

# WOMEN, POVERTY AND FAIR TRADE MOBILIZATION KIT

Prepared by:

**GLOBAL CITIZENS  
FOR CHANGE**

A project of Canada's international volunteer cooperation agencies

**CITOYENNES  
DU MONDE  
EN ACTION**

Un projet des agences canadiennes de coopération internationale

[www.globalcitizensforchange.ca](http://www.globalcitizensforchange.ca)

Global Citizens for Change is a project of Canadian volunteers and volunteer cooperation agencies (CCI, CECI, CUSO, WUSC, CWY, OXFAM-Québec, CESO, SUCO, VSO) which aims to harness the skills and experience of Canadians in ensuring that Canada does its part to achieve the Millennium development goals and end poverty at home and abroad

## Women and Fair Trade: Working a Way out of Poverty

### Section One: Introduction to Women and Poverty

Worldwide, the overwhelming majority of poor people are women, making up 70% of the world's 1.3 billion people living in poverty. (Source: [World Revolution](#), cited by Millennium Campaign; also the UNDP). Indeed, it has become almost a cliché to say that *poverty has a woman's face*. More women than men are poor, and women are more poor than men. What is more, the absolute number of women living in extreme poverty is on the rise.

And yet, women are the engines of economies. While they earn less than men, they also work harder overall, both in total number of work hours and in unpaid work in the home. As the majority of workers in the huge and burgeoning **informal sector** in the Global South, women strive to support their families and raise their children while bearing the burden of extreme and debilitating poverty.

#### Glossary:

**Formal sector** – the portion of the economy and of jobs that are taxed and regulated. Minimum standards for work safety, wages and labour conditions are (or should be) applied to these jobs.

**Informal sector** – the informal economy or informal sector is that part of the economy that is neither taxed nor regulated. It includes, for example, vendors who sell fruits or carvings in the street without paying taxes to the government, and without receiving any protections from the government such as maximum workweek or minimum wage. Workers in the informal sector might also include women doing piece-work sewing at home or in a 'sweatshop'. In the past, jobs in the informal sector barely made it onto the radar of development economists and others trying to estimate the value of labour done in a country. But the informal sector represents a tremendous and growing number of jobs and a large proportion of national economies. The exact numbers are difficult to measure but for example the International Labour Organization estimated in 1997 that some 90 % of new jobs in sub-Saharan Africa are being created in the informal sector and that the sector employs some 60 % of the urban workforce. (<http://www.gdrc.org/icm/wind/uis-wind.html>). Women make up the majority of informal sector workers.

**Structural adjustment** – a set of economic policies that countries are forced to follow in order to qualify for loans from the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund and to help repay debts already owed to banks, governments or the World Bank. Structural adjustment policies usually require countries to become more dependent on export earnings for economic growth, to slash social programs and public sector investment, to reduce barriers such as tariffs and taxes that protected home industries from foreign competition, devalue their currency against the U.S. dollar, and remove price controls and state subsidies. Public sector and well-paid jobs may be lost. The result at the household level is that to survive, many women are seeking employment in the low-wage informal sector.

The Women's International Network estimates that 66% of the world's work is done by women – and yet they earn less than 5% of the world's income and own less than 1% of property in the world. Working so hard for so little gain, they produce half of the world's food (source: World Development Indicators, 2007, Womankind Worldwide).

The many well-known problems associated with poverty – illiteracy, disease, environmental damage, despair – are thus inseparable from the problem of women's inequality.

### **So, why are women poor?**

There are a range of causes, complex and inter-related, for women being poorer than men, and for women in the Global South being poorest of all. Gender-related causes of poverty include:

- Women have unequal access to education
- Women usually earn less than men
- Women tend to be concentrated in lower-paid areas of work
- Much of women's work goes unpaid
- Women often head single-parent households
- Women may live longer than men
- Inheritance laws may discriminate against women
- Women lack capital, land and credit that can help them get started

(some of this material is adapted from Women and the Economy, a project of UNPAC, <http://www.unpac.ca/economy/whatcauses.html>)

In the words of Lin Lim, author of a 1996 report by the International Labour Organization (ILO), "the bottom line is that while more and more women are working, the great majority of them are simply swelling the ranks of the working poor ... Women's economic activities remain highly concentrated in low-wage, low-productivity and precarious forms of employment."

