

Just Change

Directly Linking Communities



Helping poor people
take control of their economy

Just Change is an initiative with an objective of establishing an alternative trading mechanism that will benefit the poor communities. We try to achieve this by directly linking poor communities and encouraging them to trade among themselves.

The vision of **Just Change** is to fight the injustice of the present market economy that impoverishes communities across the globe and to create a system where communities can participate in the economy driven by human values and principles rather than by unidentified market forces.

Just Change is a radical new approach to the economy - one that recognises not just the social and political power of organised communities but also their economic power in a market economy. People need to believe in themselves and in their capacity to take control over their own economy. **Just Change** believes that this can be achieved if communities link up with each other and by trading with each other, create their own market force.

Just Change - The Concept

In the face of globalisation, poor and disadvantaged communities anywhere in the world find it increasingly difficult to retain control over their livelihoods and they become vulnerable to market forces. We believe that lack of power and control in markets contributes significantly to poverty all over the globe.

Just Change believes that it is possible to tap the tremendous potential of human and financial resources that are locked up within organised community groups and to utilise them in a manner that is more efficient, effective and sustainable.

Just Change promotes support to local economy. But, we recognise that it is impossible to plug all the leaks and to build a purely local economy that is sustainable in the long run. Instead **Just Change** seeks to directly link different local economies of producers and consumers to ensure that as much money as possible flows between these economies thus strengthening them. We believe that such a linkage will generate



more economic activities for example, tea from the adivasis in Gudalur could result in a packaging and retailing business in Orissa.

Just Change seeks to create a new and alternative trade structure that will bring together two ends of the market spectrum - producers and consumers - to work as members of a co-operative. By sharing the ownership of the market chain, by spreading the risk along the chain and by exercising choice over whom they sell to and from whom they buy, both consumers and producers can gain greater control in the market economy.

Producers can retain ownership over their product all along the market chain and can therefore benefit from the final retail value of the product. Consumers can work directly with producers to establish a price for the product that is based on principles of equity rather than fluctuating and speculative markets. They will also have the power to collectively determine the distribution of surplus.

Just Change believes that trading between communities could become an innovative vehicle for community development. If communities across the globe could link up to trade directly with each other they could form a social chain which could be a powerful force for economic, social and political change. Such a chain would revitalise communities.

Who are our Members ?

ACCORD and Adivasi Munnetra Sangam (**AMS**), an organisation of over 3000 adivasi families in Gudalur, Nilgiris, Tamilnadu. The village sangams of AMS manage a comprehensive development programme.

SAWARD - a federation of over 90 women Self Help Groups near Calicut in Kerala. This organisation of SHGs has promoted many production units that are run by women groups.

BVM - Boodan Vikas Mandal is a Gandian organisation near Nilambur, Malappuram district of Kerala. It is a federation of 85 women Self Help Groups that are engaged primarily in credit and savings.

SVA - Sahabhagi Vikas Abhiyan is a large organisation of adivasis and dalits in 4 districts of Orissa. SVA is a federation of about 28 community based organisations with a membership base of over 30000 families.

What are the products ?

TEA : Tea is the lifeline of the adivasi tea growers associated with AMS in Gudalur. Though the adivasis started tea cultivation mainly to protect their land, the income from Tea is crucial to over 400 adivasi families. The tea growers will be able to get fair prices for their produce by directly trading their tea powder with consumer groups.



Coconut Oil : The women groups associated with Saward manufacture coconut oil, by procuring coconut grown by their members. A very good quality of coconut oil directly from the producers has found ready market from the groups, both as cooking oil and as hair oil.

Rice - Rice is the staple diet for almost all the community groups we are dealing with right now. The adivasis spend more than 25% of their money on this one commodity alone - even after getting the subsidised rice from the PDS. We are looking for partnerships with paddy growers so that rice can be directly purchased from the growers.

Others - Our member groups produce various other products like Honey, Soaps, Umbrellas, Coffee powder, Pepper, Shikakai, Cashew Nuts, Neem Oil, Handloom, Dhal, herbal medicines, tamarind, etc. Groups can trade in these products as well and explore for markets for them.

How can you join the Just Change Network ?

We invite organised community groups to be part of the Just Change network - either as producers or as consumers or both. Groups can participate in Just Change's activities either as Members or as Clients.

Members : As of now, there are Four Members in the Just Change network. (Details given in the last page). Members own and manage the Just Change Producers Company India Limited. The profits and risks of the Company are shared by the Members. All decisions regarding pricing and profit sharing are taken by the Members on consensus basis. The Members are expected to take an active role and interest in the affairs of Just Change, participate in the Management meetings regularly and take decisions to run the Company.



Clients : If the groups are not yet ready to become full-fledged Members of Just Change, they can start trading with other groups as Clients. The legal structure of Just Change Company can be used for such trading. It is suggested that community groups or urban consumer organisations can start trading products as Clients first. They can decide to become Members after successfully conducting a few rounds of trading. Interested Client groups can organise exposure trips to visit the Member Groups and can attend the Management meetings of the Just Change Company. Client groups can introduce new groups to the Just Change Network.

Others - If you are interested in the concept of Just Change, you can surely help spread the message to other groups.

Organised groups and conscious consumers need not lament about the invisible 'market forces'. We have to realise that WE are the market.

We invite Social Action Groups and other organised communities to be part of Just Change network. In this radical new approach to tackle poverty and exploitation, all of us will participate in the market economy - not merely as victims, but as Active and powerful Players.

Together we can create our own Market and take control of our lives !

Just Change Trust

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