



*Give her a share in the fruit of her hands,
and let her works praise her in the city gates.
— Proverbs 31:31*

fair trade AND women

SERRV International



Lutheran World Relief is a ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS), individuals and parish groups in international relief, development, advocacy and social responsibility.



The last time you ordered a double espresso, did you think about the coffee farmer in Central America or Africa who grew and harvested the beans?

When you ate that luscious dark chocolate bar, were you aware that it originated from a tree somewhere in the tropics?



And who wove the lovely basket you bought on sale at the store last week?



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Our lives are busy;

we're looking for good prices and we often just don't realize the effect that something as simple as our shopping habits can have on people around the world — the men and women who produce the goods we take for granted.

Many of these producers live in a state of economic crisis. Without direct access to world markets, they have to sell through middlemen who eat up their profits, often leaving them with less than the cost of production. Small-scale farmers are forced off the land their families have worked for generations, or must abandon environmentally sound farming methods and work with dangerous chemicals and pesticides. Many have to migrate to overcrowded urban areas where jobs are scarce and living conditions deplorable. Without the protection of labor unions or effective laws to ensure their rights, they often work long hours far from home,

with no paid overtime, no childcare and unsafe working environments. Their children are denied the basic human rights of education and decent health care.

Fair Trade offers us an alternative opportunity to exchange goods in a way that promotes care of both the worker and the environment. Fair Trade standards were developed as a way to guarantee human rights at all levels of global trade — from producer to consumer. When our families, communities and churches purchase Fair Trade products, we honor our human connection with workers around the world and respect their right to receive fair prices for their hard work. Fair Trade can help build schools, homes, and health clinics. It ensures quality products for us, and the chance for a better life for them. It reminds us that, until we are all whole, none of us can be, and that the choices we make are truly felt around the world.



Fair Trade helps producers 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 producers. In particular, Fair Trade benefits women. As mothers, wives, community members, and participants in the global economy, Fair Trade gives women new opportunities to prosper.

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WOMEN IN THE ECONOMY

According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), there are 1.3 billion people in the world living on less than a dollar a day, and 70 percent of them are women or girls. Since women represent only half of the world's population, this disparity demonstrates serious inequalities in the global economy. Women work longer hours for less pay in worse jobs than men in every country in the world and, even when doing the same work, their income is two-thirds less than men's.





WOMEN'S WORK

In many parts of the world, especially rural areas, women are particularly vulnerable to economic inequality. They spend twice as much time as men on unpaid activities such as caring for and educating children, cleaning the home, preparing meals and often growing the food they eat. The work is time-consuming and exhausting, but increasing numbers of women have taken on additional work as wage-earners to cover financial burdens such as school fees and medical bills.

In the workplace, women often receive less respect and less pay than men. Many employers try to maximize profits by paying women extremely low wages for demanding and long hours. In the fields, women's work is often seen as less important than men's, while manufacturing employers can take advantage of the fact that women are less likely than men to unionize or protest working conditions because they have fewer alternatives for wage labor.

HOW LWR'S FAIR TRADE PROJECTS BENEFIT WOMEN

In contrast to their marginalization in the global economic system, women become full participants when they join Fair Trade cooperatives and worker groups. Working together, they can enjoy the same economic and social benefits as men and take increasing responsibility and pride in their work. Fair Trade standards value women not only as workers, but also as citizens and family members.

Women can offer the most effective solutions for reducing poverty. Investments in women's well-being often have rippling positive effects in their communities. 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 nutritious food for family members.

Empowering 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.

As Lutheran World Relief works with partners to promote community development overseas, we recognize the important 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. We look hard at every policy and program we implement — even ones that seem irrelevant to gender — to consider how each will affect women's livelihoods and status in the community.

LWR'S FAIR TRADE PROJECTS

The following stories illustrate how LWR's Fair Trade projects empower women with new opportunities for economic success. These stories about empowered women whose products are available through LWR's Fair Trade projects represent Fair Trade's positive impact on women and their communities.

The LWR Handcraft Project: *Gifts that Make a World of Difference*

R. Mangai's Story

Twenty years ago, R. Mangai began a process that would dramatically change her family. Forbidden from leaving her house without her husband's permission, she convinced him to allow her to bring home materials for basket weaving. She began to participate with other women in an income-generating project that later became part of the Self Help Association for Rural Education and Employment, (SHARE), a nonprofit organization in southern India run by women, for women. "At first, the men scorned our work. When they saw that we were determined, they changed their attitude...now the men help, they support the women. This is a change in the mindset. Now they praise our work, they ask what they can do to help."

R. Mangai's story is echoed by other women of SHARE as they talk about the changes they have seen in their lives. They speak with pride as they describe how they provide valuable income for their families. They also stand up against domestic violence, advocate for girls to be able to go to school, and have earned a voice for themselves through their participation in SHARE.

