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GENDER AND FAIR TRADE HANDICRAFTS

THE IMPACT OF FAIR TRADE
HANDICRAFTS ON WOMEN EMPOWERMENT
IN INDIA AND BANGLADESH

STUDY NOVEMBER 2014

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study is based on literature and an on-site visit. Its goal was to investigate/summarize how fair handicraft contributes to the empowerment of women in 3 organizations in India and Bangladesh.

Several meetings and discussions, either individually or in discussion groups, have shown that fair handicraft has a significant impact for the majority of the components examined. The effect appears to be particularly important in socio-economic domains, especially when it comes to obtaining material and human resources, knowledge and skills. Furthermore, the craftswomen also gain more inner power (critical conscience, self-esteem, etc.) which leads most of them to renegotiating their roles within their own and sometimes close environment (couple, family, community). Redefining their position has for example resulted in improved mobility, in better social interaction and in women being implicated in divers socio-economic activities (most of the times within the fair trade organization itself).

The study also reveals certain limits of fair handicraft. More in particular, it doesn't always allow to question the structurally subordinate position of women in Indian and Bangladesh societies (strategic needs). For example, they often have to struggle to obtain better access to and control of production means. The result of that struggle also depends, among other things, on the women's ability to free themselves from the control of their husbands or families. Limitations for organizations often include limited resources (salary, training, ability to give orders, etc.) whereas the craftswomen can suffer from a lack of time or interest, fear of the unknown or the inability to get out of a "sacrificial" role. In the end, the degree of empowerment of craftswomen largely depends on the organization itself, on its strategy, its target audiences and its human and financial resources.

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INTRODUCTION

Inequalities. A word that seems to be taking hold in the media, as they quote T. Piketty, Oxfam International and the World Economic Forum¹. One inequality is more notable than most as it affects more than half of the world's population: gender inequality. Despite considerable progress over the past 25 years, in almost every part of the world women have fewer chances than men to decide their fate. In many countries they earn less, are less productive and have a higher risk of mortality².

Oxfam India's decision in 2013 to dedicate the first year of its "Close the gap"³ campaign to gender inequalities was symbolic because this country, along with many of its neighbours on the Indian subcontinent, is ranked as one of the worst in the world for this type of inequality. India also ranks lowest out of all emerging countries⁴. Both of the countries covered in this study, India and Bangladesh, remain highly patriarchal societies. Social norms continue to considerably limit the opportunities for women to flourish and develop, both at a professional and a personal level.

Reducing these inequalities is therefore both a moral and socio-economic priority⁵. The question is: how can this be achieved? Many tools, programmes and policies do, of course, exist. In this study we will concentrate on one particular sector – fair trade – and focus on three specific regions – Delhi, Calcutta and Dhaka. The main objective will be to look at fair trade as a tool for women's development and analyse/identify those elements of fair trade that can serve as best practice. In order to achieve this we will turn to existing literature, as well as the results of a mis-

sion we carried out in August 2014 within the following fair trade organisations: CORR - The Jute Works (Dhaka, Bangladesh), Sasha (Calcutta, India) and Tara Projects (Delhi, India).

This study is part of a wider "social change" project whose aim is to work with our partners to develop our respective skills in the social, educational and political spheres⁶. More specifically, one of the actions planned for 2015-2016 is to jointly develop an awareness raising/lobbying campaign on gender and fair trade handicrafts. This study will serve as a support tool for those involved in the future campaign, for example as a source of statistical data on gender or testimonials from artisans. It will also be used as a working base for a December 2014 seminar whose main aim will be to develop with our partners, the campaign's sub-themes and tools. Finally, presenting the case for the campaign and exploring the various scenarios involved (sub-themes, tools, etc.) will be handled in separate analyses.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

GENDER AS A CONCEPT: AN OVERVIEW⁷

The question of gender includes the notion of gender relations. This approach looks at the social functions and roles, the statuses and stereotypes that are allocated to a person depending on whether they are a man or a woman. The definition, depiction and perception of a woman or man as well as the values attributed to them are actually social, historical, cultural and symbolic constructs.

Unlike the anatomical and biological difference between the sexes, which is innate and fixed, the social relationships between women and men fluctuate and change on a permanent basis (see table 1). The way in which a woman or man is viewed can therefore differ from one person to the next. It can alter depending on the society they belong to, the period of time they live through

and the social groups they belong to. It can even change for an individual over the course of their lifetime.

Gender relations vary immensely and are also linked to the conditions associated with social class, age, ethnic origin, political status, etc. Internal and external factors transform gender relations on a permanent basis: education, laws and legal frameworks as well as technological changes, economic policies, the labour market, food crises, conflict, etc.

GENDER RELATIONS AFFECTED BY INEQUALITIES

Throughout the world, the social roles and stereotypes of women and men are characterised by multiple inequalities, overwhelmingly to the detriment of women. Despite several decades of considerable

progress, the political, economic, social and cultural rights of women are still limited in many countries. Certain figures serve to illustrate these inequalities:

- In the labour market, women are overwhelmingly paid less than men for the same skills and responsibilities. Although UN research demonstrates that women perform two thirds of the world's work (productive and reproductive activities⁸), most of this work is unpaid (they only earn 10% of global income), and is not included in a nation's wealth statistics⁹.
- Their access to productive resources and credit is severely restricted. Women in India, for example, own less than 10% of the land: a situation caused by a traditional bar on women receiving any inheritance, or simply due to fear or a lack of information¹⁰.
- Compared to men, women are significantly under-represented in positions of power. In 2009, only 7 out of 143 heads of state were women. The picture was similar in terms of heads of government (out of 192 only 11 were female¹¹) and national parliaments (on average women accounted for 21% of the world's parliamentarians in 2013¹²).
- Although there has been widespread progress in the past 25 years, gender inequalities remain high in education. In 2013, two-thirds of the world's 774 million

SEX	GENDER
Is innate and inherited	Is acquired and learnt
Is unalterable	Is evolutionary and changeable
Is biological and determines: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Genital organs - Chromosomes - Physical conditions (strength, weight, height, etc.) 	Is constructed by society and stems from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The culture - The learning process - The roles assigned to women and men in a particular society
Allows us to highlight the differences between women and men.	Allows us to highlight the relationships between women and men.

Table 1. Differences between sex and gender

illiterate adults (aged 15+) were women¹³. And even those who attend school have to leave earlier either to help their parents or as a result of early marriage. As a result, inequalities persist from one generation to the next.

- And finally, women and children are particularly affected by violence and armed conflict. In 2010, out of the 40 million people forced to become refugees as a result of armed conflict or violations of human rights, 75% were women and

children. Globally, one in three women has been raped, beaten or become the victim of one form of abuse or another at least once in their lifetime. In some countries, domestic violence is the main cause of death or damage to health in women aged 16 to 44. According to the United Nations, violence against women is a major impediment to human development.

GENDER WITHIN INTERNATIONAL AND COOPERATION INSTITUTIONS

The UN is not alone in reaching this conclusion. Many development institutions and non-State actors, both in the South and the North, now associate reducing gender inequalities with the exercise of human rights and sustainable development objectives.

Recent decades have seen many international commitments made in relation to gender. One of the first steps was the creation, in 1946, of the Commission on the Status of Women, part of the Commission on Human Rights. There then followed the International Conference on the Status of Women (Mexico, 1975), which launched the United Nations Decade for Women (1975-1985); then the adoption in 1979 by the UN of CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women), a key international legal tool for women's fundamental human rights¹⁴. In 1994, the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo abandoned the demographical control approach to focus on the sexual and reproductive rights of women.

The 1995 World Conference on Women in Beijing was without doubt a major turning point. The Declaration of Beijing was a genuine founding charter for women's rights and consolidated the work that began 20 years earlier in Mexico. In particular, it implemented the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA), a type of

THE BEIJING PLATFORM FOR ACTION'S 12 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

- Combat the persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women.
- Tackle the inequalities and inadequacies in and unequal access to education and training.
- Combat the inequalities and inadequacies in and unequal access to healthcare and related services.
- Tackle violence against women.
- Fight the effects of armed conflict on women.
- Promote equality in economic structures and policies, in all forms of productive activities and in access to resources.
- Foster equality between men and women in the sharing of power and decision-making.
- Promote mechanisms at all levels to promote the advancement of women.
- Ensure the respect for and adequate promotion and protection of the fundamental human rights of women.
- Fight against stereotyping of women and inequality in women's access to and participation in all communication systems, especially in the media.
- Promote gender equality in the management of natural resources and in the safeguarding of the environment.
- Remove discrimination against and violation of the rights of the girl child.



Mrs. Patricia Licuanan, Chairwoman of the Main Committee of the World conference on women in Beijing (1995)

guide for public action, with two main objectives for international organisations, governments and civil society: the empowerment of women (see below), and integrating gender into public policy. To this end, 12 areas of strategic action were created (see box below), with each of these regularly monitored and recommendations routinely provided to the international community as a whole¹⁵.

In 2000, the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) included the issues of equal rights for men and women in goal number two (universal primary education for all, especially girls), three (promoting gender equality and empowering women) and five (improving maternal health). And finally, the UN created a new body in 2010, “UN Women”, tasked with accelerating improvements in the condition of women and girls throughout the world.

In Belgium, the new 2013 law on development cooperation defined gender as a cross-cutting issue, alongside the environment. The for-

mer Commission “Femmes et Développement” (Women and Development Commission), established in 1993, has since been replaced by a Gender and Development Advisory Council and a “BE-Gender” platform¹⁶.

EMPOWERING WOMEN¹⁷

The process of enabling women to gain autonomy and break free of socio-cultural gender frameworks is referred to as empowerment (or empoderamiento in Spanish). There is no equivalent term in French as it includes a range of notions such as reinforcement, emancipation and gaining autonomy. But the term “power/poder” is contained within both the English and Spanish terms. The concept also refers to the power that the individual has over their own life, and the development of their own identity, as well as the collective capacity to change power structures in the economic, political, legal and socio-cultural spheres. Empowerment is therefore a process and a momentum to gain power. In terms of gender inequal-

ity, empowerment is based on gender analysis. In other words, it is based on an analysis of the socio-cultural construction of gender roles and their impact on society.

BACKGROUND

Empowerment as a concept emerged in the 1960s with African-American radicalism, then Paulo Freire’s “conscientization” (critical consciousness) community work in Brazil. It was taken up by Latin American feminist movements in the 1980s, then by women’s movements in Africa (Zambia) and Asia (India). These different movements criticised previous approaches led by western development and western feminist movements, which tended to homogenise women in the Third World and portray them as victims. They drew attention to the oppression of women, focusing on patriarchy and colonial dependency¹⁸.

The concept of empowerment was adopted by international development institutions and NGOs after the Beijing Conference (1995). The Declaration of Beijing highlighted women’s empowerment as a key strategic development goal: “The empowerment of women and their full and equal participation in all sectors of society, including participating in decision-making processes and sharing power, is fundamental in order to achieve equality, development and peace.”

And yet these various actors tended to limit empowerment to a means of fighting poverty from the viewpoint of social harmony, without

considering changes in socio-economic structures, and therefore power relationships. Contrary to this, several actors, including C. Moser, went on to highlight how important it was to look at women's practical and strategic needs in a different light (table 2)¹⁹. According to Moser, gender's strategic needs, in other words challenging power inequalities, must be directly tack-

led through action that is based on women's practical needs.

Even though this approach²⁰ challenges patriarchal socio-cultural systems, authors such as N. Kabeer and S. Longwe heavily criticise it, considering it too bureaucratic, top-down and institutional²¹. In their view it is essential to move beyond quantitative elements and

the notion that power relationships can be changed by an institution (even one that is "enlightened"), using data that is incorrectly neutral or functional. They recommend that development policies take greater account of the actors' conflicts, the deep social structures and the symbolic touch points of power.

MEETING PRACTICAL NEEDS	TACKLING STRATEGIC INTERESTS
Does not typically change existing gender relations, statuses, roles and gender stereotypes.	Results in an improved status for women and more equality (income, paid employment, trade union responsibilities, political, etc.).
Has little long-term impact on inequalities and often risks strengthening the unequal distribution of work.	Promotes empowerment: autonomy, freedom of choice (e.g. sexuality), responsibilities.
Can be a first step and lever to target strategic interests if practical needs are identified and met in a participative way, with the women concerned.	Can result in changes in gender relations, can destabilise men and women.
Is often part of a traditional view of economic development, based on GDP growth.	Is part of an equitable and sustainable vision of human development designed to provide social and political change.

Table 2. Women's practical and strategic needs

EMPOWERMENT: A PLURALISTIC VISION OF POWER

The concept of empowerment as used by women's movements in the South now attempts to take these different aspects into account. It is in particular based on a pluralistic approach to power. There is not one dominant power, but "powers", as multiple and diffuse as "a constellation of stars"²². Aside from the most obvious types of domination (e.g. violence against women), there are also indirect and invisible powers that individuals can exert over others (interpersonal power) or over institutions (structural pow-

er)²³. This power approach leaves room for various types of resistance. It also shows that with an empowerment-based approach, all of the values and relationships within society must be rebuilt. The issue is not therefore the domination of men by women, but instead a form of permanent renegotiation between both sexes of the individual and collective responsibilities that relate to social justice.

THE ELEMENTS OF EMPOWERMENT²⁴

In summary, empowerment therefore refers to the individual or collective ability to act in an autono-

mous way in relation to their life and societal choices, as well as the means required and the process used to achieve this ability to act. In this study, we will use the classification of empowerment used by the Belgian Development Cooperation to assess their development programmes. This classification breaks down empowerment into four areas²⁵.

"TO HAVE"

This component mainly refers to the economic element of empowerment, in other words improving material living conditions and well-being. It is one of the ways referred to above of attaining an ability to

make choices. It covers all of the means of accessing and controlling material and human resources: economic means (e.g. income, access to credit or markets, social benefits), means of production (e.g. land, tools, technologies), services (e.g. education, healthcare, water), human resources (e.g. solidarity networks), etc. It is not an essential prerequisite to achieving overall empowerment but it is clear that a person has to move from being in a situation of permanent survival to be able to make choices.

“TO KNOW”

“To know”, or knowledge, refers to practical or intellectual knowledge and skills. In particular it covers the management of techniques, procedures or people, training (e.g. literacy), as well as developing skills in critical analysis. This latter point (to paraphrase P. Freire, “the transformation of consciousness”), is crucial in terms of changing male/female relationships, particularly in societies that are socio-culturally “closed”.

“TO WANT”

Also referred to as “internal power”, “to want” is connected to an individual and/or group’s psychological strength and the strength of their identity (self-confidence, image/self-esteem). It covers the ability and willingness to make choices about their future themselves, as well as being aware of their own life plan and the challenges faced by their community. These development aspects of a person’s identity are highly dependent on the image given by family, people in the immediate environment and by society.

“TO BE ABLE TO”

This area relates to the opportunity a person or group has to take decisions, enjoy freedom of action and reposition themselves in their power relationships with those around them or with society in a broader sense. This element also relies heavily on the resources (“to have”, “to know”, “to want”) that have been acquired. At an individual level, it can refer to a person’s ability to take part in or control decision-making within their immediate environment (family, possibly extended family, community, etc.) or remote environment (level of socio-political influence, leadership within society in a wider sense). At a collective level, it includes the group’s ability to organise itself in order to negotiate for or defend a common objective (individual or collective rights), for example through lobbying or campaigning activity.

CIRCLES OF EMPOWERMENT²⁶

To visualise these different elements and the dynamic of the process itself, you will find below (figure 1) the circles of empowerment produced by the AURA methodology (Assisted Self-Reinforcement)²⁷. These concentric circles represent the space in which the individual or group exerts influence on the empowerment process, from the internal circle (“to want”), to the middle circle (“to have”, “to know”) and the external circle (“to be able to”). All of the institutions sit outside these circles: family, the State, religious institutions, school, media, NGOs, etc.

This diagram is a simple way of visualising the processes involved in transforming society, particularly in terms of gender. The arrows point-

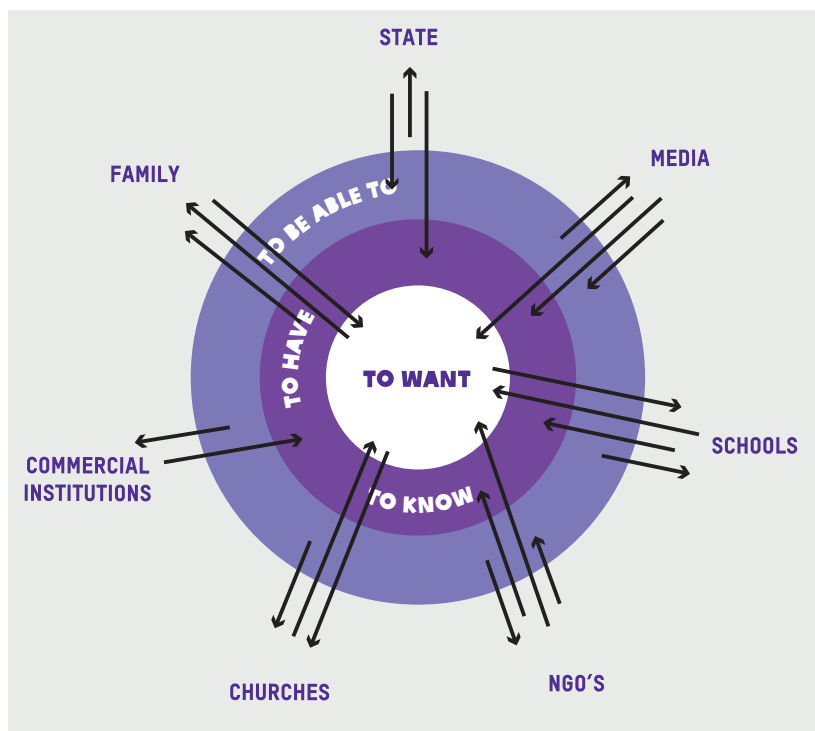


Figure 1. Circles of empowerment

ing into the circles represent the influence that the institutions have on both individuals and organisations. For example: family has a significant influence on a person's development and self-confidence as well as the image a person has of themselves ("to want"). On the other hand, individuals and their organisations (groups, associations) can influence society's institutions and thereby help to transform society (arrows pointing outside). For example: a group of farmers can influence the market to negotiate a better price for their products.

