



Mr. Neil Bryan
Retd. Naval Officer and Fair Trade volunteer with The Ants
Craft Trust, Bangalore

I am from Brisbane, Australia. I was a Naval Officer with the Royal Australian Navy for 35 years attaining the rank of Lieutenant Commander. On retiring from the Navy, I started volunteer work at a Community College in Brisbane teaching English to migrants. In 2008 I came to India and started volunteer work with a couple of NGOs in Bangalore teaching English and assisting women and youth in gaining meaningful employment. These students came from underprivileged backgrounds. I also tutor disabled girls and women in various subjects mainly

English and Math. I continue to remain involved in these projects.

I found out about Fair Trade whilst working at The Ants. I had some prior knowledge about the Fair Trade movement through visiting Fair Trade stores in Australia. At The Ants I gained a lot more knowledge on the impact the movement has on the daily lives of the producers, namely our artisans in the North East of India.

I started working as a volunteer with The Ants Craft Trust in 2010 initially teaching English and Customer Relations to the staff. As time progressed I assisted in various areas as needed such as HR, Marketing and helping manage the Café at The Ants. I see The Ants as an ideal role model for Fair Trade as they were already implementing and practicing the principles that Fair Trade stood for such as Fair wages, transparency, eco-friendly products and no child labour. The transition in the organisation joining Fair Trade was therefore seamless and the logical next step. **During my volunteer work at The Ants I have been an active advocate for Fair Trade through participating in educating the younger Indian generation during the 'Fair Trade Awareness Program'.** I did this through team presentations to students at colleges and tertiary campuses. **My advocacy continues during my visits back to Australia where I spread the word about the work that The Ants and other Fair Trade organisations are doing to make a difference to the lives of the under privileged. At the Ants shop in Bangalore, I interact with the customers answering their questions on our Fair Trade products and how by buying Fair Trade products they are contributing to a great cause.**

There is no one favourite Fair Trade experience that stands out as I have enjoyed participating in most of the programs where and when I can. I do however enjoy giving presentations to campuses and to artisans in their workplace. It is the face to face and participation by the audiences that give me most pleasure. My favourite Fair Trade products are clothing and home accessories these I normally purchase at The Ants Store. Other Fair Trade products I have purchased are honey from Last Forest and women's clothing from Aagor Dagra Afad, Assam. I have also built up a good working relationship with fellow Indian Fair Traders mainly through attending workshops where the networking has been helpful in our communications. As we are all like-minded it is easy to establish friendships with other Traders and exchange ideas.

I see a bright future ahead for the Fair Trade movement both globally and in the domestic Indian market. Buyers in the West are very aware about Fair Trade and a majority will actively seek out a Fair Trade shop they are aware of in their area. Indian consumers are now getting more affluent and also want to participate in 'feel good' causes. This will take a little longer due to the sheer population numbers who are still under the poverty line. **In my opinion the best way to reach out to our consumers is through a concentrated education program pitched at the different levels of potential customers. That is, we would pitch a presentation to a younger audience different to say faces to face with an older customer in the store. We also need to build up a data base on all the demographics of our customers such as age, area, employment and awareness of Fair Trade. As stated above, it is through educating the consumer that awareness is created. Fair Trade products generally are of a high quality and are in demand it is just a matter of steering the buyer to the path through overt advertising. Advertising is expensive therefore tools such as the social media play an important role in awareness. I believe our young consumers are the way ahead and the awareness campaigns conducted in the past to college and campuses should continue.**

Fair Trade is an important tool in ensuring a sustainable future for the development of small and emerging producers in India. We need to identify these new and developing markets to protect the future of our traditional arts and crafts in India. My journey with The Ants and The Fair Trade movement in India has been a very pleasant and memorable experience. I have learnt much and have made lifelong friends through both organisations. I feel I have better knowledge about Fair Trade and how it impacts on the lives of the people it touches. I intend to continue to help spread the word about the work both The Ants and FTF-I are doing through educating the public both in India and overseas.