



Fair Trade Educational Grants

C. Nesyman of New Ambadi Estate is beaming when he talks about his son. Niksan is in his 2nd year at college, studying mechanical engineering. The course costs Rs 200,000 for four years and that's a lot of money for a rubber tapper like Nesyman. To qualify for financial assistance from Fair Trade funds students have to do well academically. Next year Niksan's sister will also attend college and plans to apply to the joint body for a grant.

One Year On ...

The Fair Rubber Association was founded at the end of June 2012. Thirteen months later the executive secretary and a volunteer visited all supplier partners so see first hand the benefits of the Fair Trade premium payments by the members of the Association: Well over a 1000 people benefit significantly, e.g. by having safe drinking water piped to their houses. This newsletter gives some examples (longer versions are available on http://www.fairrubber.org/en/success_stories.htm)

Alas, at the same time, a bigger picture emerged (see article top right), which underlines the need for the water projects in particular. The good news: Using natural rubber (instead of artificial substitutes which are based on fossil fuels) helps mitigate climate change: Rubber trees sequester more CO₂ than the rain forest. Rubber not plastic!

Drought Or Deluge: The Monsoons Have Gone Crazy

'The monsoons used to be like clockwork', says Nishantha Senevirate, group manager of Lalan's Sapumalkande rubber plantations: the southwest monsoon brought heavy rains in May and June, less rain in July, while August and September were almost completely dry. The northeast monsoon, according to Mr Senevirate, is weaker in Sri Lanka with rains from November through till January. But since 2005 there is no telling anymore when the rains will come. In the last four to five years the winter monsoons came late, but were heavier than usual and lasted into February, the time the rubber trees are in flower. As a result the trees produce fewer seeds in September. During the last few years the southwest monsoons brought less rain. But in 2013 both monsoons were heavy and this June was the wettest in 13 years.

A little bit to the north, in Pitiakande, the winter monsoons came late. And while the average rainfall in May should be around 100mm there was no rain, not a drop in May 2012, while August saw such downpours as to cause flooding and landslides. This year May brought a record rainfall in May with 240mm.

The changing weather pattern not only has an impact on rubber production, seeds and tapping days, most of all it affects the people who depend on the rain for their drinking water. A lot of workers have no water in their homes but have to collect it from a communal tap or even a small stream. During prolonged droughts these water sources often dry up, in one section of Pitiakande water had to be supplied by tank lorries. Small wonder that most Fair Trade committees have water projects at the top of their agenda.

Udabage: The Joys Of Taking A Shower



W J Christian sits on the floor in his workshop, a wooden hut littered with tools, spare parts, cables and scrap metal. Happy shrieks come from the enclosure right behind the shed, where four boys are trying out the new showers – the new communal open-air bathroom which is an enormous improvement

from taking a bath in a nearby stream. The showers are part of the Fair Trade water project and have been installed next to Mr Christian's workshop for a reason: he is able to get there on his own. The 52 year old contracted polio when he was a baby and both his legs are atrophied, he can't walk, but has to move on all fours. 'The water project has given me so much more independence' he says. Not only can he have a bath on his own, the villagers have installed one of the 12 communal taps right behind the house he is living in, which means he doesn't have to ask his aunt or neighbours to fetch water for him. Not that anyone ever minded helping him out – W J Christian is known for his craftsmanship and ability to

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Frocester Estate: Reconnected With Fair Trade



Lalita Ayrangani's day starts early. She gets up at 4.30 and starts cooking for the whole family, rice, curries and sambols for breakfast and lunch to be taken along to work. Her son and his wife, her daughter and her four-year old grandchild live next door. At 6 am she walks to the rubber factory, work starts at 6.30. Until recently she had to get up even earlier: more than a year ago the tank that fed the water

pipes at Lalita's house collapsed which meant she and everyone else in the family had to walk to a water source about half a kilometre away several times a day to get all the water needed for cooking and drinking. The joint body agreed that the restoration of the water tank was a priority and since the work has been completed, the faucet behind Lalita's house supplies water again and when she's filled up one of the wide-bellied stainless steel vessels, she's just got to step around the corner into her kitchen. Lalita returns from work at around 3.30 pm. Usually she shops for some groceries in the estate's coop shop and for vegetables at nearby stalls. When she comes home she plays with her granddaughter, washes the family's clothes, has a bath and prepares the evening meal. Her children all work in garment companies. Lalita came to Horana with her parents and grandparents when she was 7 years old, her father still works in the factory, her mother is retired. Since the death of her husband she has two rooms to herself. Her living room with its lovingly arranged display of family photos and small knickknacks leads out onto a small veranda. The other family members share the rest of the house, two bedrooms and a living room with an array of artificial flowers and a small television set in the corner. What are Lalita's hopes for the future? Now that the water is running again she is content, she says. She just wants her children to do well and settle down somewhere nearby in their own homes.

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fix things – if he can't repair it no one can. In 1995 it took him just six months built a motorised tricycle that is low enough for him to get on and off without help. Since then he not only drives to church on Sundays, he is also able to visit customers across the estate – whether you need handcrafted wooden window frames or your fan has to be rewired, Mr Christian is your man. But the bulk of his work is done in his workshop: more than 20 years ago a plantation manager asked him whether he would be able to sharpen the cutting knives the tappers use – and that's what he's been doing ever since. It takes him about an hour to hone the chisel like tool, up to ten in a single day. He receives Rs 180 per knife and together with his other jobs he is able to make a living.

The Fair Trade water project benefits 72 families, six families each share one tap and everyone uses the four showers. Every family had to pay an initial Rs 100 for the installation of the taps and Rs 20 monthly. The money is collected by the water committee, which in turn regularly inspects and maintains taps and pipes – i.e. the families pay for a service the water committee is expected to provide. The members of the Fair Trade committee (the 'joint body') feel that a small financial contribution by those benefitting from the project enhances a sense of ownership and responsibility. Later this year the families will be able to purchase individual water

meters (the cost of about Rs 2000 can be paid off within two years) and a separate pipe and faucet will give them access to water directly into their homes. It's a huge change in a community where two to three months in a year the one water source nearby runs dry and every litre of water has to be carried from a spring some 500 meters away.

The families live in what are called lines, the typical accommodation introduced by the British who established the rubber and tea estates in the 19th century. Each family occupies two rooms that can be accessed from the veranda running along several narrow, single story buildings – the lines. But with the temple, the bus stop and the enormous peepul tree these lines in Udabage almost have the feel of a proper village. And there certainly is a lot of community spirit – that the showers would be built as close as possible to W J Christian's house and workshop was a given from the start.



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