The arrows do not carry the same weight. In other words, the ability to influence differs at each level. For example, a person has less power than an organisation to influence an institution such as the market or State. In a general sense, arrows that start in the outer circle are more important than those that start in the inner circle. Finally, the

diagram does not include all of the relationships of influence, for example the relationships between the different institutions, which naturally play a major role in transforming society.

EMPOWERMENT: A DYNAMIC AND NON-LINEAR PROCESS²⁸

A spiral can also be used as another way of representing the different steps involved in the empowerment process (figure 2). Here you can see that while certain gains are required to reach a higher level of empowerment, the process is not necessarily linear or chronological. The individuals and/or social groups can at times reinforce their well-being and their involvement. Neither is the evolution constant: individuals and/or social groups will have different behaviours at different times in their life or depending on other political, social or economic factors.

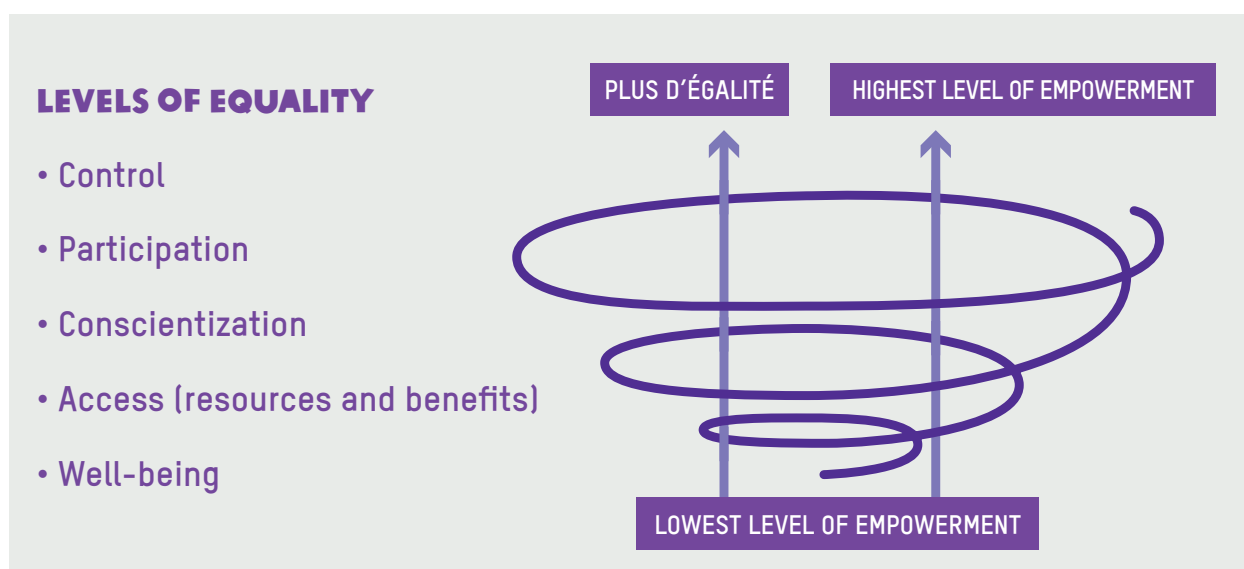


Figure 2. The different levels in the process of women's empowerment²⁹

CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS

BANGLADESH

OVERALL SITUATION

Bangladesh has 160 million inhabitants, making it the world's seventh most populated country as well as one of the most densely populated. Almost all (98%) of the population are of Bengali origin, apart from some minority groups mostly from the Bihar region (neighbouring Indian region). Ninety per cent of the country's inhabitants are Muslim, making it the third largest Muslim country in the world after Indonesia and Pakistan.

The country's current borders were drawn up in 1947 during the partition of India, when the country became the eastern part of Pakistan (known as East Pakistan). Both parts of Pakistan shared a majority religion (Islam) but the link was fragile due to the enormous distance between them (1600 km of Indian territory). The Bengalis in East Pakistan were subjected to political, economic and linguistic discrimination by the western half of the country, and declared independence in 1971. Bangladesh was officially formed after a short war of independence, supported by India and the USSR. The new state was soon beset by various political crises, in particular a series of coups d'état at the end of the 1970s. Under pressure from western donors, and within the context of the end of the Cold War, General H.M. Ershad was forced to resign in 1990³⁰.



Textile confection workshop in Dhaka (2013)

Bangladesh has since become a relatively stable parliamentary democracy and this has enabled it to make significant social progress³¹. The poverty rate fell from 56.6% in 1992 to 31.5% in 2010³². The maternal mortality rate dropped by 40% over the same period. The Human Development Index (HDI) is currently 0.524 which, according to the UN, places it in the ranks of countries that have achieved an average level of human development³³. Many NGOs have been involved in these developments at a social level, with the State progressively conferring upon them various healthcare, microfinance³⁴ and education³⁵ roles.

Strong economic growth has also played a positive role, with the country seeing an average annual growth of 5% since 1990³⁶ (6.3% during the 2011-2012 tax year³⁷). Reasons for this growth include

transfers from Bangladeshis living outside the country (over \$8 billion in 2011-2012), but above all textile exports. Faced with salary increases, many Asian countries have relocated their production to Bangladesh. The country's textiles sector now has over 4 million workers and accounts for 7% of GDP and 76% of exports, with a total value of \$14.2 billion (6.5% of the global market)³⁸. These results make it the world's second largest clothing exporter after China³⁹. The social cost has, however, been immense and working conditions are often inhumane, as illustrated by the numerous industrial accidents such as the collapse of the Rana Plaza building in June 2013.

Many challenges still remain: 63 million people still live below the poverty line, the majority of them living in rural areas (71.1% in 2012)

and carrying out subsistence farming; health problems are widespread (arsenic contaminating the water, malaria, dengue fever, etc.); natural disasters are becoming more frequent (floods, hurricanes, etc., primarily caused by global warming); governance is poor⁴⁰ and the government is still seen as one of the most corrupt in the world⁴¹; and an increasingly competitive globalised economy threatens growth.

Bangladesh has also had its fair share of political crises. The country's two main political parties - the Awami League (AL), a secular party strongly associated with the 1971 war of independence against Pakistan, and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), a conservative party with an Islamist leaning - have been involved in disputes relating to the electoral process. As a result there was a very low turnout (15-20%) in the latest parliamentary elections in January 2013. The elections returned a heavily discredited Awami League led by Sheikh Hasina to power. Even more discredited since it has moved in a dangerous authoritarian direction (arresting demonstrators, legal action against journalists or heads of NGOs, etc.)⁴².

GENDER INEQUALITY

Some progress but could do (a lot) better. This phrase could be applied to the situation of women in Bangladesh today. In 2013, the country was ranked 75th out of 136 countries included in the World Economic Forum's (WEF) Global Gender Gap Index⁴³. There has therefore been a net progress in just a few years, as

the country was ranked 100th in 2007. Nevertheless, these improvements have been very uneven.

On a more positive note, Bangladesh is one of the most advanced developing countries in terms of gender equality in politics. The number of women elected to the country's parliament has doubled in 20 years and now stands at close to 20%. While this may still be low, the figure is within the world average (21% according to the latest UN report on human development)⁴⁴. The country also holds the world record for the presence of a woman in the highest office of state. The country's two main political parties - the BNP and AL - are also both led by a woman (respectively Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina, the current prime minister⁴⁵). These progresses can also be seen at a local level as increasing numbers of women are now members of local councils, bodies with considerable power in terms of rural and urban development. And finally, Bangladesh has the eighth smallest gender gap in

the world in terms of political emancipation⁴⁶.

While there are various reasons for this, the political progress has begun to influence social norms and even family structure. Bangladeshi society is gradually abandoning its traditional view of women as an economic burden, especially within the urban middle classes. This has resulted in a drop in the "missing women" phenomenon, a phrase used to refer to infanticide based on sex (see also below the Indian context)⁴⁷. It has also made it more acceptable for women to go to work. A symbol of these changes is the predominance of women working in the textile industry (80 to 90% according to sources), which, as mentioned above, is a key sector in Bangladesh's economic success⁴⁸. Microfinance has played an important role in this emancipation, particularly in rural settings: 92% of borrowers are women and 90% live in a rural area⁴⁹.

Significant progress has also been



Khaleda Zia (BNP president) et Sheikh Hasina (AL president and current 1st minister)



Protest in Dhaka against violence on women (2010)

made in the education sector, particularly at the lower end of the education system (primary and secondary school), where the number of girls registered to attend school is now higher than boys (110 girls for every 100 boys). Amongst others, this had led to a shortening of the gap between the sexes in terms of literacy: 61.3% of men and 52.2% of women could read and write in 2010, compared to 44.3% and 25.8% respectively in 1990⁵⁰. These im-

provements are particularly associated with several national programmes: compulsory primary education, the "Food for Education" (FFE) programme⁵¹, and more specifically for girls, grants or free registration at primary and secondary schools⁵². Mothers also have a stronger voice when it comes to their children's education, especially in terms of their daughters.

Despite this progress, a large ma-

jority of Bangladeshi women still have to deal with extreme levels of discrimination and injustice. One of the main black spots is the continued practice of early marriages and, more generally, violations of the sexual and reproductive rights of women. The average age at which girls marry in Bangladesh is 16.4 years, the lowest in Asia and one of the lowest in the world⁵³. Consequences of this include persistently high fertility rates (80.6 births per 1000 women aged 15 to 19)⁵⁴ and high maternal death rates⁵⁵ (170 per 100000 births)⁵⁶ (only 31% of births receive assistance from medical personnel⁵⁷). Another impact is a school drop-out rate that is higher among girls than boys, which is the result of discrimination issues and violence in school⁵⁸.

Another major problem is the mostly informal nature of women's work⁵⁹. According to the Asian Development Bank, 92.6% of working women work in the informal sector, compared to 85.8% for men⁶⁰. These sectors are low-income sectors, mostly farming (e.g. shrimp farming) but also work in clothing factories or domestic work. These jobs typically involve poor working conditions and a general lack of social safeguards and protection, which increases their vulnerability. The migration of women to foreign countries, for domestic or other work, also leads to many forms of exploitation, both in and outside of Bangladesh⁶¹.

The issue of violence against women, especially domestic, is another of the country's major weaknesses. Police statistics, as well as inde-

pendent reviews by NGOs, highlight an increase in different forms of violence in recent years:

- Several studies have shown that approximately 60% of Bangladeshi men have used physical and/or sexual violence against their partners (with almost half of this serious physical violence)⁶².
- In a UN study, almost 15% of men interviewed admitted to raping women or girls⁶³.
- Nearly 3000 cases of dowry-related violence⁶⁴ were reported in 2004, with this figure doubling by 2012⁶⁵.
- Dowries have been illegal in Bangladesh since 1980, but the number of dowry requests rose from 5331 in 2010 to 7079 in 2011⁶⁶.

These numbers are likely to underestimate the problem, as many incidents go unreported. Victims usually don't file a complaint due to strong social pressure, police indifference (and even hostility), the complexity and cost of legal proceedings, etc. As a result, out of 109621 cases of violence identified by the police in 2010-2012, only 6875 were deemed to be "genuine" and resulted in legal proceedings⁶⁷. Many cases are handled informally, by means of a compromise or through local courts, the "shalishes"⁶⁸. These cases are usually not included in government statistics⁶⁹.

Bangladeshi institutions generally do little to protect women's rights. The constitution refers to equal rights, but only in the public sphere. Civil and religious laws are highly patriarchal in nature and are fre-

BANGLADESHI LAWS PROMOTING WOMEN'S RIGHTS

- 1980: Dowry Prohibition Act
- 2000: The Women and Children Repression Prevention Act
- 2002: Acid Crime Control Act
- 2009: Citizenship Act and Human Rights Commission Act
- 2010: Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act
- 2012: Hindu Marriage Registration Act
- 2012: Human Trafficking Deterrence and Suppression Act

quently applied in the private domain, particularly for issues surrounding divorce, marriage, inheritance and child custody, often issues that are the most important to women. Muslim law, for example, specifies that a son must receive twice the amount of inheritance given to a daughter. Or that a woman loses her custody rights when she marries a man who is not related to her child. Traditional Hindu law also places strong restrictions on a woman's inheritance and divorce rights. Ms. Rashida Manjoo, UN special rapporteur on violence against women, recommended the immediate adoption of a uniform family code that complies with CEDAW provisions⁷⁰. Ms. Manjoo also advocated that the Bangladeshi government withdraw its reservations in relation to CEDAW Articles 2 and 16, which are designed to eradicate discrimination against women under the law and within the family. Bangladesh has up until now opposed these articles, stating that they conflict with Sharia law⁷¹.

In the face of these different examples of violence, various laws have however been adopted over the

past 20 years (see box below). But these laws are often loosely and ineffectively applied. This can be explained by the lack of application procedures as well as widespread (and publicly acknowledged) corruption on the part of civil servants (bribes, destruction or loss of evidence, criminals set free, politicization of legal decisions, etc.)⁷². It is worth noting however that the Bangladeshi government has recently implemented several measures to limit the levels of violence: local accommodation and assistance centres for victims, a national helpline, a trauma control centre and a series of prevention units. These official services are often complemented by those supplied by various NGOs on the ground, for example legal support or income-generating activity such as microcredit programmes⁷³.

Overall, the position of women's rights in Bangladesh remains somewhat mixed. The essentially patriarchal nature of Bangladeshi society remains an immense obstacle, particularly in rural settings and/or within minorities. This can be seen

SUMMARY OF THE MAIN WOMEN'S RIGHTS CHALLENGES IN BANGLADESH

- Raising awareness of and preventing early marriages
- Combating violence against women, in particular domestic violence
- Family Code including the fight against discrimination in the private sphere
- Improved implementation of existing legislation
- Recognition of women's informal work

at a legislative level: despite a succession of laws in recent years, their implementation has been hampered due to deeply ingrained traditions that exist at all levels of society, from the police to religious and community leaders, and often amongst women themselves⁷⁴. Despite this, the fact that these issues are being discussed in an increasingly open manner – in the media, within the political classes, civil society, etc. – is in itself a victory and leaves hope for future improvements.

eighteenth century. Initially colonised by various Portuguese, Dutch, French and English trading companies, it was the English who, by 1850, controlled almost the entire country. India gained its independence in 1947 after fighting in two world wars alongside the British and a struggle for independence dominated by Mahatma Gandhi's non-violent movement. The country has been a federal parliamentary republic since 1950 and is reputed to be the world's largest democracy.

India was still considered to be a poor country at the start of the 1980s but has since seen rapid economic growth. The country's GDP currently stands at \$1877 billion, which makes it the tenth largest economy in the world⁷⁷, one of the so-called emerging countries⁷⁸. The country's growth peaked in the mid-2000s, when it reached an impressive average of over 9% growth per year. Most economists attribute this growth spurt to the change in economic policy that began at the start of the 1990s. It was at this point that political leaders decided to switch from a Nehru-style mixed, socialist economy⁷⁹ to a liberalised free-market economy. Politicians focused on developing one sector of the population (the educated and urban middle classes⁸⁰) and specific sectors of the economy (the services and hi-tech sectors)⁸¹.

India has however lost some of its shine in recent years, with a sharp economic slowdown. While its performance initially continued unchanged during the economic crisis

INDIA OVERALL SITUATION

India is both a country and continent, and is the world's second most populous country (1.25 billion inhabitants in 2013⁷⁵) after China, which it is expected to outpace in 2030⁷⁶. The population is mostly Hindu (80.5%), and also includes Muslims (13.4%), Christians (2.4%), Sikhs (1.9%) and Buddhists (0.8%). The country was the cradle of ancient civilisations but was gradually colonised by Europeans from the



Slums vs. buildings in Mumbai

(9.9% growth in 2011), its growth rate dropped to 4.4% in 2013⁸². The Indian economy initially suffered from the adverse international economic conditions, particularly a drop in foreign direct investment (FDI), a devaluation of the rupee and a sharp drop in the export of services⁸³. Some also highlight the country's intrinsic weaknesses: poor infrastructure (transport, energy, water distribution), deep-rooted corruption⁸⁴, political paralysis and labour regulations that are seen as too restrictive by investors⁸⁵.

Others point the finger of blame at the failure of the approach known as "trickle-down", where selective growth, based primarily on services and aimed at the middle classes, is able to boost the entire country's economy. And it would indeed be difficult to contradict this criticism, as inequalities have sky-rocketed since the start of the liberalisation process. Some figures illustrate this phenomenon:

In 10 years, the number of Indian billionaires has risen from 6 to 61. In 2008, these minority elites held 26% of the country's wealth (compared to 1.8% in 2003)⁸⁶. Iconic examples of these "super rich" Indians are the controversial steel magnate Lakshmi Mittal (6th richest person in the world) or the brothers Mukesh and Anil Ambani (19th and 36th richest).

