

Instilling good practice

Strategic partnerships to build capacity, India

www.ethicalteapartnership.org

ETP's producer support programme in India has grown considerably. Currently the focus is on rolling out training on health and safety and environmental management as these are two areas where producers have acknowledged they need further help.



Tea estate Assam

Supporting producers

India produces nearly a quarter of the world's tea. The sector provides employment to more than 1 million people, the majority of whom are women. A further 9 million people depend on the industry for their livelihoods. Assam, which produces most of India's tea, is a region ETP has been working in for many years.

Recently, a partnership was developed with Verde Consulting Pvt Ltd to roll out training on health and safety and environmental management.

The training workshops have been designed specifically for estate managers and assistant managers, and they provide practical solutions on the key safety and environmental

challenges that are relevant to the tea industry in Assam.

Environmental Management

The one day course gives managers an understanding of environmental principles and highlights best practice and ways to manage risk in the following areas:

- agrochemical safety
- soil and water management
- wildlife & ecosystem protection
- energy use & waste management

Health and safety

As well as focusing on ways in which to put health and safety at the heart of operations, participants are taught the skills and are provided with tools to assess and mitigate risk, leading to safer and better work

environments. The health and safety course covers issues such as:

- machine and fire safety
- hazard minimisation
- sanitation
- safety of worker housing
- health & welfare

ETP has also been working with the head office staff of companies who own large numbers of estates, to find effective ways of institutionalising good practice across their entire groups.

For example, ETP and Verde ran a specially adapted version of the H&S course for 25 managers from Amalgamated Plantations Pvt Ltd (APPL), one of the largest tea companies in India. This was well received by APPL, who found it an efficient way to standardise good practice.

Support programmes such as these help producers meet international standards on worker welfare and the environment, thereby ensuring that Indian tea remains competitive in global supply chains where ethical considerations are insisted on more and more.

The training will continue to be rolled out to other producers in India and adapted for other countries.

“The feedback from the workshops is excellent and more gardens need to be trained”

Mr Sandip Ghosh from the Assam Branch of the Indian Tea Association

Helping to protect wildlife and endangered Asian elephants

Tea estates are often surrounded by areas of natural beauty. Farm practices used for tea cultivation, such as applying agrochemicals and building drainage ditches, can impact negatively on the surrounding environment and the animals that live there.

Such proximity also means that workers can encounter wild animals. In Assam, relationships between humans and elephants on estates that border the Dehing Forests are fraught with difficulty. Elephants often cause damage to crops, food storage, and worker housing, and there have also been cases of workers being accidentally injured or trampled to death.

While many elephants have suffered from a loss of habitat and a disruption to their migratory routes, some have been attacked and in extreme cases even killed.



Roaming through an estate



Drainage ditches can be a hazard to elephants

With these issues in mind, ETP teamed up with the Nature Conservation Foundation (NCF) and ran workshops to raise awareness on the importance of protecting wildlife, and to show producers and workers how to live more harmoniously with elephants. This training has ultimately helped to make workers' lives safer.

As well as providing information on elephant ecology and conservation, the training showed practical ways to make estates safer:

- Installing early-warning trip wire systems
- What to do when confronted by elephants to avoid 'flash-point' situations
- Changing patterns of food and grain storage to protect buildings
- Advice on insurance schemes for property and crops

NCF also explained how tea estates could play a crucial role in preserving the elephant population by:

- Keeping traditional migratory routes/corridors clear from obstruction
- Allowing them to roam freely
- Leaving natural vegetation for them to forage



Workers often come into contact with elephants

“Working with ETP has been very positive. The workshop has helped catalyse links between local NGOs and Assam planters which will hopefully minimise conflicts and conserve wildlife on the estates in the future.”

Shankar Raman, Scientist, Nature Conservation Foundation

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