



UNITED STUDENTS FOR FAIR TRADE

Empowering Alternatives

Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda Interfaith Delegation Executive Summary 2006

Haki na Amani.... Justice and Peace in Kiswahili, and the guiding vision for United Students for Fair Trade's 2006 trip to origin. In June and July, sixteen USFT student activists joined coffee and craft cooperative allies in Tanzania, Kenya, and Uganda. The intentionally interfaith group sought to understand the way Fair Trade works on the ground and explore the ways that faith and social justice activism intersect. The participants were responsible for organizing the trip, taking complete ownership over the journey through a democratic, non-hierarchical planning process. In their pursuit of global understanding and social justice, USFT students laid the ground work to grow the relationship with the cooperatives. Their journey across East Africa proved profoundly challenging, intellectually and emotionally, and will absolutely influence each of the student activists' lives for years to come.

Desired Outcomes



1. Build relationships with Tanzania's Kilimanjaro Native Cooperative Union and Uganda's Mirembe Kawomera Cooperative and local craft cooperatives in Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda.
2. Discuss faith as a motivator for social justice and how faith influences peoples' commitment to Fair Trade work and hope to learn from the cooperatives about the way faith influences their work.
3. Maintain relationships with cooperatives in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania and produce resources designed to share their experience with student organizers in the U.S.
4. Increase the awareness of African strengths and opportunities through strategic and intentional interactions between and among coffee and craft communities in Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania and US economic justice activists.
5. Increase commitment to cross-cultural, cross-continental, intergenerational, and interfaith solidarity
6. To strengthen the relationship between USFT and African cooperatives and to broaden and deepen the Fair Trade movement.

Components of the Project

Fundraising - While a large part of the funding for the delegation came from foundations and likeminded groups, the delegates also raised a significant amount of money themselves. In order to make the trip accessible to all and in accordance with USFT's anti-oppression policies, each participant was asked to make a personal contribution of however much she/he could afford, from whatever sources available to her/him. Each delegate was also asked to raise a minimum of \$200

through local fundraisers, donations, etc, educating and enrolling her/his community in an active support role.



Ally Relations – The delegation would not have been possible without the critical support that various allies, from within the Fair Trade movement to more general social justice and faith groups, contributed along every step of the way, from conception to the present. Throughout the planning process members of the delegation kept in touch with allies and solicited their input on various topics.

Logistics – Students were responsible for planning most aspects of the trip, including nearly all of the logistics. A committee was formed to coordinate the logistics of the trip, from purchasing plane tickets to arranging for transportation, lodging, and meals within the countries.

Program Planning – One of the more important aspects of the trip, this consisted of another committee that worked on developing a program for the time spent in-country. The program was developed in coordination with the cooperative members in-country and was brought back to the entire group before decisions were finalized.

Faith Dialogue – From an early stage an essential component of the trip was the interfaith aspect. Students from various faith backgrounds were chosen as delegates and the aim was to explore both how faith motivated social justice among the student activists and the role that faith played in the producer cooperatives.

KEY OUTCOMES

LEADERSHIP AND CONTINUED COMMITMENT

One of the core goals and most notable outcome for USFT as an organization was leadership development. From the group of 15 student participants, three have stepped into national organizing roles for USFT and two have stepped into coordinating roles in the Student Trade Justice Campaign, USFT's sister organization that addresses Trade Policy. Beyond the national leadership, many are committed to building campus and community organizations that advocate for Fair Trade principles and products. All of the students have a renewed commitment to Fair Trade communities and will continue to organize around Fair Trade in their own communities.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH EAST AFRICAN COOPERATIVES

USFT believes that Fair Trade *is* relationships. In an effort to support the Fair Trade cooperative work in Tanzania, Kenya, and Uganda and the Fair Trade activism in the United States, producers and student activists engaged in depth. Organizational



relationships were built between USFT and Mirembe Kawomera, USFT and KNCU, USFT and Traidcraft. While these are important, students were deeply impacted by the relationships they built with individual members and families of the cooperatives. These personal relationships will influence the growth of the Fair Trade movement more than anything, driving each group to work in solidarity together.

COFFEE PROCESS AND COOPERATIVE STRUCTURES

USFT students spent the majority of their time on farms with producers learning about coffee farming and processing. The students now know the coffee process well (and could all produce a coffee tree-cutting if asked) and understand the coffee market better. Additionally, students gained a profound appreciation for the cooperative movement through their interactions. The empowerment that happens in primary societies was fundamental to students' understanding of Fair Trade as a movement and a market.

ESTABLISHED AN INTERFAITH WORKING GROUP

Because of the group's commitment to exploring faith as a motivator for social justice work, Catholic, Lutheran, Muslim, and Unitarian students have joined together to start an active working group. This team will work to create workshops and guides that specifically reach out to students of faith and will support them in their work.

FOLLOW UP

Since returning to the United States, student activists have struggled, individually and collectively, to make sense of their experiences and to put their passion into action. Several have stepped into national leadership roles while others organize locally; all are in some way committed to the communities we spent time with and will work in solidarity with them.

Throughout the next year, USFT will stay in close contact with the individual students, supporting their journeys and their activism. As a group, they will continue work together, contributing to the development of the Interfaith Working group and Convergence workshop content. They will play a leading role in supporting the South-North Intern from Uganda in the spring and in East African cooperative participation in the Convergence.