At the same time, over three quarters of Indians currently live on less than \$2 per day⁸⁷.

India's HDI loses 28% of its value once adjustments for inequalities

have been made (from 0.586 to 0.418)⁸⁸.

The government of former prime minister Manmohan Singh, the principal architect behind the reforms of the past 20 years, has implemented numerous social programmes. But despite this largely insufficient policy of subsidies, the wider population was still excluded from the country's growth. Take the guaranteed-employment scheme for example. Launched in 2006, the scheme guaranteed 100 days of paid work for workers in rural areas, but met with a series of obstacles, not the least of which is corruption⁸⁹. The countryside, which contains 60% of the workforce, is the poor relation in the story of Indian growth. Agriculture only saw a 2% annual growth during the period 2000-2010, compared to almost 10% for manufacturing and services⁹⁰.

A further example of this deplorable social situation is that India's public expenditure on healthcare amounts to only 1% of GDP⁹¹. According to the United Nations, as a result only 30% of the population has access to adequate healthcare, 50% to basic medicines and 44% of children suffer from malnutrition. Over 500 million Indians still live below the poverty line⁹², the equivalent to 42% of the country's population and one third of the world's poor (more than the poor in sub-Saharan Africa). India also remains immensely fragmented: by class⁹³, caste and religious community, but also at a geographical level, between a poor north-east and the prosperous states in the south

and west of the country, as well as between cities and the countryside. Poorer Indians are essentially rural-based, Adivasis (a tribe), Dalits (untouchables), Muslims and female⁹⁴.

In the face of these challenges, India swung to the right end of the political spectrum during the recent May 2014 parliamentary elections. Narendra Modi, of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP, right-wing Hindu nationalists) won a majority of the 543 seats in the "Lok Sabha", or lower house of parliament. His main rival, Rahul Gandhi, successor to the Gandhi-Nehru dynasty and leader of the Congress Party (India's traditionally dominant party), was soundly beaten, paying the price for a particularly lacklustre campaign. Modi also capitalised on the overall disenchantment with the outgoing government, weakened by a series of corruption scandals as well as the recent economic slowdown.

The new government's main priority is to spread growth. Many see Modi as a shock tactician, capable of replicating at a national level the economic performance he delivered in the state of Gujarat between 2001 and 2013. His economic plan is to intensify the country's liberalisation and make a clean break with the state capitalism of his predecessors in the Congress Party⁹⁵, particularly by focusing on manufacturing exports and boosting heavy infrastructure projects (electricity, railways, etc.). Aside from the growth objectives, the benefit of this "East Asian" model is, in Modi's opinion, that it will absorb the 10 million workers who reach

working age in India each year. The main challenges for this policy are financial – via foreign capital or internal savings – and migratory – how to manage the immense internal population movements that will be generated, especially from the countryside⁹⁶.

In terms of internal issues, it would appear that the pre-election fear of interfaith disturbances, raised by the Hindu nationalist nature of the BJP and Modi's background, has failed to materialise. Modi's reputation was for some time scarred by the 2002 anti-Muslim pogroms in his state of Gujarat. The riots claimed over 2000 victims, mostly Muslims, with Modi doing little to bring the rioting to an end. It would appear that Modi has managed to impose an element of pragmatism on his party's nationalist base⁹⁷.

Many analysts highlight the fact that the India's extreme heterogeneity – religious, social, linguistic – acts as a moderating factor on every central government.

GENDER INEQUALITY

Similarly to the situation in Bangladesh, the condition of Indian women remains, despite some progress in recent years, one of the most difficult in the world: from the persistence of female infanticide to the resurgence of the dowry and the many acts of violence committed against women including honour crimes and rape, India remains profoundly affected by gender discrimination⁹⁸. This situation is partly reflected in the WEF's Global Gender Gap Index. In 2013, India was ranked 101st out of a total of 136 countries, and lowest out of all BRICS

countries⁹⁹. Its ranking was especially low in the sectors of education (120th position), economic participation (124th position) and health (135th position).

One of the country's only positive areas in terms of gender equality is women's participation in politics, where it is ranked 9th in the WEF index. This score is a reflection of the numerous great female figures who have played a role in Indian political life: historically Indira Gandhi (prime minister for 16 years), but also her daughter-in-law Sonia Gandhi (president of the Congress Party) and Meira Kumar (president of the Lok Sabha, one of the two chambers of parliament). In addition, since 2009, 50% of positions within local political institutions (the "Panchayati") have been reserved for women. Nevertheless,



Narendra Modi during an electoral meeting (2014)

women accounted for only 11% at a national and regional level in 2012, far behind the average in Bangladesh for example (see above)¹⁰⁰.

The most severe and visible problem is without a doubt the continued practice of infanticides and the gender-selective abortion of girls. This issue can be clearly seen in the infant death rate: 44.3 deaths per 1000 births amongst girls, compared to 43.5 for boys, rates that are the reverse of the global average (32.6 and 37 respectively)¹⁰¹. The ratios in relation to children's sex (aged 0-6 years) are also telling: 914 girls for every 1000 boys¹⁰², the lowest figure ever recorded (it stood at 927 in 2001)¹⁰³. In regions such as the Punjab and Gujarat, it even reaches the alarming rate of 800 girls for every 1000 boys. The fact that these regions are the most affected by this issue should come as no surprise as they are also the richest regions. The middle classes are greater in number and have greater access to pre-natal testing (ultrasound), which makes it easier to carry out discriminatory abortions. Such abortions have been illegal since 1994, when the Pre-Conception and Prenatal Diagnostic Techniques Act was adopted¹⁰⁴. Gynocide, the killing of girls, is also still fairly widespread in rural areas¹⁰⁵. Based on the latest census carried out in 2011, India had 37 million fewer women than men, a result of foeticides, infanticides, negligence towards young girls and other crimes or discrimination against women. Any return to a normal balance between men and women would require a further 60

million women (the total number of "missing women", to use the phrase coined by economist Amartya Sen¹⁰⁶). Certain authors refer to this demographic imbalance as "genocide"¹⁰⁷.

This behaviour is associated with a general preference for boys in Indian society and can be explained by a whole series of economic and cultural factors, first and foremost the dowry system. Despite being banned under Indian law since 1961, it continues to this day and has even seen a resurgence in some regions as a result of economic growth. It is also spreading amongst lower castes, which have begun to copy the social behaviour of the richer members of society. The growing demands from the husband's family make it increasingly important economically for a couple to have a boy. In addition, many of the dowry demands are not met, which results in more crimes against women. Believing themselves to have been deceived, the groom or in-laws often go as far as burning the bride alive. According to Indian police, 8233 women were killed in 2012 following dowry disputes, the equivalent to 22 per day¹⁰⁸. The constant rise in this kind of crime is facilitated by delays in legal proceedings and a low conviction rate (only 32% in 2013)¹⁰⁹. Due to the persistence of this practice with deep cultural roots, an article of the Criminal Code (Section 498A), adopted in 1983, punishes perpetrators of "atrocities" committed in the name of so-called dowry "duties".

More generally India, like Bangla-

desh, has a record high number of cases of violence against women: dowry-related violence, as previously explained, but also domestic violence, rape, sexual harassment, acid attacks, honour crimes, sexual trafficking and kidnapping. A recent survey carried out amongst 200 gender experts ranked India as the 4th most dangerous place in the world for women¹¹⁰. According to official statistics (National Crime Records Bureau - NCRB), 309546 crimes of this kind were reported to the police in 2013, compared to 244270 in 2012, an increase of 26.7%¹¹¹. Once again these figures can only serve as a general illustration of the problem, as the social stigma attached to this crime makes violence against women one of the world's most under-reported crimes¹¹². This is aggravated by the fact that approximately half of all violence occurs in the victim's home (committed by the husband or family¹¹³, on whom many of the women rely heavily), as well as the fact that marital rape is not criminalised in India^{114,115}. And finally, a further obstacle is the fact that police officials are reluctant to record the complaints. Most of these officials are in fact men¹¹⁶, the low conviction rate is no incentive and these complaints increase the statistics to the detriment of these officials.

The country is nevertheless gradually becoming more aware of these issues, especially amongst the urban middle classes. A major turning point was the rape and murder on a bus in New Delhi of a young 23-year-old girl¹¹⁷ in December 2012. The particularly savage nature of the



Protest against Delhi gang rape (2013)

rape (by six men, including the driver, along with torture involving an iron bar) and the fact that the victim died from her injuries, provoked widespread anger and shock across the country. Shortly afterwards, New Delhi saw massive and at times violent demonstrations, fuelled by a media-led mobilisation campaign¹¹⁸. The government was forced to react by strengthening legislation on sexual assault. Rapists now risk at least 20 years in prison – and up to life in prison, or the death penalty if they reoffend or the victim dies¹¹⁹. The case also received a speedier legal process: nine months of special proceedings (“fast-track court”) led to the death sentence for four of the defendants¹²⁰. A far from common sentence to say the least, given the usual conviction rate for rape (3.5% in 2012).

Aside from the legal and institutional solutions, the case provoked a major debate about the social and

cultural roots of this violence¹²¹. Women have been able to speak out more freely than ever before. The 2013 statistics showed an increase in the number of reported rapes in Delhi compared to 2012, which could be a sign that Indians are gradually ridding themselves of the taboos and guilt that has prevented them from prosecuting those who commit these crimes up to now¹²².

Another relatively common form of violence in India is the honour crime. This term covers a range of violence committed primarily against women by members of their close family, mostly males (father, brother, uncle). The victims are deemed to have brought dishonour on the family, as a result of behaviour judged to be immoral: rejecting an arranged marriage and/or choosing their own partner, asking for a divorce, having a relationship outside of marriage or having being subjected to a sexual assault¹²³.

While the incidence of such violence may be lower than in Arab countries, they still result in 900 deaths per year in India (out of a total of 5000 worldwide), mostly in the northern states of Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh¹²⁴.

The economic situation is little better. Women’s participation rate in the workforce¹²⁵ was only 29% in India in 2012, compared to 57% in Bangladesh¹²⁶. Most working women work in the informal sector: 96%, compared to 91% of men¹²⁷. Given the country’s size and diversity, the situation differs enormously from one region to the next. Women in the north-eastern and southern provinces tend to work more in the formal sector, especially in the services sector. The same goes for urban areas, where the female employment rate in the informal sector is considerably lower, at around 65–70%¹²⁸.

As in Bangladesh, various laws have been adopted over the past 30 years in the area of women’s rights (see box below). But like its neighbouring country, the implementation of these laws remains highly problematic (corruption issues, cumbersome administrative procedures, limited budgets, lack of information and education for women, etc.). Legislation increasingly comes up against religious rules, always predominantly in the area of an individual’s rights (basic social rights, divorce, inheritance rights, etc.¹²⁹). An interesting example of a legislative instrument instigated by the government in Delhi is the scheme known as “Ladli”, which provides an allowance for the birth

of each girl. As the allowance cannot be used before the child reaches the age of majority, the system is an attempt to combat girl infanticide and early marriage. Various other support and positive discrimination programmes exist, such as the “Rashtriya Mahila Kosh” (credit for women on low incomes), or the “Rajiv Gandhi” project (nutritional, educational, healthcare support, etc., for teenagers at risk), but once again their implementation has been extremely complex and limited¹³⁰.

To conclude, all of this data clearly shows that the socio-economic position of women in India remains especially difficult. It is even more striking when compared with women in Bangladesh who, although faced with a much worse economic

situation, are in a slightly better position. The gang-rape case in Delhi highlighted the deeply patriarchal and violent nature of Indian society. But the ensuing media attention also showed that India is changing and that a growing percentage of the population was no longer willing to accept this kind of violence. In particular, the emergence of new economic, educational and political opportunities for a growing number

of women has given rise to an increased level of activism and stronger civil society, one that is better able to defend women’s rights, whether in the media, government, political life or wider social structures. These developments encounter some resistance however, as shown by the appearance of “masculinist¹³¹” movements and a recent draft amendment to the dowry law¹³².

SUMMARY OF THE MAIN WOMEN’S RIGHTS CHALLENGES IN INDIA

- Raising awareness of and preventing gender-based infanticides/abortions
- Combating the dowry system
- Combating violence against women, in particular domestic violence
- Improved implementation of existing legislation
- Gender equality in the workplace and recognition of women’s informal work

INDIAN LAWS PROMOTING WOMEN’S RIGHTS

- 1961: Dowry Prohibition Act
- 1983: Section 498A of the Penal Code punishing dowry related crimes
- 1994: Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques Act
- 2000: Women and Children Repression Prevention Act
- 2002: Acid Crime Control Act
- 2009: Citizenship Act and Human Rights Commission Act
- 2010: Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act
- 2012: Hindu Marriage Registration Act
- 2012: Human Trafficking Deterrence and Suppression Act



METHODOLOGY

DATA COLLECTION

The qualitative data¹³³ in this study was collected in August 2014 during a three-week mission to India and Bangladesh (one week per partner organisation, see description below). Various methods were used:

- A series of semi-structured¹³⁴ interviews with the partner organisations. Staff members interviewed were mainly those in charge of educational activities or campaigns, as well as directors. These discussions covered the way the organisation operates, its activities, relationships with the groups of artisans, the tools used at a political or educational level, etc.
- Semi-structured interviews with artisans (or “life stories”), from rural communities or slums. Most of these artisans were fairly old and held “leadership” profiles, i.e., they held or had held positions as group managers or representatives within fair trade organisations (FTO). The aim was not to obtain a representative sample of all artisans, but instead to take a closer look at the empowerment process, with the career path within the organisation being most significant.
- One or two focus groups¹³⁵ per FTO. At CJW and Sasha, around 20 representatives from different groups of artisans were gathered together for one morning. At Tara Projects, discussions were held with one single community (Sunita



Focus group, Sunita Handicrafts, Tara Projects – 05/08/2014

Handicrafts, Badarpur¹³⁶, New Delhi). The same process was followed with the additional focus group at Sasha (KSEWS, Paikpari, West Bengal). The aim here was to gather together a wide variety of testimonials from artisans: the impact of fair trade handicrafts on their careers, issues, needs and suggestions in terms of women’s rights, etc. The workshops followed a research-action approach¹³⁷, especially with the first workshop at Sasha, which enabled the start of a long-term process of discussion and awareness-raising on women’s rights.

- Finally, in each region visited, interviews were also carried out with civil society organisations that specialise in issues of fair trade:
- Dhaka, Bangladesh: Oxfam Bangladesh, Caritas, Naripokkho, Shapla Neer, Ecota (Bangladeshi fair trade forum), Tushar Kona

Khander (consultant for the FTO Dhaka Handicrafts).

- Calcutta, India: Jeevika, Swayam, Devasmita Sridhar (consultant at Sasha).
- Delhi, India: Oxfam India.

METHODOLOGICAL LIMITATIONS

This study clearly has no quantitative value, given the limited number of interviews conducted and workshops held. It simply provides qualitative avenues for analysis on the empowerment process of women artisans from the three Indian and Bangladeshi FTOs. The testimonials gathered are restricted to three highly specific geographical areas: Delhi, Calcutta and Dhaka as well as their surrounding areas. This prevents, among other things, any systematic comparison between Indian and Bangladeshi situations. Some interviews were carried out in

rural areas, but the majority were with urban groups. Translations were of course required and these limited the flow of the discussions (particularly during the focus groups). They also lessened the authenticity of the testimonials, with the interpreters inevitably altering some of what was said. And finally, the theoretical framework has been simplified so that the study can be used by all potential campaign partners).

FAIR TRADE HANDICRAFT ORGANISATIONS STUDIED

CORR – THE JUTE WORKS (CJW), BANGLADESH¹³⁸

CORR – The Jute Works (CJW) was established in 1973 to assist the women affected by the independence war against Pakistan. Producing jute products provides women with a quick way to earn money from a traditional craft that they know well and can perform at home. In 2013, the organisation worked with over 160 groups of artisans, with approximately 3700 women and 350 men across 23 districts in Bangladesh. The groups are organised in a collective and autonomous way (e.g. they monitor production on the ground). Most of the artisans live in rural areas (82%), with the remainder (12%) living in slums¹³⁹. The organisation's turnover in 2011–2012 was US\$ 773000¹⁴⁰.

To cope with the fall in demand for jute products, CJW has developed new production methods. Besides

items made of jute (bags, baskets, table sets, hammocks), the groups produce articles made from terracotta, wax and banana fibres. They also produce craft objects from papier mâché, glass beads and leather. The organisation is also looking to diversify its export markets and has in recent years begun to work with the textile multinational H&M¹⁴¹.

At a social level, CJW runs education and awareness-raising programmes (hygiene, family planning, resource management, women's rights, etc.), as well as professional training (product development, quality, etc.). The groups also benefit from a collective savings fund, managed democratically by each group, and designed to encourage the artisans to explore other complementary activities. These funds have enabled many of them to develop family agricultural projects (animal husbandry, small-scale fish farming and cultivating vegetable

crops, for which CJW also provides seeds). CJW also provides them with a small credit fund for personal needs, healthcare services (e.g. eye tests), equipment to provide drinking water for the community, shrubs, etc.

In terms of campaigning, CJW is mostly active in the areas of fair trade and women's rights (see final chapter of this study). As the organisation has limited resources in this area, it appears to want to empower the groups of artisans and/or work in tandem with others (it is a member of the WFTO, WFTO-Asia and ECOTA, Bangladeshi fair trade forum)¹⁴².

