

FAIRTRADE PREMIUM IMPACT



PRODUCER NAME: WEST JALINGA TEA ESTATE

FLO ID : 29907

COUNTRY: INDIA

PRODUCT: TEA

FAIRTRADE CERTIFIED SINCE: 2013

SALES AND PRODUCTION:

PRODUCT VARIETY: CTC, Orthodox & Green Tea, White Tea, Oolong Tea

ANNUAL PRODUCTION CAPACITY: 900 MT

MAJOR COUNTRY OF EXPORT: Japan, Taiwan, Sri Lanka, USA and all European countries

ABOUT THE PRODUCER ORGANIZATION:

West Jalinga Tea estate located in the Dwarbund area of Silchar in the South of Assam, India, is a third generation family owned business which started in 1935. It was started by the Late Manibhai G. Patel who was a great visionary and is now managed by Mr. Kirit Patel and his son Mr. Ketan Patel who are well dipped in the business of tea.

Jalinga turned completely organic in 2004 and now have the proud distinction of being the largest organic tea estate in India, with a size of 1004 Hectares, of which the actual tea plantations cover 656.56 Hectares.

Of even greater significance is that it is the only CO2 Neutral certified tea estate in the world.



West Jalinga Tea Factory



Workers in the tea estate

They have a work force of 1365 people between their 3 divisions of Jalinga, Kalachera and Dwarbund.

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Workers in the tea estate

West Jalinga is situated in the Cachar district of South Assam which is bordered by the states of Manipur and Mizoram and also shares an international border with Bangladesh. The city of Silchar which is 28 km away, is the gateway to these regions and it takes around 1 hour 15 minutes by road, through deeply rustic parts of Assam, to reach the estate from the city. Silchar has an airport which is another 30 km further away.



Spotted dove at Jalinga Tea Estate



Barra Bungalow

While the city is not much to look at, the emerald green landscapes of the tea estate transport you to paradise and the big bungalow or Barra Bungalow as they call it, is a veritable resort with its beautiful gardens bursting with fruits, flowers and vegetables, all organic ... but of course and testified not just by humans but by the birds, butterflies and various other life that coexists on the land.

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BRINGING JOY TO JALINGA !

FAIRTRADE PREMIUM COMMITTEE



Fairtrade premium at West Jalinga Tea Estate

The FPC at Jalinga consists of a total of 19 members, 1 from the management + 2 staff + 2 sub-staff + 14 workers.

As in most of the other tea estates that benefit from Fairtrade premium, Jalinga too 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.

The annual procedure to decide on what projects to select, is conducted via meetings between the workers and FPC Members, where the suggestions for new project are put forth. The FPC Members then meet again and discuss the proposals and estimated amounts. A Project Risk Assessment, Market Survey and Budget is done by the FPC members and Fairtrade Officer. Then the Project is proposed to the AGM for final approval and fund allocation.

The FPC Members organize and maintain the accounts of the project and have time to time meetings with the workers to discuss project updates.

This is a methodology that works smoothly and effectively and takes place without undue hindrance.

For the year 2018-19, the issues listed above were discussed and a consensus was arrived at with projects that were able to address the existing problems.

OUTCOME AND IMPACTS (2018-19)

• ENVIRONMENTAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACTS

Carbon Neutral Project: Additional incomes are always welcome by the workers and if it can be combined with protecting the environment, and also be through means that are beneficial to health, then it is an added bonus. The traditional earthen cooking stoves were a cause for concern in several ways including smoke emission, inhaling of carbon dioxide, difficulty in procuring large quantities of dry firewood due to the rains and a considerable waste of time tending to the stoves. It was important give worker's better alternatives from which they could also earn.

Being an organic estate, due consideration is always given to clean agricultural practices. Apart from this, a consciousness to maintain the ecological balance and Carbon neutrality in the system, propelled the Fairtrade Premium Committee to procure TLUD (Top lit updraft) stoves for worker's kitchens.

