



WSAF

Women's Safety Accelerator Fund

ANNUAL REPORT 2023

Creating **Safe**
and **Empowered**
Workspaces for
Women



SafeTea | EqualiTea | DigniTea

**Creating Safe and Empowered
Workspaces for Women in the
Indian Tea Sector**

Funded by



Implemented by



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Acronyms

CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DC	Deputy Commissioner
DV	Domestic Violence
ETP	Ethical Tea Partnership
FIP	First Information Person
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GWSF	Global Women's Safety Framework for Rural Spaces, UN Women
IA	Intervention Area
IC	Internal Committee
IEC	Information, Education and Communication
IP	Implementing Partner
JAP	Joint Action Plan
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
OSC	One Stop Centre
PAP	Program Activity Plan
PCEP	Plantations Community Empowerment Program
POA	Plan of Activities
POSH Act	Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013
PPP	Public Private Platform
PRA	Producer Readiness Assessment
RBF	Results Based Financing
RMF	Results Measurement Framework
SH	Sexual Harassment
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
TE	Tea Estate
VAWG	Violence Against Women and Girls
WG	Working Group
WSAF	Women's Safety Accelerator Fund

Message from the **SECRETARIAT**



Manisha Majumdar
Senior Program
Manager



Maryam Zameela
Program Officer

Looking back, 2023 wasn't just a year of growth; it showcased our collective dedication and vision. From its inception, WSAF has been committed to fostering safer and empowering work environment within tea estates. Building upon the momentum of the previous year, 2023 witnessed a phenomenal expansion. We soared from 162 to an impressive 321 gardens, marking a significant leap forward in our mission.

Expanding our footprint beyond Assam and West Bengal, we proudly ventured into two new states in Southern India- Tamil Nadu and Kerala. This expansion not only broadened our reach but also deepened our impact, bringing our initiatives to new communities and regions. Throughout the year, our engagement with tea producers, workers, civil society organizations, government agencies, tea producers' associations, certification bodies along with several other stakeholders was intensified. These collaborations were instrumental in creating safer spaces and fostering empowerment within the tea industry leading as an example, offering guidance to business on how to advance gender equality and women's empowerment in the workplace, marketplace and community.

Strategic partnerships continued to be the cornerstone of our success, securing visits from esteemed partners who provided invaluable insights and opportunities for co-learning, co-ideating, co-creating and co-investing in sector wide policies, pathways and solutions towards systemic change. Moreover, our enhanced visibility at the state and district levels further solidified our commitment to effecting meaningful change.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our Implementing Partners, Tea Producers, Civil Society stakeholders and State and District level Government functionaries. Your unwavering support and agility have been the driving force behind our achievements. We gratefully acknowledge the contributions of Unilever, Tesco, Twinings, Taylors, Ethical Tea Partnership, and IDH. Your foresight and partnership have been instrumental in steering forward our collective vision and commitment. As we move forward, we remain committed to learning from each other and strengthening our interventions for greater impact. The insights gleaned from our partners will undoubtedly shape our strategies in the coming year.

We invite you, to delve into our Annual Report, which encapsulates the highlights, learnings and next steps in our journey. Together, let's continue to champion women's safety and empowerment in the tea gardens of India.

With deepest appreciation,

WSAF Secretariat,

Manisha Majumdar, Senior Program Manager
Maryam Zameela, Program Officer





Introduction

The Women's Safety Accelerator Fund (WSAF) is committed to making workplaces safer and more empowering for women in the tea industry by addressing gender-based violence and ensuring women can thrive at work. Through WSAF, funding partners are addressing gender-based violence (GBV) in the tea value chains.

In its first phase from 2021 to 2023, WSAF aimed to positively impact 200,000 women tea workers across 300 tea estates in Assam, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala. The program focuses on delivering clear results through careful monitoring and evaluation, primarily targeting the prevention and addressing of gender-based violence by mobilizing resources and strengthening local capacity.

Through ten intervention areas, WSAF is driving lasting change in tea estates, aligning with the four outcomes proposed by the UN Women's Global Women's Safety Framework in Rural Spaces (GWSF). WSAF is laying the groundwork for enduring change through collaboration, marking a significant step in promoting women's safety and empowerment in tea industries. Looking forward, WSAF aims to expand its impactful work beyond tea to other regions and agricultural sectors.





2023

The Year That Was

The year 2023 marked a significant phase in the journey of the Women's Safety Accelerator Fund (WSAF), with broad stakeholder engagement, involving over **321+** tea estates, **57+** tea producer companies, and key government officials across four states of India namely-Assam, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

Innovations at Field level Implementation

- 🌱 Monday Morning Messages on GBV through whatsapp broadcast to tea garden management, men and women workers. Using multimedia for wider reach with a cascading approach.
- 🌱 Using observation days as opportune/rallying moments, sports, theatre and social arts intervention for addressing social norms and discriminatory practices leading to GBV. These include Equality football matches, Tug of Equality, big theatre, one act show, and so on.
- 🌱 Trained leaders at Tea Estates were provided identity cards as First Information Responders signed and issued by tea estate management.

Deep Dive

- 🌱 Enhancing knowledge retention and outreach through innovative methods piloted in 40 tea estates.

Public Private Partnerships

- 🌱 Formal agreements with State Governments to work in in tea gardens with a shared agenda for strengthening ecosystem response and sustainability (systems change).
- 🌱 Expanded collaborative engagements with certification bodies (Trustea and Rainforest Alliance), UNICEF and UN Women.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

- 🌱 Using Kobo toolbox for analysing quantitative progress. Midline program evaluation by Transform Trade (formerly Traidcraft).
- 🌱 WSAF selected as a deep dive case study for IDH's Corporate Evaluation.
- 🌱 Community of Practices created for cross learning and sharing amongst Implementation Partners.

Changing business practices, Transforming attitudes towards VAWG in the tea industry

- 🌱 Empirical research undertaken on Return of Investment to understand how violence against women is linked to business loss or gain. (for change in better sector governance and business practices).
- 🌱 SoPs to address VAWG signed and circulated by 78% of tea estate managements, bringing policy level changes at the estate level.
- 🌱 How to approach 'Breaking the glass ceiling' in tea industry - a discussion initiated.