SASHA, CALCUTTA, INDIA

The Sasha organisation, originally called Sarba Shanti Ayog (SSA) was established in 1978 in Calcutta by a group of designers and development officers looking to provide artisans with a way of marketing



Jute bags workshop, CJW – 23/07/2014

their products. In 1984, the artisans created their own association, Sasha Textile Artisans Association, which covered the four areas of production: weaving, dyeing and printing, embroidery and assembly. In 1986, SACP (Sasha Artisans Association for Craft Producers) was founded to handle all aspects of marketing, while Sarba Shanti Ayog (SSA) focused on development projects (technical, organisational and financial support)¹⁴³.

In 2013, Sasha was working with around 5000 producers, organised into 72 groups (individual producers, cooperatives, community groups and freelancers). Sasha primarily focuses on women (70%), as well as marginalised groups (Dalits and Adivasi) in rural and semi-urban areas in the states of West Bengal, Orissa (Odisha), Bihar and the North-East. Most of the artisans work together in a workshop, with just a few of the steps (embroidery, etc.) sometimes carried out at home, as some of the women require more flexible hours¹⁴⁴. The products sold include crafts, textiles, jute products, leather, natural fibres, metals, organic food products (through the RASA rural agriculture service) and plant-based preparations¹⁴⁵. Approximately 30% of Sasha's sales come from the local market (shops in Calcutta and Delhi) and 70% from exports. Sasha had a turnover of US\$ 1.8 million in 2011-2012¹⁴⁶.

Over time, Sasha has become a services platform and also set up the EDF foundation ("Enterprise Development Foundation"), which supports entrepreneurship amongst women and the poor by providing



Embroidery workshop, KSEWS, Sasha – 28/08/2014

funding (microcredits) and training (e.g. product innovation and development). This willingness to support entrepreneurial spirit is specific to Sasha. The economic services it provides (fostering innovation and creativity, support with producing a business plan, improving techniques, linking them up with financiers, etc.) enable these small producers to organise themselves and create their own activities to support the economic and social development of their communities¹⁴⁷.

It should also be noted that Sasha is a member of the WFTO and co-founder of the Fair Trade Forum India and the Asia Fair Trade Forum (previous name for WFTO-Asia), networks through which Sasha gets involved in several lobbying/campaigning activities both in India and internationally.

TARA PROJECTS, DELHI, INDIA

Founded in the 1960s in Delhi, Tara Projects is an organisation that tackles poverty both at an economic level as well as in terms of exclusion and human rights. It is now the largest FTO in India (almost US\$ 3 million turnover in 2010-2011). In 2010 it worked with around 30 groups (cooperatives, micro-enterprises, support groups, family workshops) with a total of 1000 producers (60% of these women). Most of these came from immigrant or marginalised groups living in rural/semi-urban areas in the regions of Bihar, Bengal, Uttar Pradesh and Delhi. Part of the production takes place directly in the Tara workshops. Home working is discouraged (it accounts for only 5% of producers), for reasons related to child labour and women's independence¹⁴⁸.

Tara Projects is split into two sections: a marketing department and a department handling community development. The former supports the production and marketing of artisanal products (jewellery, boxes, vases, statuettes, etc., made from soapstone, carved wood, resin, etc.), under fair trade conditions (fair wages, pre-financing, paid leave, emergency assistance, healthcare insurance, etc.). The latter department covers all of the educational and campaigning activities and the various social programmes. One such programme is the construction of a medical centre in the village of Badarpur, which has enabled the entire village to receive medical check-ups.

Tara Projects also provides artisans with a range of professional training (sewing, embroidery, marketing techniques, management, quality, product development, recycling, etc.), providing them with some independence and even enabling them to start their own businesses (also through microcredit and collective savings programmes). The organisation also provides more generic training for adults, particularly women (e.g. IT, literacy)¹⁴⁹. And finally, in an attempt to fight child labour, it has built 10 informal education centres. Over 1000 children have received schooling in these centres and benefited from school equipment and clothing (grants have also been provided to approximately 100 children)¹⁵⁰.

At a campaign level, Tara Projects works in two areas: (un)fair trade, as well as working with children, women's rights, inequalities (e.g. the caste system), the right to an education, healthcare (e.g. AIDS), environmental issues (e.g. water, climate change), etc. This awareness raising work usually involves seminars, such as on World Fair Trade Day or International Women's Day. Similarly to Sasha, Tara Projects receives support for this through its membership of the networks WFTO, Fair Trade Forum India and WFTO-Asia¹⁵¹.



Jewelry workshop, Mahila Vikas Crafts, Tara Projects – 07/08/2014

RESULTS – IMPACT OF FAIR TRADE HANDICRAFTS ON WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT WITHIN THREE ORGANISATIONS IN INDIA AND BANGLADESH

Various studies have shown that fair trade can act as a development model that promotes the well-being, status and emancipation of women. An initial, and without doubt the most obvious reason for this, is that fair trade often focuses on women as a priority because they belong to a disadvantaged section of the population. Many of Oxfam's partner organisations therefore employ women to meet their production needs, especially in the crafts sector. If we look at the partners that were the focus of this research, we see that women account for approximately 95, 70 and 60% of workers at CJW, Sasha and Tara (see chapter 4.3 on methodology). Of course, providing employment to women by giving them access to markets is a necessary condition for their economic empowerment, but is not enough. The organisation also needs to have a genuine gender policy and the jobs provided must be decent. There are many examples of paid employment within the conventional sector that fail to deliver a significant improvement in women's conditions. Many of these jobs in fact make their situation worse, especially when the women are required to combine their new job with reproductive and/or domestic duties¹⁵².

Set against this, fair trade usually ensures women's empowerment through a series of principles and criteria. WFTO's principle no. 6 is dedicated to "Non Discrimination, Gender Equity and Women's Economic Empowerment, and Freedom of Association"¹⁵³. The WFTO has also developed a specific gender strategy, designed to ensure gender equality in all of the branch organisations, as well as raising the issue at a political level. More generally, fair trade organisations (FTOs) in Europe use monitoring tools (gender policies, training or specific governance) to monitor the efforts made by their partners in this area¹⁵⁴. The gender dimension is less developed within Fairtrade International, which only refers to it in a general sense under the criteria of non-discrimination¹⁵⁵ (ILO convention 111 rejects "any distinction made on the basis of race, colour, sex, religion, political opinion, national extraction or social origin")¹⁵⁶.

Beyond these principles, the concrete impacts of fair trade for women have been relatively well documented. This is especially true in the agricultural sector but somewhat less so in handicrafts, where

research has been more limited. In the following chapter we will attempt to summarise, using existing literature, all of the impacts that fair trade handicrafts have had at an economic, social and political level on women's individual and collective empowerment. Using interviews and group discussions conducted during this research, we will investigate to what extent these impacts apply in the specific context of the Indian and Bangladeshi FTOs that were included in this study. In order to achieve this, we will use the various forms of empowerment (gain, knowledge, desire and power) referred to earlier in this study. Once again we would like to remind readers that this classification is both simplified and formal, and the boundaries between each of the different categories are fluid and permeable.

"TO HAVE"

To recap, this area covers all economic aspects, in other words the acquisition of material and human resources that enable practical needs to be met. It is without much doubt in this area that fair trade has, in principle, the greatest impact.

MATERIAL RESOURCES

Firstly, fair trade handicraft provides women with paid work, unlike most of the traditional ways in which a family's tasks are distributed. Furthermore, the prices guaranteed by the FTO partners are higher than average prices. This gives the artisans a significant and relatively stable income. The income generated enables poorer families to supplement and improve their diet.

"Before, we used to only have two meals a day, one in the morning and one in the evening. As soon as I started working we had three meals, and we were able to add fish and meat to our diet". (Haricha, Nagori village, Kaligonj, CJW).

The money is invested in staple products (products not available via local agricultural production, for example oil, salt, medicines, etc.), as well as clothing or even improving their housing situation. The latter investment is a priority for people who have been displaced following conflict or natural disasters¹⁵⁷.

"This work has given me my independence and enabled me to buy my own things. I bought a sewing machine, and replaced my bamboo house with a house made of brick". (Rashida Begum, Mirpur 27 Refugee Women's Group, CJW).

Having their own income has direct consequences on women's individual empowerment but also on their family's well-being. Compared to men, women usually invest the



Focus group, Sunita Handicrafts, Tara Projects – 05/08/2014

money they earn in improving the living conditions of their immediate family, particularly healthcare and education¹⁵⁸.

"My life is a bit better now. I can send my daughter to school now". (Alo, group discussion, Tara Projects).

Because of their independent source of income, some women are even able to look after members of their distant family, following various incidents in their lives.

"I adopted my elder sister's daughters after she died. I haven't been able to get married because I support my family financially". (Group discussion, CJW).

As well as the decent salary, the Indian and Bangladeshi FTOs analysed during this study also provide their members with a whole range of additional social benefits that

have positive effects on women's empowerment: maternity leave, educational programmes for girls, savings and microcredit schemes, health insurance, pension schemes, etc.

"The organisation gives me a 30000 takas pension, which is very rare here". (Anwari Begum, Mirpur 2 Refugee Women's Group, CJW).

It is however important to remain realistic about fair trade's ability to cover a wide range of needs. Most FTOs still provide their artisans with salaries that are relatively far from being a living wage¹⁵⁹. Plus they often have insufficient orders to guarantee them a regular income¹⁶⁰. During the interviews, several artisans told us that orders were growing more infrequent, which left some of them in a difficult position. One young woman who worked for CJW and lived in one of Dhaka's slums told us that she still "dreamed

of living with dignity". The same situation was felt by a woman from a slum in Delhi, who said she was still "fighting for survival" (group discussion, Tara Projects).

It is worth mentioning however that the FTOs referred to here provide their members with other socio-economic development programmes, aside from fair trade

handicraft work. Example: CJW, Sasha and Tara Projects run savings and microcredit programmes. Amongst other advantages, these schemes enable a significant number of artisans, as well as other members of the target communities, to benefit from loans at reduced rates¹⁶¹. While many of these loans are used for everyday expenses (e.g. marriages, private school fees), others launch their own microenterprises in an attempt to diversify their income (e.g. stalls selling foodstuffs)¹⁶². This kind of opportunity is fairly unique, given the immense barriers, particularly cultural, that Indian and Bangladeshi women face when trying to access financial services or launch businesses. This is especially difficult for widows or divorcees¹⁶³.



RASHIDA BEGUM (MIRPUR 27 REFUGEE WOMEN'S GROUP, CJW)

Of Bihari origin, Rashida Begum lives in a slum in north-western Dhaka. Her living conditions are very tough, with the district she lives in suffering from a lack of water, serious hygiene issues and widespread alcohol and drug-related violence. Part of the district was recently burned down, the work of delinquents and local corrupt politicians looking to take over the land. Rashida was forced to leave school at 14 to go out to work when her father, a restaurant owner, died after an illness. She has been working for CJW for several years now. Selling her products has enabled her to buy more staple products. She has also been able to build part of her, albeit small, accommodation out of brick (it was previously made of bamboo branches). But above all she now has greater freedom to take decisions. She has decided to help educate her younger sister, and perhaps more importantly, she freely chose her husband (she is due to marry a jewellery manufacturer from a neighbouring district in a year's time).

"What little we have we owe to CJW, which supported us when nobody else would. Thanks to CJW, my dream of living with dignity is gradually coming true. I have genuine hope for a better future".

HUMAN RESOURCES

But the women's desire to get involved in the FTO partners' activities is not limited to the purely economic/material aspect that is associated with increasing their income or gaining other social benefits. Many of the women mentioned how important the fair trade organisation or group's social network was, and the role they played as a haven of solidarity¹⁶⁴.

"I am very glad that I belong to this group. I try to help those who are suffering and are in the most trouble". (Group discussion, Tara Projects).

An example of a time when these collaborative relationships come into their own is when one of the women is faced with a problem of domestic violence.

“Alo’s husband is an alcoholic and very violent towards her. He once came to threaten her at the work-place. I got involved and made him leave. He was scared of me”. (Asha, group discussion, Tara Projects).

“One of my neighbours was violent with his wife. He was angry with her for giving birth to five girls and no boys. I threatened to call the police, and he calmed down. He’s now in prison for another crime”. (Sofiya, Tara Projects).

Some of the organisations that provide our partners with handicrafts products also offer legal and psychological support services to women who are suffering or have suffered from violence. This is the case with Jeevika¹⁶⁵, one of Sasha’s suppliers based in Calcutta (see Pooja’s testimonial, inset). In other instances, it is the FTO’s employees themselves who advise the women, helping them to manage their family and private affairs. During one of the interviews conducted for this research, a CJW employee spent almost half an hour trying to resolve a conflict between one of the artisans and her daughter.

Belonging to a group also enables these artisans to organise themselves so they can manage their different activities: handicrafts, agricultural or domestic work, looking after children or children’s education, etc. Most of the FTO partners are organised in such a way that helps to reconcile work and family life.

“We have very flexible hours. From approximately 5 am to 11 am, the

artisans stay at home to look after their children and prepare the food. They then come to work in the workshop. They can leave whenever they want during the day. It’s the total opposite to working on an assembly line in a factory. It’s a lot more flexible”. (Dipali, KSEWS, Sasha).

The opposite side of the coin is that the division of domestic tasks between the couple at home remains unchallenged (see below chapter 5.4). Another downside to these social networks is that the contacts (and therefore the benefits) are diminished when the handicraft work is carried out at home. This is especially true for groups in rural settings, such as most of the CJW groups for example (also see below on mobility aspects). And while these networks undeniably act as safety nets for the artisans and their families, they can also act as an entry barrier for women who don’t have good contacts¹⁶⁶. Most of the artisans we met during this

study said that they had joined the fair trade organisation they work for through a member of their immediate family (see the example of Anwari Begum, inset, traditional leader of CJW, three of whose daughters now work for the organisation).

And finally, it is worth noting that fair trade handicraft can also act as an instrument in the fight against rural depopulation. During the discussion with the Sasha group, KSEWS, several artisans mentioned that they preferred to continue working within the group as they felt safer and enjoyed better conditions than in the region’s factories.



Restaurant owner who benefited from a microcredit program, Tara Projects

"TO KNOW"

ACQUISITION OF KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

In addition to work and the associated income, the fair trade handicraft organisations also offer their members the chance to train themselves and improve their knowledge, abilities and skills. Most of the training provided relates to learning new methods of production.

Out of all the groups visited during this research, the embroidery and clothing microenterprise KSEWS (a Sasha supplier) undoubtedly provides the best example of how important this training is for the women involved. When the group was created, the four female founders faced opposition from many villagers, who disliked the fact that the women were able to work, especially away from home. The group gradually succeeded in making their activity more acceptable by providing regular sewing courses at the homes of each of the women who wanted to get involved. The business now employs over 35 women in a workshop, and has a turnover of 2.5 million rupees (over €30000) (see also box on Dipali Pramanik).

This kind of training naturally fits with the FT0 partners' need to have a qualified workforce, one that is able to meet the needs of their clients in terms of quality, cost and deadlines. But their vision extends beyond mere production and sales. They also provide the artisans with basic training in a range of fields:



POOJA (JEEVIKA, SASHA)

Jeevika, one of Sasha's suppliers based in Calcutta, organises activities associated with women's rights (training, public demonstrations, theatre plays, etc.). The organisation also provides legal support to women who have been victims of violence, working with a group of professionals and volunteers called a "rapid response unit". Pooja turned to such a group in 2002 when her husband was violent with her. From a poor family, she had to leave school at 14 and was married at 15. Because of the violence, she decided to return to her father with her little boy.

"I did go to the police but the officer in charge started to question my behaviour. I didn't pursue it and went to see a girlfriend who worked for Jeevika's rapid response unit. This is how I started with the training". With support from a free lawyer, the young woman took the case to court, despite pleas from her husband who had since remarried. She filed a complaint for rape and asked for support payments and custody of her child. *"I won in the end, after 11 years of trials and various appeals. But I had to work hard to get there. I worked at night in my father's business, making puffed rice, and during the day I would sew. At the same time I took the Jeevika training and looked after my son and handicapped brother. I didn't get a lot of support. People told me that this was what men were like, and you just had to accept it".* The young woman is now invited to talks to present her case and explain the legal avenues to tackle violence against women. *"When I think about it all, it makes me very proud. Despite having received little education, I can now speak in public and even on television! Those around me have gone from being suspicious to being in awe. I am also very grateful to Jeevika, because they helped me continue this struggle for so many years".*



ANWARI BEGUM (MIRPUR 2 REFUGEE WOMEN'S GROUP, CJW)

There are many fair trade handicraft groups within the immigrant populations in India and Bangladesh. These migrants have often lost everything because of conflicts, disasters or forced displacement. Fair trade gradually helps them to return to a life with dignity.

Anwari Begum, from the Mirpur 2 group in Dhaka is a good example, having had to cope with a great deal of hardship over the years. Of Bihari origin, her family was displaced into a refugee camp in 1971, following Bangladesh's war of independence. After living in a tent for over a year, she married at the age of 10 and went to work for CJW at 15. Along with her husband's salary (house painter), this activity enabled them to meet their basic needs and gradually build a brick house. But bad luck was to strike. Her eldest son was stabbed by local mafia in 2001. Her husband also died of an illness in 2003. Despite these ordeals, she managed to find a job at CJW for three of her daughters, while two others continued with their studies. She now lives with one of her daughters and her son-in-law, in the same place that she arrived in several decades ago as a refugee.