Unequal trading relationships, years of resource extraction through colonization, the devastating impact of the HIV pandemic and diseases like tuberculosis and malaria, the burden of massive debt repayment and structural adjustment are just a few of the causes of poverty in the countries of the Global South. Desperate poverty hits women – already labouring under the burden of economic and legal discrimination -- hardest.

In fact, the global economic system stacks the cards strongly against women ever working their way out of poverty.

### **Working out a solution**

Looking back at the list above, you can see that several of the factors that tend to make women poor relate to the work they do. It's for just this reason that UNIFEM, the United Nations' organization dedicated to improving the condition of women, warned in a 2005 report that more attention needs to be paid to the links between women's work and women's poverty.

If women were compensated for their work at a rate that reflects their cost of living, if they were given access to capital, land and opportunities to borrow small amounts of money, if their jobs were long-term and with reasonable work conditions, they would be far less vulnerable to unstable prices, global supply and demand, and competition driving prices and wages ever lower, as well as to inequalities in society that prevent women from gaining economic stability ... sound impossible?

It's not. **Fair trade**— as you'll see in a moment - is a powerful tool for global change, and provides an opportunity for you to challenge global inequities right in your home, work, and community.

This Women and Fair Trade action kit aims to equip you with the knowledge and tools you need to contribute to a fairer world for women.

### **Women and poverty *at a glance*:**

- Some 1.3 billion people live in poverty around the world
- Of these, 70% are women.
- Two-thirds of the world's work is done by women
- Women earn less than 5% of global income
- Women produce one half of the world's food
- Women own less than 1% of the world's property

## **Section Two: Fair Trade and Other Initiatives Supporting the Economic Empowerment of Woman**

With a global economic system so firmly stacked against people who are poor and people who live in the Global South – and against women – women urgently need a sustainable way to achieve a measure of economic independence.

One mechanism we can use to support the economic empowerment of women in the South is fair trade.

A fair trade system is one in which people who buy and people who sell come to an agreement to go outside the conventional market system to set standards that are just, and that allow producers to make a decent living from their labour.

Sometimes fair trade products are more expensive than their non-fair trade equivalents because they more accurately reflect the real costs of producing the item, rather than depending on an artificially low cost of labour to make them cheap.

A large and growing list of products are available in fair-trade versions. You can buy fair trade cocoa and chocolate products, dried and fresh fruits and vegetables, fair trade cut flowers, coffee, honey, oranges, bananas, juices, nuts, oil, seeds, quinoa, spices of various kinds, sugar, tea and rice. In Canada there are 11 types of commodities

certified by TransFair, including most of these – and sports balls! You can even get fair trade wine. Crafts of various kinds, from hammocks to woven bags to children's toys, may also be produced as fair trade products.

### **How does fair trade work?**

Fair Trade standards go beyond initiatives like a code of conduct by not just setting minimum requirements, but actually guaranteeing a **fair price** to the producers of these products – no matter what is going on in the volatile global commodities market. They also include a fair trade **premium** that the producer re-invests into her economic, social or environmental development.

### **Seven simple guidelines**

The **Fair Trade Labeling Organizations (FLO) International**, which sets world standards for Fair Trade certification that are used by national fair trade certification organizations like Canada's TransFair Canada, uses seven simple principles of fair trade. These are:

- 1 - Direct trade** – consumers, like us, know who makes the product they buy. Whether it's a women's sewing co-operative in Nicaragua or a women's group selling dried mangoes from Burkina Faso, we are able to put a face or a name to the farmers and artisans who produce the food and goods we consume – and by purchasing from them rather than from a big-box superstore, we are making a commitment to fairer trade relations with real people. Direct trade means very few middle agents, and more money going into the pockets of the women who do the work.
- 2- Fair pricing** – the conventional global market has fluctuating prices that in no way reflect the actual value of labour – prices for commodities like rice or coffee may even fall well below the cost of production, forcing small-scale farmers to have to abandon their land and economic independence to work for hire at poverty wages, and causing a situation of competition that creates a race to the bottom in terms of labour standards and wages. Fair trade products pay a fair price that, at a minimum, covers the costs of living and of producing the goods.
- 3- Democratic and transparent organization** – producer organizations, for example a weaver's co-op, must be organized in a way that ensures that all of the workers have a say in how benefits are spent. This ensures that an individual member of the co-op or organization doesn't get exploited by fellow members or by management.
- 4- Protection of the environment** – a commitment to sustainable production, and moving towards organic means of production, is an important aspect of fair trade.
- 5- Community development** – especially in the realm of commodities production, there is a long history of buyer countries like Canada taking out far more than they put back into the communities that produce their sugar, oranges, coffee or tea. By maintaining a commitment to community development, fair trade moves beyond just the producer and the buyer to encompass the welfare and sustainability of an entire community. The fair trade standards requiring a specific premium for social

