



INDIAN TEA ASSOCIATION

SUSTAINABILITY

Newsletter





NAYANTARA PALCHOUDHURI
CHAIRPERSON, ITA

It gives me immense pleasure to introduce the Second edition of the Sustainability Newsletter. The ITA has sustained its work on social and economic wellbeing for tea communities in Assam and West Bengal through community based interventions with the objective to improve the quality of life of workers and their families. These interventions embodied the spirit of responsible teamwork by the stakeholders in the Industry. The ITA organized the International Tea Day and the International Women's day to highlight the challenges faced by the Industry as well as endorse the spirit of gender equity in the Industry. I note with satisfaction the work done by the Sustainability cell in upholding CSR work in our member estates. I am confident that in the years ahead the Association would take up more programs which would lead up to peace, harmony and progress of the Industry.





ARIJIT RAHA

SECRETARY GENERAL, ITA

Indian Tea Association's sustainability footsteps have been aligned to the U.N Sustainable Development Goals. Our endeavors aim at strengthening stakeholders' participation in promoting ethical, environmental and safety compliances across the tea value chain - from the Bush to the Cup.

We are fortunate to be supported by National as well as International NGO's who have partnered with us to promote overall wellness of the tea community through interventions at the grass root level encompassing gender equality, women empowerment, decent work, mother & child protection, nutrition, climate change mitigation and adaptation, occupational safety and health, training & integration of small tea growers, hygiene & sanitation and agricultural extension services for non tea farmers of Assam.

The sustainability cell of ITA is spearheading this agenda and we welcome the suggestions and guidance of stakeholders in upscaling and broadbasing these initiatives.

I wish to congratulate the ITA's sustainability cell for their efforts to bring out this edition of the newsletter which gives an overview of the activities.

SANDIP GHOSH

SECRETARY (SUSTAINABILITY)

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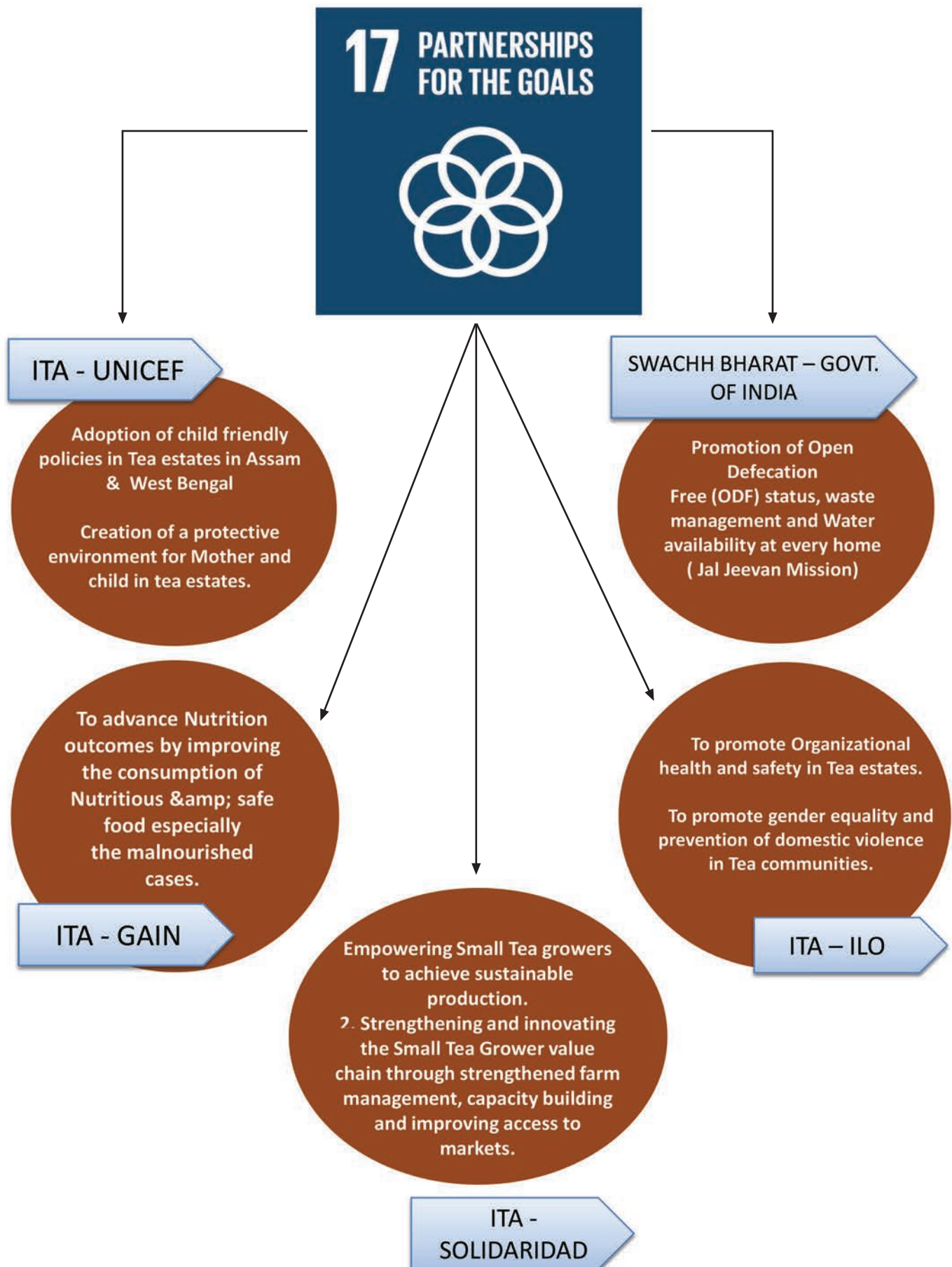
SUMANTO GUHA THAKURTA