"I am very grateful to CJW for everything the organisation has given me throughout these difficult times: work, a stable income for me and my daughters, responsibilities as the leader of my group and now a pension. And more importantly, I feel that CJW belongs to me. After so much hardship, CJW is now like a family to me".

literacy, languages, healthcare education, IT, commercial and budgetary management, etc. These FTOs also provide their artisans with many opportunities to read and write, contrary to most of the other unskilled jobs that are available to them¹⁶⁷.

"My parents were very poor. I couldn't go to school until I was six years old. Most of what I have learned has come from CJW". (Yarida Yeasmine, Chandpur Mohamadeur, CJW).

Thanks to this training, some women have gradually taken on more responsibilities within their organisation, often leading to their taking management positions (see the chapter below on leadership).

Our partners therefore have a much wider social objective than simply providing the means of production. This is especially true for Tara Projects, which has used its own funds to build several social centres within the artisans' communities. Among the range of services provided by these centres (there is a focus on healthcare, etc.), there are also lessons aimed at young girls, for example IT lessons¹⁶⁸.

INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE CRITICAL AWARENESS

This general training enables the artisans to develop critical awareness, in other words to formulate ideas, an opinion or plan for the future. Some of the topics covered relate specifically to human rights, especially women's rights. They therefore gain a critical sense of their own role in

society, i.e. the cultural roots of gender inequalities, and how they can help to deconstruct these¹⁶⁹.

"I took part in seminars on women's rights. I learned that early marriages (Ed: under 18 years of age) are illegal. And that it was the same for dowries. I found out that it was a mistake to marry my daughter off at 13. This is why I'm going to let our second daughter, who is 18, study and make up her own mind". (Yarida Yeasmine, Chandpur Mohamadeur, CJW).

This testimonial shows us how one of the artisans was able to learn something new, analyse it and then apply it to her own situation. And the result was a specific social change for her and her family. Gaining a sense of critical awareness is accompanied by an ability to take a more long-term view. Many of the women do not want their daughters to experience the subservient and marginalised lives that they themselves have led.

"I fight for my rights and those of my children. I don't want them to go through the hardships I have had to experience. I want them to be educated, and above all realise that all humans are equal. Society has created norms that subjugate women" (Ruksana, Mahila Vikas Samooh, Bawana, Tara Projects).

The awakening they experience in terms of the inequality and socio-economic injustice that women suffer is not just an individual process, but also a collective one. Apart from the education work, our partners also offer group work within the workshops, encouraging discussion on this topic.



DIPALI PRAMANIK (KSEWS, SASHA)

In 1984, Dipali Pramanik formed an embroidery and clothing microenterprise in the village of Kolaghat, Indian Bengal. After a long development, the enterprise now exports products (scarves, bags, gloves, rings, aprons, etc.) to Europe and the United States. The business provides employees with health insurance and gives them a share of the profits via a savings plan. This success owes a lot to the perseverance and leadership of the founders, who constantly fought to improve quality, deadlines and, more generally, their organisation's financial sustainability. This is especially so for Dipali, who received an "outstanding woman" award from the Confederation of Indian Industry in 2010.

"We are very committed to our organisation. It's like a family for us. There are arguments sometimes, and some people threaten to go and work in the factories near the village. But it's never that serious. It's a much safer environment here, we have a lot of flexibility and we are involved in all the decisions"..

"We get together every Saturday. We discuss the orders, how to share out the work, etc. We also talk about fair trade, particularly salary issues". (Group discussion, KSEWS, Sasha).

The discussions tend to initially focus on technical issues. But the artisans quickly move on to other topics, often more personal (e.g. domestic violence). This leads them to understand that

gender inequality issues are not just personal, but relate to society as a whole and are also cultural and political.

"We often discuss issues of domestic violence. We try to offer support as a group". (Alo, group discussion, Tara Projects).

"Now I'm able to speak out against the discrimination and turn to the law.

The group has given me the strength to fight back if someone threatens me or persecutes me. This courage has come from the discussions we have, from the unity that exists between us". (Group discussion, CJW).

The fact that the groups consist exclusively of women¹⁷⁰ enables them to speak freely and strengthens the sense that they share the same cause, that they are a collective of united women (as well as being a source of internal power, see below)¹⁷¹. In itself this represents considerable social progress. It is quite rare on the Indian sub-continent for women to get involved in group activities. Their sense of identity usually comes from the family unit¹⁷².

The fair trade organisations therefore act as training venues and places for collective discussions, in which the artisans can provide each

other with mutual support and learn about socio-economic or political rights. And yet the FTOs' ability to raise the artisans' awareness of certain issues must be placed in perspective. The crisis in fair trade handicrafts is severely restricting the resources that these organisations can allocate to this more generic training, a training that is non-lucrative in the short-term. In each of the organisations we visited, the employees stated that they lacked the resources to continue providing this kind of training¹⁷³.

"In the past, education was fully integrated with the fieldwork carried out by the trainers (Ed: training and technical support). But we can't allow them to do this anymore because we only have 5-6 trainers left, who travel from one group to the next". (Milton Suranjit Ratna, development manager, CJW).

An organisation such as Sasha does not allocate specific resources to this kind of work. The training provided by SSA (the branch handling community development) focuses almost entirely on issues of economic empowerment. In addition, many groups are finding it more and more difficult to tackle these topics because of a lack of time.

"We used to get together to discuss social issues such as better salaries, property and environmental issues. But we do this less and less now, we just don't have the time". (Group discussion, KSEWS, Sasha).

Based on discussions with various employees from this group and from Sasha, this lack of time is mostly due to increasing demands from the fair trade importers in terms of quality and deadlines. Another factor is the increasingly diverse range of



Group meeting, Sunita Handicrafts, Tara Projects – 07/2014



Groupe de discussion, Corr Jute Works – 2014

orders (smaller volumes of products with the same design, which means the artisans need to learn how to make a new product more often, which reduces their productivity).

According to Sujata Goswami, director of SSA, “many of the artisans think of nothing else apart from work and fulfilling the orders”.

"TO WANT"

This area refers above all to gaining internal power, in other words self-confidence and self-esteem.

There are various sources behind this increase in internal power.

Firstly, it comes from the sense of accomplishment that is felt from being a working woman and having paid employment. This gives them a sense of social esteem and a sense of dignity within their community. Belonging to a fair trade handicraft organisation also gives the women plenty of opportunities to discuss issues and talk freely, for example during group meetings. These occasions give them the chance to speak in public¹⁷⁴ and experiment with and assert their ideas. This builds their confidence in their own abilities¹⁷⁵. The image projected by the group plays a crucial role in the process of building a positive identity (this is what is known as "using the mirror effect to construct your identity")¹⁷⁶.

"I am very happy and proud to be part of Tara. People now say, 'copy Sofiya', whereas before they would say, 'don't do what Sofiya does', which has made all the difference for me". (Sofiya, Tara Projects).

In a more general sense, the fact that they have come out of their position of isolation and are being exposed to the outside world also provides the women with an increased sense of self-assurance (see also increase in mobility, below).

"We were recently stopped by the police while we were transporting products. They wanted to make us open our bags. We told them to do it themselves". (Group discussion, CJW).

The democratic way in which the FTOs operate also means that the positions of responsibility are rotated: chair, treasurer, board member, etc. Although these new responsibilities are often placed upon them (the women are elected by the group and feel obliged to accept the roles), and the roles require a great deal of effort, both in terms of personal training and at a psychological level, the women usually feel

that they benefit from the experience and also feel more sure of themselves.

"When the previous chair stood down, the 20 members of the group elected me to take over. It was a major responsibility but I am proud and happy to have taken on this leadership role". (Anwari Begum, Mirpur 2 Refugee Women's Group, CJW).

It has to be said however that during this research many of the artisans said they did not want to or were unable to get involved in this kind of activity. Either because they lacked the time or knowledge, or for safety reasons (also see the chapter on leadership, below)¹⁷⁷.

"I don't want to take on too many responsibilities because it's not easy for me to travel around. I live far away, public transport isn't safe and the lighting is poor. The risks of being attacked are too high. A male member of the family accompanies me when I absolutely have to travel". (Group discussion, Sasha).

"TO BE ABLE TO"

The different areas of empowerment discussed in previous chapters – associated with acquiring material and human resources, skills, critical awareness to develop greater autonomy and self-esteem – form a foundation from which women are then able to renegotiate their position within their families, communities and, in a more general sense, society itself. The following chapters will therefore cover the artisans' ability to individually and collectively influence their immediate and more distant environment.

PERSONAL ABILITY TO INFLUENCE THOSE IN THEIR IMMEDIATE ENVIRONMENT

Having their own income (and therefore contributing to the family's resources) and improving their knowledge and means of expressing themselves, increases the artisans' confidence (see increase in internal power, above) in terms of the people in their immediate environment, especially their husbands. They are therefore in a position to renegotiate the power relationships they have with them. This repositioning work can be seen in the sharing of management of the family budget, reallocation of household chores, an increase in mobility and improved land ownership. Women thereby improve their status within society and move on from simply being dependent on their husbands, fathers or brothers.

JOINT MANAGEMENT OF THE FAMILY BUDGET

Thanks to fair trade handicrafts, the women play a greater role when it comes to managing resources, particularly because they make a visible contribution to the family budget¹⁷⁸ and/or have developed skills in this area (see the training referred to above).

"We manage the family budget together, which wasn't the case before". (Haricha, Nagori village, Kaligonj, CJW).

In many cases, the husbands give their wives greater freedom to act, and also trust them more. This is especially true when it comes to education, with the additional income brought in by the women often being specifically put aside to pay for the children's education, particularly the daughters' education.

"I convinced him to let our daughters stay in education longer". (Haricha, Nagori village, Kaligonj, CJW).

The support provided by women to education is a very important element in social progress. It extends the benefits of fair trade by investing in children's education, which thereby benefits the whole family.

"I managed to convince my husband that educating our children was a long-term investment that would benefit the whole family. As a result, all of our children now have a good job and provide us with support". (Rupu Begum, Doripara village, Kaligonj, CJW).

This process is often accompanied by a reappraisal of the social and professional value of daughters who were previously seen as "burdens" on the family (particularly in India, and associated with the high rate of girl infanticides, see the analysis above)¹⁷⁹.

"Fighting to have our daughters educated is the most important thing we have to fight for". (Basanti, Doripara village, Kaligonj, CJW).

Nevertheless, these changes in behaviour are not systematic and often come up against more powerful individual behaviours and social norms. One of the testimonials from a CJW artisan is particularly relevant in this context. Having managed to send her daughter to sec-



Jewelry workshop, Sasha

ondary school, something unexpected happened: the daughter fell in love with an Imam. Despite protests from the artisan and from her husband, as well as various members of their community, the pair got married.

"It was all very painful for me. I had invested in my daughter. I had worked hard to educate her and teach her about her rights as a woman. That's all been lost now. My daughter wears the veil and stays at home all the time as a housewife". (Rehena, Nagori village, Kaligonj, CJW).

REALLOCATING HOUSEHOLD CHORES

Another area of power renegotiation within the family unit is the area of household chores, and is linked to women's professional activity. Because the women who work as artisans have extra duties to carry out, and often have to leave the

home to work elsewhere, the household chores have to be reorganised or reallocated while they are away.

"My husband helps out with the housework. Men don't usually do this kind of work. But he understands that the handicraft work is extra work for me". (Haricha, Nagori village, Kaligonj, CJW).

"My husband agreed to help me take care of our first child after it was born and to help out with the housework. When I got married I had one condition: that I could carry on working as an artisan, like my mother. It was very important to me". (Group discussion, CJW).

In this last testimonial, the negotiation took place before the wedding, which is highly unusual given the very strong traditions associated with marriage in Bangladesh. It is obvious that in this instance the future bride's mother played a

key role by enabling her daughter to start working as an artisan before she got married, an advantage that her daughter didn't want to give up. Nevertheless, this kind of role negotiation isn't always successful, even when the women are educated and/or have significant responsibilities.

"We have a lot of financial worries. My children's education is very expensive. I studied for a long time. If I worked some more, I'm sure I could use the extra income to pay for my family's needs. But my husband doesn't want me to. He says I need to look after the children and the home. He's very stubborn and my mother-in-law backs him up". (Group discussion, CJW).

"I have a lot of work to do and sometimes I don't feel up to it. I didn't go to university. I've thought about taking some other kind of training but it's difficult to combine that with the work I have to do at home. My husband has a construction business and doesn't want to do any housework". (Sandhya, Udha-gram Lokoshikshaniketan, Sasha).

Therefore the opportunities women have to reposition themselves still face opposition from powerful socio-cultural norms. The previous testimonial shows how difficult it can sometimes be for these women to reconcile the tasks that their new responsibilities bring (professional, domestic, reproductive, personal development tasks), with the significant impact these have on their quality of life. Some women clearly prefer to continue with the family structure as it stands, with

their work as an artisan simply supporting, and not challenging, their role as a wife and mother¹⁸⁰. As S. Goswami commented, *"initially, most of the artisans prefer to stay at home so they can look after their children. For them, working as an artisan requires considerable additional effort, and they only see the benefits after a certain period of time"*.

When asked about their future hopes and dreams, most of the women don't mention any desire for personal achievement. Almost systematically their hopes and dreams relate to their families, particularly their children, or their artisan friends from their group.

"My dream is for all the women in the group to have a good life". (Anwari Begum, Mirpur 2 Refugee Women's Group, CJW).

According to Devasmita Sridhar, a consultant working for Sasha, "for the artisans, having a personal dream is seen as being selfish". By acting this way, the women are sealing themselves in a gender-based hierarchy. In other words placing themselves in the "sacrificial" role that Indian or Bangladeshi society compels them to play.

INCREASE IN MOBILITY

Belonging to a fair trade group also offers the women the chance for some increased mobility: the intrinsic mobility that comes from the fact that they are no longer stuck at home, but also an ability to take decisions about travel. This travel consists of daily trips to the work-

shop (for those artisans who work away from home) as well as logistics related trips to places further away (e.g. collecting and transporting products to take them to the export depot in town, purchasing raw materials from the local market, taking part in fairs, workshops and exhibitions, often overseas).

"I often go to Dhaka to collect and deliver orders and take part in training. Our husbands used to always come with us at first, mostly because they were afraid that the nuns would convert us to Christianity¹⁸¹. But they gradually realised that this wasn't the case, and, more importantly, that this was well-paid work". (Haricha, Nagori village, Kaligonj, CJW).

Some of the artisans we spoke to have managed to gain complete independence from men when it comes to travel, even in potentially dangerous situations (e.g. risk of assault) or travel that presents physical difficulties.

"A few years after I started working for CJW I was chosen to transport products to Dhaka. Every Friday I collected the products from the different production locations and took them to the CJW offices by public transport. We didn't want any of the men to help us out, despite the stress involved and the transport problems. We wanted to be independent". (Magdalena, Doripara village, Kaligonj, CJW).

It was clear that these women were proud of the courage they had shown in facing the unknown and the fact that they could now move

around freely in public. It should be noted however that some of these women only take these travel risks because they are forced to do so, particularly divorcees or widows¹⁸².

As with the social networks referred to above, these increases in mobility are mostly the product of working in the workshops, which gives the women an "alibi" to enjoy greater freedom of movement. Working as an artisan part-time or at home therefore has less of an impact on women's empowerment. While it provides greater flexibility in terms of working hours, it acts as less of a challenge to the gender-related power imbalances that exist in the world of work. This is why the fair trade organisations usually try to create workshop-based groups (with the exception of CJW), but this often meets with stiff opposition from the communities involved, especially amongst the Muslim minority in India. The cultural tradition of keeping women at home, restricting them to household chores and reproductive tasks, is very strong there, especially in the countryside.

"There is a horrible saying here, that a woman can only leave the house as a corpse". (Alo, group discussion, Tara Projects).

Several of the testimonials from Tara Projects artisans show that their current socio-professional position, and therefore their freedom of movement, had been the subject of long and difficult discussions, both with their husbands and their in-laws. On such occasions the proactive role played by the FTO employees, as well as their diplomatic



RUKSANA (MAHILA VIKAS CRAFTS, TARA PROJECTS)

Fair trade handicrafts often work in mysterious ways! Ruksana can testify to this. She was married at 14 as part of an arranged marriage. She didn't want to get married but her father, a rickshaw driver in a Delhi slum, quickly accepted her future husband's marriage proposal for financial reasons. Despite plenty of other suitors, the social pressure meant she had to accept the marriage. Her father's honour was at stake, but also her "marriageable" status if she refused the marriage. Nobody would have thought it would be a blessing in disguise. Ruksana's husband job was the plating of handicraft products: by helping him in his daily work, she gradually learnt the various production techniques, which would bring her in touch with Tara Projects several years later.

"My husband was invited one day to a meeting with Tara. Professor Sherma (Ed: at the time director of Tara Projects) asked the producers to bring their wives. My husband refused at first, but I managed to convince him. I said it might be good for us financially. At the time I got very scared and stressed in front of others because I had been kept at home since I was 15. But I overcame my fears. Later, Prof. Sherma asked me to put together a group of artisans. He convinced me by telling me lots of stories of artisans who had managed to gain their freedom".

Ruksana now lives in a slum in Bawana, north-west Delhi, because of a forced displacement by the authorities. Those living there are mostly Muslim migrants originally from the states of Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Bihar, who used to work in Delhi as workers, rickshaw drivers, fruit and vegetable sellers or in construction. But in Bawana the job prospects are slim and infrastructure practically non-existent. Despite this particularly tough environment, Ruksana's group has gradually managed to improve their living conditions because of fair trade handicrafts and other social programmes offered by Tara (microcredit, paramedic services, etc.). *"After so many years of isolation, life is as it should be".*

skills, appear to play a crucial role.