The program's success in 2023 can be attributed to the strengthening of trust between tea estates and civil society organizations, district level service providers and embracing ties with government, overcoming initial hesitance. The standardization of tools and learning materials ensured uniformity in training delivery and outcomes, further cementing the foundation for sustained improvement in addressing gender-based violence (GBV). A noteworthy practice was the continuous adoption and development of a monitoring tool on Kobo Collect, aligned with WSAF's Results Measurement Framework (RMF), highlighting the program's commitment to evidence-based impact monitoring. WSAF's focus on building effective networks and partnerships was evident in its establishment of strong linkages with local administrations, in 17 districts of Assam, 5 districts of West Bengal, 6 districts of Tamil Nadu and 3 districts of Kerala in the year 2023.

Building on these foundational efforts, WSAF's Deep Dive initiative piloted in 40

tea estates introduced a nuanced layer of engagement, focusing on enhancing knowledge retention and outreach through innovative methods such as WhatsApp broadcast groups, visual creatives with messages. This initiative empowered change agents like Urja and Saharsh Sathi, enabling them to play pivotal roles in disseminating key messages and fostering trust within communities. The Monday Morning Messages (MMM) initiative developed for change agents in the tea gardens further exemplified the power of leveraging technology to foster inclusive solutions and empower decision-making at the grassroots level. Management engagement through these platforms facilitated a deeper understanding and collective responsibility towards addressing social issues within the tea estates.

The convening and multi-stakeholder dialogue brought forward additional learning, emphasizing the importance of strategic preparation, focus, and experience design in achieving desired outcomes. These engagements highlighted the need for

intentional participant selection, fostering collaborations, and ensuring diligent follow-up on commitments. Reflecting on the year that was 2023, the journey of WSAF through its implementation, the Deep Dive initiative, and the convening and multi-stakeholder dialogue, presents a comprehensive narrative of progress, challenges, and opportunities. It presents the collective efforts to enhance women's safety and empowerment in tea gardens, leveraging partnerships, technology, and community engagement to pave the way for transformative change.

These efforts catapulted the program's innovative approach to scaling interventions and fostering Public-Private Platform (PPP) for addressing GBV in each of the four states. Integration with Govt's flagship programs emphasized the potential for achieving broader systemic change, while a data-driven approach validated the correlation between women's safety and business growth. Building on the successes and lessons of 2023, WSAF is poised for continued growth, going into 2024.



Programme Achievements

Program Targets	Total Achieved in 2021	Total Achieved in 2022	Total Achieved in 2023	Cumulative Achieved
Number of Estates Engaged	29	133	159	321
Corporate	27	115	120	262
Proprietary	2	18	39	59
Number of Workers Reached	59,010	1,59,572	1,37,919	3,56,501
Women	43,287	1,02,336	92,749	2,38,372
Men	15,723	57,236	45,170	1,18,129
Number of Community Members Engaged	35,637	3,91,030	3,20,800	7,47,467
Women	21,573	2,61,030	1,92,480	4,75,083
Men	14,064	1,30,000	128,320	27,2,384
Number of Management and staff from tea estates trained/engaged	359	2,024	2,254	4,637
Management	64	315	575	954
Staff	295	1,709	1,679	3,683
Number of Change Agents Trained	1,160	5,393	5,175	11,728
Number of District Level Service Providers Engaged	43	205	400	648

M&E Tool- Kobo Collect

In 2023, the MEL group conceptualized crucial qualitative and quantitative elements of SOP adoption, case reporting, and the integration of Deep Dive progress into the Kobo Collect Tool. This strategic move has allowed our implementation team to effectively track progress and pinpoint areas for further enhancement.

The utilization of tools like Kobo Collect for Monitoring and Evaluation has enabled IPs and the Secretariat to practice data collection, analysis, and regular sharing of information. This process enhances our ability to continuously assess and address areas of concern within the program, with updates made to the tool through quarterly reviews.

The introduction of the Deep Dive Module within our M&E framework has been particularly significant. It allows us to meticulously gauge the capacitation and regularity of engagement within core groups. Analysis from this segment helps us understand the depth of impact, combining qualitative and quantitative assessments with our training and interventions. This guides us in refining our strategies and interventions to better meet the needs of these groups.

Snapshot of Kobo collect Tool



Data Entry



Data Analysis

ee-eu.kobotoolbox.org/v1/CRKbyFX

0

Deep-dive

* Is deep-dive implemented in this tea-estate?

☒ Yes

☐ No

> If yes, please provide response to following sub-sections:

* Module Number

☒ Module 1

☐ Module 2

☐ Module 3

☐ Module 4

☐ Module 5

☐ Module 6

☐ Module 7

* Module 1 session number

☒ Session 1

☐ Session 2

☐ Session 3

☐ Session 4

* AVM/ MMM shared against the module

* Number of Core Group members trained

Question Form



SAFETY ACCELERATOR FUND
AND
A RIGHT ADVISORS
WORKING TO END
AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS



সভা কক্ষ
উপায়ুক্তর কার্যালয় : নগাঁও
CONFERENCE HALL
OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER : NA





WSAF

Key Stakeholders

1. Tea Company Management



- 🇮🇳 Staff, Sub-Staff, Estate Management- Manager, Assistant Manager, Welfare (Male & female) Women/ Men Collectives (Groups), Community, Adolescent Clubs (Boys/Girls).

2. External Response Ecosystem-District Level



- 🇮🇳 District Administration, Panchayats, Tea Producer Associations, Labour Unions, Service Providers, CSOs.

3. External Stakeholders-State & Country Level



- 🇮🇳 State Government - Departments of Health, Women and Child Development, Livelihood Mission, Certification Bodies such as Rainforest Alliance, TRUSTEA, UN Women, UNICEF.

Milestones 2023







PART A

Activity Report



Producer's Readiness Assessment

In 2023, **5 IPs** conducted the PRA in **159** estates covering **575** management, **1,679** staff and sub staff, **3,180** female workers and **2,235** male workers, **4,691** community members.



Awareness, Capacity Building and Training

A. Capacity Building Trainings for WSAF Implementation Staff

Overview: Two rounds of comprehensive trainings were conducted involving all Implementing Partners, focused on equipping staff with essential knowledge and skills. Additionally, monthly online sessions were organized through three community of practices, addressing communication, knowledge management, and M&E, to reinforce learning and address any field implementation queries that arose.