ADDL. SECRETARY (SUSTAINABILITY)

The Sustainability cell is grateful to all members of the Association for their active participation in all the programs. The support of the members is vital to achieve results. A period under review saw a number of new initiatives for tea communities in Assam and Bengal which has been highlighted in this edition of the newsletter for your reading. We shall be grateful to receive your comments to make the Newsletter a prime source of reference.



The ITA partnership (SDG 17) with institutions of repute is implementing the sustainability initiatives as detailed below :



INTERNATIONAL TEA DAY

21st MAY 2022

The United Nations has marked the 21st day of May as International Tea Day in their annual calendar of events. The tea board and Indian Tea Association jointly organized a seminar to observe the International Tea Day. The Seminar was held in a hybrid mode on 21st May, 2022 at the Williamson Magor Hall, Bengal Chamber of Commerce & Industry (BCC&I) Building, 6, N.S. Road, Kolkata - 700 001.

Tea Board India in collaboration with Indian Tea Association organized a Seminar (in hybrid mode) to commemorate the 3rd International Tea Day on 21st May, 2022, an annual event of the United Nations Calendar. The inaugural session was graced by the presence of Ms Anupriya Patel, Hon'ble Union Minister of State for Commerce & Industry, Govt. of India through the virtual medium. Other notable dignitaries who participated in the inaugural session were Dr. K.N. Raghavan, Executive Director, Rubber Board and Chairman, MPEDA as well as former Chairman and Dy Chairman, Tea Board India, Mr. Saurav Pahari, Chairman and Deputy Chairman, Tea Board India, Ms Nayantara Palchoudhuri, Chairperson ITA and other dignitaries of Tea Board India and Indian Tea Association. Other important dignitaries who added value to this seminar were Dr Krishna Gupta IAS, Principal Secretary, Deptt of Technical Education, Training and Skill Development, Govt of West Bengal, Mr Atul Asthana, MD Goodricke Group and Dr Shatadru Chattopadhyay, MD, Solidaridad Asia.



In her welcome address, ITA Chairperson Ms Nayantara Palchoudhuri stated : 2 *"Our goal is to strengthen the socio-cultural fabric and economic sustenance of the tea sector and work towards the collective growth and prosperity of all stakeholders"*.

She added that Sustainability of the tea sector is no longer just about profitability but one that also takes into consideration the well-being of all stakeholders - be it preserving our natural resources in the face of climate change threats or meeting the growing aspirations and improving the standards of living of the vast workforce and to ensure that the consumers get a safe and healthy beverage.

Smt. Anupriya Patel, the Hon'ble Union Minister of State for Commerce & Industry extended her good wishes to the industry on the occasion of International Tea Day. She stated that this day is an occasion to promote and foster collective action towards sustainable production of tea recognizing that globally the trend is moving towards better quality and organic teas. She further stressed on tea being made attractive as a beverage to the younger generation who would drive consumption in the future. She emphasised on the need to make India a leading supplier of quality tea in the global market.