"I was very afraid to start with, because everyone was against me. People didn't want women to leave the home. My father, brother and husband said it was an insult to them, that it implied that they were unsuccessful. Tara employees came and talked to my family and other members of the community". (Sunita, Sunita Handicrafts, Tara Projects).

"When Moon (Ed: Tara Projects director) asked me to set up a group of artisans, I was terrified! But I really wanted to do it at the same time. It would mean lots of trips to Delhi. My grandfather was completely against it at first. Moon speaks Urdu (Ed: the local language) and spoke with him for quite some time. He came round in the end after visiting the Tara centre with me in Delhi". (Mousmin, Khewai Mahila Hastshilp, Tara Projects).

Most of the testimonials about mobility come from Tara Projects (see also the boxes on Sofiya and Ruksana). The Muslim minorities targeted by Tara Projects are most likely very conservative, especially when it comes to applying Purdah¹⁸³. And finally, the artisans' increased visibility, due to their more frequent travel in public, can lead to both respect (see the chapter on internal power above) and jealousy, particularly from women who do not work.

LAND OWNERSHIP

Land ownership was discussed amongst some of the artisans we met¹⁸⁴.

"I argued with my brother a lot, but I managed to get half of my family lands, thanks to help from the owner"¹⁸⁵. (Group discussion, KSEWS, Sasha).

"I will share my land equally between my children, contrary to Islamic law"¹⁸⁶. (Hassina Begum, Purbamonipur Women's Group, CJW).

Nevertheless, our interviews appear to show that this kind of negotiation is quite rare, despite the income brought in by the artisans. These issues of land ownership are in fact crucial in rural settings that are typically a more conservative environment, especially in terms of women's rights. Controlling these resources remains a major challenge for most women.

SUMMARY OF WAYS A PERSON CAN INFLUENCE THOSE IN THEIR IMMEDIATE ENVIRONMENT

Fair trade can therefore play an important role in changing the power relationships between women and those in their immediate environment, to the benefit of the women themselves. But not all women benefit from these changes in the same way. For example, working as an artisan at home certainly has less of an impact on emancipation than when the women work together in a workshop. There is also a risk that the male partner will reject any changes to the power relationship, changes that may lead to a "masculine identity crisis"¹⁸⁷. A Tara employee spoke of an artisan whose husband had left her because, ac-

ording to him, she had more independence and this had brought "social shame". The threat of separation¹⁸⁸ is an important tool used by men to subjugate women. It is actually extremely difficult for a single woman to exist socially (due to the social stigma) and financially (access to work), both in Indian and Bangladeshi society.

Women therefore have varied opportunities to reposition themselves. All of the interviews we carried out clearly demonstrated that the important financial support provided by fair trade plays an important factor when it comes to negotiating with men. As summarised by Haricha (Nagori village, Kaligonj, CJW), "the increase in financial security has been decisive". As mentioned above, another crucial factor has been the involvement of FTOs. The fact that they actually speak to the families themselves and stress the financial advantages that their activity brings appears to carry a lot of weight. And finally, the image that these female "icons" represent to other women and girls is also an important factor in the emancipation process. One young artisan's testimonial speaks volumes in this respect.

"Television has played an important role. It has opened up a whole new world for me. It has given me ideas. I was really motivated when I saw TV series with women working as police officers, judges, lawyers, etc." (Sofiya, Tara Projects).

But inspiration can come from other sources too. In the next chapter we will look at the extent to which

fair trade can promote emergence of female leaders as sources of inspiration and social emancipation within their communities.

PERSONAL ABILITY TO INFLUENCE SOCIETY

The positive impact of fair trade on renegotiating powers extends beyond the women's immediate circle. The abilities that the artisans acquire in the workplace, particularly leadership skills, can lead them to take on new responsibilities within their community or wider¹⁸⁹ associations or political bodies.

"I now play an advisory role for the rest of the community. I go to other villages and teach them how to start an artisan's collective or cooperative". (Rehena, Nagori village, Kaligonj, CJW).

"I am involved in politics and with my community's associations. I fight whenever there is a cause to defend. I'm not afraid to fight for my rights". (Sashi, group discussion, Tara Projects).

While a more "informal" community involvement (as in Rehena's case for example) is fairly commonplace, the example of women such as Sashi, who has got involved in politics and associations, appears to be much less common. Most of the women who were interviewed (the majority actually in leadership roles) said that they had neither the time, the resources or the level of education for this kind of activity. Others were simply not interested and preferred to focus on their work¹⁹⁰.

SOFIYA (TARA IN HOUSE, TARA PROJECTS)

Your fate in life can often turn on the smallest of incidents. This is even truer for the poorer in society, for whom a “bad” decision can have disastrous consequences. But in the case of Sofiya, one of Tara’s artisans, a brave decision has enabled her to drastically improve her living conditions. From a Muslim family of seven children, whom their rag-and-bone man father could barely feed, her fate seemed to have been mapped out: like her elder sisters, she was set to marry early, raise children and remain at home to take care of the household chores. But she had a strong character and always thought that the lifestyle imposed by her father, and especially her uncle (she lived with her extended family in one house for a long time) was unfair. “As soon as the men came home we (the women) had to move into another room and be quiet. We weren’t even allowed to smile in their presence. I had to wear the burqa from the age of 12, and the only trips outside that were allowed were to go to school as a group. When my sisters got married I saw how some of them were constantly assaulted or criticised by their husbands. I found all of this disheartening”. One day an opportunity came up: one of her brothers-in-law told her about a trade fair taking place near their home. Summoning up all her courage, she pretended to go and wash laundry for some neighbours and went to the fair with her brother-in-law, visiting the different food and handicraft company stands. One of the Tara



employees was interested in her story and gave her his business card, telling her she could definitely come and work for them. “I was very afraid but also full of hope. When I got home, and was stuck indoors, I would look at the card every day. But I didn’t have the courage to ask my father. Then one day I decided to talk to him and I told him everything. I begged him not to be worried about what others would think because I was just going to earn money for the household, money that we desperately needed. When he initially refused I went on hunger strike. I quickly became very weak. He eventually gave in, saying that his honour was in my hands. I went back to see Tara and on the very same day they hired me to work in the packaging department. It was the best day of my life. I was over the moon when I got my first pay packet”. The day that she plucked up the courage to confront her fears and the social pressure was a turning point. “It was difficult to start with because everyone gave me dirty looks when they saw me going to work. But I always stuck to the

schedule, coming straight back home at 6 pm”. Sofiya now makes jewellery for Tara. This means she can look after her mother, who has been blind since she gave birth to her fourth daughter, as well as two of her nieces, whose mothers passed away. “I give them complete freedom in terms of their future. I will help them if they want to carry on studying, or if they want to get married”. She doesn’t want to get married herself and dreams of becoming a designer, while helping other women fight for their rights. “I’m respected in the area and some women use me as an example. I’m no longer afraid of speaking in public, I have a social network and I take part in meetings etc. When I think of my previous life I was very naive, I knew nothing about the world. All I did was work at home, eat and sleep. I am very grateful to my father. He was brave enough to help me although he was under a lot of pressure. Unfortunately he has now passed away. But I am confident for the future. God watches us and will one day judge us based on the actions we take”.

With this in mind, the example of artisan Hassina Begum is quite revealing. A member of CJW's board for two years, and outwardly very enthusiastic about serving another term of office, she said she had no wish to commit herself to anything beyond CJW.

"I don't want to get involved in another association or in local politics. I'm not educated enough for that, I left school aged 11". (Hassina Begum, Purbamonipur Women's Group, CJW).

And yet in her position on the board, she has run a campaign, has engaged with her "voters" and has dealt with important CJW stakeholders; all experimental steps for a life in politics. But for the majority of artisans interviewed, both in India and Bangladesh, politics was viewed as a world that was polarized (with the need to support one side or the other), corrupt and violent.

"I don't want to get involved in political battles. I would have to support one side or the other". (Group discussion, KSEWS, Sasha).

Neha (Tara Projects) was one of the few artisans we met who, as well as managing her handicrafts microenterprise, was heavily involved in the political and activist side of her community. Her story illustrates the contingent nature of the artisans' political commitment or involvement in associations. Various conditions converged that resulted in her taking on these responsibilities:

She comes from a fairly well-off



Interview Hassina Begum
(Purbamonipur Women's Group, CJW) – 22/07/2014

family (her father was a civil servant), one element (amongst many) that led to her studying at university.

Her brother's murder, the result of a rivalry over village land, had a profound effect on her and prompted her to work in the social sector. Following on from this, she benefited from her family's political contacts to establish her own NGO.

The NGO tackles issues surrounding domestic violence (mediation services, legal advice, cooperation with the police, etc.), which saw her rapidly expand her network. She was then contacted by the local branch of the Congress Party, which was looking for women to work with the party.

Because Neha needed income-generating activities for her NGO, she met with Tara's managers who per-

suaded her to set up a group of artisans (making jewellery, bags, etc. for Tara Projects).

And finally, she decided not to get married, which freed her from certain reproductive and domestic pressures.

All of these aspects of her story show how the journey to reach this level of responsibility can be both long and hazardous. Neha actually pursued the opposite path to that taken by other leaders: she first of all held a management position in an NGO before then moving into fair trade handicrafts. So in her case it would be wrong to say that fair trade played a part in her taking on a leadership role. Moreover, her organisation currently has various financial problems due to a fall in orders from Tara Projects. One of Tara's employees commented that while the organisation managed by

Neha (Begum Hasthlp Samooh) was very active politically (e.g. demonstrations supporting women's rights, "sit-ins" in front of the police station), it found it hard to meet quality requirements and deadlines. This example shows how difficult it can be for an FTO to combine economic and political activities. Both require different (even contradictory) profiles in terms of human resources, both at a leadership and artisan level¹⁹¹.

Finally, and surprisingly, many of the artisans we met said that they were interested in politics, particularly during the discussion with the CJW group, where all of the artisans said that they voted whenever there was an election, and did so independently.

"I decide who I vote for. I vote based on the parties, not the personalities. I vote for whoever champions women's rights. These are the smaller parties that aren't in power". (Group discussion, CJW).

From a political perspective, it would be interesting to see our partners invest more in training, both in terms of social issues and developing leaders. Encouraging such leaders might serve as an example to other artisans¹⁹².

ABILITY TO INFLUENCE AT A COLLECTIVE LEVEL

This chapter focuses on the artisans' collective powers¹⁹³, more specifically their ability to socially, economically and politically influence the various sectors and insti-

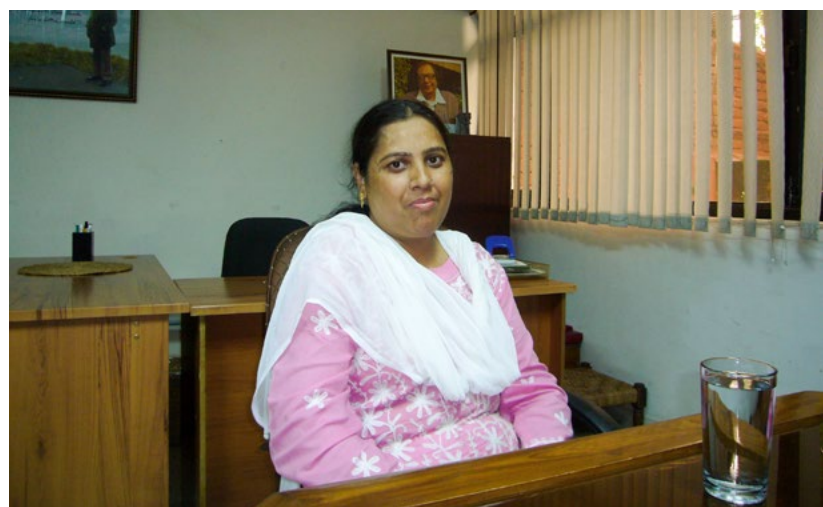
tutions in their surrounding environment. Among other reasons, the three partners covered in this study were chosen because of their capacity to deliver social change (see social change project referred to in the introduction). They clearly deliver a significant impact in these fields. And yet it is in this area of activity that the fair trade sector shows the highest levels of disparity. This is due to the differing levels of resources available to each organisation, their philosophies and the levels of conscientization (or critical consciousness) that exist amongst the different groups of artisans. For this reason the rest of this chapter will focus on each of these three FTOs in turn, analysing them in terms of collective power and focusing in particular on the campaigning, lobbying and awareness raising activities they conduct in support of women's rights.

SASHA

As an organisation, Sasha is heavily geared towards "microenterprise incubation" and focuses on the

economic empowerment of women. Its ability to influence its environment is therefore focused on the economic sphere. An impact study carried out by Trade Aid has, for example, shown that the added financial security for artisans in the Sasha network has encouraged other women in the surrounding community to become economically independent, particularly in remote areas¹⁹⁴.

Sasha appears to have less influence in other areas. Nevertheless, Sasha runs or coordinates several social programmes that benefit village communities (e.g. health education projects run by the Usgaraman group of artisans, or the malaria and tuberculosis prevention project in Phulbani). A support programme for artisans, enabling them to gain better recognition (identity cards) and assistance from the public authorities (access to bank credit and insurance) could also increase overall recognition for the sector¹⁹⁵.



Interview Neha (Tara Projects) – 05/08/2014

MOUSMIN (KHEWAI MAHILA HASTSHILP, TARA PROJECTS)

Mousmin and Sofiya's stories are very similar (see inset above). Mousmin is also from a large Muslim family and on several occasions has managed to summon the courage to free herself from society's pressures. Her situation was perhaps even more difficult because she grew up in a rural area (a very isolated village to the north of Delhi, in Uttar Pradesh) that was very conservative and patriarchal. Few girls went to school, Mousmin included, and she was limited to learning Urdu from her father, a preacher at the local village mosque, simply so she could read the Koran. She looked after the cows until she was 12, the age of puberty when she would be forced to stay at home, where she had to take care of various domestic tasks for the wider family (grandparents, uncles and aunts, cousins, etc.).

"My village was and still is very orthodox. Very few people have television, which is seen as wicked, and foreigners are viewed with suspicion. As for women, I always saw them as the equivalent to



slaves, not even human. They had to listen and obey orders. For example they had no say in their marriage". An incident in her youth traumatised her: she saw her grandmother beat her mother just because she hadn't made the bread properly. Mousmin took hold of her grandmother and begged her to stop. "I didn't understand why my mother wouldn't defend herself, I was shocked by the whole thing. From that moment on I told myself that I would never live like that". Several years later she managed to persuade her father to let her work in an embroidery and jewellery workshop. This gives her the opportunity to secretly learn Hindi and

to meet Moon, director of Tara Projects. This first contact was crucial because several years later Moon asked her to put together a group of artisans after the manager of an artisan group retired. Like Sofiya, Mousmin is now highly respected within her community. She even attends conferences to talk about her experience and women's rights. "I am very happy and proud to take part in these discussions. A woman's main strength is her dignity and the respect that she inspires. We are as capable as men are! Girls and boys do come from the same mother after all".

In terms of lobbying and campaigning, there appear to be some activities focusing on fair trade¹⁹⁶, but little that have to do with gender itself¹⁹⁷. Overall, Sasha did not appear to offer the artisans systematic support in terms of women's rights issues. According to a

consultant regularly employed by Sasha, "the organisation does have a gender policy, but it is limited in scope and is mainly focused on Sasha's direct employees, and less so on the artisans themselves"¹⁹⁸. The discussion group organised as part of this research

was the first of its kind for this organisation and showed a low level of critical awareness amongst the artisans on these issues. However they did all show a keen interest in working on this within their communities.

According to S. Goswami, “gender-focused education, awareness raising and lobbying is not currently part of Sasha’s mandate but there have been recent discussions within the board with a view to running this kind of activity”. Initially, “the idea would be to give each of the groups involved in the discussion their autonomy and encourage them to implement an action plan that defines the audiences, activities and partnerships that should be developed for women’s rights”. As part of this process, Sasha could receive support from some of its more experienced groups. We have already mentioned the Jeevika organisation¹⁹⁹, but groups such as Durbar and KSEWS are also involved in lobbying activity at a local level²⁰⁰. And finally, if Sasha does decide to get more involved in this area, it could have a significant impact given the network, resources and skills that the organisation has in terms of supporting artisans.

CORR – THE JUTE WORKS

As the largest FTO in Bangladesh, CJW has considerable resources, and some of these are allocated to education and campaigning work. In terms of gender, our interviews clearly highlighted a high level of collective critical awareness amongst the CJW artisans and therefore a significant influence potential. As mentioned above, the organisation encourages women to take part in group discussions, get involved in meetings and participate in various conferences on this topic. According to Milton Suranjit Ratna (development manager), recently

organised seminars include events focusing on the dowry system, violence against women²⁰¹ and the trafficking of women and children²⁰². In addition, more active artisans are involved in the local family courts or take part in demonstrations in support of women’s rights.

“Several of us, from different groups, recently took part in a march on International Women’s Day”. (Group discussion, CJW)²⁰³.

Most of these artisans belong to stable groups that are well-developed and geographically close to CJW (which de facto excludes most of the groups located in rural areas). Despite their relatively small number, their involvement in this kind of activity is remarkable given how relatively ostracised women are in Bangladeshi public life, particularly more marginalised women. Clearly, the fact that they belong to a fair trade handicraft group has played a key role in this involvement.

