

FAIRTRADE PREMIUM IMPACT



PRODUCER NAME: BORENGAJULI TEA ESTATE UNDER MCLEOD RUSSEL INDIA LTD (MRIL)

FLO ID : 18013

COUNTRY: INDIA

PRODUCT: TEA

FAIRTRADE CERTIFIED SINCE: 2007

SALES AND PRODUCTION:

PRODUCT VARIETY: CTC and Orthodox tea

ANNUAL PRODUCTION CAPACITY: 1300 MT

COUNTRIES OF EXPORT: UK, Japan, Germany, Central Asia

ABOUT THE PRODUCER ORGANIZATION

Borengajuli tea estate belongs to the expansive range of tea estates of McLeod Russel India Ltd (MRIL) group of tea producers. McLeod Russel began planting tea in India in 1869 and today is the largest tea producing company in the world. Part of the renowned Williamson Magor Group, the Company has forty-



Figure 1. Borengajuli Tea Estate

eight tea estates in the Assam Valley and five in the Dooars region of West Bengal, three factories in Vietnam, six estates in Uganda and the management control of the world renowned Gisovu estate in Rwanda, Africa. Their widespread plantations, meticulous processes, art and science of blending, sustainable environmental practices and community initiatives have enabled them to strengthen their leadership in the global tea industry. Every year, the estates produce more than 100 million kilograms of quality black tea which reaches millions of tea lovers worldwide. MRIL has a large presence in Assam and West Bengal and also has several tea estates in other countries.

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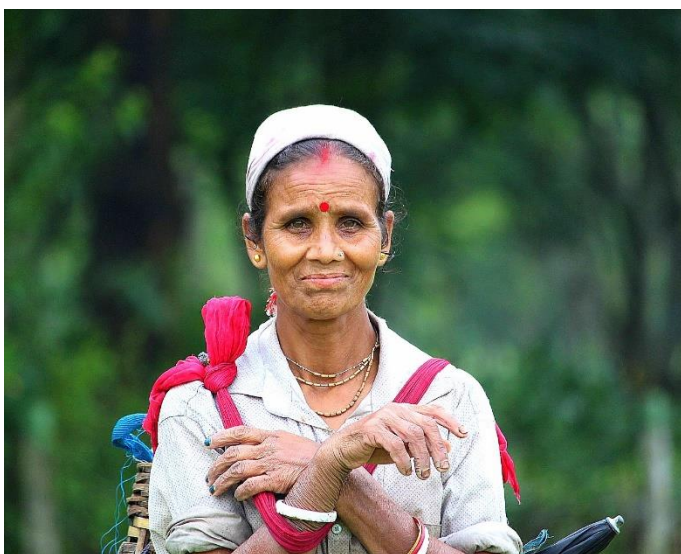
Occupying a total area of 797.61 Hectares, Borengajuli has tea plantations across 655.97 hectares of Assam's verdant landscape. It is made up of 2 divisions, namely Borengajuli and Bamanjuli.

It has been a Fairtrade certified producer since 2007 and is a beneficiary of Fairtrade Premium since 2008. It currently has a workforce of 2224 people. Borengajuli Estate is well known for the outstanding quality of its tea and produces a high yield of luxury grade teas.

The estate is located in the Dimakuchi village of the district of Udalguri in the northern part of Assam in India. It is situated at a distance of 90 km from Guwahati which is the nearest international airport. The drive takes around 2.5 hours and the road is tricky during the rains. The recent construction of a bridge has now made it much easier to reach the estate. Earlier, vehicles had to drive across a river bed to get there and the estate used to be cut off when the river was full.



Tea Workers at Borengajuli



Tea Worker at Borengajuli returning home after the day's work



Tea Worker at Borengajuli

BRINGING IN A BETTER BORENGAJULI !

PROJECT BACKGROUND (2018-19)

In order to educate and encourage the workers to understand the importance of environmental protection and make them a part of the process in whatever little way they can contribute, it was felt that education was a basic necessity. Simultaneously, overflowing and blocked drains that were breeding grounds for diseases were a concern. There was a need to provide some basic level of comfort by providing the workers some comfortable furniture. The humid climate of the region made the homes hot and uncomfortable and the workers unanimously requested for fans to be fixed. Though, children were provided with basic amenities like schools but there was no dedicated play area where they could safely amuse themselves. The workers work hard through the year, and some diversion from their routine lives in the form of social and physical activities, like organised games and sports goes a long way in rejuvenating them and also instilling a sense of accomplishment.

INTERVENTION BY FAIRTRADE PREMIUM COMMITTEE

The Fairtrade Premium Committee consists of 26 members, 24 from the workers and 2 from the management. The Fairtrade Premium Projects – Borengajuli, like most of the other tea estates that benefit from Fairtrade premium, has put in place workable and viable processes to ensure an optimal and wise usage of the available funds. This results in highly advantageous outcomes and has a great impact on the development of their individual workers and the community as a whole. It has infused enthusiasm and hope in them, that the progress and improvement in their lives will be an ongoing activity.