Shri Saurav Pahari, IAS Deputy Chairman Tea Board in his address stated that Tea industry needs to reinvent itself to keep pace with the changing consumer trends. The image of tea should synergize with current trends and appeal to the consumers, especially youth. He praised the role of the industry for taking special care of the health and safety of the workers during the COVID pandemic and said that the industry has shown remarkable resilience during the trying times.



ICC SOCIAL IMPACT AWARD

2022

The ITA, for the fourth consecutive year was awarded for benevolent work for plantation workers. In the year under review, ITA received the runners up award for improving lives & livelihoods in Tea Plantations. The ICC Social Impact Award 2022. The Award was handed over to the ITA Secretariat on 11th March 2022.



ITA-UNICEF PARTNERSHIP

ITA has been working UNICEF to improve live and livelihoods of tea plantation workers towards improving awareness levels, capacity building, Health, Nutrition, WASH, and Child Protection and Child Rights programs.

Brief of activities, achievement and progress under ITA - ABITA-UNICEF projects are illustrated below :

ASSAM: JUNE 22 - JULY 2023

Programme	Activities	Achievements
<i>Child Protection - towards empowerment</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthening of adolescent groups Sessions on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Program for adolescent Exposure visits to institutions Training, sports events, for boys group members on Positive Masculinity Program Capacity Building Workshop (CBW) for Child Protection Committee members Intergenerational sessions conduct with parents and children Convergence meeting with the line department related to children and women. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthening of adolescent groups with 420 Adolescent Clubs and more than 29000 registered members Developed 1400 adolescent peer leaders on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Program Child marriage reduced to 1.9% from 5.1% 57% parents disapprove of issues such as child marriage, gender-based violence (GBV), discrimination, sexual harassment, and alcoholism 73% adolescents disapprove of violence against girls and boys Published quarterly "Mukta Akash" a newsletter for adolescents by Adolescent Young Reporters
<i>Health - Improving lives</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supportive visit VHND sessions and Routine Immunization Sessions Promotion of emergency preparedness and response, institutional delivery, newborn care etc through home visit, group discussion, meeting with pregnant women Promotion of early registration and timely ANC among the pregnant women and visit hospitals for quality Antenatal checkup 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Institutional delivery, immunization increased More numbers of Babies were born alive Infant mortality decreased More women received 4 ANC's and consumed 100 IFA during their pregnancy
<i>Nutrition - at a glance</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capacity building of frontline workers Awareness among mothers on Minimum diet diversity and infant young child feeding practices Reach frontline workers on IFA supplementation and SAM screening Coordination with FLWs, sector and block officials to streamline IFA stock availability Reaching targeted beneficiaries through VHND sessions Counseling of mothers of under-two years on Complementary feeding practices Weekly nutrition and health education session with adolescent group members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Girls and boys started receiving adequate diet More mothers have the knowledge on minimum diet diversity 98.6% mothers reached through messages on MIYCN More number of girls received IFA through WIFS programme Increased numbers of frontline workers trained on complementary feeding screening and treatment of severe acute malnutrition
<i>WASH progress so far- Achievements and activity</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> District level orientation programme of Medical Officers , Tea Garden Managements on FSM, SLWM & climate resilience WASH Orientation of Line Chowkidars on SLWM Training on MHM to adolescents groups, Creche workers, AWW, SHG members District level convergence meeting with PHED, Zila Parishad, district administration Ensuring water quality testing of all the tea gardens. Strengthen convergence with PHED laboratories and Capacity building of school teachers on operation and maintenance of drinking water facilities, water quality testing in schools, segregation of waste in schools and importance of group hand washing units Training of School teachers on developing Swachhata Action Plan (SAP) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More nos. of New Toilets Constructed Chlorination of drinking water points Labor Line Sanitation Campaigns Increasednos. Of household having access to functional household tap connection under JJM- More os. of Garden availing the services of CMSC under SBM-G Phase II initiative Children, adolescents and mothers live in households that have improved More Households have improved sanitation facility Most of the Adolescents trained on WASH-related information and Community-based frontline workers trained on WASH related activities

Apart from the above trainings /activities were done on Responsible Business Practices and Child Rights, Education, Social Behavior Change, Social Protection, Disaster Risk Reduction under the ITA – ABITA partnership