investment create a definite, dollar amount measure of how community development is supported when you buy a fair trade product.

**6- Long-term trade relations** – long-term relationships between producers and buyers allow producers to diversify their income, refine their product, and create a sustainable livelihood.

**7- Access to credit for producers** – When prompted by producers, the importer must give access to credit by way of prepaying part of the container load sold. Furthermore, through community savings banks and micro-credit loans, even poor women with no capital are able to start up a business. The fair prices and long-term trading relations ensure they can keep it going.

(These guidelines apply to products rather than companies, and when translated into enforceable standards, principles 6 and 7, are not compulsory)

Fair trade handicrafts, (bowls scarves, jewelry etc.) are treated a bit differently and are traded under International Fair Trade Association (IFAT) standards that apply to organizations and not products, though products are traded.

Members of IFAT are mainly associations and co-ops, a majority of which are women-based. Successful examples of a co-ops are Asarbolsen and Q'antati from Bolivia. These two organizations which produce textiles, traditional handicrafts, musical instruments, ceramics, pottery and jewelry are women-run and they've been quite successful on the export market.

Depending on the product, fair trade needs may vary. For example, tea is usually grown on estates by many workers. For these workers, a living wage and adequate labour standards are critical needs. Coffee, on the other hand, may be grown on small plots by a co-operative such as the women's coffee co-op of Nicaragua's Yasicá Sur region, for whom the most urgent need is a fair price for their coffee beans. This is something that the conventional world market does not provide, but which they get by selling their fair trade certified beans to Canadian fair trade merchants like Alternative Grounds ([www.alternativegrounds.com](http://www.alternativegrounds.com)).

Therefore, there are two sets of standards for fair trade – those applied to small co-operative, democratic and participatory structures, and those applied to hired workers in factories or plantations, ensuring them the right to organize and to enjoy good working conditions. An example of the latter situation might be a woman working in a garment factory, for whom fair trade might guarantee that she can organize her co-workers into a union without fear of reprisal. (source: [http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/about\\_standards.htm](http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/about_standards.htm))

Currently, some 200 retailers in Canada are licensed to carry the TransFair label, indicating that the products they carry have been fair trade-certified by TransFair Canada, the national organization that applies FLO standards.

### **Three important initiatives often go along with fair trade:**

**Co-operatives:** In a co-operative, the workers are also the bosses, and decisions are taken together, risks assumed together and earnings fairly distributed. One very successful example has been the shea butter cooperatives in Mali. Many fair trade initiatives function as co-operatives, or co-ops.

**Micro-credit:** small loans, a model first popularized with Bangladesh's Grameen Bank, allow women to get a small – tiny! – business off the ground (an example would be for a woman to obtain funding to purchase a dozen hens and a few crates, in order to sell some eggs at a stall). While banks would never loan to women with no credit history, little experience and no collateral (or in many places, no husband to sign for them), micro-credit initiatives give them a chance. Astonishingly, rates of repayment of these loans are high, often over 90%. Some organizations, like Pro Mujer, work exclusively with women borrowers. Micro-credit and similar initiatives like community savings banks, where each member of a group is responsible for the repayment of a loan, can provide the fuel to start up a fair trade business – although the jury is not yet out on just how effective micro-credit can be for creating social change. Still, it is a powerful way to get small initiatives going. For this reason, extension of credit is one of the principles of fair trade.

**Environmentally Friendly Agricultural Techniques:** Often mistaken with organic, fair trade is not organic and *vice versa*. Nonetheless, a very comprehensive list of chemical pesticides and fertilizers known to be hazardous for the environment and humans is banned in the fair trade standards, which lends to a healthier environment, and fewer health hazards for the people who are working in the fields.

