

# Uganda

## FAIR TRADE FOR WOMEN PRODUCERS

*"What has changed? Cooperation in the family on decision-making.... Women make decisions too. Women work for themselves and are self-reliant. Once we realised the benefits of working together, we were motivated to work even harder."*

Lakeli Namona, Primary Society Committee member,  
Gumutindo Coffee Cooperative

**Partner:** The National Association of Women's Associations in Uganda (NAWOU)

### MISSION & MEMBERSHIP

NAWOU has more than 70 national and over 1500 community-based organizations as members. Registered as an NGO in 1992, NAWOU's mission is to promote the growth of a strong women's movement that works for women's rights and enhances their social and economic status. Advocacy is embedded in all its programmes. Its vision is to see a unified body of women and organizations that have the capacity for self-sufficiency. Fair Trade is part of the organization's poverty and economic empowerment programme. NAWOU has its own Fair Trade shop in Kampala, and a marketing department promotes and exports handicrafts made by women.

The women's groups participating in this project were:

- the Kazinga Basket Makers with 60 members
- the Ngalo and Kanyanya textile handicraft groups, whose 58 members work with bark cloth, raffia, banana fibre and textiles
- the Patience Pays Initiative, whose nearly 100 members are primary producers for the Fruits of the Nile Growers Association, comprised of 100 registered primary producers who in turn buy fresh fruit from more than 800 other approved farmers to supply solar dried fruit to Fruits of the Nile, an enterprise worth about \$200,000 a year

WIEGO also visited the Gumutindo Coffee Cooperative in Mbale, a 7,000 member-strong organization with an explicit gender policy that reserves half of the seats on its board for women.



Photo by Carol Wills

### WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

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



Development Cooperation  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Resources have been dedicated by the cooperative to women's empowerment with great effect.

## LOCAL AND GLOBAL CONNECTIONS & MARKETS

NAWOU and Fruits of the Nile are members of the Uganda Federation for Alternative Trade (UGAFAT), Cooperation for Fair Trade in Africa (COFTA) and the World Fair Trade Organization (WFTO).

NAWOU is affiliated to the International Council of Women; is a member of the International Council for Social Welfare; and has consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council.

## CURRENT CONTEXT & CHALLENGES

Through the East African Community Common Market Protocol, the borders between countries in the region have been opened. However, the case study learned Ugandan artisans were at a disadvantage and found it hard to compete with Kenya and Tanzania, where the handicraft sector receives government support. This creates a barrier to reaping the benefits of regional integration. Many of the women producers were not aware of these broader economic policies.

As part of this project, NAWOU conducted a survey of 300 artisans in three product categories (basket weavers, textiles and fruit drying) across four districts. Its artisan activities were not recognized or valued as income-generating work. Artisans were found to be in urgent need of continuous provision of technical training and market information and support of the handicraft business, as the government does for the agriculture sector. It also calls on the government to promote acquisition of seed money or soft loans and to provide guidance on how best artisans can voice their issues and gain visibility.

## FINDINGS FROM THE RESEARCH

The Uganda study found that joining an informal production group with links to a Fair Trade marketing organization gave poor working women the opportunity to contribute to the family income and reduce

dependency on husbands or fathers. Fully 90 per cent of the participants said they appreciated the intervention of NAWOU and Fruits of the Nile, which have linked them to markets locally and abroad. They acknowledged that they could not have done this on their own.

Women who were marginalized when they worked alone are now able to learn from other group members and share their own skills and knowledge, benefiting the group as a whole. Self-confidence and self-esteem have increased, resulting in some women seeking, and being elected to, leadership roles in their communities.

Fair Trade organizations in Uganda have shown that with determination, dedication, consultation and good planning, it is possible for poor women producers to transform their lives through hard work, emphasis on quality and Fair Trade.

## MOVING FORWARD

A key recommendation that came out of this project's contextual analysis portion is that the National Statistics Bureau of Uganda obtain statistics that will quantify the vital contribution made by women handicraft makers and fruit driers to the country's economic development.

The linkages that have been established between artisans, NAWOU and Fruits of the Nile through this project will continue. The project allowed NAWOU to update its database of artisans, and this will help them reach out to artisans, and to encourage them to form groups and work together. As well, connections between artisans who did not know each other previously will allow information and experience to be shared more broadly.

*"I urge women to be confident and determined so as not to miss out on opportunities. Ugandan women and men are equal. We are more active than men and have a bigger workload - but men take the money."*  
Immaculate Nakayiza, Chair, Kazinga Basket Makers Group