This was a project where 1010 families were provided with a wood cook stove that provides better ease of cooking and also is smoke free, less time consuming and makes less use of fuel. The earlier traditional earthen cooking method that were used, needed a lot of dry firewood which the workers would find hard to procure, considering the long duration of the rainy season. The stoves also needed frequent tending with a constant feeding of wood and filled the kitchens with hazardous Carbon di oxide that was inhaled by the ones cooking the food.



TLUD stove

The introduction of the new stoves have made a huge difference in the health of the workers and greatly reduced the time spent on cooking. The fuel requirements are minimal for these stoves and a few twigs or some bio- mass will do and there is no need to frequently go out to forage for firewood. There is nearly a 50% reduction in fuel consumption. The stoves are designed for high temperatures and heat retention and hence are very time efficient too.

What is also commendable is that the heat generated in these stoves by the combustion of bio-mass and twigs, produces coal as the residue and the workers also have some economic benefit of around Rs 5 per kg, by selling this charcoal back to the estate. This coal is used for other commercial applications in the tea factory.

The impact of this stove project, is a significant conservation of fossil fuels from over a 1000 households, reduction of Carbon emission which is in tune with the ethos of Jalinga estate, reduction of indoor air pollution and of course a limiting of deforestation.

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Kalpona Akura using the TULD stove

Kalpona Akura is one of the tea estate workers who has benefited from all the conveniences that Fairtrade Premium has bestowed. She says – “Fairtrade Premium has given us so many useful items that have made our lives much easier. The stove is a huge blessing and in fact it is only because of it, that I am able to stand here now and talk to you while my cooking is going on untended in the kitchen. It has saved a lot of time for me and my health as well as that of my family’s, has also improved greatly”

• ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL IMPACTS

There is a sense of triumph and contentment in the workers, that comes from being envied by the workforce of non- Fairtrade certified producers whose standards of living are not as comfortable as those at Jalinga. Workers say that their morale is boosted really high when they speak to the workers of non- Fairtrade certified estates and realize that they are leading definitely far more comfortable lives.

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 competence that the system instills in the workers.

Infact, the impact on women’s empowerment has been so great in Jalinga, that a couple of their women workers were also chosen to stand for the local panchayat elections.

There is also a significant improvement in the health of workers and their families.

Right to decent standard of Living:

- **Weather Protection Measures:** This region of South Assam is subject to rains for most of the year. The incessant showers bring along their share of woes which include being unable to perform outdoor work, diseases, chill, insects and other such impediments. Worker absenteeism would affect not just the worker’s earnings but would also be a problem for the tea estate’s production. Solutions had to be found to surmount these weather-based issues. Raincoats, shawls, jackets were given to all the workers so that they could continue to perform despite the wet weather. This has reduced absenteeism and also protects them from falling sick due to exposure to the rain. Plucking efficiency has gone up in the monsoons and the workers also benefit economically from this.

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- **Measures for safe and uncontaminated food** : Work starts early on a tea estate and in order to be at the factory by 7.30 am, the workers have to get up much earlier and prepare their food for the day which they then carry to the estate. Carrying their meals in makeshift containers was a health hazard due to possible contamination or exposure to dust and dirt. Lunch boxes and bags were also given to everyone to ensure that their meals were kept safe and uncontaminated. This has decreased the incidence of exhaustion due to lack of proper nourishment and also helps the worker consume clean and safe food
- **Protection against diseases:** The rains lead to stagnation of water and these pools become breeding grounds for mosquitoes. Malaria and other mosquito borne diseases were an issue that seriously affected a number of workers. To protect the workers from the rampant mosquito menace that brought with it diseases like malaria etc, 1050 mosquito nets were distributed to all the worker families. This led to a sizeable reduction in mosquito borne illnesses.
- **Access to- and storage of clean drinking water:** Access to clean potable water is a bare necessity and storage and filtering facilities were a must. Contaminated water was a cause of several diseases. The availability of clean water for consumption is critical for the health of the workers. Water filters were distributed to all the worker homes and they were instructed to consume only boiled and filtered water.



