



# India Country Plan

Executive Summary

Published July 2023



# Development issues

## Economically thriving tea sector



Low wages of tea plantation workers are one of many pressing issues in India. The proposed living wage is 81% higher than the actual wages received by tea plantation workers.<sup>1</sup> While wages have increased, the cash component of wages is still low. As per the Plantation Labour Act, the industry provides non-cash components including housing, healthcare, education, and food rations for permanent workers, compensating for low cash components.<sup>2</sup> Small Tea Grower (STG) production increased by 3% between 2018 and 2021.<sup>3</sup> Smallholder tea farmers are struggling for a living income due to price fluctuations, labour costs, and lack the technical capacity to produce quality tea.<sup>4</sup>



## Equality for everyone in tea



75% of the full-time workers on Indian farms are women, most in low-paid jobs, while men dominate higher-paid factory or supervisory roles.<sup>4,5</sup> 34% of married women in Assam reported experiencing domestic violence, and alcohol abuse is prevalent.<sup>6</sup> On tea estates, this is often hidden, but women face a range of issues, from domestic violence to workplace harassment, with little or no awareness of redressal systems. Nearly 16% of adolescent girls aged 15-19 are married, resulting in high education dropout rates.<sup>7</sup> A recent gender-responsive water, gender, and hygiene assessment by ETP indicated that most women bear the sole responsibility for water collection, and many women cannot meet basic menstrual hygiene needs due to inadequate facilities.

## Environmentally sustainable tea production



Climate change is leading to erratic rainfall and droughts in India, giving rise to pests and increasing pesticide use. Assam is the most climate vulnerable state in India, which has impacted the quality of tea and led to the loss of India's tea export market in 2022.<sup>8</sup> Tracing deforestation, low-carbon tea, and sustainable energy consumption are some of the areas that will require attention. While the organised sector of tea production is known for carbon sequestration practices, some of these, along with good and resilient agricultural practices, can also be adopted by small tea growers to increase carbon capture potential.

# ETP's Strategic Plan in India

## Projects



In India, ETP will implement projects to provide social protection for tea plantation workers, address gender inequality by building women's leadership, and ensure female representation at various levels. Projects in India are implemented with producer companies, local civil society organisations, and technical agencies. ETP is considering a pilot project to build the capacity of Small Tea Growers (STGs) and integrate them into the organised sector supply chain. An annex to this executive summary details this work.

## Private sector change



ETP aims to support the organised tea sector towards better transparency and disclosure. ETP will analyse the Business Responsibility and Sustainability Reporting requirements introduced by the Securities and Exchange Board of India for a selection of listed tea producing companies, to understand how they are faring in meeting the environmental, social, and corporate governance parameters. This analysis will help ETP push the industry towards greater accountability and responsible business conduct, while also supporting buyer decision-making.

## Policy



The progress ETP can make on issues in the Indian tea sector is limited by inadequate laws and policies and outdated and poorly developed ones. Therefore, ETP is reviewing policies, laws and government programmes that affect the tea sector in India, focusing on Assam's organised tea industry. The objective is to create a repository of relevant laws, policies, and schemes, assess their efficacy, and identify an action plan to guide ETP's policy initiatives in India.

## Resources required

Achieving ETP's Country Plan in India over the next three years will require £2,937,000, of which £2,075,000 is already secured. The additional funding required to implement proposed activities is £862,000. The total budget includes current and planned staff costs, programme activity costs, project communications, admin costs, roundtables, conferences, and local and international travel. For the first time, ETP staff costs are included in country budgets.





# ETP's current programme in India

## Plantation Community Empowerment Programme (PCEP)

### Impact area

- Economics
- Equality
- Environment

### Approach

- Project
- Private sector change
- Policy

### Outcome

- Living wage
- Living income
- Good livelihoods
- Equal opportunities
- Empowered, safe communities
- Net zero tea
- Climate resilient agriculture
- Zero deforestation

### Location

Assam, India

### Expected reach

21,317 women and men (direct)

### Project overview

PCEP brings together communities and estate management through a unique platform, the Community Development Forums (CDFs), to resolve issues and improve living and working conditions on tea estates.

