



FAIR TRADE AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

Over the past centuries, much of the world's heritage has been irretrievably lost. We have witnessed and continue to witness the destruction and deterioration of irreplaceable treasures. The **Fair Trade** movement aims to recover some of this loss. Thus, a fundamental principle of Fair trade (and Fair Trade Egypt) is to preserve cultural heritage and, more importantly, to ensure its sustainability for future generations.

'Cultural heritage' includes oral traditions and expressions, language, performing arts, social practices, rituals and festive events, and of course, traditional craftsmanship.

Cultural handicrafts are distinguished by their style, design, colors, shape and materials employed. For example, the colors and patterns used to embroider traditional dress will vary between one Bedouin community and the next. Each item reflects the social and cultural environment in which the products are made. Thus, handicrafts represent cultural identity and therefore differ between community, region and country.

So how does Fair Trade Egypt contribute to preserving the country's cultural heritage? Fair Trade Egypt actively seeks communities that make culturally unique and identifiable crafts, most of which may be on the verge of extinction. Once we 'find' these groups we ask

them if they would like assistance reviving and/or marketing their crafts.

Fair Trade Egypt essentially provides these artisans with sustainable market access and a reason to continue making crafts. Knowing that their traditional crafts are desired and attractive to people both in Egypt and on the international market, is motivation for the artisans to continue producing. More importantly the artisans are motivated to teach the younger generation in order to ensure a sustainable livelihood for the community.

In valuing traditional crafts and providing a market to sell these crafts, the artisans are inspired to produce more and the consumers are inspired to learn more about cultural history.

➔ FTE has developed a partnership with silversmiths from **Siwa**. The traditional unique designs and methods used to make Siwan jewelry have been lost over time. FTE has made a concerted effort to support a new generation to relearn the old ways and once again produce traditional designs and styles. After 3 years of training and support, a small group of Siwa men are once again producing jewelry, like their forefathers. This is an example of how fair trade supports marginalized producers to revive traditional and culturally identifiable crafts and expose these crafts to the market to ensure that they remain viable and valued.