The environmental aspect of fair trade also forces diversification of crops: food and exportation crops are then sold at local markets to earn extra money. An example is Kanya Onsri, from Surin Rice Fund in Thailand. She is now not only growing rice, but also organic peanuts and various fruit and vegetables, which she is selling at the local market. The extra earnings have a drastic impact on Kanya's financial situation: "last year my income from peanuts and vegetables as well as from the sale of one cow, allowed me to have an extra income of \$800".

### **An important question ... How fair is fair trade for women?**

With women facing unequal and unfair treatment in so many aspects of their lives and in so many structures, even those set up to help them, we have to ask the question, *is fair trade really fair for women?*

In 2006, Québec M.A. candidate Caroline Langis conducted a research study of a fair trade project in Peru, a federation of Peruvian coffee co-operatives that involved women and men. She found, disturbingly, that rules limiting co-op membership to landowners left women out of the co-ops since their inception in 1967, and that the resulting disadvantage of women in terms of technical knowledge and capital remains a factor today. Women complain of being left out of decision-making. Unfair inheritance and land ownership laws prevented them from achieving significant economic independence.

Clearly, these are things to watch out for. And yet, Langis also found that women benefited from the fair trade social premium re-invested in projects to promote women's activities, technical training and even training that raised their awareness of women's human rights. She suggests that the FLO needs to use better criteria for women's participation -- such as ensuring that a mixed gender co-op includes a women's committee and joint membership in co-ops, so that women are not dependent on their husbands' participation.

Other examples are far more positive. Many fair trade-certified co-ops are organized, staffed and run by women, providing them with financial independence for the first time and transforming their communities. In fact, a TransFair Canada-licensed producer in Peru, Café Femenino, is a woman-controlled fair trade structure that exists within the larger fair trade movement in the country, ensuring that earnings stay in women's hands, and gradually changing attitudes and policies in the movement as a whole. By 2006, 790 women from fifty communities were part of Café Femenino, and similar initiatives have sprung up in Nicaragua and Rwanda, among others. (TransFair Canada newsletter issue 2).

### **... and another question: How fair is that trade?**

Recently there has been an explosion of products on Canadian shelves that claim to be fair trade. However, with TransFair Canada the only independent third-party organization in the country verifying that products and traders are adhering to fair trade standards, many of these products are more quasi-fair trade, more like a code of conduct urging social responsibility for example, than actually, definitely, quantifiably fair trade. According to Dario Iezzoni, Executive Director of Equita, Oxfam's fair trading arm, this muddying of the just commerce waters is perhaps the greatest threat that the fair trade movement faces today.

Be sure that as you promote fair trade among your friends and acquaintances and by demanding an ethical buying policy for your office or school, you emphasize the importance of reliable certification. That way you help ensure that our fair trade purchases make a *real* difference in women's lives, and that the fair trade system isn't a triumph of flash and promise over substance.

### **Fair trade at a glance:**

In Canada [from TransFair.ca]

- Between 1997 and 2006 the number of licensees selling Fair Trade products in Canada has increased from 5 to 162.
- Between 1997 and 2005 the percentage of adult coffee drinkers who purchase Fair Trade coffee has quadrupled.
- Small family farmers grow over 50% of the world's coffee (from [transfairusa.org](http://transfairusa.org))
- In 2006, a number of universities including McMaster, Queen's University, University of Montreal and York University had adopted ethical or Fair Trade purchasing policies (from [transfair.ca](http://transfair.ca)).

Globally

- In 2005, 508 producers in 58 developing countries were fair trade-certified by the FLO – a 37% increase over the previous year.
- Approximately one million producers and five million people, including dependents, benefit directly from certified fair trade. (from the FLO)

<p><b>Section Three:</b> <b>Get Active – Make Trade Fair!</b></p>
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**Part One: Creating an ethical buying code**

By supporting companies that are fair trade-certified, we send a clear message that we are not interested in cheap goods that devalue women's labour.