Significance: Enhanced understanding of gender issues and laws, launched knowledge enhancement initiatives on trafficking, migration, sexual health, WASH, and developed insights for effective program implementation and case management.

Key Points: Continuous engagement with Implementing Partners (IPs) resulted in strengthened field implementation, leading to noticeable improvements in knowledge, attitudes, and skills among team members, especially at the field level.



B. Gender Sensitisation Workshop for Tea Estate Staff and Management

Overview: Two workshops held at each TE level targets management, staff, sub-staff, and worker groups within tea estates, focusing on gender dynamics, discrimination, and violence against women and girls (VAWG) laws.

Significance: Increases awareness of WSAF's goals and gender dynamics, and provides knowledge on gender-based laws.

Key Points: Establishment of allies to prevent VAWG. Development of response mechanisms like FIPs and SoPs and understanding the roles of estate management in supporting and adopting them.



C. Prevention of Sexual Harassment (POSH) and Internal Committee (IC) Training for Tea Estate Management, Staff, and IC Members

Overview: Training across Assam, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala emphasizes understanding the POSH Act, IC roles, and addressing workplace sexual harassment. Two-day residential training sessions for IC members were conducted in Darjeeling, Coonoor, and Dibrugarh. These sessions brought together IC representatives and management from various tea estates and diverse companies. The trainings provided a valuable opportunity for cross-learning, reflection, and hands-on learning on the implementation of POSH.


Significance: Raises awareness among management, staff, and IC members, and facilitate the formation and functioning of ICs.

Key Points: Heightened awareness and understanding of the POSH Act. Sharing of best practices for preventing workplace sexual harassment. Formation and restructuring of Internal Committees. Enhanced collaboration and collective responsibility towards women's safety.



D. Awareness and training for Men and Women Workers

In 2023, the Women's Safety Accelerator Fund (WSAF) continued its dedicated efforts to mitigate gender-based violence (GBV) and improve gender awareness across tea estates. Building on the foundational work from the previous years, our focus this year has been significantly directed towards educating tea estate workers on critical aspects of gender dynamics, the multifaceted nature of gender-based violence, and the available redressal mechanisms.


 **Direct Engagement:** Our Implementing Partners (IPs) successfully reached all tea estate workers, both men and


women, directly. This achievement stands as a testament to our commitment to inclusivity and ensures that the awareness and teachings are verifiable and well-documented.




Workplace Outreach: Utilizing innovative outreach strategies, we engaged workers right at their places of work—ranging from labour challans to factory settings. Through short, impactful awareness sessions, we provided direct access to essential information to a wide range of workers, including both permanent and temporary staff, particularly capitalizing on the peak production seasons.



 **Targeted Training:** Beyond the initial outreach, we conducted targeted training sessions during the off-season. These sessions were designed to delve deeper into challenging existing gender norms, understanding the varied forms of violence against women and girls, and disseminating information about protection mechanisms and support services.

 **Comprehensive Awareness Workshops:** The workshops have been pivotal in raising awareness about legal frameworks and policies addressing sexual harassment and other forms of violence at the workplace. These sessions also covered gender-based abuse in personal spaces, empowering workers with knowledge and resources to seek help and support.

 **Impact and Coverage:** Our goal for enhanced coverage and deeper impact was ambitiously set and successfully met. Collectively, we reached approximately 297491 workers across 292 (133+159) tea estates, with over 195085 of these being women.

The growing assertiveness of women in articulating the challenges they encounter signifies a positive shift, as they actively seek support. Women are increasingly coming forward to communicate their concerns to FIPs, leading to a rise in reported cases

at both the FIP and management levels. Furthermore, proactive engagement from management includes sharing information on cases reported by FIPs or victims, fostering a collaborative approach to address and mitigate challenges.

In the follow-up sessions held in the gardens, workers articulated that the intensity of their work schedules had inadvertently pushed considerations of mental health, moral support, and the nurturing of family connections to the back burner, contributing significantly to deteriorating mental wellness.. During financial literacy outreach initiated by IPs in select gardens a transformative insight was shared by the workers - the transition to digital wages has not only streamlined their income management but significantly boosted their savings. Additionally, their developing understanding of various government schemes, has played a pivotal role in elevating their financial status. These interactions underscore the invaluable impact of continuous financial literacy discussions, affirming their essential role in fostering financial empowerment among the workforce.

The direct engagement strategies, combined with comprehensive awareness programs, has laid a robust foundation for sustained change. Our focus on both men and women workers ensures a holistic approach to tackling GBV, promoting a culture of respect, equality, and safety across the tea estates.



E. Awareness and Trainings for Community Change Agents and Advocates

In 2023, we trained over **11, 728**, proactive community members called ‘Change Agents’ to raise awareness and tackle gender-based violence (GBV) in tea estates. Their insights have been crucial in planning and implementing effective interventions. Stories from change agents highlight the impact of their advocacy, inspiring positive change in their communities.

During our trainings, conversations with adolescents have shown how important it is to make informed decisions and speak up. They are passionate about women’s rights and eager to drive change in their communities. This highlights the need to support youth development, helping them tackle life’s challenges with confidence.

To address gaps identified in the midline assessment, we piloted the deep dive approach in 40 estates in West Bengal and Assam as an additional and independent effort aimed at **strengthening knowledge retention, enhancing outreach efforts, and identifying issues of vulnerable groups**. Their focus includes increasing reporting of cases, building trust in support mechanisms, and involving management in providing necessary support.

In addition to the training sessions, WSAF has initiated a **culture of MMM (Monday Morning Messaging)** to enhance the retention

In the past year, Change Agents have become key figures, leading a significant change in how both workers and community members view and respond to violence against women and girls. They organize awareness programs and group discussions in their communities to encourage open dialogue on this important issue. Their initiatives aim to educate women about different types of violence and provide a safe space for sharing personal experiences.

capacity of the training and extend outreach. This involves creating **WhatsApp broadcast groups** where learnings from the pieces of training and messages are shared with approximately 250 individuals in each group. **Many of these groups are intentionally cross-tea estates and cross-companies, promoting engagement for cross-learning and collaboration.** The change agents play a crucial role in the MMM initiative by resharing the messages with the larger communities, ensuring last-mile connectivity. We see the amplified voice of change agents and their confidence, a strong step towards transformative leadership building. Some of them have created similar community WhatsApp groups, involving members from other collectives such as SHG, union, etc.