Rajib Mondal-Asst FTO

There was a time in Jalinga when water borne diseases were very common. Action was taken by educating the workers on how to consume only boiled water and filters were given to every household to enable them to have access to uncontaminated water. The impact was such that the statistics reported by the West Jalinga hospital indicated a big drop in diahorrea and other water borne disease related complaints – says **Rajib Mondal** who is the **Asst Fair Trade Officer at Jalinga**.

50 Litre buckets with well- fitting lids were also distributed for the safe storage of water and for the convenience of having water at hand. This has saved a lot of time and energy because the water has to be pumped out and transported from the common pump which is at a distance from the houses.

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Kalpona Akura with her filter and bucket



Access to clean and healthy food : Workers were unaware about the benefits of procuring good quality provisions and hence needed assistance and education. Twice in a year, all the workers families are given good quality and tested food ingredients such as oil and pulses. Quality products are sourced and the workers are educated on the benefits of consuming unadulterated ingredients. Left to themselves, workers used to opt for cheap provisions without considering the bad effects on their health. This distribution that is usually conveniently timed during a festival or other significant time, encourages them to understand the difference in choosing quality food over cheap food because of how it will affect their health in the long run. In the year 2018-19, 7872 units of these provisions were distributed to all the families. To take this further Jalinga is in the process of setting up a Fair-price shop at their estate with the support from Fairtrade.

- **Motivational Perks:** Workers spirits should be kept high and giving them useful gifts from time to time, is a great way to show appreciation and keep them motivated to continue their good performance. As an encouragement for their services, the 1365 workers were given sarees and T shirts this year.

- **Right to Quality Education & basic amenities:** Attendance in the schools of the tea estate used to suffer due to children being absent because of bad weather or lack of amenities like note books, bags and other necessary items. Ever since they have been given various items like water bottles, tiffin boxes, school bags, umbrellas etc, a renewed enthusiasm has been observed. These incentives keep the children interested in attending school and they also find it easier to do so in every season, without being hampered by the weather conditions.



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School children with their books, bags and umbrellas

Children though being provided with basic amenities like schools, were not incentivized to attend classes regularly due to a lack of necessary items like bags, umbrellas etc. The weather also played spoilsport. Keeping them abreast of technology in these fast-moving times was also a priority.

To keep the school children abreast of technology and to help in their career development, 3 computers were installed in the Lalitaben Manibhai Patel school of the tea estate. The middle school children from 6th – 8th std, are now proficient in using the machines and have access to learning via the computer. Rajib Mondal the Asst FTP officer has been kind enough to make time twice a week to teach the children how to use the computers and he has also trained a few senior children to assist in teaching in his absence.



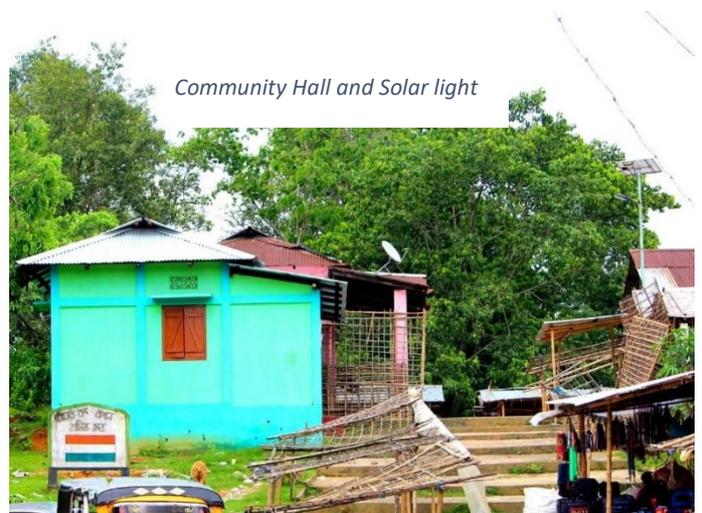
School children using the computer



School children using the computer

- **Installation of solar lights along the pathways:** Safe movement of people was a concern in the unlit paths of the villages and quarters. In keeping with the environment friendly goal, 10 solar light have been fixed along the major pathways for the safe movement of people during the night.

