

## Improving Young Lives in Tea Communities of Assam, India

In Assam, young girls living on tea estates have limited access to secondary education, which can make them susceptible to exploitation. To address this issue and help give young people brighter opportunities and a better quality of life, ETP entered into a partnership with Unicef at the end of 2014 that is working with 350 communities linked to more than 100 tea estates.

The partnership brings together all key stakeholders in the tea industry as well as public and private partners to tackle child exploitation across the sector. Through peer support and education, the partnership is working to reach 25,000 girls and 10,000 community members to help protect children from violence, abuse, and exploitation, including trafficking and unsafe migration out of tea communities.

The programme focuses on giving girls access to education and training. This has been implemented through the strengthening and setting up of more than 350 Adolescent Girls' Groups (AGGs). The AGGs empower girls with the confidence and knowledge they need to stay safe from exploitation. Girls also attend regular health talks and life skill classes, such as hygiene, sanitation, and cooking, as well as taking part in drama and sports.

As part of the programme, almost 300 Child Protection Committees (CPCs) have also been formed to support child protection at the tea garden level. As well as training community members to understand the dangers of child trafficking and unsafe migration, the CPCs also intervene to demand the safe return of children engaged in exploitative labour as well as providing counsel to families that might be considering early marriage of their daughters.

Watch the video to learn more about this ground-breaking partnership and find out below what the girls are saying about the AGGs.



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## Find Out How Girls are Benefitting from AGGs

**Bondana** is 14 years old and wants to be a doctor when she grows up because it is something that would make herself and her whole family very happy.

She says that the Adolescent Girls' Group has helped her to be able to communicate better with lots of different types of people. Now she feels more comfortable speaking with her elders and supporting younger girls in the group. The most important lesson that she has learnt from the club is how to be responsible for herself.



**Sonali** is 16 years old and wants to be a lawyer when she leaves school.

She says that a lot of people are scared to go to the police if they need help and she wants to be a lawyer to help people feel safe and confident to access police services.

She enjoys being a member of the Adolescent Girls' Group because it provides a forum to discuss issues that affect girls. It has also provided Sonali and her friends with an avenue to explore their talents, figure out what they want to be, and how to pursue their dreams.



**Momta** is 17 years old and is still working out what she wants to be when she is older.

She loves attending the Adolescent Girls' Group because it has helped her learn about key issues such as child marriage. She now understands it is wrong to get married as a child and she wants to help other families in her community realise this and focus on girls' education before marriage.



**Pallabi** is 15 years old and wants to be a teacher when she grows up because she enjoys teaching and learning and wants to help other children feel the same.

She says she enjoys the Adolescent Girls' Group because she has gained so much knowledge and has learnt new things.



**Biyasuna** is 16 years old and wants to become a doctor. She says she was very shy before she joined the Adolescent Girls' Group but now she has started to talk a lot more.



**Sumi** is 16 years old and her dream is to open a dance studio so that other children in her tea garden can learn to dance and can participate in big dance competitions.

She enjoys attending her Adolescent Girls' Group and has learnt how to be more hygienic and clean at home.



**Binodi** is 19 years old and wants to be a beautician because she loves looking nice and wants to help women look beautiful.

She says that she used to shy away when adults would talk to her but the Adolescent Girls' Group has given her more confidence to speak up.

