“Much has been written about the role of artisan production in promoting socio-economic development, especially for poor women, but there is surprisingly little empirical work that documents the outcomes of artisan and craft work, especially under fair trade conditions. Artisans and Fair Trade helps close the gap.”

—Sue Ellen M. Charlton, Professor of Political Science, Colorado State University, and author, Comparing Asian Politics and Women in Third World Development

“Provides a vivid portrayal of the lives and aspirations of women handicraft workers in India and reveals how fair trade relations can strengthen individual and collective capabilities.”

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An inspirational case study of a fair trade textile group in Mumbai, set in the context of the broader ethical certification movement. Quantitative and qualitative studies of the artisans’ lives emphasizes the impact that collaborative production and direct market access has on these remarkable women.”

—Charlotte Opal, co-author, Fair Trade: Market-Driven Ethical Consumption and Standards Committee, Fairtrade Labelling Organizations (FLO)

“Presents a thorough, thoughtful and compelling assessment of the impacts of fair trade practices on the artisans who form its base...hopefully it will bring increased support for cultural industries and decent work for the creative and skilled artisans of the world.”

—Judy Prater, Project Director, Kala Raksha Vidhyalaya

After agriculture and tourism, artisan work provides the next most significant source of income in many developing countries. Yet because of its image of a “soft” or frivolous industry, some politicians and development professionals question whether the handicraft sector is worthy of investment. An opposing view holds that the creation of sustainable employment opportunities for poor people and a positive alternative to mass production outweighs the costs. Until now, the debate has been hampered by a lack of industry data. The apparel group, MarketPlace: Handwork of India, serves as the perfect case study to provide this missing information. Like many fair trade companies, it has dual goals: to generate income in the global marketplace and foster the empowerment of the low-income workers who staff the business. In conducting interviews with MarketPlace’s artisans, managers, and founders, Littrell and Dickson produced an in-depth socio-economic audit of the group over time. The result, Artisans and Fair Trade, provides a quantitatively and qualitatively illuminating study of fair trade impacts and a methodology that is sure to inform current assessment practices in social entrepreneurship and business social responsibility.

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