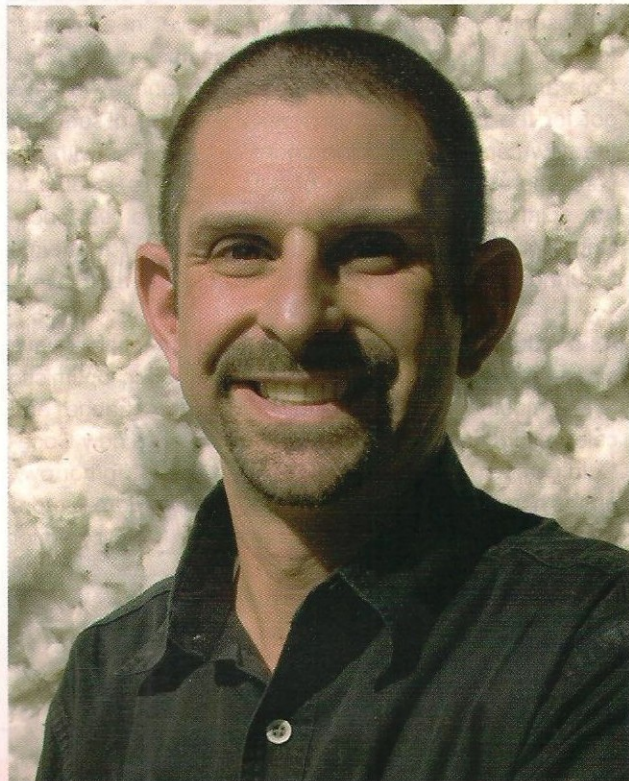


Shop your way to change with fair trade



Shop for Change Fair Trade is a not for profit set up by the NGOs International Resources for Fairer Trade (IRFT) from India and Traidcraft Exchange from the UK to find an innovative solution to the problems faced by poor farmers and artisans in India. Shop for Change uses promotional campaigns, online marketing and generates media coverage to build a network of informed consumers to spread the fair trade message in India and grow the market for Shop for Change Fair Trade certified goods. Shop for Change works to empower farmers, businesses and consumers to change the way India does business and make shopping fairer and greener for a more sustainable future.

Seth Petchers is the CEO of Shop for Change Fair Trade, an NGO working to build the market and the movement for fair trade in India. With 15 years of experience in fair trade across the globe, Petchers leads a team that is introducing the internationally successful fair trade certification concept to the Indian market.

In conversation with ExM, Petchers elaborates on fair trade and Shop for Change, and its future in India.

Please explain the concept of Fair Trade and Shop for Change. How was this idea conceived?

The concept of fair trade certification has existed in the West for over 20 years. Our aim, as an Indian NGO, is to

take that successful model and introduce it to the Indian market. India has seen a huge economic boom over the last 10 years and for many businesses and individuals, this has meant great opportunity. But the benefits clearly haven't been shared by everyone and, in particular, poor farmers continue to struggle to make ends meet. Anyone would agree that the fact that there have been an estimated 2 lakh farmer suicides in the same period of such impressive growth in India shows that not everyone is benefitting from the boom.

At Shop for Change, we envision a win-win vision of business in which new value is created in supply chains, and that new value is distributed so that everyone gets a fairer share. For farmers, Shop for Change means a fairer deal so they can care for their families and the environment. For the brands that we partner with, Shop for Change is a way to differentiate products and build brand equity. And for consumers, choosing products with the Shop for Change mark is a way to identify the brands that represent their values and, simply, an easy way to make a difference to poor farming families.

What kind of growth and acceptance has this concept seen in the Indian market? What kind of potential does the future hold?

Propelled by major MNC brands like Tesco, Starbucks, Target, and many others, global sales of fair trade certified products hit US\$6 billion in 2010. Here in India, Shop for Change launched its fair trade certification in 2010 and we're now working with farmer organizations representing over 7,000 farmers in six states. In partnership with 13 brands including ColorPlus, Future Group affiliated





Mother Earth, No Nasties, IWearMe, and several of Anita Dongre's labels, Shop for Change certified products are now available in 135 stores across the country. Of course, these are early days for fair trade in India, but consumer uptake of Shop for Change certified products, not to mention significant mainstream media attention, suggests a tremendous amount of potential. And there is a lot of independent research to back that up.

A survey by the global PR firm Edelman found that over 75 per cent of Indians surveyed would switch brands if a brand of equal quality supported a cause, and have more trust in brands that are socially responsible. To date, our focus has been on cotton farmers and textile companies but shortly, we will be extending our work to include food crop farmers and partnerships with food brands.

Do you see activations and promotions as a good medium to promote this concept in India? What efforts have been made toward this so far?

When we approach brands for partnership, we do so with a business case in hand. Of course, our ultimate aim is to benefit poor farmers, but we do so by creating visibility and differentiation for brands we partner with to create new opportunities for farmers.

In addition to creating a significant amount of media buzz around the brand partnerships we've launched, we have also organized promotional events at malls and colleges and held concerts for the cause. Celebrities like Gul Panag, Parvin Dabas and Jacky Bhagnani have volunteered their time and voices to promote Shop for Change, helping us to highlight those brands who work with us to source products from poor farmers.

How did Fair Trade come to associate with brands like Anita Dongre's AND stores, Mother Earth, etc? What kind of initiatives has been taken by these brands to promote fair trade in India?

Anita has been a big supporter of Shop for Change's work for nearly two years. She sources a significant amount of Shop for Change Fair Trade certified cotton fabric for four of her labels and has been a huge ally in spreading the word to the industry and consumers alike. Anita and Gul Panag travelled with me to visit Chetna Organic, one of the fair trade farmer organizations we work with to supply companies like Anita's and other Shop for Change partners like No Nasties and IWearMe. Recently, we tied up with ColorPlus, which launched a collection of Shop for Change certified dress shirts and polo shirts. The collection was highlighted with point of sale materials in ColorPlus stores, and Shop for Change used tools like Facebook and Twitter to make sure consumers knew that the products were available.

How will this concept be promoted in the future? Will on-ground activations be conducted for the same? Please elaborate.

Shop for Change makes a difference by helping brands sell poor farmers' products. That means that above and beyond the certification process, Shop for Change will invest significant time and resources into providing marketing support for partner brands alongside providing supply chain facilitation to make it easy for brands to go 'Shop for Change.'

As for promoting the concept, on Jan. 17, we were in a mall in Bangalore with our NGO partners International Resources for Fairer Trade and an ace team of management school volunteers showing consumers how they can make a difference by Shopping for Change in the stores of the brands we've partnered with. Moving forward, we'll continue to use the media, social networking platforms, volunteer support from celebrities, and other events and promotions to create a consumer movement dedicated to making a difference by choosing Shop for Change certified products. And, given the way that the Indian middle class has shown its readiness to come together around a cause in the last year, I think the future for Shop for Change looks bright.