“So many of our women have gone through harassment at the workplace, but often, it would end up with a verbal warning by the manager. But the risk of retaliation or recurrence was always there.

Today, we see that our issues are instantly taken up by the management and also reach the concerned authorities who can help us, as we now know who is responsible for what.”

Sunny Munda, Women Worker, Mokalbari Tea Estate





F. Community Awareness and Outreach

In the past year, the Women's Safety Accelerator Fund (WSAF) significantly expanded its outreach efforts, especially in labor lines where workers reside. Utilizing innovative campaigns, WSAF aimed to educate and mobilize the community, challenging societal norms and attitudes towards gender-based violence (GBV). These campaigns reached over **320,800** community members and employed various creative strategies, such as street theatre, film screenings, sports, and arts events.

Events like the **Equality Football Match** and **Tug of Equality** not only attracted community attention but also sparked meaningful discussions on gender equality, showcasing the impact of sports and cultural activities in reshaping social norms. Additionally, significant international observances like the **International Day of Peace** and **International Youth Day** were celebrated within tea garden communities. These events provided platforms for deeper engagement on themes of peace, youth empowerment, and gender equality.



F. External Ecosystem Response

District level: In 2023, WSAF made significant progress in engaging with local ecosystem stakeholders to strengthen response mechanisms for gender-based violence (GBV) in tea estates. Govt service providers like, **legal service, police, counsellors of One Stop Centres**, et al visited tea estates to sensitize workers. Multi-stakeholder workshops organised at the district level brought in greater confidence and encouraged reaching out for institutional support. As a result, there was an increase in reporting of GBV incidents—an early sign of heightened awareness and empowerment

District level stakeholders' convention during observation days like **International Women's Day, Tea Day, Youth Day, Girl Child Day, etc** brought together district administration, local unions, associations, and Tea Estate Managements and have created massive impact, higher visibility and offered a platform for a joint action plan for addressing VAWG in tea gardens. The events encouraged women who have voiced against domestic violence, mothers of girl child, outstanding mothers who have inspired other mothers through their dedication, efforts, and good will. Women centred activities of this scale have never happened before. Through these events the women community could share their safety issues directly to the external stakeholders like the police, Child Development Project Officers, Circle officers, General Managers, Welfare Officers and IC members.

State and regional level multistakeholders' roundtable:

In 2023, five Round Table Conventions across different locations - **Coonoor, Coimbatore, Trivandrum, Darjeeling, and Kolkata** were organised. These conventions were successful in attracting significant participation from state Govt departments, tea companies, associations, unions, and NGOs. The main aim was to facilitate collaborations towards build the Public Private Platform with a shared agenda. The conventions served as powerful platforms for exchanging ideas,

insights, and best practices, fuelling the collective efforts.

Chennai roundtable was successful in setting a common agenda for govt, associations bodies, unions to be coordinated by Planning and Coordination department on women's safety in tea gardens in the region with plans to coordinate efforts and set targets against SDG 5 and cross-cutting aspects of other SDGs, which is currently under development in Tamil Nadu.

Assam Conclave prepared the framework for a signing-off agreement with the convergence of engagement by multiple departments in creating 200 model tea estates in Assam over the next three years. Additionally, the role of UN Women and UNICEF, along with certification bodies like Trustea and Rainforest Alliance (RA) in building model tea estates was laid out. The participants agreed to explore strategies for establishing a comprehensive database tailored to the specific needs of tea garden communities.

Our engagement strategy with Govt unfolded across several phases:

1. District-level stakeholders convening (2021 - 22)
2. Separate discussions with departments at the state level (2023)
3. State-level multistakeholders' convening (2023)
4. Formalizing engagement plans.

Key highlights: PPP

- 🌱 **Integration of Government Programs at Tea Estates:** Identified key government programs and schemes to integrate into WSAF tea gardens through convergent plans, aligning activities for maximum impact.
- 🌱 **Nodal Coordination Department:** A designated department in each state for interdepartmental collaboration & coordination, streamlining efforts for efficiency (social welfare/women and child development, police, legal, health, skill building, panchyati raj & rural development, etc).
- The coordinating department for each of the states for WSAF are:** Assam - Women & Child Development, West Bengal- Department of North Bengal Development, Tamil Nadu- Dept of Planning and Coordination, Kerala- Kudumbashree.
- 🌱 **Formal Agreements from producer companies/ Tea Estates:** Securing formal agreements with producer companies for Tea Estates, ensuring clear guidelines and responsibilities Tea Estate Managements.
- 🌱 **Mapping of Overlapping Programs:** Identified and acknowledged overlapping social impact activities/initiatives to ensure synergy and avoid duplication of efforts.
- 🌱 **Clear Roles and Responsibilities:** Delineated clear roles for government functionaries, Tea Estate Managements, associations, and unions to ensure accountability and effective collaboration.
- 🌱 **Implementation and Facilitation:** Outline plans for WSAF to implement activities and facilitate partnerships, including those with direct government investment.



“The program has offered the producer companies a **good market access**, as Tea Buyers in the value chain would want to buy from gardens and companies that have good practices with regards to its massive women workforce.”

Mr. Nibir Bordoloi, Head of Exports, Luxmi Tea

“The differentiator of WSAF is the **connection the program has built** with different service providers to create the safety net for women and girls in tea gardens in accessing govt services.”

Mr. Indranil Ghosh, Director (Operations & Plantations), Chamong Grou of Gardens

“WSAF is showing tangible results. In my tea gardens, I see a **reduction in child marriage**, as now the community steps in to stop such practices. The retention from the skits and awareness programs has contributed to such possible outcome.”

Mr. Ajay Jalan, Chairperson, Director at Mokalbari Kanoi Tea Estate Pvt Ltd, President, Tea Association of India (TAI)

“Women’s Safety is very important to us. Partnering with WSAF has brought a lot of changes for the women. Women now **feel a lot safer in their workspace** than their homes.”