WEST BENGAL :

ITA-UNICEF, KOLKATA

PREVENTION OF TRAFFICKING AND STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY BASED CHILD PROTECTION IN WEST BENGAL TEA GARDENS - The ITA recognizes that safety of Tea estate children and young persons especially the girl child is most important needing urgent attention. The porous borders of North Bengal Districts with neighbouring regions has led to increase in trafficking and tea estates have been suffers as children are lured into this racket. To eradicate /reduce this menace ITA and UNICEF signed an MOU in September,2021 which was further extended from August,2022. It is expected that this partnership will strengthen the Institutional mechanism to prevent Child Marriage,Child trafficking and unsafe migration.

The Key Components of the Program are;

- Sensitization of Managers,
- Capacity building of 40 Welfare Officers
- Capacity building of Adol.Girls club members in 30 tea estates
- Capacity building of 40 Mothers club in 30 Estates
- Capacity building of Vigilant groups on Child Rights and protection
- Capacity Building of Youth
- Distribution of key messages on Child RIGHTS ETC
- Camps in 30 Estates on social protection schemes
- Legal literacy clinic in 10 estates
- Deployment of 30 community mobilizers

Expected Outcomes

1. Participation of community people, different community structures, children and young adolescents from the community who will ensure maximum participation of children and adolescents.
2. Engaging with local communities, especially key influences such as the SHG members, parents' groups, Village Level Child Protection Committees, youth clubs and older adolescents for ownership to strengthen child protection and monitoring.
3. Institutional strengthening being the key strategy in addressing the child protection and adolescent issues, and enhancing capacities of service providers to identify and reduce gaps in service, and design appropriate interventions.



CHILD RIGHTS WEEK

14th - 20th NOVEMBER 2022

WEBINAR ON 21st NOVEMBER 2022

WEST BENGAL

The Child Rights Week was observed from 14th to 20th November, 2022 in 32 tea estates. During the week banners with signatures were displayed in these gardens. Walkathons with banners as well as sit & draw completion by children were organised.

On 21st November 2022 a webinar was held for the tea gardens in West Bengal for stakeholders associated with the prevention of trafficking and strengthening community based child protection mechanism in the concerned tea estates .

The Webinar was inaugurated by the Chairperson, ITA, Ms Nayantara Palchoudhuri. Mr. A. Raha, Secretary General, ITA also articulated his views. From UNICEF amongst others, Ms. Paromita Neogi, Child Rights Specialist addressed the gathering.

The meeting witnessed an active participation of Managers of the concerned estates, community mobilizers and others who pledged their support to the programme.

The event was coordinated by the Sustainability Cell of ITA.



CHILD RIGHTS WEEK

14th - 20th NOVEMBER 2022
WEBINAR ON 15th NOVEMBER 2022

ASSAM

A webinar organised for the Assam gardens on 15th November, 2022 to observe the Child Rights Week was inaugurated by Ms. Nayantara, Chairperson, ITA

In his opening remarks Mr. A. Raha, Secretary General, ITA stressed on the importance of the ITA-UNICEF programmes and how they aim to educate the adolescent children and workers in the tea estates on various issues like child marriage, education and protecting the girl child from abuse.

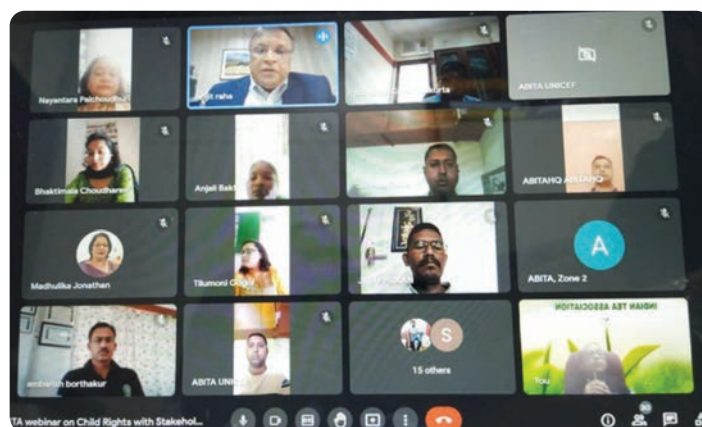
The beneficiaries of the programme viz. the adolescent boys and girls narrated the benefits and how the tea garden communities have started to change their thinking. The beneficiaries thanked the UNICEF and ITA and its Assam Branch (ABITA) for their active role in helping the tea garden children to change their life for the better.