Apart from the economic benefits, there has been a significant social impact too, with increased confidence levels, a discovery of inherent leadership abilities, a poise that enables interactions with outsiders and a capability of ideating and executing plans and ventures because of the empowerment that the system bestows.

The annual procedure to decide on what projects to select, is conducted by the people and for the people. The elected Fairtrade Premium committee members are responsible for convening discussions with the workers of their respective constituencies to understand and record their needs and evolve viable projects. This will form the criteria for final project selection. The projects are then presented and discussed at the FPC meeting with necessary guidelines from the advisors. The monitoring mechanism of the projects are also detailed out. The projects are then presented at the AGM for approval by a minimum of 2/3 rd majority. For high value projects, there is a risk assessment process that is undertaken. This is a workable methodology and takes place without undue hindrance and the favorable outcomes of earlier endeavors is proof of this.

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OUTCOME AND IMPACTS

Following are a few details on some of their key Fairtrade Premium projects that have been introduced for the year 2018-19, as well as some that have been ongoing from the past few years. Some of the earlier ones have been the installation of an Electro-chlorination plant in 2014-15, providing concrete flooring for all quarters in 2013-15, setting up a library and play area for the school.



Electro-chlorination Plant



Concrete flooring project



School library

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The current activities for the year 2018-19 include the following major projects both community based as well as at individual level –

- **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT**

Fruit tree plantations: To promote sustainability and a pride in growing one's own produce, Fairtrade Premium funds have been utilised to plant fruit trees in the gardens of worker and staff homes. This has also instilled in them a sense of responsibility for the environment and since it makes use of the existing space within their own gardens, they feel a sense of satisfaction and fruitfulness when they literally enjoy the fruits of their labor.



The first crop of guavas in Pitar's garden



Pitor Kujur- admiring the fruit of his labor

Delightedly showing us the guava and pomegranate plants that he has lovingly nurtured, Pitor Kujur who is a Line Chowkidar in the estate, says – **“Fairtrade Premium has given us something so satisfying and useful. This guava plant is already yielding fruit within 1.5 years of being planted and we cannot wait to taste the produce of our own backyard. We are growing these plants with organic compost and we have learnt that it is beneficial for the environment”**

Set up of rain-water drains – In order to promote a healthy and hygienic environment for the community, rain water drains have been built along the streets of the residential areas of the workers. Before these were constructed, the existing gutters were inadequate for bearing the load of waste and water and also were difficult to clean. The filth and stagnation was a health hazard.



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Figure 2 Silas Kerketta - health worker

“This drain was built this year. Before this there was a kachha (crude) gutter and it was in a very bad state and it was not conducive to good health. After this has been completed, we are able to keep the area clean and disease free and the workers do not have to waste time and effort to constantly maintain the drains”- **Silas Kerketta- Health Assistant at the estate**

● SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACTS

Right to decent standard of living – In order to provide a decent standard of living, basic amenities such as Iron beds & ceiling fans have been provided in the homes of all workers. This has provided some basic comfort and convenience to the workers and their families who earlier had to sleep on the floor. Likewise, the heat and humidity of the region’s climate has been made more bearable by the addition of ceiling fans in the homes of all the staff.



Dayalu Tanti proudly showing us his house

“Last year during the Fairtrade Premium meeting, all of us decided to have fans installed in our homes. We used to find it very uncomfortable in the heat and were not able to sleep well at nights. Now it is a big relief for us and we are very happy and grateful to Fairtrade. We hope that every year we will have more conveniences like this which will greatly improve our standard of living and level of comfort” - **Dayalu Tanti who is an employee of the estate says**

Community Development Projects

The set up of a second Children’s park is an ongoing project that is being implemented to improve the existing facility for children. The first park that was built, is at the Lower Primary school in the Bamanjuli division.



Playground equipment at the Bamanjuli LP school



Ms Waheeda Begum - Head teacher at Bamanjuli LP School



Proposed site for the second children's park

Ms Waheeda Begum who is the head teacher at the LP School in Bamanjuli says – “This park provides a safe and entertaining space for our children not just during school hours but at all times. The children are also very happy with these facilities. It is good that another park is being constructed so that more children can avail of these facilities”

Sports & Recreation: In a bid to encourage sports and culture, Fairtrade Premium organizes events from time to time. The workers as well as their children take part in the games and activities and this instils a sense of self worth and accomplishment in them while also drawing out their latent talents.

The football team consists of players who are estate workers or their grown up children. An annual tournament is conducted between the various tea estates where Fairtrade Premium takes care of the costs involved.



Gyan Kujur (L) and Vishal Toppo (R)

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Vishal Toppo has lost his father and he stays with his mother who works at the tea estate. He is a student of 12th standard and is the captain of the Borengajuli football team. "Borengajuli has a very good football team and Fairtrade Premium gives us great encouragement by organizing an annual tournament. They provide the trophy and also a cash prize. We were the winners of the current year's tournament. My friend Gyan Kujur is also on the team and he is the goalkeeper. We hope that Fairtrade will continue to support us and we plan to win all future tournaments too."

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Fairtrade Premium has positively impacted the lives of all the workers and there is great hope among them that it will provide continued support in future so that there will be continued progress, development and empowerment.

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