Mr. Saneer Gurung, Head- HR & Administration, McLeod Russell India Limited

Assessing workers’ voice through technology

Introducing digital tool by expert company, **Diginex**, to amplify worker voices and enhance the detection of Gender-Based Violence and Harassment (GBVH) within tea supply chains was piloted in **7 tea estates** **Estates in Assam and West Bengal**. This survey engaged approximately 10% of the total workforce, garnering insights from **569 workers**. The tool allowed offline survey through the mobile application, additionally offering the liberty to take surveys on their own in a personal safe space through the **QR code** generated for the Tea Estate, which was made readily available as pastings in all places of mass gathering within the tea estates, maintaining workers anonymity throughout.

Best Practices

Celebrating Maasika Mahotsav

Maasika Mahotsav was an inspiring event of Menstruators in Darjeeling celebrated from **21st May – 28th May**, the week of International Tea Day. A week-long event was organized at various Tea Estates of Darjeeling by IP Sakshi in collaboration with **PadSquad** with an objective to end silence on Menstruation. This was a **‘Plastic-Free’** Event with many activities such as throwing the ball, thumbprint and hitting the target mainly focusing on ending taboos related to periods. Throw the ring activity gave a message to the audience about the correct period dates. Matching the column and label the picture helped the player get a better understanding about Menstruation.

The Tea workers and Change Agents of **5** Tea Estates celebrated this event following up with the respective schools of these Tea Estates.

To enable more synergistic and sustained progress on addressing menstruation-related needs, an effort was undertaken by the team to distribute menstruation cups for those who were willing to use them. The introduction of Maasika Mahotsav with the help of an illustration of the uterus made some of the workers uncomfortable while others talked about it more candidly. Moving to the schools of the Tea Estates, the team introduced alternative products which could be used during menstruation, the taboos related to periods and replaceable products in place of pads were acknowledged respectively. Overall, Maasika Mahotsav was a successful event with an outreach of more than 1500 participants.





Issuance of Identity Cards



Management signing ID cards for Change Agents and Advocates (CAA's)



ID cards ready for distribution among CAA's



Change Agents and Advocates happily posing after receiving their Identity Cards

“Many tea community members **lack the necessary documents** due to illiteracy and other challenges, hindering their eligibility for various schemes and programs. Thanks to the WSAF Program, women are now **empowered to seek agency and independence** in exercising their economic rights.”

Mina Soren, Union Representative, Assam Tea Tribes Women Association (ATTWA)

Mainstream Discourse Integration:

Through strategic efforts, WSAF has successfully brought covert topics surrounding women's safety within the tea industry into the forefront of mainstream discussions. By shedding light on crucial issues like the provision of toilets for women's safety, reproductive health rights, and mental health, we've fundamentally reshaped industry discourse to address previously overlooked aspects.



Breaking the Glass Ceiling Dialogue:



Initiating a dialogue on addressing breaking the glass ceiling in the tea industry, WSAF engaged industry leaders to confront the challenge of minimal female representation in decision-making roles, currently standing at less than 1%. This initiative allowed industry leaders to initiate a discussion on the pressing need of acknowledging and creating opportunities for women to increase their representation, leadership and voice in the industry. Leaders aimed to dispel the stereotype that women can't be estate managers, encouraging more young women

to join the tea industry. Action points included connecting with academia, boosting the tea sector's visibility among professionals, and improving HR communication. Empowering women through education, skills, and inclusive policies can enhance both individual careers and industry equity. **Guest speakers** from **Tata Steel** and **Gainwell Commosales** offered cross-sector insights. Suggestions included tying MD/CEO evaluations to gender equality, providing suitable workplace infrastructure, regular feedback, and embracing mistakes for growth.

Return on Investment (ROI) Study:

Securing approval and active involvement from industry leaders, the ROI study on women's safety serves as a cornerstone for developing Gender Transformational Business Models not only within the tea industry but also across broader sectors. The study's insights promise significant implications for advancing gender equity in business practices.



Broadened Partnerships:

By forging innovative government partnerships and commitment to investment models aimed at generating further capital for worker well-being in tea gardens, WSAF laid a robust foundation for sustainable progress. Additionally, collaborations with certification bodies like TRUSTEA, Rainforest Alliance, and UN Women, coupled with the formulation of Multistakeholder Convergence Plans, position us strategically to tackle complex gender-related social sustainability issues across multiple states in WSAF 2.0.



SOP Adoption: With regard to the intervention area Codify and Regulate, IPs worked with the tea estate management to establish SOP for addressing violence against women and girls (VAWG) and to ensure women's safety in 50 tea estates of Assam and 45 estates of West Bengal. All tea estates have formally accepted and committed to adopt the SOP by signing a copy of the same with their garden insignia.



Notification letter on IC formation:

In line with progressive practices observed in some tea estate managements, formal steps have been taken to establish the IC. A notification has been issued by management, affirming the formation of the IC in compliance with the POSH Act. The letter includes the names of IC members, including the presiding officer and external member, and stipulates a three-year term for the committee. It mandates that members raise awareness on the issue of sexual harassment and requires the presiding officer to convene meetings every three months, with minutes of these meetings to be recorded and shared with management.



Safety Assessment Report:



The management has been supportive while accepting the safety assessment report after it was shared with them. Major issues that came from the safety assessment with women workers have been around the lack of toilets in the challan areas and streetlights in line areas. IPs have suggested the management to leverage available schemes like **Street Light National Programme** and **Ujala from the Panchayat**. The management

of all the tea estates with whom the safety assessment report has been shared have provided IPs with positive affirmation on the tasks. The tasks range from construction of **9 toilets** in the challan areas in collaboration with the Panchayat for streetlights installation. The management has further assured that they will construct the roads and drainage system and put-up signboards in and around the estate.

Hiring of Para Legal Volunteers:



A significant outcome of our WSAF interventions is the hiring of **Para Legal Volunteers** from tea estate communities by District Legal Service Authorities. This in the long run would empowers local communities by providing access to legal assistance and support, bridging gaps and promoting awareness, advocacy, and empowerment.