Representatives of the tea garden managements present were appreciative of the ITA-UNICEF programmes. They felt that the garden communities have greatly benefitted from the good practices which have considerably reduced social ills besides promoting better moral values.

UNICEF, New Delhi Ms. Geetanjali Master remarked that the garden managements as responsible employers have played a vital role in securing the rights of children.

UNICEF, Guwahati representative Dr. Madhulika Janathan stated that the programme covers 205 gardens. Through the participation of other Tea Associations led by ITA, the programme would be extended to other tea estates in Assam including Barak Valley. A mention was made on the changing behavioural patterns of young boys and girls who have adopted a progressive attitude in changing their own communities through positive action in promoting education, preventing child marriages, preventing child labour etc.

The Hon'ble Labour Minister Shri Sanjoy Kishan stated that the ITA in partnership with UNICEF has been doing excellent work for tea communities in Assam to address the fundamental issues on rights of the child and enable them to grow up in a healthy and friendly atmosphere.



ITA - ENGAGEMENT WITH SOLIDARIDAD

POWER OF VOICE (POV) - RECLAIM SUSTAINABILITY PROGRAMME

ITA and Solidaridad signed a new MOU for a period of 4 years beginning 1st, January, 2022 with the basic objective of;

- 'Empowering the Small Tea Growers and their Associations under the Reclaim Sustainability Programme by helping them build independent, democratic organizations, improve their negotiation position with buyers / employers, achieve economic stability, make joint investments and increase their collective influence.
- Strengthening and innovating the Small Tea Grower value chain through strengthened farm management, capacity building and improving access to markets.

The Agreement envisages setting up multi stakeholder platforms in India which will include recommendations from Central and State Governments and Tea Board developing improved business model for trading in tea of the small tea sector. The baseline model would be fair pricing , fair sale and fair share in the overall business transactions between small tea growers and purchaser of their produce.

TRINTEA Programme Committee (TPC) Meeting held on 20th June 2022 - under the Power of Voice (Pov) - Reclaim Sustainability Programme :

TPC Meeting proceedings :

Ms Nayantara Palchoudhuri, Chairperson of ITA and TPC, in her introductory remark, stated that over the years STG's have grown steadily and have become an integral part of the Tea Industry. She observed that impressive progress has been made under the TRINTEA programme with the joint collaboration of ITA, Solidaridad, and STG Associations, and it is necessary to consolidate the progress under the newly launched Reclaim Sustainability Programme.



Mr. Arijit Raha, Secretary General, ITA expressed his happiness at the signing of the new MOU between Solidaridad and ITA for a period of 4 years beginning 1st, January 2022 with the basic objective to 'Empower the Smallholder Tea Farmers and their Associations under the Reclaim



ITA - ENGAGEMENT WITH SOLIDARIDAD

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Sustainability Programme. While the Trintea programme over the past three years had focussed more on reaching out to STGs and meeting their training needs to improve agronomical, social and environmental practices, the new programme over the next 4 years aims to empower the STGA's and help them to build independent, democratic organizations and leverage their collective influence to achieve economic stability. Further, Mr. Raha stated that ITA has already initiated a drive to bring in at least 5,000 members under its membership

Dr Shataddru Chattopadhyay, Managing Director, Solidaridad Asia in his deliberation highlighted the problems that may in the near future owing to climate change and suggested that suitable steps are to be taken to ward off the ill effects of Climate change. He spoke briefly about the steps being initiated by the European countries to address the problem of Climate change. He felt that ITA and UPASI could act as Coordination points for guiding their member plantations to take advantage of the carbon credits accruing due to carbon sequestration.



He also mentioned that Solidaridad Asia has already entered into an agreement with RABO BANK to create a 'Carbon Bank'.

Mr Sandip Ghosh, Secretary, Sustainability Cell, reiterated that the Trintea Secretariat would continue to act as a facilitator and extend all possible support towards proper implementation of the newly launched Reclaim Sustainability programme over the next 4 years.

