A great deal of modern trade has its routes in the colonial period in which the colonial powers (Britain, France, Spain, Portugal...) exploited local resources (iron, tin, silver, gold, oil...) or replaced local crop production for plantation cultures to produce cocoa, tea, coffee, bananas, tobacco, rubber, palm oil etc. This distortion of trade was for the benefit of consumers in the West who enjoyed and continue to enjoy low prices for their foods and other goods.

To the developing countries it was a disaster as countries lost the ability to be self-sufficient in producing for their own people, the land having been set aside for plantation crops. As the price of such crops go up and down with global trade swings, price falls can lead to famine in these countries. A further issue is that the ‘local’ owners of these resources now, if not multinational companies, tend to be an elite in their own societies with little concern for the ordinary people. This income divide can be very wide and a source of great friction in society.

Local producers and artisans are outside of this global economy and have no way of accessing it. True Fair Trading CIC is a Not for Profit organisation that gives local artisans access to the global market and so puts income directly into the communities in which the artisans live, so helping them to look after their own needs, be they community or environment. We buy from the artisans, paying a fair price (We want people to be happy to see us, but not too happy!!). When the goods are sold we repatriate profits to the artisans for them to invest in their communities. Normally, this is into education or further micro-financing. The idea is to help people to stand on their own feet and not have to ask for charity!!
True Fair Trading CIC buys from a number of countries. The terracotta pots we give away in the Art & Nature programme are from a small village near Kegalle in the Hill Country of Sri Lanka- jungle communities home to Elephants, Leopards, beautiful birds….and lots of snakes!! All the women in the village, some 100, have their own pottery wheels and kilns in their gardens!! The containers of terracotta we buy from them supports the whole community through the women!! they use the money for their children’s education, for improving their homes etc. On lady was able to pay a loan shark off!!

By buying Fair Trade, consumers are able to put their money directly into the pockets of the people providing the goods and not into the pockets of middlemen making a profit. What you buy can make a huge difference to some of the poorest people in the world.