

Name: Sophia Ludtke

Username: sludtke

Email: sludtke20@newarka.edu

School: Newark Academy

Browse through the Fair World Project magazine “For a Better World” to learn more about the connection between the Fair Trade movement and women. What article from this publication resonated with you most and why?

The article “Fair Trade for Women’s Health” stood out to me. This article discussed the intersection between economic opportunity, public health, and women’s rights: three areas of particular interest to me. I find it empowering to learn how the Fair Trade organization aspires not just to economically mobilize communities in developing countries, but also to sensitively and purposefully try to change the culture in these communities for the better. The article specifically focused on the traditional practice of female genital mutilation (FGM). According to the article, in the region of Togo (that the article discussed), FGM is the leading cause of complications during pregnancy and even death. As an outsider, it is easy to be disturbed, appalled, or even angry at this seemingly cruel tradition. How could something so tragic and damaging be allowed to take place? But, I very much appreciate how the article discusses the importance not just of outside intervention but of *sensitive* outside intervention.

I’m sure Americans wouldn’t respond well if a foreign body began to attack our age-old traditions or values, telling us that our way of life was somehow wrong (A prime example of this was a segment of the US population’s backlash towards the US’s agreement to the Paris Climate Accords. Such an agreement mandated that the US take dramatic emission-reducing action, which would necessarily require us to scale back on coal production, which would in turn uproot the lives of those dependent on the coal mines for an income). While this initial resistance to a foreigner’s intervention may be inevitable, it is important that any intervening country be very mindful of existing practices or traditions. Just like how efforts need to be made in this country to ensure that the lives of those dependent on the coal mines (along with the lives of many others) aren’t tragically uprooted by the carbon emission-reducing action our planet is demanding that we take, similar efforts have to be taken when the US intervenes abroad (such as in an attempt to end the practice of FGM). The article discusses how volunteers went door to door, explaining the serious consequences of FGM and encouraging local leaders to take action themselves (rather than having the foreign volunteers insensitively require such action to be taken). The article served as a reminder that, while change is certainly difficult, that difficulty can not cause us to shy away from tackling issues altogether. Rather, proper care must be taken to ensure that any change is taking place in a way that is sensitive to all--especially to the most vulnerable.

Now that you have learned more about the impacts fair trade has on the lives of individuals, choose one person to focus on and share a profile of their story. This can be from the video or magazine above, or from your own research! (300 word minimum)

Gerardo Arias Camacho is a coffee producer currently working in Costa Rica. The Fair Trade Organization has mobilized Gerardo, his family, and his community to lead more self-sufficient and more sustainable lives. Before Fair Trade, the coffee market in Costa Rica was growing increasingly erratic. In any given year, the market price for coffee could fluctuate significantly, sometimes dropping so low that the farmers were unable to cover their production expenses. As Gerardo explains, he was forced to leave his home country for America in search of an income to support his family.

But, since the introduction of Fair Trade practices, Gerardo's life has been transformed for the better. In addition to stabilizing the coffee market prices (allowing workers like Gerardo to trust that their income will remain secure), Fair Trade practices have empowered Gerardo's community in Costa Rica to become more sustainable: a win-win, both for the workers and for the environment. More trees have been planted, pesticide use has been reduced by 80%, and new ovens in the coffee producing plant (powered by organic waste products) eliminate the need to cut down trees in order to power production.

Similarly, Fair Trade practices have revolutionized education in Gerardo's community. A scholarship program has been implemented, allowing students to stay in school for longer, thus receiving an education that will allow them to continue to make sustainable and socially-conscious decisions for their communities in the future. One of Gerardo's sons is already in college, and he proudly speaks of the educations his younger children are receiving as well.

The Fair Trade organization is certainly not just a charity, giving aid to workers in countries abroad. Rather, it is a vehicle for self-empowerment. By amplifying the importance of economically sound, socially conscious, and environmentally mindful practices to an audience worldwide, Fair Trade is encouraging consumers to make choices which then in turn bolster the economies of developing countries worldwide.

This quote spoken by Gerardo himself, speaks to the importance and value of the Fair Trade Program: "As a Fairtrade farmer, I finally feel competitive - I feel that I have a tool in my hand. It has given me knowledge, so that I am more able to defend myself and my people. I feel there is a future in front of us, because we can stay in our own country and make a living growing coffee....just by going shopping, you can make a difference."

SOURCE: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2008/mar/12/ethicaliving.lifeandhealth>

Upload a photo or video of the individual/community to a social platform of your choice and caption it with their story. Tag [@TurningGreenOrg](#), [@FTCampaigns](#) and [@FairWorldPrj](#), and hashtag [#PGC2018](#) and [#FairTrade](#)

