

Tanzania

FAIR TRADE FOR WOMEN PRODUCERS

"Tuna weze! (Yes we can!) It is far better for us to work together than separately. We share our experiences and we learn together. This helps us all."

Tatu Juma, Chair, Tusifemoyo (Keep Going) Women's Cooperative, Kidoti, Zanzibar

Partner : The Tanzania Fair Trade Network (TANFAT)

MISSION & MEMBERSHIP

Founded in 2003 but not formally registered until 2010, TANFAT is a young network whose members work to alleviate poverty among marginalized producers through the exchange of ideas and experiences, lobbying and advocacy, and growing sales for producers by developing and promoting hand-made products. TANFAT plans to focus on improving production, quality and production capacity and envisions becoming a strong Fair Trade network.

The two Tanzanian women's groups taking part in this project are:

- The Tusifemoyo (Keep Going) Women's Cooperative, Kidoti, Zanzibar, formed as a self-help, income-generating group. It now has about 25 active members who farm seaweed and make soap.
- Wawata Njombe, which began as church-based mothers' union and developed into village-based producer groups to help women meet their economic needs; it works with five women's groups at the village level with almost 300 active members who weave iringa reed baskets

LOCAL AND GLOBAL CONNECTIONS & MARKETS

TANFAT is the country network member of COFTA, (Cooperation for Fair Trade in Africa), which is affiliated to the World Fair Trade Organization (WFTO).

Wawata Njombe and Kidoti both market products through Kwanza Collection, a Dar es Salaam-based Fair Trade exporter and member of TANFAT.



Photo by Carol Wills

WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Launched in 2009, the Women's Economic Empowerment project is funded by the MDG3 Global Fund by the Government of the Netherlands. Through the project, WIEGO and its partners are advocating for the needs of informal workers, especially women. The project seeks to promote the voice, visibility and validity of working poor women across different countries, sectors and issues in the informal economy. As part of this project, WIEGO's Global Trade Programme, in partnership with leading Fair Trade organizations in seven countries, initiated *Fair Trade for Women Producers* with a focus on documenting, analyzing and disseminating key success factors of fair trade by involving women producers in all stages of development.



Development Cooperation
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

CURRENT CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES

Tanzania's Constitution prohibits discrimination based on gender. The government has a specific Women and Gender Development Policy in place stressing education as a means of empowerment. A signatory to the Millennium Development Goals and many regional and international conventions relating to gender, the government professes a commitment to the economic empowerment of women. Despite this, there remains a significant gap between policy and the achievement of gender equity. Informally employed, poor women continue to face many difficulties. As well, unemployment is high in Tanzania and competition in the informal sector increases continuously. The case study recommends that government find a way to consult women themselves when it comes to implementing policies that affect women workers' lives.

An unregulated and competitive market means the producers must struggle to keep their market share as, for example cheap baskets made of plastic materials from Asia are sold in the same market.

FINDINGS FROM THE RESEARCH

The women say that working as part of a group linked to a Fair Trade marketing organization has helped them earn additional income for the family. This has enabled them to send children to school, pay for health care, build better homes and be more independent.

Groups provide the advantages of networking and can offer members valuable information and training. Those from Zanzibar reported that they no longer wait, for the husbands to supply the family needs. Being part of a group has helped them attain skills and confidence in their capabilities, and working together they have found markets for their soap.

Through this project, TANFAT has provided training in product development, business skills and on health related issues as a response to a needs assessment. Products have been sold to Fair Trade buyers in the

United States and in Europe. Nevertheless much more capacity building is needed. Women have found their voice. Through their Fair Trade Network (TANFAT) they need to learn how to advocate for their rights with government.

MOVING FORWARD

Recognizing that such groups are often weak organizationally and lack management and governance skills, one recommendation of the Tanzanian study is that the groups seek formal registration to enable them to access more services.

The areas in which enlightened policy would improve the rights, protection, and opportunities of those who work in the informal economy include: labour legislation (that guarantees, at a minimum, core labour rights to all informal workers); social protection coverage (that is provided either through existing and/or new schemes); macroeconomic policies (that balance incentives, tax burdens, and statutory benefits between small and big businesses and between informal and formal workers); and urban regulations that are formulated through a process in which those who work in the informal economy have a voice.

The project has highlighted the need within TANFAT to build its own capacity by increasing its membership so that it can gain the strength of many producers who bring the advantage of many products and talents. TANFAT plans to pursue a recruitment strategy by inviting members that represent different sectors of production.

"The group improves lots of things... Now we dress well, wear shoes and our children go to school. ... Let's find a way to cement all these small groups so we can all benefit."

Rita Mwigwa, Njombe Village Group