Mr. R.Sanjith, Secretary UPASI mentioned that UPASI deals with all the major plantation crops such as tea, coffee, rubber and spices and its membership includes small tea growers with one seat reserved in the Executive Committee for small grower category for each plantation crop. Their present focus is on promotion of high value multi cropping in the plantations with a twin objective of increasing income from the per unit area and to move towards multi cropping / intercropping by ensuring bio diversity.



ITA - ENGAGEMENT WITH SOLIDARIDAD

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He further mentioned that the carbon sequestration potential in plantations is significantly higher than what is being emitted and added that Japan buyers have committed to reduce 30% greenhouse gases in their operations by 2030 and black tea was also within their scope and this will be a new challenge, the industry will have to proactively engage with.

Mr. Ranjan Cincar, Solidaridad Asia in his deliberation highlighted the achievements and progress of the project since its official launch in 2019. He stated that although the progress of the project was greatly hampered due to the Covid pandemic more than 75000 small growers producing around 560 million kgs of green leaf have been brought under the ambit of the programme. After having imparted training on good Agricultural practises, a second assessment was made covering 37000 growers accounting for 254 million kgs and spread over 1028 villages. It was observed that as compared to the 1st,Assessment,the compliance level had gone up significantly by touching 30% from 1%.Steps have now been initiated for linking the grower with satisfactory compliance level with the nearby tea factories to ensure better price for their green leaf.

Mr. Ramanand Tiwary, Sr. Programme Manager, and Mr. P. John and G.C. Arvind of IT Team of Solidaridad Asia highlighted the activities supported for the benefit of the small farmers in Assam under the 'Smart Agri Project' and the special features of the traceability App (Solitrace) and Green Leaf Analyser Machine (Ballotronix) respectively

Dr. Manish Pande of Quality Council of India while appreciating the fact that more than 76000 growers have joined the TRINTEA program stated that there is a good scope for alignment of TRINTEA with other standards and seek parity with standards like INDGAP/GLOBAL GAP and improve the acceptance level of the TRINTEA farmer and TRINTEA tea. He also mentioned that the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights intends to do a study on the prevalence if any of Child Labour in the tea industry in order to mitigate the situation that might hamper our prospects of realizing the vision of 'Local to Global'.

Mr. S.Soundarajan, Director, Tea Development,Tea Board of India commended ITA and Solidaridad for the work being done under this TRINTEA programme.

The representatives of STGA's while appreciating the progress of the programme voiced their concern with regard to green leaf price realization and lack of adequate soil testing



ITA - ENGAGEMENT WITH SOLIDARIDAD

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facilities. Request was also made to give some kind of recognition to Organic growers. Dr. Ramu of SISTGA stated it is important for the Tea Board to register the GL Agents. He also requested that the Technological innovations that have already been introduced to the small growers in Assam be also extended to other regions as well.

Mr. Debasish Chakravarti, Secretary, ITA welcomed the members. He emphasized ITA's commitment to a successful execution of the Power of Voice (PoV) programme and wished that all stakeholders will with unwavering zeal carry out the activities whereby the small holders benefit.

In his deliberation, Dr. Shatadru Chattopadhyay, MD, Solidaridad Asia wished that Producer groups can play a positive role to make this programme a success. He highlighted the key points with regard to the emerging opportunities of 'Carbon Market' for the STG's and also mentioned that the main objectives behind the tie up with ITA and STGAs are three-fold:

- a. Strengthening the governance of STGAs to make them more impactful and influential,
- b. Formulation of Policies that are favourable to the Small Tea Growers,
- c. Address the issues relating to promotion of Small Holder's Tea

He felt that if all the stakeholders come together under one umbrella like ITA without losing their individual identity, the tea sector will strengthen. He appreciated that some of the ABSTGA STGs have joined the ITA initiative. He felt that this is indeed a significant step in the right direction. The new Policies to be framed will focus on the interests of the STGs.

Mr. Arijit Raha, Secretary General, ITA, stated that enterprising activities should be taken up by STGs collectively and ITA would be happy to facilitate and progress the agenda through the Tea Board and Financial Institutions.

OTHER ACTIVITIES :

In addition to these activities, 40 workshops with Small Tea Associations and Farmers were held in Assam & West Bengal.



Solidaridad



ITA PARTNERSHIP WITH GAIN & WORKFORCE NUTRITION

The Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) a Swiss-based foundation and Indian Tea Association entered into an Agreement w.e.f. 20th Feb 2021 which was further extended on and from 1st, December 2022 to improve the demand, access and consumption of safe and nutritious food by tea worker households in 34 tea estates in Jorhat, Tezpur, and other adjoining districts in Assam.