Newsletters:



Since January 2023, IPs have launched the WSAF newsletter, releasing **eleven editions** by December 2023. This initiative aimed to effectively communicate the groundwork, ongoing efforts, and transformative changes catalysed within the Tea Estates (TEs) through the program. It served as a vital communication tool, reaching both internal and external stakeholders, including district-level government functionaries, to spotlight the progress and impact achieved within the tea industry.

Wall Graffiti:



Engaging Communities: We enhanced visibility and community engagement by painting thematic murals on tea estate walls, fostering pride and ownership among workers and youth.

Capacity Building and Learning:



We organized a 2-day writeshop for all our Implementing Partners. These sessions aimed to brainstorm strategies for addressing midline findings and focused on thematic capacity building (understanding trafficking linked to VAW, nuances of sexual harassment at workplaces, etc). We emphasized strengthening the institutional character of change agents empowered by WSAF

intervention. Through a core group-driven approach and the use of data, audio visuals, and informative messages, we engaged workers and management to enhance retention and outreach. The workshops resulted in the development of evidence-based review mechanisms to strengthen our interventions.



Inception Workshop:

In the third year of WSAF implementation, we began laying the groundwork in the new tea estates by organizing inception workshops to strengthen engagement with the estate stakeholders. This approach greatly increased engagement with both estate management and the community, offering valuable insights during producer readiness assessments.

Highlights: 16 Days of Activism against VAW

The 16 Days of campaign to end violence against women from **November 25 to December 10**, unfolded across **321 tea estates** in Assam, West Bengal, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu. Activities engaged management, workers & communities, providing resources on legal rights and safety, promoting gender equality, and building support networks. In West Bengal, 78 tea gardens saw vibrant activities like pledge ceremonies and awareness events, fostering a more respectful treatment of women. In Assam,

street theatre and rallies reached 197 tea gardens and beyond, with strong community participation and media coverage. In South India, over **11,510** individuals participated in rallies, training, and awareness programs, signalling a journey towards safer and more inclusive environments. These efforts showcased a commitment to combating gender-based violence and empowering women, driving societal change within tea garden communities and beyond.

#OrangetheWorld

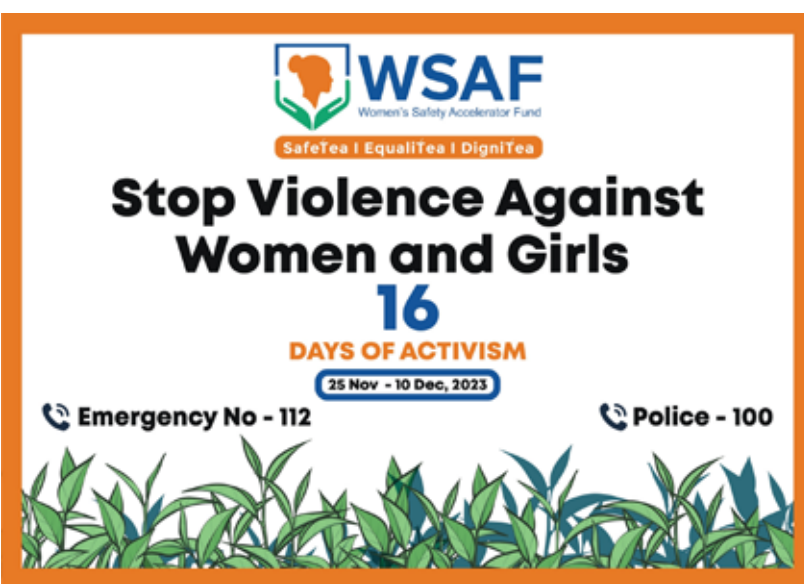
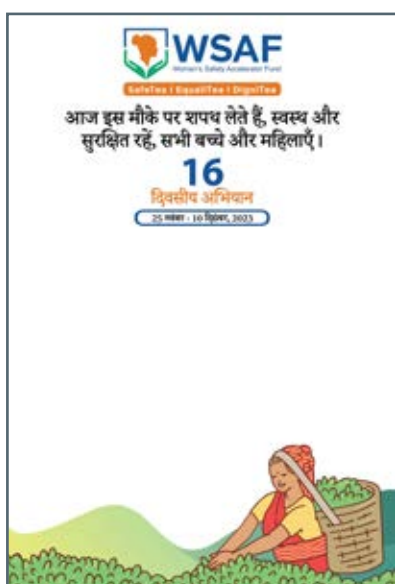
“Our community thinks that football is a boy’s game and girls should not play it. I am still determined to **let my daughter pursue her dream of playing football** and one day becoming a known footballer.”

Pratima, Tea Estate Worker and Change Agent, Amgoorie Tea Estate.



IEC Creatives- 16 Days Of Activism

1. Dangers on Activism Week, Creating Safe Tea Estates, Ending Child Marriage
2. Pledge Board
3. Helpline Stickers



Peek into 16 Days of Activism





Joint Action Plan: WSAF x TRUSTEA



Trustea, in a groundbreaking collaboration with WSAF, is set to embark on a transformative journey aimed at tackling the pervasive issue of sexual harassment in workplaces. Through a strategic deep dive, the partnership is committed to identifying the core barriers and devising effective strategies to overcome them.

This initiative will focus on:

Enhancing the Code on gender, specifically targeting issues related to Gender-Based Violence (GBV).



By adopting a SMART approach to leverage our existing implementation partnerships, we aim to not only strengthen but revolutionize our verification protocols.



This involves gaining critical insights and implementing necessary corrective actions concerning gender and GBV, ensuring a safer and more equitable work environment for all.





“ The women workers form the backbone of the Indian tea industry, working in a tough and challenging environment. The trustea program looks at sustainability in a holistic way, **as a symbiosis of environment, safety and livelihood.** It is

paramount that women workers are able to carry out their work and live a fulfilling life free from harassment, discrimination as well as domestic violence. Today, about 70% of tea in India is trustea verified and the WSAF program covers more than 300 tea gardens. This is the context in which trustea entered into a collaborative understanding with WSAF. By sharing our learning, experiences and joint initiatives, we are working to bring more depth to the efforts in delivering a safe and empowered life for the women tea workers. One recent example is the joint deep dive conducted to probe the status of women’s safety in the tea gardens and we are jointly looking at ways to redress the adverse findings. There are also efforts to increase the participation of women in field supervision and leadership roles. IDH and funders of the program deserve appreciation for the continued support to the program. We look forward to continue our collaboration to ensure a deep and long lasting impact towards betterment of the lives of the women tea workers.”