As individuals, every day we have opportunities to send this message by adopting our own, personal ethical buying code. For example, we can:

1. Commit to choosing fair trade over non-fair trade options wherever possible. For example, if your local coffee shop carries several brands of coffee but just one fair trade brand, be sure to order the fair trade-certified brand. Just by making that choice you're letting the owners know that you value fair trade over other factors – and encourage them to stock a variety of types of fair trade coffee.
2. Commit to buying only fairly traded versions of a particular commodity. This is a good way to take first steps towards buying fair trade. You might choose to only buy chocolate that is TransFair Canada-certified, or only fair trade tea.
3. When you give presents, make sure that your gifts are fair trade. This way you not only support fair trade producers, you also send a message to the recipient about your values, and about your understanding of what *they* value, too. Next time you are throwing a birthday party or shower, specify that it is a fair trade party, and include in the invite a list of places where guests can look for fair trade gifts.
4. Be sure to ask, every time, for fair trade brands. Even if you know that a given restaurant or café doesn't carry any fair trade products at all, if enough people ask often enough, eventually they'll get the message. Especially if you let them know you're going to take your business to an establishment that already does.

But what happens when you aren't doing the buying? The T-shirts your company buys to promote the business may be made in an Indonesian sweatshop. The coffee your non-profit organization stocks its kitchen with may be bought at an absurdly low price reflecting random dips in the world price of coffee. This is a reality with most businesses and organizations. But it's a wonderful opportunity to engage in some fair trade activism.

You can support fair trade by creating an ethical buying code for your company, organization or school.

**Universities and colleges** are major customers of unfairly traded goods. Just think of all the tea, coffee, sugar and chocolate – commodities that can be bought for *extremely*

low prices when they're produced by *extremely* exploited workers -- consumed on campus! And universities buy and sell garments that may be produced under 'sweatshop' conditions. But in a growing movement, students at universities across Canada are successfully coaxing their administration into adopting fair trade buying codes to ensure that they pay a fair price, and only buy from producers who adhere to reasonable labour standards.

When you work in an **office** that buys non-fair trade versions of products readily available fairly traded, you have a ready-made opportunity to engage your co-workers with a simple, everybody-wins form of action by proposing a switch to a TransFair Canada-certified brand. You might start by convincing your department to stock the office kitchen with fair trade coffee – and end up turning a whole **company or organization** on to the concept of fair trade!

### **Steps to create your own ethical buying code:**

**[adapted in part from TransFair Canada's Student Guide to Fair Trade Activism]**

#### **Step One: Identify your 'ask'**

Research the sources of products commonly bought by your school, organization or company. Then create a list of concrete demands – the 'ask'.

- TransFair Canada proposes the following goals that students might propose to the groups they approach on campus: that the student union and university or college authorities create a policy to govern fair trade purchasing
- that fair trade certified products be made available for sale in campus shops
- that fair trade certified products be used in all cafes, restaurants and bars on campus
- that fair trade certified products like coffee and tea be served at all meetings hosted by the university and the Student Union and in all university and SU management offices
- that student government and the college or university administration commit to campaigning for increased fair trade consumption on campus.

Here's an example:

Supported by the desires of the student body, we, Fair Trade group of X request that Institution Y:

1. adopt a Fair Trade purchasing policy on coffee by the end of 2008, to be composed by a joint commission of Fair Trade group X and institution Y
2. provide annual Fair Trade training for all employees
3. work in partnership with Fair Trade group X to develop a marketing strategy for Fair Trade products on campus

Be ready to negotiate your list of demands. For example, an institution may say it is not financially feasible to adopt a purchasing policy by the end of 2008 or that they cannot be sure if the market exists to even have a purchasing policy. Perhaps you will be able to convince them to run a year of trial purchasing and from the results of that year move into a purchasing policy the next year.

In the case of an organization or office, you might not need to be so formal. A simple proposal, supported by the reasons for switching and an honest assessment of any cons (would spending rise? Would any cost increase be significant?), may be enough.

### **Step Two: Go Public**

1. In proposing a fair trade purchasing policy to your college or university, you can adapt an existing fair trade purchasing policy to get the language right. For example, here is McMaster University's ethical purchasing policy: <http://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/fairtrade.pdf>.

This could be useful as well if you're working across an organization or business – but feel out the situation – going too formal too quickly can alienate co-workers or managers who aren't yet convinced of the benefits of switching to fair trade.