GAIN's mission is to advance nutrition outcomes by improving nutritious and safe food consumption for all people, especially the most vulnerable to malnutrition.

The Main Objectives of the Project were :

- Implement measures to enhance knowledge and awareness of nutritious foods to increase the dietary diversity of tea workers' households with a specific focus on female members of the households and the most vulnerable ones;
- Community Engagement and mobilization to create an enabling environment to create the necessary momentum toward achieving the goals of the program;
- Capacity Building and Nutrition Awareness;
- Advocacy and sensitization of estate management.

Some snapshots of the activities under the ITA - GAIN partnership programmes :



A number of cooking demonstrations and competitions were held with regular home visits in the 34 Tea Gardens selected for the project. Besides, number of Street Play and Nutri Games were held.

An innovative supply chain model has been launched in the tea estates of Assam. These retail shops provide healthy and nutritious food products through novel networks with local distributors to reduce the burden and costs of sourcing products from wholesalers in the nearby town.

Reports received indicate that the intervention has evoked a great response from the tea workers and local management as they have witnessed a positive behavioral change toward adopting new food habits. It can therefore be safely concluded that better health through proper nutrition guidance would enhance workers' health and productivity as well as reduce absenteeism at work.

ITA hopes that along with GAIN this project will be further taken forward in other tea gardens of Assam.

ITA PARTNERSHIP WITH ILO

Occupational Safety & Health (OSH) (ITA- ILO Partnership Programme)

In the first pilot program 27 big tea estates from Zone 1 and 2 along with 25 small Tea growers of Naharkatia region are participating in the program which commenced in Feb. 2022.

Immediate Objectives :

- Build capacity and organizational system in ITA and its member enterprises to mainstream Occupational Health and safety measures in Tea estates , prevent sexual harassment at the workplace and promote better working conditions for plantation workers.
- Progressive improvements are made over a period of time by the member enterprises of ITA ((including small growers in supply chain) to improve health and safety and prevent sexual harassment at the workplace.

The Period April 2022 to March 2023 witnessed a number of orientation meetings on OSH followed by exercises. By the participants . ILO was represented by their National Coordinator and ITA by their sustainability cell .

Among the notable public events the WORLD SAFE DAY was observed in Tea estates on 28th . April 2023.



Observance of World Safe Day



ABITA GRAMIN KRISHI UNNAYAN PRAKALPA

ITA as part of its commitment to serve communities in Tea Districts embarked on an ambitious programme on Agricultural development of communities in Assam in the year 2000. Since its inception, more than 28000 farmers from 3300 villages have been trained to adopt improved agricultural practices to increase crop yields through distribution of high yielding variety of seeds, adopt multiple cropping and encourage marketing of produce.

The ABITA program covering RABI and KHARIF crops presently operates in Doom Dooma , Lahoal , Morann Sonari , Panery & Binduguri . It lays emphasis on improving yields of Farmers and crop diversification for benefit of famer communities. Each centre covers 188 bighas per season (Rabi and Kharif separately). The prime thrust is on Paddy but Vegetables, pluses and Oil seeds too are grown by farmers.

The RABI coverage is 1201 Bighas while the Kharif coverage is 1220 Bighas (in the year 2022-23).

The project has driven farmers in Assam towards self-reliance and improved earnings.



AGKUP Ceremonial harvesting - Vegetables



Demo. For paddy crop



Field Training of farmers under ABITA Gramin Krishi Unnayan Prakalpa



ASIA TEA ALLIANCE

The Asia Tea Alliance (ATA) comprises of the world's top tea producing, consuming and exporting countries to promote common interests of the teas worldwide. Asia Tra Alliance organization entered into a MoU to strengthen financial and sustainable development of the tea sector. Solidaridad being sustainability partner to the ATA held discussions and agreed that a high powered Core Group would be formed to develop and have a clear road map against set milestones. The Core Group consisted of India (Indian Tea Association), China (China Tea Marketing Association), Sri Lanka (Sri Lankan Tea Board), Indonesia (Indonesian Tea Marketing Association) and Japan (Central Tea Association).