They also benefit from CJW’s strategic commitment to invest in these

issues, a commitment that can be seen in its highly developed gender policy²⁰⁴. Even though, as in Sasha’s case, this policy mostly concerns CJW’s direct employees²⁰⁵, a complete chapter is dedicated to providing the artisans with support on gender issues (training, access to information, developing leaders, etc.). The document also refers to CJW’s involvement in gender campaigns and lobbying, but in a much less detailed way. In this area CJW mostly works in partnership with other organisations such as Naripokkho²⁰⁶, The Hunger Project-Bangladesh²⁰⁷, Shapla Neer²⁰⁸ and even the “We Can” campaign²⁰⁹. More generally, CJW’s work on gender clearly benefits from its close relationship with its parent organisation, Caritas Bangladesh, which has considerable human and financial resources²¹⁰.

TARA PROJECTS

Tara Projects is clearly highly active on issues of social change in general, combining fair trade handicraft activities with social and microfinance programmes. The organisation does, however, have a strong



Focus group, Sasha – 30/07/2014



Focus groupe CJW – 22/07/2014

“education” focus (see sewing, embroidery and IT training as well as the schools referred to above)²¹¹, and this is clearly at the expense of any campaigning or lobbying activities (for which it appears to have fewer resources, both in a human and a financial sense)²¹².

It appears to have a relatively high level of influence in terms of gender issues. Each year it organises various activities on International Girl Child Day (11 October) and International Women’s Day (8 March)²¹³. It has an advantage in this area because its audience extends beyond its artisans (for example, the beneficiaries of its social or microcredit programmes). The organisation seems to limit its campaigning and lobbying on gender issues to a regular involvement with partner campaigns (e.g. Oxfam India’s “Close the gap” campaigns²¹⁴, street theatre on domestic violence issues with the NGO, Jagory²¹⁵).

Despite these various activities, the organisation’s social objective clearly places less emphasis on women as a specific target group than that of an FTO such as CJW. As an example, Tara Projects’ gender policy is less well developed than that of the Bangladeshi organisation. Tara’s policy instead contains a few lines prohibiting the harassment and discrimination of its employees²¹⁶. The artisans, however, appear to be engaged in a fairly high level of activity and are relatively autonomous when it comes to social rights, as can be seen in the testimonial from Sunita in Badarpur.

“We have gradually managed to change our community’s way of thinking. Along with five other members of the group, I am now a community representative. In the evening we go from house to house, mobilising them about healthcare issues, domestic violence, child labour and access to basic services. At the beginning we used to

travel as a group, but we are now confident enough and have sufficient respect that we can travel on our own. Recently the area’s water was cut off for three days. A group of women went to the water distribution company and smashed terracotta pots in front of them! We can achieve a lot when we come together as a group”. (Sunita, Sunita Handicrafts, Tara Projects).

The different interviews conducted for this study also seem to show that the organisation is skilled at identifying and then supporting women leaders (they account for approximately 50% of the total number of group leaders²¹⁷). As highlighted above, Tara’s managers get personally involved in speaking to families, convincing them to allow their women to join the organisation. A “Be the Change” prize is also awarded on a regular basis to reward the involvement displayed by these leaders²¹⁸. As a result, many of the groups have charis-

matic leaders such as Sofiya, Sunita, Ruksana and Neha (see testimonials or boxes that appear throughout this study). Although many of the leaders have no involvement in associations or politics beyond their involvement with these FTO partners, they play a major role in adding dynamism to the activities of artisans and their communities.

LEVEL OF COLLECTIVE INFLUENCE FOR THE THREE FTOS' IN THIS STUDY: A SUMMARY

As highlighted at the start of this chapter, the ability of the three organisations to influence issues at a local or national level does vary, particularly in terms of gender campaigning, awareness raising and lobbying. One of the reasons for this is clearly because this kind of ac-

tivity diverges from the main objectives of fair trade – delivering better living conditions for artisans at an individual level – and that the organisations have limited financial and human resources. Moreover, getting involved in a field as specific as gender is highly dependent on the strategic commitment of each organisation, which is itself linked to each organisation's preferred target audience (e.g. CJW compared to Tara Projects). Finally, the groups' geographic location also plays an important role, with any involvement in political activities such as demonstrations a lot more difficult in rural settings (linked to the mobility issues highlighted above).

Each of the three organisations performs an important role in bringing together the groups of artisans, particularly through their demo-

cratic bodies. This is crucial, as women's involvement in collectives is both extremely rare and culturally unacceptable in India and Bangladesh. As Tushar Kona Khander (a Dhaka Handicrafts consultant) mentioned during one of our interviews, the fair trade handicraft organisations have a considerable advantage in this respect compared to other NGOs, because they have already formed a number of collectives. The downside is that most of the artisans do not have enough time or resources to get involved in anything else apart from productive tasks. The challenge is therefore to get the more dynamic groups involved in campaigns for women's empowerment. Thoughts on the possible topic(s) and format(s) of the campaign planned as part of this study will be covered in a separate piece of analysis.



Embroidery school (Taja 8, Tara Projects, Pataudi village, Haryana) – 07/08/2014



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CONCLUSIONS

This study has provided us with an overview of the various contributions that fair trade handicraft makes to women's empowerment in India and Bangladesh (see table 3 below).

Belonging to a fair trade organisation usually results in a significant change for the artisans involved as they gain material and human resources, skills, critical awareness and self-esteem. This membership can also serve to redefine their roles within the home, resulting in an increase in mobility and can sometimes see them involved in socio-political activities (mostly within their organisation, rarely outside). While some authors suggest that the financial incentive is often not a priority for the artisans, our interviews appear to indicate that it remains a key factor. For most of the women we met, the salary prospects and decent working conditions have carried significant weight in the negotiations they held with their immediate family. It has served as a real trigger for change and opened the door to other forms of empowerment²¹⁹.

However fair trade handicraft does have its limitations: it fails to consistently challenge the way that tasks are shared out according to gender²²⁰; it always relies heavily on women's ability to liberate themselves from the norms and controls applied by their husbands and in-laws; available resources are often quite limited; while it has elements that make the work suitable for

women (flexibility of work location and working schedule in particular)²²¹, it can also keep the women confined to the home when the work is not performed in a workshop²²². And finally, its impact on women's practical needs (well-being, income, knowledge, etc.) is clearly more significant and systematic than on their strategic needs (redefinition of women's subordinate role, better access to and control of the means of production and benefits, etc.)²²³.

Each FTO's ability to satisfy both needs, i.e. to find the right balance between the economic and socio-political empowerment of women²²⁴, is based on various factors: long-term strategy, target audiences, the groups' geographical location, financial and human resources, ability to form artisan collectives and raise awareness amongst these groups, and to do so in a participative rather than top-down way. Examples of best practices that were identified in this study include the implementation of a more profound gender policy (in order to give women a more targeted support, e.g. when it comes to public transportation or flexible working hours), the creation of places where women can have discussions (but also for men to discuss women's

rights) or the establishment of leader development training schemes. Oxfam-Magasins du monde's social change programme has provided an initial opportunity for the sharing of these kinds of experiences and practices between the different partners in relation to these issues. Working together to build a campaign on gender and fair trade handicraft should help to strengthen and cement this trend.

AREA	CONTRIBUTIONS	LIMITATIONS
"To have"	<p>Material resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fair wages. • Social benefits (maternity leave, health insurance, pensions, etc.). • Flexible working, especially in terms of reproductive tasks. • Access to financial services (e.g. saving funds, microcredit). • Opportunities to invest in education, healthcare, etc. <p>Human resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solidarity network, e.g. combating (domestic) violence or scheduling working time. • Psychological support (and legal in some groups). • Combating rural depopulation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not a living wage. • Fall in number of orders within fair trade sector. • Growing demands from buyers (quality, timescales, diversity). • Handicraft work not highly valued at a social level. • Discrimination towards women with no network/ contacts.
"To know"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acquiring technical skills, through professional and practical training (e.g. production, group management). • Acquiring basic knowledge through generic training (e.g. literacy, languages, IT). • Ability to develop individual/collective critical awareness through awareness raising and discussions as a group: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Women's rights (e.g. combating domestic violence). - Rights of the girl child (e.g. education). - Developing an interest in democratic life, the right to vote, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FTOs lack of financial and human resources for training. • Artisans' lack of time to undertake training, particularly personal development training.
"To want"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-esteem. • Self-confidence. • Group identity. • Increased respect from family/community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential distrust/hostility from family/community. • Fear of the unknown, possible difficulties associated with increased responsibilities. • Lack of interest/willingness to get involved in any activities (e.g. socio-political) apart from productive work. • Sacrifice for the family, at the expense of personal development.
"To be able to"	<p>Individual ability to influence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint management of the family budget. • Sharing household chores with the husband. • Increase in mobility. • Land ownership. • Development of leaders involved in associations and political life at a local/regional level. <p>Collective ability to influence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good example shown to other communities (and members of these communities) by the socio-economic success of FTOs/groups of women. • Target audience of the FTOs' social programmes wider than just artisans, aimed at communities. • Grouping of craftswomen into activist action groups at a local/national level. • FTO lobbying for human rights, particularly women's rights. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work overload for women when combined with reproductive tasks. • Work is often within the home, limiting women's mobility opportunities and chance to make social contacts. • Gender-based distribution of socio-professional roles not always challenged. • Possible cause of conflict/strong resistance from within the (wider) family/community, the result of entrenched social norms, especially at a rural level. • Insecurity caused by mobility. • Discriminatory nature of political involvement, which is more well-developed in urban as opposed to rural areas. • FTOs' target group can be very wide, which may reduce the potential to empower craftswomen. • Difficult for FTOs/craftswomen to combine economic and socio-economic empowerment (particularly in terms of skills).

Table 3. Summary of fair trade handicraft's contributions and limitations in relation to women's empowerment.

ANNEX

A CAMPAIGN ON GENDER AND FAIR TRADE HANDICRAFTS?

The object of this study is to present the context and arguments in favour of a North/South campaign in 2015-2016 on gender and fair trade handicrafts, both for Oxfam-Magasins du Monde (Omdm) and for the partners involved. The aim here is not to study the impact of fair trade handicrafts on women, since this aspect has been explored in depth in a separate study¹. Nor is the aim to give a precise and complete common campaign outline or all the aspects that are specific to each partner (sub-themes, actions, tools, etc.). These elements will be discussed at a seminar in Brussels next December, and then worked out in more detail during the campaign preparation period, scheduled between January and August of 2015.

CONTEXT

The idea of conducting a campaign on gender and fair trade handicrafts is part of a wider project called "social change". Financed by the DGD², this aim of the project during the first phase (2011-2013) was to initiate ideas to reinforce the position of partners from the South in the educational strategy of Omdm, as was mentioned in the strategy memorandum "Education and Development" by the Belgian co-operation³. One argument was that, "in order to organise efficient education in development, it is important to ensure the relevancy and legiti-

macy of the messages transmitted jointly with the South, and to do so by involving the organisations of the South in the approach to education and development".

More broadly speaking, the objective was to see how to set up a partnership beyond a simple commercial relationship, by developing our respective capacities together with a selection of partners at the social, educational and political levels. During this first phase, different seminars and field missions allowed the project partners to debate issues concerning their visions, strat-

egies and audience for social change, to examine the role that fair trade might play in it, as well as to share tools, practices and experiences at an educational and/or political level.

During the closing week, four working areas were identified: the continuation of exchanges about the methods for the education of young people (e.g. around the theme of responsible consumption), the tools to inform consumers (especially concerning the producers, for example through an approach of the PPP type⁴ from the Omdm) and the practices of (popular) education (through, for example, a digital tool-sharing platform)⁵. A marked interest in developing common North/South campaigns was also expressed. The Omdm's proposal to organise a gender and handicrafts campaign was received with great enthusiasm, so the idea will become the main component of the programme for the 2014-201⁶ period. It should also constitute a concrete way for partners to work together on questions of social change.

CASE STATEMENT

A campaign with the theme gender and fair trade handicrafts naturally has the advantage of improving visibility, and so, hopefully, the well-being and autonomy of the women producers working for our partners. A certain number of contextual elements could improve its impact:

- The theme fits in perfectly with the WFTO's new gender strategy. Approved at the organisation's last general assembly, on 29 May 2013 in Rio de Janeiro, this strategy encourages all members to "draw up clear policies and action plans to attack the root causes of inequality between men and women"⁶. A joint campaign with our partners would contribute to this strategy, both in the North and the South, in particular to its political aspect, which aims at "bringing gender considerations into advocacy programmes, in order to influence politicians and decision-makers to deal with the structural obstacles that prevent women from exercising their rights".
- The theme fits in with the systematisation of gender aspects in development policies over the past few years. So in Belgium, gender has been preserved as a transversal theme in the new law on cooperation in development of 2013, and could even be the subject of more specific programmes in the future⁷. More generally, 2015 will be a particularly interesting

year since it will be marked by many events linked to the two themes (see table 1):

- Redefinition of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) in the UN's global development framework⁸. More precisely, many civil society groups are campaigning for equality between men and women to constitute a transversal aspect of all new MDGs⁹.
 - The Year of European Development, with March in particular being specifically devoted to the rights of women and girls.
 - Twentieth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration¹⁰, which could offer media visibility and opportunities, especially in the context of the campaign of UN Women "Beijing +20"¹¹.
- The subject also allows the Omdm and its partners to develop the socio-political content of fair trade handicrafts (which represents all or most of their activities). In fact, handicrafts are generally considered as less politically charged than the agricultural sector. By demonstrating / com-

municating all the economic, social and political impacts of fair trade handicrafts on the questions of inequality between men and women, the campaign has the potential to reinforce the image and the political positioning of the different member organisations.

MORE SPECIFICALLY FOR THE OMDM, THE CAMPAIGN SHOULD ALLOW US:

- To reassert our position as an advanced player in the field of fair trade (cf. principle 3 of Omdm's fair trade – focus on the most disadvantaged producers and workers, and principle 7 – participatory logic, through the construction of a campaign)¹³.
- To develop our expertise in the field of handicrafts (cf. complementarity with the specialisation in food of our sister organisation Oxfam Wereld Winkels).
- To align ourselves with the Oxfam International's campaign on inequalities¹⁴ as well as strategic plan (2013-2019)¹⁵. The latter gives many references to gender, makes justice

EVENT	DATE	ORGANISATION
Gender focus of the European Development Year	March 2015	European Union
International Day of the Girl Child	11 October 2015	UN
Fair Trade Week	October 2015	CTB ¹²
National women's day in Belgium	11 November 2015	Belgium
International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women	25 November 2015	UN
International Women's Day	8 March 2016	UN
International Fair Trade Day	11 May 2016	WFTO / FLO
Beijing+20 Event during the European Development Days (Brussels)	June 2016	European Commission

Table 1. Gender and development events 2015 - 2016



March for World Fair Trade Day, Tara Projects - 2006

between men and women one of its six strategic change goals (goal 2)¹⁶ and advocates for a “Worldwide Influencing network” (WIN), into which a N/S campaign fits perfectly.

- Contributing to the repoliticisation of our movement (ongoing work within the Omdm), around a relatively new and potentially resonant

theme among our volunteers (cf. the mainly feminine composition of the movement).

We can see that the North/South campaign in 2015-2016 on the theme of gender and handicrafts could have a relatively important impact and scope (even more so if other organisations join, for example, from inside the WFTO network).

Conducted both globally and complementarily, the campaign should improve the credibility and relevancy of the discourse of partner organisations in relation to North/South citizens and consumers in the objective of reinforcing their participation in a fairer model of production and consumption.

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1 Veillard P. November 2014. Gender and fair trade handicrafts. The impact of fair trade handicrafts on women empowerment in India and Bangladesh.
 2 Direction Générale du Développement [General Development Office], a public body in charge of development cooperation in Belgium.
 3 DGD. March 2012. Note de stratégie éducation au développement.
 4 Product / Partner / Political Project. See also the analysis: Oxfam-Magasins du monde. Juillet 2011. 35 ans d'Oxfam-Magasins du monde. Des premiers pas d'Oxfam-Belgique aux nouveaux défis du commerce équitable.
 5 Among the ten principles of fair trade of the WFTO, number six was modified in 2013 to put greater accent on the economic empowerment of women. This principle now requires that the WFTO and its members promote the equality of the sexes, guarantee women access to resources, particularly to land, pay women the same wages as men (for work of equal value), even in situations of informal employment, and finally, take into account the health and safety needs that are specific to women.
 6 WFTO. 08/03/2013. WFTO urges change by governments. Fair trade agenda to improve women's lives marking international women's day.
 7 Most development programmes only “inject” gender into projects related to a precise area, most often in agricultural supply chains.
 8 A particularly important date will be the United Nations summit on MDG from 20 to 22 September.
 9 It is also interesting to note that the UN's new Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, Ms Hilal Elver, has shown interest in fair trade and gender. After her nomination, the European Fair Trade Advocacy Office sent her a congratulatory letter, to which she replied: “fair trade, particularly when related to gender, is very important to me”.
 10 The World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 resulted in particular in the introduction of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA). This platform set international organisations, governments and civil society two goals: the empowerment of women and the incorporation of gender into public policy. With this aim, it organised work in 12 priority action areas, each of which was the object of regular monitoring and recommendations directed at the entire international community. The present context is characterised by risks of regression due to very strong lobbying by conservative countries, and by the Vatican in particular towards developing countries.
 11 See the site UN Women for the list of events taking place in the world in the run-up to this 20th anniversary.
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 16 Among the references to gender in the implementation strategies: “promoting leadership and participation of female producers in Oxfam's Fair Trade networks and promoting women's agency and leadership across all of Oxfam's work”; “alliance-building with civil society organizations”; “training poor ‘at-risk’ women to understand their rights and building their capacity to lead and influence decision-makers”. Source: Oxfam. 2014. Transformative leadership for women's rights. An Oxfam guide. Understanding how leadership can create sustainable change that promotes women's rights and gender equality.