2. Then you need to get 'buy-in' from student and faculty organizations on campus. You might want to approach the company that provides catering services on campus, including catering meetings, running cafeterias or tuck shops, and providing food services in residence; clubs or organizations on campus with an interest in social and economic justice issues or women's human rights – groups like Oxfam, WUSC, PIRGs and the university or college Women's Centre; the university authority responsible for facilities and services; the student union executive. With each meeting you gain support or identify obstacles to be overcome and raise awareness about the issue.

Buy-in at the office or organization level is more a matter of personal conversations. Engage as many people as you can in discussions of the issues.

3. Hold events, teach-ins, movie or discussion nights, fair trade food fairs and other awareness-building events. Write op-eds on the need for a fair trade policy for the student newspaper, or go on the campus radio show to discuss issues relating to fair trade. At work, hold a brown-bag lunch on fair trade-issues and what employees can do – invite a speaker from TransFair Canada or another organization concerned with fair trade issues, and invite your co-workers and bosses to bring their lunches and their questions.

### **Step Three (for schools) : Build – and show – your support base**

After you have gotten the message out there, the next step is to quantify the existing support for fair trade. At school, your college or university administration will need to feel confident that adopting a fair trade policy would be a successful, popular, non-controversial move.

For a simple demonstration of support, your group could canvass the campus population with a petition expressing support for the college or university adopting a fair trade buying policy. Along a similar vein, your group could place a plebiscite question on a student referendum ballot.

#### **Step Four: Meet with the Big Cheeses**

**At work**, meet with the person in charge of purchases. If you're seeking to get your company or organization to formally adopt a fair trade buying code, you might need to speak with the heads of departments or the executive director or chief operating officer. By the time you get to this meeting, be sure you can clearly show the significant support that exists among both managers and staff for adopting the code. Also be sure to demonstrate the bottom-line advantages: advantages for the organization's reputation, for worker morale, and the context of more and more organizations and businesses adopting ethical purchasing policies – doing so would keep you at the forefront of corporate or organizational social responsibility trends. For example, Canada's VIA RAIL recently decided to serve only fair trade-sourced coffees – and other major companies and organizations are increasingly coming on board the fair trade train.

At your **university or college**, when you meet with the administrators responsible for facilities and services, or another department responsible for the institution's buying policy, be sure to present your demands in the context of the growing trend of academic institutions adopting fair trade purchasing policies. Emphasize also the significant student support that exists (which you can show through the results of your petitions and meetings with interested groups). Also don't forget to provide a succinct background to the issue so decision-makers understand the practical, effective nature of the change that can be achieved through fair trade. Be to-the-point, well-prepared, well-dressed, respectful and ready to help decision-makers work through the obstacles they fear they might face in adopting a fair trade buying policy.

TransFair Canada suggests that it is important to engage in open and honest dialogue with the institution as it is far better to establish a partner than to establish an enemy. At the same time, it's important to map out the different actors who are influential in making a decision, and see where you might put on the pressure if you don't get a positive response. A letter-writing campaign, an office sit-in, an anti-'sweatshop' fashion show and articles in campus media are all tactics that other student fair-trade activists have found successful. **TransFair also offers some excellent resources on how to become a fair trade activist at your school or office.**

Currently there is no official certification for 'fair trade universities' or schools, as there is in the U.K. Still, creating an ethical buying code that is adopted by your college, university or school is an important first step towards moving it in a more ethical and just direction.

#### **Section Four:**

#### **Make Poverty History - Meet With your Member of Parliament**

The Make Poverty History campaign aims to end extreme poverty. Getting governments on board the campaign is an important step to advance anti-poverty goals and redress current gender inequalities.

March 8<sup>th</sup>, International Women's Day, is an important day for initiatives to address women's poverty. Meeting with Members of Parliament is a very effective way of letting the Canadian government know that the issue of extreme poverty and its disproportional

and debilitating impact on women in the Global South is important to their constituents and that we want change.

Use March 8<sup>th</sup> as a date to get your friends, colleagues, and fellow constituents to write, call or meet your MP.

### **Member of Parliament Meeting Tool**

It may sound a bit intimidating, but speaking as a constituent to your local MP is an effective and simple means of getting your concerns heard. Keep in mind that your MP works for you. This approach can be particularly effective when constituents across the country are delivering the same messages.