- **Community Development Project:** Keeping workers educated and entertained was also an important factor in maintaining their morale. Hence there was a need for a common venue for community-based activities. Community halls were constructed under the Community Development Program, for the benefit of the workers. There are currently 5 halls. In order to provide entertainment and education for the workers who toil all day long, LED Television and satellite dish were installed at the community hall under the community development program. Apart from being a means of relaxation and rejuvenation, this also keeps them abreast of the



Community Hall and Solar light

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happenings in the world and serves to enhance their knowledge of current affairs. These facilities can be enjoyed by all the workers and their families.

Bikram Ree who has been with Jalinga for several years says- "Fairtrade has brought about a huge change in our lives. I can see a big difference in our standard of living from the past and there has also been a huge boost to our self-confidence. We are now very comfortable communicating with people who visit us from big cities. Our women too have made us proud by being in the forefront in many matters. We are very grateful to Fairtrade and we hope to continue to benefit from it"



Bikram Ree, estate worker at Jalinga

- **Women Empowerment:** The women too were a meek lot and not very vocal or bold enough to speak up. Since women form the backbone of a tea estate, it was important to bring them to the forefront and empower them through various means.

The male workers have access to football and other physical sports, which the women do not participate in. Hence as a part of the women's empowerment program, Fairtrade Premium sets aside some funds to conduct an annual Women's sports day. This is usually held on Jan 26th, which is India's Republic day. It is commendable that the entire organising is done by the women workers themselves. Races, high jump, long jump and other competitions are held and prizes are given. This event greatly boosts their morale and encourages them. Men are allowed to be mere spectators and to cheer and all the participation is reserved for women.

A short interview with Soma Mal and Roma Gonju - 2 lady workers who stood for the Panchayat elections, brought out some points that highlighted the powerful impact which has been a consequence of the existence of Fairtrade Premium. Soma and Roma share the same thoughts on the betterment of their society and there was remarkable wisdom in their thoughts and words as they both echoed each other saying –

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Soma Mal and Roma Gonju-FPC committee members

“Ever since Fairtrade has come in we have seen great changes in many factors. We ourselves have been members of the Fairtrade Committee for the last 3 years and we find a very big improvement even in our own lives. We have become super confident, we command a lot of respect, people heed what we say, we can speak easily to people who visit from big cities and we have also had the honor of being chosen to be the contesting candidates at the recent Panchayat (local Indian village council) elections. We have only Fairtrade to thank, for giving women the ability to reach such a distinguished state. In turn we too try our best to live up to expectations and we lend out support to the workers who approach us with their issues. People know they can count on us and the level of trust we have built up is very satisfying. We are also approached by the workers of non-Fairtrade certified estates and when they tell us of their problems, we realize how advanced our lives are compared to theirs and we feel a great sense of pride and accomplishment”

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Ketan Patel-Director, Jalinga Tea Estate

“Fairtrade has brought a very big change in Jalinga. Being in a backward part of Assam, the Fairtrade premium has helped to change the lives of our workers in many ways. Their health has been in focus with the no-emission stove and the quality provisions that they have got access to. There is a significant empowerment in our women population. As you know, 60% of our workers are women and we have seen great improvements in their confidence levels, ever since they were involved in the

Fairtrade premium committee. A couple of them even stood for the local Panchayat elections and one of them won. They have learnt to take charge and make decisions.

We are also planning to go beyond tea and venture into spices, honey, herbs etc. We are also assisting small producers around Jalinga, because we believe in extending our knowhow for the benefit of the community as well, and we will help them also to avail the benefits of being Fairtrade certified”.

Mr. Ketan Patel, Director, Jalinga Tea Estate

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the Fairtrade Premium projects have had a positive impact, both on the environment and ecosystem, as well as on the social and economic aspects of the workers lives.

There is great hope among them that it will provide continued support in future so that there will be an ongoing surge of progress, development and empowerment. Huge impacts have been created by some of the initiatives which have broken some social taboos, boosted the confidence of the women and propelled them to heights that they would never have imagined attainable in the past.

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