### Aims, objectives, and activities

The project aims to improve the well-being of members of the tea communities, including the most marginalised. PCEP will improve social cohesion in the tea communities through increased and meaningful participation of various community members in decision-making. PCEP aims for critical stakeholders to be accountable to workers and tea communities and collaborate to support a more sustainable tea sector.

## Gender Responsive Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene

### Impact area

- Economics
- Equality
- Environment

### Approach

- Project
- Private sector change
- Policy

### Outcome

- Living wage
- Living income
- Good livelihoods
- Equal opportunities
- Empowered, safe communities
- Net zero tea
- Climate resilient agriculture
- Zero deforestation

### Location

Assam, India

### Expected reach

17,500 women (direct)

### Project overview

This project has been developed for a Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) intervention which will be implemented within three of the PCEP gardens and under the remit of a women-led wash committee working in close collaboration with the CDF structures.

### Aims, objectives, and activities

Following a Gender Responsive WASH assessment in 2023, significant gaps in women's wash needs have been identified in three gardens. This project's activities will be prioritised by CDFs. These are likely to be on hygiene and sanitation awareness, menstrual hygiene solutions, toilet and changing facilities in gardens, and safe waste disposal. The project will also influence company policy and make recommendations for changes to in-kind benefits to be more responsive to the needs of women and girls. The project will influence government water and sanitation projects to fill existing service gaps in tea estates.

## Additional current programme

- The Improving Lives Programme - UNICEF (ending 2025).
- Healthy Diets for Tea Communities (ending June 2023).
- Digital training for women in tea estates.

# ETP's planned programme in India

## Strengthening Small Tea Growers (STGs) in India

### Impact area

- Economics
- Equality
- Environment

### Approach

- Project
- Private sector change
- Policy

### Outcome

- Living wage
- Living income
- Good livelihoods
- Equal opportunities
- Empowered, safe communities
- Net zero tea
- Climate resilient agriculture
- Zero deforestation

### Location

Assam, India

### Expected reach

1,000 farmers (direct)

### Project overview

ETP will develop a small tea grower project to address uncertainties about the sustainability of tea in India and the increasing number of unregulated small tea growers.

### Aims, objectives, and activities

The increase in production of STG grown tea impacts the Assam tea sector as a whole and dilutes social environmental standards across the sector. This will support 1,000 farmers in the catchment areas of four bought leaf factories that support export producers. The project will work closely with STGs, particularly women and women-led groups, to achieve a more climate-adaptable, economically resilient, and equitable smallholder tea sector. ETP will focus on strengthening the voice of STGs and supporting organisational development and business skills to increase competitiveness in the tea value chain, working with producers who both export and sell domestically. The project will improve the income and livelihoods of STGs, particularly women, through improved tea production and access to carbon credit income. The project also aims to enhance the environmental resilience of STG areas through improved practices such as regenerative agriculture.

## Building Women's Leadership to Improve Redressal Mechanisms

### Impact area

- Economics
- Equality
- Environment

### Approach

- Project
- Private sector change
- Policy

### Outcome

- Living wage
- Living income
- Good livelihoods
- Equal opportunities
- Empowered, safe communities
- Net zero tea
- Climate resilient agriculture
- Zero deforestation

### Location

Assam, India

### Expected reach

12,000 women (direct)

### Project overview

The project will ensure proper implementation of redressal systems for human rights violations at the estate and national levels. This will be done through women's leadership and participation in tea estates to ensure issues impacting women link into to national level advocacy for policy change.

### Aims, objectives, and activities

Recent discussions with ETP members have highlighted the importance of supporting producers in addressing gender-based issues within the tea supply chain, in particular redressal mechanisms. This project is likely to be in six locations and will reach up to 12,000 women. The project will advocate for access to remedy and strengthening redressal systems and build women's leadership. The project will focus on locations where the PCEP project is implemented and areas of focus by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.

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