Suraya's story

Due to the long conflict in Sudan, Suraya Juma had to flee with thousands of others to a Sudanese refugee camp in northern Uganda. Because she is a widowed woman with children to provide for, the challenges she faces to survive in a foreign country after losing everything are especially harsh.

Suraya now supports her family through handcrafts — weaving the brightly-colored baskets and trays her grandmother taught her to make. ▶

She is a member of the International Widows Association for South Sudanese Refugees in Uganda (IWASSRU), which creates income-generating opportunities for women through craft production and agriculture. IWASSRU also operates two orphanages that shelter children, sponsor a foster program for children and offer educational opportunities for disabled children. Speaking for the women of IWASSRU, Suraya 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."

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To support women like R. Mangai and Suraya through the LWR Handcraft Project, visit lwr.org/handcraft or call 1-888-294-9660. Request an LWR Handcraft Project catalog for your home or organize an LWR Fair Trade Fair for your church. The LWR Handcraft Project is a partnership with A Greater Gift, the handcraft program of SERRV International.



Divine Chocolate

The LWR Chocolate Project: *Sweet Justice*

Cecilia Appianim's story

Cecilia Appianim comes from the village of Asemtem in the Central Region of Ghana. In addition to being a local recorder — the person in the village who weighs farmers' cocoa beans — and volunteer firefighter, Cecilia was recently elected to the Executive Committee of Kuapa Kokoo, an innovative cooperative for cocoa growers. Leaders like Cecilia exemplify Kuapa's commitment to empower women. Women and men in the cooperative are allowed equal access to elected positions and are recognized as valuable managers in their communities.

“Fair Trade has helped us a lot. Because of Fair Trade, women can come out boldly and take part in every event. Before we would stay at home and watch the men. And we would work with our husbands and they would take the money, put it in their pockets, and

when it came time to buy food or pay school fees they would say the money is gone.

“But Kuapa has opened our eyes to see that everything should be 50-50. So if a man has one vote a woman has one as well. If the men come together to make a decision then the women are there to take part as well. So now we are empowered and the men they cannot cheat us again.”



Find out just how sweet justice can taste! Call 1-888-294-9660 or log on to lwr.org/chocolate to learn more about the LWR Chocolate Project, and how LWR became part owners of Divine Chocolate, the Fair Trade company that buys Kuapa Kokoo cocoa. The LWR Chocolate Project is a partnership with SERRV International.

The LWR Coffee Project: *Pour Justice to the Brim*

Flora's story

Lutheran World Relief, with funding from the U.S. Agency for International Development, assisted Flora del Socorro Montenegro and other members of Unión de Cooperativas Agropecuarias (UCA) SOPPEXCCA — a union of small-scale coffee farmers in Nicaragua — in their transition to Fair Trade and organic certification. Fair Trade prices mean economic security for the entire family, and money for shoes and school uniforms for Flora's children. She has used some of her profits to add rooms for tourists to her family home. This diversifies her family's income, while bringing tourists to the area to experience a coffee farm firsthand. These tourists often return home as advocates who spread the word about Fair Trade.

Several years ago, Flora began converting her five acres of coffee trees to organic production. It wasn't easy. Flora commented, "At first, I had to convince my husband that it was worthwhile. We spent a lot of time doing all the 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 hard work had a great outcome. In December of 2004, her coffee won fourth place in Nicaragua's prestigious "Cup of Excellence" coffee competition. As a result, she sold her entire year's organic coffee production for \$500 per hundredweight, about \$350 above the market rate at that time. Success has given Flora confidence in her farming and her future.

"I can definitely say that this project and the help from Lutheran [World Relief] has opened up a whole new world for me and my family," affirms Doña Flora. "When I came to this area years ago with my parents



and siblings to make a go of farming, things were pretty tough. Now I have faith that the hard work we've invested is finally paying off."

To honor Flora del Socorro Montenegro and the many women around the world who are behind the continuing success of the LWR Coffee Project, our partner, Equal Exchange, has created an exclusive LWR coffee blend: Organic Sisters' Blend. Like all Fair Trade cooperatives, the Peruvian and Nicaraguan cooperatives that grow beans for the Organic Sisters' Blend pay particular attention to the integral role women play in a cooperative's success.



Pour justice to the brim! To learn how your parish or household can be part of the LWR Coffee Project, visit lwr.org/coffee or call 774-776-7340. The LWR Coffee Project is a partnership with Equal Exchange, a worker-owned co-operative dedicated to Fair Trade.



▲ Inspired by their participation in an LWR Study Tour to Nicaragua, **Jim** and **Sondra Mericle** returned to Wyoming, MN and started their own Fair Trade coffee shop.

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YOUR FAIR TRADE STORY

The story of LWR Fair Trade project participants doesn't end here! As Lutherans, we can come together as individuals, parishes and communities to practice what we preach. Fair Trade purchases demonstrate compassion to economically vulnerable communities around the world. Lutheran World Relief wants to hear how your participation in Fair Trade fosters world justice.

Email fairtrade@lwr.org with your Fair Trade story.
Send us your photos, too!



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