Rajesh Bhuyan, Director, TRUSTEA



Flowchart

I. JAP Initiation-Tea Estate Exploration

An in-depth exploration in six tea estates to thoroughly examine the implementation and effectiveness of the Prevention of Sexual Harassment (POSH) Act.

II. Planning Phase- Assess & Address

Identifying and addressing the barriers that prevent the reporting of cases of sexual harassment and corrective actions to address them.

III. Capacity Development

Engaging the Implementing Partners of WSAF and Trustea collectively to provide capacity-building support to management on POSH.

IV. Testing of Indicators

Strengthening the verification protocols on gender, women's safety and GBV by developing a comprehensive checklist of indicators for Trustea auditors to effectively investigate, understand, and acknowledge arising issues.

V. Content Creation and Finalization

Co-creating audio-visual messages to facilitate communication at the local level (workers), ensuring effective dissemination of information regarding women's safety by trustea implementation partners.

VI. Formalize Internal Committees

Strengthening the verification protocols on gender, women's safety and GBV by developing a comprehensive checklist of indicators for Trustea auditors to effectively investigate, understand, and acknowledge arising issues.






VII. Scoping-STGs

Scoping women's safety issues within small tea growers' segment.



VIII. Planning way forward for continued collaboration.

Progress Towards GWSF Outcomes




Locally owned solutions for women's safety have been identified through a structured approach:

-  **7** Public Private Platforms (PPP) has been established through round table and conventions to foster sustained dialogue and cooperation in eradicating Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG), with continuous engagement with government authorities at various levels to create an enabling environment.
-  The local ecosystem of **31** districts and **4** states has been meticulously mapped to identify key stakeholders and service providers.
-  **11728** Change Agents and program participants have been equipped with information on available care and protection mechanisms.
-  **650** First Responders (FIPs) have been identified and trained to connect survivors with appropriate service providers or Internal Committees (ICs), providing crucial emergency support.
-  **122** Women Cells have been established or are under creation in Tea Estates (TEs), with all members trained on safety aspects, laws, and available services for women and girls facing violence.






Laws and policies have been effectively implemented:

-  **300+** Internal Committees have been formed or re-structured in compliance with the POSH Act 2013, with members trained in their roles and responsibilities.
-  Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) defining standardized response mechanisms have been introduced and discussed with Management for adoption, adopted by **180+** Tea Estates.

Ensuring safety and economic viability of spaces:

-  **92749** Women leaders have been trained to conduct Safety Assessments in their respective estates to identify safety needs.
-  **300+** Safety walks have been conducted to identify safe and unsafe zones within the workplace and other common areas within the TE.
-  Recommendations from safety assessments have been presented to Management for implementation, addressing issues like poor lighting and inadequate infrastructure in **300+** tea estates.

Addressing social norms, attitudes, and behaviours:

-  Awareness sessions conducted at challans and workplaces have been effective in reaching **356501+** workers simultaneously
-  Involvement of **5175** Change Agents in awareness programs has made a significant impact.
-  Increased awareness among **83%** women in tea estates regarding violence against women and girls.
-  Various tools including street plays and interactive activities have encouraged women to share their experiences of violence and recognize different forms of violence against women.
-  A noticeable increase in reported cases of VAWG indicates growing confidence, support, and access for women and girls, where **79%** women are aware of methods to file a complaint, and **74%** management is confident in addressing VAW.
-  These incremental impacts contribute to the larger goal of the program aimed at achieving lasting change.



PART B

Governance



Steering Committee

In 2023, the Women's Safety Accelerator Fund (WSAF) Steering Committee remained steadfast with representation from **Twinings, Taylors of Harrogate, Ethical Tea Partnership (ETP), Unilever, Tesco and IDH**. Key decisions and activities undertaken by the SteerCo. during the year included:



First Quarter

First Quarter Finalizing the Midline Evaluation Report with ETP and Unilever Consultation and feedback on WSAF 2.0. The evaluation and approval of implementation plans by implementing partners (IPs) Finalizing the TOR for the Return-on-Investment Study.



Second Quarter

Second Quarter Exploring integration with PCEP Program with ETP and Taylors Consultation and feedback on WSAF 2.0. Finalizing the instrument and initiating the Return-on-Investment Study with Tea Estates.



Third Quarter

Third Quarter Exploring integration with PCEP, followed by a discussion to include all 20 PCEP gardens in the WSAF 1.0., with ETP and Taylors Consultation and feedback on WSAF 2.0. and deep-dive approaches received from few SteerCo Partners.

The working group for Return-on-Investment Study (having representation from Unilever, ETP, IDH -HQ) has remained engaged towards finalizing the ROI inception report. The Inception Report has been shared by the Council for Social Development Team, leading the ROI study, with the WSAF Secretariat and working group.



Last Quarter

In the last quarter, we focused on gathering suggestions for the WSAF 2.0 proposal by meeting individually with Steering Committee members.

Approval on commissioning an Endline Evaluation to gauge the program impact.

Program Visits and Visibility



Ms. Carla Hilhorst, Chief R & D Officer, Nutrition, Unilever & Mr. Marcelo Scarcelli, Chief Procurement Officer, Nutrition, and Unilever along with a team of 8 others visited Mokalbari Tea Estate.



The Women Leaders can be seen performing a Skit.



Mr. Olav Kristian Sildan, CEO Twinings and Ovaltine, visit to Khowang and Amgoorie Tea Estates.



Mr. Reginaldo Ecclissato, Chief, Business Operations and Supply chain officer, Unilever visit to Mokalbari Tea Estate.



WSAF receiving the ICC Social Impact Award



WSAF and IDH Senior Leadership at ETP Roundtable

Financial Statement 2023

Budget Head		Cost (EURO)
WSAF 1.1	Fund Management	89,391
WSAF 1.2	Communications	5,936
WSAF 1.3	Monitoring & Evaluation	18,227
WSAF 1.4	Technical Services	-
WSAF 1.5	Implementation	825,540
WSAF 1.6	Advisory Cost	43,374
WSAF 1.7	IP Training & Development	5,304
WSAF 1.8	Public Private Platform	1,098
Total*		988,870

*Please note that the total figure mentioned here is unaudited.

