



GENDER STRATEGY: TRANSFORMING EQUAL OPPORTUNITY, ACCESS AND BENEFITS FOR ALL

The Fairtrade Gender Strategy seeks to attain gender equality and women's empowerment in producer organizations through building women's and girls' power and agency. The strategy aims to deliver a transformative approach to gender mainstreaming in the Fairtrade system.

WHY HAS FAIRTRADE REFRESHED ITS GENDER STRATEGY?

Women make up 25 percent of the smallholder farmers and workers involved in Fairtrade, either through being members of small farmer organizations, or by being employed directly by a plantation. However, these figures do not account for members' female relatives who contributed to the production of commodities in small farmer organizations, and while they may not officially have been direct members of producer organizations, they were crucial to the production of Fairtrade products. Gender analysis has not been systematically included in studies on the impact of Fairtrade, and so there is insufficient evidence to understand how Fairtrade is impacting on women and girls in comparison to men and boys.

Globally, there are three main arguments for addressing gender inequalities:

1. The 'justice' argument recognizes gender equality as a valid objective in itself, following a rights-based approach.
2. The 'business' argument equates gender equality with productivity and economic growth, creating a 'smart economics' angle which is gaining traction among global organizations like the World Bank
3. Addressing gender inequality is also important from a 'societal' point of view in order to achieve wider objectives such as the Sustainable Development Goals.

While there are many examples across the Fairtrade system of good practices in the promotion of gender equality, a systematic and effective approach to taking into consideration gender issues is long overdue in the Fairtrade system. This strategy aims to close this gap and set a clear direction and approach for Fairtrade's global work on gender for 2016-2020. Strengthening the work in this area is an opportunity to significantly increase Fairtrade's impact on the ground.

OUR AMBITION

The goal of the Fairtrade Gender Strategy is to increase gender equality and empowerment of women and girls through systematic mainstreaming of gender throughout Fairtrade operations, from standards to producer initiatives, business partnerships, awareness-raising and advocacy. By 2020, Fairtrade's Gender Strategy aims to have:

- Significantly increased women's active and equal participation in Fairtrade certified smallholder and hired labour organizations
- Empowered more women and girls with opportunities to access equitably the benefits of Fairtrade
- Addressed systemic issues that hamper the realization of greater gender equality in Fairtrade supply chains

THE FAIRTRADE APPROACH

The Fairtrade approach seeks to tackle unequal power relations in order to promote gender equality and women's empowerment. This will be achieved by strengthening women's human, social, financial, and physical capital. This approach is aligned to Fairtrade's 2016-2020 Strategic Framework and guided by the Fairtrade Theory of Change. Further, it adopts the Gender at Work framework and reflects the recommendations of the 2015 Equal Harvest Report.

Transformative gender approaches share an understanding of the need to go beyond women's participation in activities and institutions, to challenge deeper gender norms and structures with the aim of permanently and profoundly rebalancing unequal power distribution between persons of different genders. While Fairtrade's approach focuses mostly on changes in attitudes, practices, and policies in agricultural production and trade, it also necessitates broader transformations in political and social life.

Fairtrade also recognizes that gender is one of several variables that determine power relations and social inequalities which result from an intricate web of contextual factors such as race, class, religious or ethnic identity, and disability. In addition, social issues encompassed in agricultural value chains differ according to region, country and local context and they continue to evolve and become more complex.

Gender equality and women's empowerment will be promoted through work at all levels, and through a bottom-up and context driven approach. However, in accordance with the fundamental purpose of Fairtrade, most resources will be put into supporting gender equality and women's empowerment at the producer organization level. It is understood that gender equality and women's empowerment will include, at all appropriate levels, a focus on girls as well as boys.

CAPACITY STRENGTHENING

The Fairtrade Gender Strategy sets 3 objectives to enable women farmers and workers to develop their skills through training opportunities.

Promote and strengthen gender equality and women's empowerment awareness and skills of key staff in Fairtrade International's units, national Fairtrade organizations, and producer networks: To achieve the overall goal of this strategy it is essential that all staff in the Fairtrade system understand the purpose and benefits of gender mainstreaming. A systematic approach is needed in order to equip staff with the necessary skills and deepen their commitment to achieving the vision of gender mainstreaming.

Gender equality refers to the concept that all human beings are free to develop their personal abilities and make choices without the limitations set by stereotypes, rigid gender roles, or prejudices. It does not mean that women and men and girls and boys have to become the same, but that their rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female.

Women's empowerment implies an expansion in women's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them.

Strengthen the capacity of producer networks and producer organizations to develop and implement gender policies and programmes at a local, regional or national level: The strategy needs producer networks to support producer organizations to understand gender constraints in Fairtrade. These producer networks and producer organizations need to be trained to address these specific challenges to gender equality. Each of the producer networks will use a different approach in their region to take in to account the regional contexts and the capabilities of the individual networks.

Create greater awareness and understanding of gender equality and women's empowerment in Fairtrade, as part of Fairtrade's advocacy and campaigning for trade justice: This objective calls for Fairtrade to engage internal and external stakeholders in the implementation of the strategy. Fairtrade's advocacy plan and campaigns will also need to reflect and feature this gender mainstreaming work.

GROWTH AND SUSTAINABILITY

The growth and sustainability objectives aim to strengthen Fairtrade's gender programme through improving internal systems and nurturing external collaboration.

Develop market and business engagement opportunities and implement initiatives aimed at enhancing the empowerment of women and girls in value chains: To achieve long-term change, it is fundamental that gender concerns are integrated into the existing and future initiatives that connect producers and markets. The business case for increasing gender equality needs to be understood and actively promoted across Fairtrade. This will ensure that any new programme and service is connected to, and informed by, producer organization needs and priorities.

Establish and strengthen Fairtrade networks and alliances for enhanced gender equality and women's empowerment within Fairtrade: Fairtrade producer networks will need to work with local, regional and global partners. These partners who have the context-specific expertise and the motivation to tackle gender injustices in trade will support producer networks to leverage and influence local and global structural and policy changes.

Improve ways to demonstrate the impact of gendered interventions in the different regions (Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific, Africa) for increased sustainability: Fairtrade needs to improve the measurement of its gender-related impacts. This objective aims to fill this gap by integrating gender more fully into Fairtrade's monitoring, evaluation and learning systems. This will also enable Fairtrade to communicate more clearly about its impacts on gender equality.



© Suzanne Lee

NEXT STEPS

The Gender Strategy will be implemented during a five-year period. The strategic actions for this period are outlined in the strategy. Fairtrade's Gender Action and Learning (GAL) group will lead on developing concepts and models to produce funding proposals for the identified strategic actions.

Proposals will also seek to engage full-time gender staff, at the producer networks, to drive the implementation of strategic actions on the ground. A detailed action plan, with outputs and indicators for each year of the strategy, will be developed by consolidating the producer networks' annual gender plans. This will be monitored by the GAL group.

The monitoring of Fairtrade's gender mainstreaming work will be guided by a set of predesigned indicators, according to the Fairtrade Theory of Change.