The Core Group agreed strengthening financial trade promotion, technology exchange and do such things to promote sustainable development of the tea sector, jointly organizing seminar and conferences to promote sustainability in the global tea sector, conservation of eco system and product safety. It was decided that the Core Group would meet once a year to discuss various issues as stated above.

Mr. Wang Qing was the first Chairman of the Asia Tea Alliance and a MoU was inked between the Core

participating countries which included ITA in the year 2018.

The Core Group physically met on 10th November, 2023 and inducted two other producing countries namely Nepal and Bangladesh into the ATA.

On Mr. Wang Qing demitting office; the Core Group unanimously elected Ms. Nayantara Palchoudhuri, Chairperson ITA as the Chairperson, Asia Tea Alliance.

Mr. Wang Qing, the outgoing chairman of the Asia Tea Alliance in his opening remarks through



his virtual presence highlighted the impact of having the Asia Tea Alliance and his commitment to uphold the interest of the Asia Tea Alliance. In the meeting held on 10th November 2022 discussions held on ways and means sharing of information of common interest with all the members.



INDIA INTERNATIONAL SMALL TEA GROWERS' CONVENTION IN KOLKATA (IISTGC)

10th NOVEMBER, 2022

The first India International Small Tea Growers convention, jointly organised by Solidaridad and ITA, was held on 11th November 2022 at Taj Bengal Kolkata. The Purpose of the convention was to highlight the numerous challenges faced by the Small Tea Growers in tackling economic sustainability, adversities faced due to climate change and other management difficulties. The conference was attended by more than 150 participants from across India and several other countries, including Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, China, Indonesia, and Nepal. Speaking on the occasion Nayantara Palchoudhuri, Chairperson, ITA stated, that the tea industry was adversely impacted by factors that are detrimental to economic sustainability of the tea industry. The growing effects of climate change, price stagnation, high input cost bear adversely on cost of production. The Chairperson remarked that the ITA-Solidaridad partnership has been working on and bringing about a holistic development of the tea industry by way of overall improvement in the livelihoods of STGs - is commendable.”

Apart from the Hosts Mr. Henry Heyneardhi, Partnership Director, Indonesian Tea Marketing Association, Senaka Alawattegama, Chairperson, Planters' Association of Ceylon (Sri Lanka), M Shah Alam, Chairperson, Bangladesh Tea Association, Suresh Mittal, Chairperson, Nepal Tea Producers' Association, and Bijoy Gopal Chakraborty, President, Confederation of Indian Small Tea Growers Association (CISTA), among others. Several small tea grower representatives from Assam, WB and South India viz. All Assam Small Tea Growers' Association, All Bodoland Small Tea Growers' Association and Jalpaiguri Dist. Small Tea Growers Association and Small Tea Growers Association of South India also attended.

Thanking the Chairperson ITA f Dr. Shatadru Chattopadhyay MD Solidaridad stated that Over a million small tea growers in India and from other countries depend on the tea industry for their existence. The tea business is critical to rural livelihood as well as



the economy of the producing countries. Promoting longterm health, wellbeing, and environmental sustainability in the tea business should be a top priority, but the sectorsfacing a crisis because of persistently low tea prices, which are also crushing the small tea farmers. Hence Solidaridad and ITA aim to empower the farmers to turn their business into a purpose-driven brands.

Bijoy Gopal Chakraborty, President, CISTA,said, "I am extremely thankful to ITA and Solidaridad for organising thefirst India International Small Tea Growers Convention and providing an opportunity to the smallholder tea growers from all tea-producing countries to share their experiences and success stories."

The day-long event also saw technical sessions featuring presentations and talks by captains of the industry and experts including Small Grower representatives about various aspects of value and supply chains as well the innovative digital tools demonstrating their advantages. The event comcluded with an award ceremony felicitating 15 small growers for their exceptional achievement in producing specialty teas followed by a cultural programme.

An exhibition of teas produced by the small growers was also organized and inaugurated by the Hon'ble Minister after the inaugural session.

Experts from the tea industry deliberated on the challenges faced by the small teagrowers and discussed solutions that can address the sustainability issues in the tea Industry. The highlight of the event was a display on innovation in sustainable tea production and consumption, which can empower smallholders. This included Soli Trace, a QR code technology that facilitates direct communication between consumers and producers, Soli Probe, an instant soil analyser, Soli Met, a hyper-local weather station, and Ballotronix, an instant tea leaf reader.