#### **GENERAL TIPS:**

- Be absolutely clear about what you want the MP to do. (See “The Meeting and The Ask” next page.)
- Listen well
- Don’t be disappointed if the MP is not immediately supportive. Hearing his/her views and justification of a position is valuable for the campaign, and he or she may come around in the future.
- Always be polite and respectful. Your MP opinion on an issue may change on a dime, but a bad impression lasts a long time.
- If you have not been overseas, talk about your current involvement with charitable organizations, or the work you are doing to promote fair trade and women’s equality.

#### **REPRESENTING YOURSELF:**

Be clear about who you are and who you represent. You may want to start by briefly outlining your personal experiences volunteering (if you have any). Make sure that you explain your volunteer position in a concise way. Practice doing this beforehand. Ask a friend to listen to your introduction and ask for feedback. Remember that your MP may not be very familiar with international development so stay away from using acronyms, and catch phrases.

#### **STEPS TO TAKE TO MEET WITH YOUR MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT:**

##### **Identify Your MP**

- If you don’t know who your MP is, visit [www.elections.ca](http://www.elections.ca), click the language of your choice, and then enter your postal code. Click “for more information” under the MP’s name to get the phone number for his or her office.

##### **Call the MP**

- Call the MP’s local office, and ask if you can have 30 minutes of his or her time to discuss the issue (e.g. global poverty reduction and women’s inequality).
- Suggest days that you would be available for a meeting.
- Keep a friendly tone.
- Use everyday language in explaining your issue.
- Be careful not to assume knowledge.

## Prepare for the meeting

- Know your MP – check out his or her website and latest printed materials. Refer to supportive positions taken by the party or members of the party.
- Find out if the MP has met or been involved with international development organizations before on this or related issues. What was the outcome? Has he or she ever spoken publicly about this issue? What committees do they sit on?
- Gauge who the MP is most likely to listen to. A community or business leader, a volunteer, or an academic. Can you enlist them as fellow spokespeople?
- If possible, choose a delegation of 2-3 people from your committee – make sure one is a constituent and ensure you are on the same page about the message and goals of the meeting.
- Decide in advance who will take the lead in the meeting.
- Brainstorm what kind of questions might be raised and prepare answers.
- Plan for different possible outcomes/responses to the meeting.
- Set a clear, achievable goal for the meeting.
- Send a one- or two-page backgrounder on the issue.
- Dress appropriately – showing knowledge of dress code increases trust. And don't forget to wear your white band – the symbol of the Make Poverty History campaign.
- Bring extra white bands to give to the MP and staff.

## The Meeting and “The Ask”

- A typical meeting lasts about 30 minutes. This time will go by very quickly. Prepare to do a lot of listening, while making sure you get your points across before the meeting is over. As a general rule, the MP should talk two-thirds of the time, you one-third. Within the meeting:
  - Arrive on time. It sounds elementary, but arriving late leaves a bad impression.
  - State your case precisely, in everyday language.
  - Give examples, and draw from your own experiences.
  - Make clear your goals and what action you'd like to see the MP take. Recommended “asks” include:
    - **Raise the issue in caucus.**
    - **Write a letter to the prime minister (or, in the case of opposition MPs, to their party leader).**
    - **Wear a white band to show support for the campaign.**
    - **Personally endorse the campaign at [www.makepovertyhistory.ca](http://www.makepovertyhistory.ca)**
- Keep a positive tone – actively listen, show interest in and understanding of their point of view.
- Keep the discussion on track – summarize progress, and have talking points handy to move the meeting along if it gets sidetracked.
- Have answers to difficult question on hand and deal with them confidently, don't bluff. If you don't know the answer, tell the MP you will get back to them.
- Agree on the end time of the meeting at the start and stick to allocated time.
- Do not ask people to do what they are unable to – it may lead to unnecessary frustration on both sides.
- Check and record what the MP has agreed to do what before leaving.
- Make sure you give him/her a white band.

**Follow-up**

- Write a letter thanking the MP for the meeting, reiterating agreed outcomes.
- Contact one of the Global Citizens for Change Co-ordinators and let them know how your meeting went.