Our strategic partners and funders have been instrumental in providing resources and guiding us with strategies for engaging with tea companies. They have paved the way for engagement at the tea estate level, reflecting on continuous feedback and suggestions. Additionally, they have facilitated connections with national and global dialogues within the tea industry. The visits of partners to WSAF and their showcasing of issues and learnings to larger platforms have played a crucial role in encouraging replications and cross-learning among other value chains.





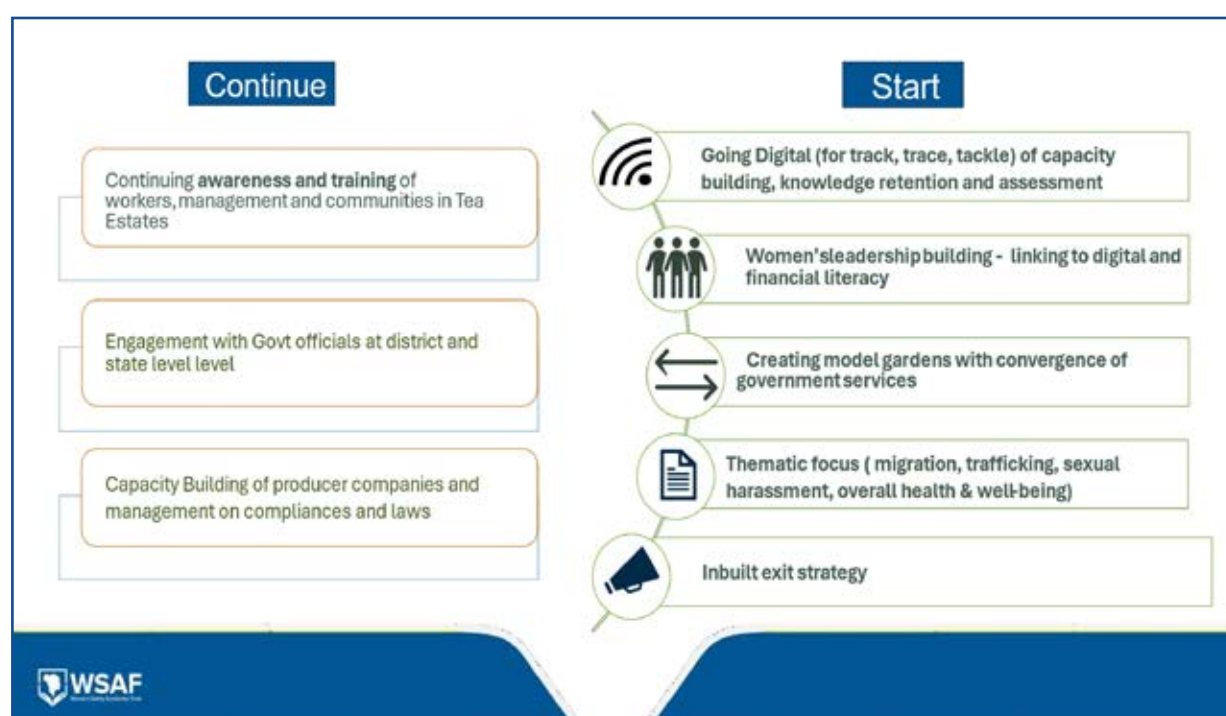
PART C

WSAF Outlook 2024



Transitioning from WSAF 1.0 to 2.0

Moving from WSAF 1.0 to WSAF 2.0 in 2024 means deepening our engagement in the tea estates providing sustained support to local-level redressal mechanisms for women's safety, all while fostering convergence with government and other significant initiatives. WSAF 1.0 ended in March 2024, and WSAF 2.0 starts in May 2024, building on what we learned before. The new phase would focus on working in close collaboration with Government departments building capacity on prevention and strengthening redressal mechanisms of GBV in tea gardens .



As we herald the transition from WSAF 1.0 to WSAF 2.0, a visionary shift is on the horizon, embracing co-investment with the government to further empower the women of Assam's tea gardens. With WSAF 1.0 concluding in March 2024 upon the completion of an endline study, the inception of WSAF 2.0 is eagerly anticipated in May 2024, promising not only a continuation but an enhancement of the groundwork laid by its predecessor. This evolution retains the core framework, TOC outcomes, and output areas, while indicators undergo a meticulous review in light of the endline findings, ensuring that our strategies are as impactful as possible.

WSAF 2.0 will focus is on empowering women workers in tea gardens by bolstering their confidence, self-esteem, and access to government services, thereby addressing their economic and livelihood needs. The strategy includes enhancing their visibility and participation in value chains, equipping them with the skills and technologies to adapt to industry trends, and ensuring special attention to vulnerable groups through strategic engagement with relevant government departments.

Digitalization will play a key role in tracking, tracing, and tackling challenges, backed



by a centralized data system, mobile apps, and multimedia approaches to raise large-scale awareness. Moreover, WSAF 2.0 aims to introduce **annual assessment indicators** for each participating tea garden, expand partnerships, and collaborate extensively with UN agencies, research institutions, and more, all while maintaining a three-pronged approach to grievance redressal and initiating engagement with Bought Leaf Factories and Small Tea Growers, contingent on resource availability.

A landmark collaboration with Mission Shakti, Department of Women and Child Development, Assam and Assam State Rural livelihoods Mission (ASRLM) to champion this

phase, aiming to transform tea gardens into **model entities** through a multi-departmental convergence. This initiative seeks to address gender-based violence and discrimination, emphasizing health & well-being, and economic empowerment, among other focal areas. The proposed pilot in five districts for the first year, with gradual expansion, offers a commitment to creating sustainable, transformative impacts in the tea gardens of Assam, aligning with broader SDG goals.

This holistic approach represents a significant advancement in our ongoing efforts to empower the women of Assam's tea gardens, holding the promise of a more prosperous and equitable future.

Get involved

Join us in creating
safe and empowering
workspaces
for women in the tea
sector.

For details, contact:

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