ENDNOTES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

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- 21 Revenga A., Shetty S. Mars 2012. L'autonomisation des femmes, un atout pour l'économie. Finances & Développement.
- 3 <http://www.closesthegap.in/>.
- 4 Chapter 3.2.2 below provides a contextual analysis of gender inequalities in India.
- 5 Banque mondiale. 2012. Rapport sur le développement dans le monde : égalité des genres et développement.
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- 15 <http://www.mondefemmes.be/>.
- 16 The Advisory Council will provide the Cooperation Minister with advice to ensure that gender is included in every development intervention as well as the work of international forums. The platform includes both academics and NGOs and its role is to provide input to the Council's work, while also undertaking awareness-raising and lobbying activities. Source: Delafortrie S., Springael C. 19/12/2013. Création du Conseil consultatif Genre et Développement.
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- 38 Achact. 2013. Factsheet Bangladesh. www.achact.be.
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- 130 Tara Projects. 04/08/2014. Presentation on gender issues and equality.
- 131 Examples: "Men Cell", "Save Indian Family Foundation" or the local branch of the National Coalition for Men (NCFM), who organized in 2010 in Bangalore an event called "Save the male."
- 132 Announced on November 8th, the project plans to amend section 498A of the Criminal Code to toughen penalties against frivolous complaints and to encourage family compromises. If women's organizations do not deny the existence of false accusations (especially among educated women of the upper classes, who know better the legal framework), they remain minor (according to the research center CSR, they represent 6.5% of the total number of complaints). Source : Le Monde. 13/11/2014. La bataille de la dot, nouvel épisode de la guerre des sexes en Inde.
- 133 Qualitative research is a type of research that uses specialist techniques to obtain in-depth information about a person's thoughts and feelings. It looks at the beliefs and behaviours of the group under investigation and is more interpretative than descriptive. The opposite is quantitative research, which attempts to provide a detailed numerical description for a representative sample. In some ways it could be said that "a quantitative approach uses three questions aimed at 1,000 people, while the qualitative approach uses 1,000 questions aimed at three people". Source: CESAG. February 2011. Qualitative methods of follow-up and assessment.
- 134 The semi-structured interview is a qualitative technique used to gather information. It focuses the output of those being interviewed around previously agreed themes that have been documented in an interview guide. As opposed to the structured interview, the semi-structured interview does not restrict the output of the person being interviewed by the use of predefined questions or a closed framework. They are able to develop and steer their output, while the various themes have to be included in the discussion with the interviewee. Source: Eureval. 2010. Conducting a semi-structured interview. Eureval data sheet.
- 135 A focus group is a planned discussion with a small group of stakeholders, led by a facilitator. Such focus groups provide a source of information on the preferences and values of different people on a given topic, as well as the underlying reasons behind these. This is made possible by observing an interactive group's structured discussion within an unforced and relaxed setting. Source: Fondation Roi Baudouin. 2006. Participative methods. User guide. Focus group.
- 136 Badarpur is a slum in the south of Delhi, mostly populated by Muslim migrants.
- 137 Research with a dual objective: transforming reality and generating knowledge about these transformations. It leads to the development, through self-learning, of skills in the subjects being examined. Source: Leclerc A. 1990. Dictionnaire d'épidémiologie. Editions Frison Roche.

- 138 Oxfam-Magasins du monde. 2009. Fiche Flash CORR – The Jute Works.
- 139 Most (approx. 90%) of the artisans perform their work at home. Source: CORR – The Jute Works. 2013. EFTA information form.
- 140 CORR – The Jute Works. 2013. EFTA information form.
- 141 CORR – The Jute Works. 2013. Annual report.
- 142 CORR – The Jute Works. 2013. Op. cit.
- 143 Oxfam-Magasins du monde. 2010. Sasha, partenaire indien d'artisanat équitable.
- 144 Sasha. 2013. EFTA information form.
- 145 Oxfam-Magasins du monde. 2009. Fiche Flash Sasha.
- 146 Sasha. 2013. EFTA information form.
- 147 CTB. Mars 2012. Les femmes actrices du commerce équitable.
- 148 Tara Projects. 2012. EFTA information form.
- 149 Solidarmonde. Septembre 2008. Fiche Tara Projects.
- 150 Tara Projects. 2012. EFTA information form.
- 151 Tara Projects. 2008. Annual report 2007 – 2008.
- 152 Kabeer N., Mahmud S., Tasneem S. September 2011. Does Paid Work Provide a Pathway to Women's Empowerment? Empirical Findings from Bangladesh. IDS working paper no. 375.
- 153 Principle 6 was amended in 2013 to place greater emphasis on the economic empowerment of women. This principle now requires the WFTO and its members to promote gender equality, guarantee women access to resources (especially property), provide them with the same pay as men (for equal work), even in informal working situations, and finally to take into account women's specific healthcare and safety requirements.
- 154 Graas F. 2011. Commerce équitable : vers un changement des relations hommes-femmes.
- 155 Aside from the WFTO's Guarantee System, other recognised fair trade labels that make a direct reference to gender issues are Ecocert and Fair for Life (the Fairtrade, Tu Simbolo and Naturland Fair labels do not mention it specifically). Source: Veillard P. October 2013. Les systèmes de garantie équitable.
- 156 Graas F. 2011. Op. cit.
- 157 PADD II. Février 2006. Le commerce équitable face aux nouveaux défis commerciaux : évolution des dynamiques d'acteurs.
- 158 CTB. Mars 2012. Les femmes actrices du commerce équitable.
- 159 The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR - Art. 23.3) defines the minimum living wage as "a remuneration earned by a worker during a normal working period that covers the essential needs of the worker and their family (accommodation, food, clothing, healthcare, access to education) and provides them with discretionary income that they can perhaps set aside as savings". All of the FTOs provide at least the local minimum wage and a majority offer a decent wage, in other words a salary more in line with the living wage. These restrictions are essentially due to the impact that a living wage would have on the products' end price, and therefore on the organisations' economic viability. Source : Behets E. Avril 2014. Salaire vital versus salaire équitable.
- 160 As an example, the most recent CJW annual report showed that the organisation only used 65% of its artisans' productive capacity. Source: CORR-The Jute Works. 2014. Annual report 2012-2013.
- 161 For example, approximately 1-2% at Tara Projects.
- 162 Even though these are often informal activities.
- 163 WIEGO. December 2011. Trading our way up: women organizing for fair trade.

- 164 Graas F. 2011. Commerce équitable : vers un changement des relations hommes-femmes.
- 165 Jeevika is an organisation that provides women with legal and psychological support services, income-generating activities (microfinance, savings, fair trade handicrafts and embroidery, agricultural development programmes), and also organises training, public gatherings, theatre plays, etc., all related to women's rights. <http://jeevikadevelopmentsociety.org/>.
- 166 As with the Latin-American handicrafts group Kuyanaky, a CIAP supplier, some FTOs actually restrict the communication/advertising they carry out for their organisation. Poverty is widespread and resources are scarce in the areas they cover. These organisations cannot therefore cover all of the people who might need their help.
- 167 Le Mare A. 2012. "Show the world to women and they can do it": Southern Fair Trade Enterprises as agents of empowerment, *Gender & Development*, 20:1, 95-109.
- 168 Approximately 80% of the IT courses are aimed at young girls/women. Source: Tara Projects. 04/08/2014. Presentation on gender issues and equality.
- 169 PADD II. Février 2006. Le commerce équitable face aux nouveaux défis commerciaux : évolution des dynamiques d'acteurs.
- 170 This was the case for most of the groups involved in this study.
- 171 During a discussion with a Sasha supplier, the KSEWS group, many of the artisans carried on sewing while they chatted informally amongst themselves in a corner of the workshop.
- 172 In a study on fair trade organisations in Bangladesh, Le Mare noted that only 22% of the artisans questioned belonged to an association outside their handicrafts group, mostly microcredit groups. Source: Le Mare A. 2012. "Show the world to women and they can do it": Southern Fair Trade Enterprises as agents of empowerment, *Gender & Development*, 20:1, 95-109.
- 173 As a reminder, the discussion organised for this research with various Sasha groups was the first such discussion to focus specifically on women's rights.
- 174 Most of the artisans we met during this research had no problems whatsoever speaking in front of a large group of people, including foreigners.
- 175 WIEGO. December 2011. Trading our way up : women organizing for fair trade.
- 176 Le Monde selon les femmes. 2013. Les essentiels du genre. Genre et empowerment.
- 177 A discussion with a consultant regularly employed by Sasha revealed that several years ago the FTO had a programme designed to develop 'leaders' within the various groups. But once again the programme was withdrawn due to a lack of time and resources.
- 178 The visible contribution generated by fair trade handicrafts is in contrast with the situation in the agricultural sector, where the income from women's work is usually included in the wider family income, which is then managed by the men in the family.
- 179 Le Mare A. 2012. "Show the world to women and they can do it": Southern Fair Trade Enterprises as agents of empowerment, *Gender & Development*, 20:1, 95-109.
- 180 Le Mare A. 2012. Op. cit.
- 181 CJW is an FTO with strong ties to the Catholic church because it belongs to the Caritas Bangladesh network. Nuns regularly visit Haricha village to assist the community.
- 182 Kabeer N. 2001. Conflicts over credit: re-evaluating the empowerment potential of loans to women in rural Bangladesh. *World Development*. 29(1): 63-84.
- 183 Purdah is a social and religious practice to prevent men from seeing women (by keeping women in confinement and forcing them to cover their bodies). It mostly exists amongst Muslims on the Indian sub-continent and in Arab countries. Source: Wikipedia.

- 184 In India, for example, 80% of working women work in agriculture (associated with the increasing trend towards male migration), while only 10% own land. Women have a right to agricultural land by law. But very few of them lay claim to this land, out of fear or ignorance. A new draft law on “the right of women farmers” would create a process to recognise women farmers and validate property titles. Source: Le Monde. 04/03/2013. India denies women farmers the right to own their land.
- 185 This woman’s father was a farm worker who received land from its owner after many years of work.
- 186 Land ownership is something that is still governed by religious laws in Bangladesh. Islamic law specifies that one third of the land must go to women, two thirds to men (50/50 for Catholics, with all of the land going to the men in the case of Hindus).
- 187 Charlier S. 2006. Solidarity economy for women: which contribution to women’s empoderamiento (empowerment)? Case study in the Bolivian Andes.
- 188 Another threat used by men is to take another wife, as polygamy is legal in Bangladesh (maximum of four wives for Muslim men, no limits for Hindus) and is permitted in India amongst Muslims (who have their own family law). The practice is however in sharp decline, particularly in Bangladesh (where it is estimated that 10% of Bangladeshi men are polygamists).
- 189 CTB. Mars 2012. Les femmes actrices du commerce équitable.
- 190 M. S. Ratna told us that there may be cultural reasons for this. It is uncommon for Bihari people, for example, to get involved in politics or activism. They tend to focus exclusively on their work or family.
- 191 This problem is nothing new for Oxfam-Magasins du monde, an organisation also constantly seeking to find the right balance between its commercial and political/educational activities. See: Veillard P. Mars 2013. Le commerce équitable aujourd’hui. Etat des lieux, tendances et positionnement d’Oxfam-Magasins du monde.
- 192 As with all of the training referred to earlier in this study, the FTOs often lack the resources required to give this training. This situation is aggravated by the crisis in the fair trade sector and growing demands from importers. A consultant employed by Sasha told us that the organisation used to provide such training, but had to cancel it due to a lack of resources.
- 193 As a reminder, a definite connection exists between individual and collective empowerment: the group relies on a minimum level of individual action with these individuals, which is then strengthened by collective action.
- 194 Trade Aid. April 2009. Fair trade impact assessment.
- 195 Oxfam-Magasins du monde. 2010. Sasha, partenaire indien d’artisanat équitable.
- 196 According to the latest EFTA information report, none of Sasha’s employees are directly involved in campaigning or lobbying activities. The “campaigning” activities primarily consist of promoting fair trade in general as part of World Fair Trade Day, in cooperation with the WFTO. The organisation appears to have taken part in national or international events such as the World Social Forum. It has also put together various partnerships, in particular with a local radio, Jadavpur University and with environmental and human rights NGOs. Source: Oxfam-Magasins du monde. 2010. Sasha, partenaire indien d’artisanat équitable.
- 197 According to documents provided by the organisation, only the celebration of International Women’s Day focuses on gender.
- 198 Sasha association for craft producers. April 2012. Fair trade policy. Point 6: non-discrimination and gender equity.
- 199 <http://jeevikadevelopmentsociety.org/>.
- 200 Mehta R. 2014. Sasha’s role in

- women centered-development. Presentation during Oxfam partner's day.
- 201 This workshop was held on 10 March 2013 to coincide with International Women's Day and was entitled "a promise is a promise: it is time to end violence against women". It mainly focused on domestic violence and, interestingly, some men took part. More generally, the organisation has a "training the trainers" policy, bringing in external experts (e.g. CAFOD, British development agency). Source: CORR-The Jute Works. 2014. Annual report 2012-2013.
- 202 However it has been difficult to gauge the specific level of the FT0's activity in this field because we were not provided with any lists.
- 203 The demonstration was organised by the "Girl Child Advocacy Forum", see below. Five members of CJW took part, with other members from Caritas Bangladesh. Source: CORR-The Jute Works. 2014. Annual report 2012-2013.
- 204 CORR – The Jute Works. 2013. Gender policy. Social and Trade Justice is the Basis of CJW. Maximizing benefit of artisans is its Aim.
- 205 Developed in 2005, and revised in 2013, this policy aims to increase the number of women directly employed by the organisation (from 26% in 2010 to a target of 35-40% in 2015, and 50% in management by 2018). Another objective is to create a working environment better suited to women: staff training on gender, social benefits (e.g. maternity/ paternity leave, crèches, flexible working hours, refunds for two bus tickets to minimise the risk of assault), zero tolerance towards all forms of harassment, etc. And finally, CJW has implementation committees at a national, regional and local level to embed this gender policy within all levels of the organisation.
- 206 Naripokkho is an activist organisation campaigning for women's rights, based in Dhaka. Founded in 1983, its members (mostly volunteers) combat all forms of inequality towards women, particularly issues relating to violence and discrimination.
- 207 The Hunger Project-Bangladesh is a Bangladeshi NGO that organises an annual National Girls' Rights Day. Over 50 NGOs, part of the "Girl Child Advocacy Forum" (including CJW), take part on 30 September each year.
- 208 Shapla Neer is a Japanese NGO. Some of their activity focuses on fair trade. It has an office in Dhaka. CJW took part in one of their campaigns in 2013 that focused on highlighting domestic work by girls. See also: http://www.shaplaneer.org/english/support/domestic_worker.html.
- 209 "We Can" is a campaign launched in 2004 designed to "make violence against women less socially acceptable". Initially bringing together NGOs, individuals and institutions from six countries in southern Asia (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka), it has since expanded to include Indonesia, the Netherlands and British Columbia in Canada. <http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/our-work/gender-justice/we-can>.
- 210 For example, the CJW gender policy referred to above is directly taken from the policy developed by Caritas Bangladesh (<http://www.caritasbd.org>). This close relationship with Caritas can, however, have its downsides, given the ties that Caritas has with the Catholic church and its less than progressive stance on gender issues.
- 211 It is also worth noting that Tara places an emphasis on girls in a lot of its training (e.g. 80% of IT students are girls/women).
- 212 According to the latest EFTA information report, five people are employed in lobbying and campaigning activity. But these same people work on community development programmes, which appears to be a higher priority for the organisation. Source: Tara Projects. 2012. EFTA information form.
- 213 Examples: training sessions on women's rights, seminars on domestic violence, external

- presentations, such as Mousmin’s testimonial above. But as with CJW, Tara Projects did not send us a detailed list of its activities in this field, which means we are unable to make exact comparisons.
- 214 A three-year campaign designed to reduce inequalities in India, specifically by launching an “open dialogue with the public”, using social networks and other mass media. The first year (2013) tackled gender inequalities, with a particular focus on women’s representation within public authorities. Source: Oxfam India. 2013. Indians demand equality for women. www.closesthegap.in.
- 215 <http://jagori.org/>.
- 216 Tara Projects. 2013. Gender Policy.
- 217 Tara Projects. 2012. EFTA information form.
- 218 Tara Projects. 04/08/2014. Presentation on gender issues and equality.
- 219 As a Tara Projects consultant commented, “simple awareness raising on women’s rights is not enough. To deliver real impact you also have to make a difference at a financial level”. He used the example of women who were highly educated but in a weak financial position, which meant they were fundamentally unable to change the power relationships they have with men.
- 220 For example in the Tara Projects group, “Taja-8”, metalwork and jewellery work is exclusively a male domain and there is a clear physical separation between men and women within the workshop. The group employs very few women as many of the younger female employees leave the organisation when they get married.
- 221 CTB. Mars 2012. Les femmes actrices du commerce équitabile.
- 222 Le Mare A. 2012. “Show the world to women and they can do it”: Southern Fair Trade Enterprises as agents of empowerment, *Gender & Development*, 20:1, 95-109.
- 223 Moser, C. 1989. Gender Planning in the Third World: Meeting Practical and Strategic Gender Needs. *World Development*, 17 (11): 1799-1825.
- 224 An organisation such as Tara Projects, for example, has a distinctly inclusive philosophy. This can be seen in its strategic documents, where it refers to the need to combat poverty by both “providing sufficient income” and “fighting for individual and collective rights”.





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