FAIR TRADE FOR HOMEBASED WORKERS AMIDST CLIMATE CHANGE

Fair Trade is an economic partnership based on dialogue, transparency, and respect. It creates opportunities for economically and socially marginalized producers. It helps develop transparent and accountable relationships between buyers and sellers in the international trading system. It enhances and develops capacity of producers while at the same time supporting safe and empowering working conditions. It promotes gender equity and social protection for workers while helping to eliminate child labor. Equally important is that it cultivates environmental stewardship and respect for cultural identity as well as care for natural resources.

Fair Trade embraces a holistic development approach because it creates a long-term impact on producers while delivering better products to the public, thus contributing to the development of communities. Producers are able to access basic resources and services from the higher returns on their earnings derived from a fair trade environment. Fair prices for quality products entail lower cost because of the elimination of middlemen; thus producers enjoy greater profit for their products. Patronizing fair trade products can also contribute significantly to address the adverse impacts and threats of climate change especially on homebased workers in terms of production, raw materials sourcing, livelihood and income opportunities, and generating green jobs.

Homebased workers are very capable of producing products using raw materials that are environmental friendly. The innovativeness of HBWs in creating products out of recyclable materials has been amply shown many times. Demonstrating the use of “green products” will be beneficial to women home-based workers considering the gender issues and concerns related to calamities and disasters. Such issues and concerns also need to be addressed in the context of Homenet Southeast Asia’s continuing campaign for inclusive and comprehensive social protection including occupational safety and health.

Women homebased workers especially those in poverty tend to rely more than men on natural resources to produce various products to earn a living. Women in the informal economy including HBWs are the ones mostly affected by adverse consequences related to climate change because their raw materials, such as fiber for textile weaving, are derived from agricultural produce. Communities that are engaged in fiber production and dependent on other crops to produce various crafts need to increase their adaptive capabilities especially on climate sensitive resources such as water and to natural outbreaks such as insect infestations. Changes in temperature and rainfall patterns directly affect crop yields, livelihoods and economic activities of communities engaged in various productive activities including those for their own household needs. Coping strategies to address changing women’s needs and priorities may be learned and adopted from HBWs from participating Homenets. Their involvement in developing new technologies that are user-friendly, effective, sustainable and appropriate for women HBWs can be highlighted in the context of fair trade.
“Solidarity Economy” is based on mutual help. Its primary goal is not profitability, but to serve producers, communities and consumers. Through participation of stakeholders and democratic means, it strives to strengthen and increase bargaining power of the vulnerable groups. It provides for an economy in which all parties shall be involved in acting and thinking together for the better quality of life of all. The essential basis to make possible Solidarity Economy is self-sufficient production and consumption and refraining from mutual exploitation. The new way of living together under this economy should rest on fairness, participation, non-exploitation, and tolerance. Cooperatives organizing and other form of cooperation between consumers, producers and government agencies created around the world to cope with the problem.
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