The main objective of the workshop was to organise a knowledge and experience exchange between actors working with Fairtrade – this aim was achieved and all participants showed appreciation over being introduced to each other and hear about each other's work. The workshop was a promising start for a cooperation between the participants and everyone was interested in continuing to support each other; through the workshop, the foundation for a network was formed. Everyone was inspired by each other and motivated to continue working for Fair Trade, justice and gender equality. We talked about creating a group on Facebook in order to support each other, where we can discuss how to respond to critique and questioning in the best way possible. This group would constitute an easy way of keeping in touch and facilitate a continued exchange of experiences and strategies. In order to contribute to making Fair Trade a more prominent part of public debate, we could help each other in writing discussion articles and opinion pieces and organise participation in the events listed above. In order to increase and spread knowledge on Fair Trade and sustainability, we can help each other in organising film screenings, short lectures and Q&A sessions in neutral arenas such as the city library.

We hope to be able to keep this network running and continue to cooperate on gender equality, sustainability and Fair Trade. In 2019, GADIP will start a study circle on Fairtrade and Gender, where the knowledge from this workshop provides useful insight. GADIP would like to greatly thank everyone who participated in the workshop. We hope that the work on Fairtrade and gender continues and expands, and that the ideas we discussed can be put into practice in the near future.

