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Twinings announces increased investment to improve the lives of women and girls in Assam

Twinings announces a further five years of funding for its partnership with UNICEF, with the aim of enhancing the lives of children and women living on tea estates in Assam, in North East India. The award winning partnership, which started in 2010, has already ensured that 34,000 young women living on tea estates have been reached with interventions centred on nutrition, empowerment and child protection. Now, thanks to Twinings' renewed funding commitment, the partnership is entering its third phase.

The programmes funded through the partnership are helping meet a real need within tea communities. Approximately 17 per cent of Assam's population are tea workers, who are among the most marginalised groups in the state, with poor development indicators. Data shows that almost half of women and girls in tea gardens in Assam are stunted and 96.7 per cent are anaemic, leading to high maternal mortality, under-nutrition and low learning levels. Early marriage is common, as is poor education and school drop-outs. This leaves children vulnerable to exploitation, trafficking and abuse.

This new phase of the partnership aims to improve the lives of the most vulnerable women, adolescents and children living in 63 tea gardens in Assam, which have a total population of 350,000. The programme will promote a protective environment in which adolescent girls and boys are encouraged to stay in school and ensure that women and children have access to quality health services and social protection schemes. This involves working with tea producers and the local government to build the capacity of healthcare staff and child marriage prohibition officers; promote kitchen gardens; improve sanitation and hygiene practices; provide life skills education for adolescent girls; and support community-level organisations.

Advocacy with local government remains a key element of the partnership's work in order to influence policy reform to improve protection and basic services at state and national level. This is in line with Twinings' approach to make all of its interventions both scalable and sustainable for long-term change.

Mike Penrose, Executive Director, UNICEF UK said: *"Children growing up in Assam's highly marginalised rural tea communities, face huge problems. They are vulnerable to exploitation, trafficking and abuse, often leave school early and suffer from poor health. With the support of partners like Twinings, we have been making a vital difference to the lives of these children over the last eight years, and increasing their chances of growing up to be happy, healthy and safe. We have improved the child protection systems that protect them, empowered them to stand up for their rights and ensured that they have better access to quality healthcare. By renewing its support for UNICEF's work in Assam for a further five years, Twinings has once again proven that it is determined to play its part in helping solve the problems faced by tea communities."*

This intervention is just one of many under Twinings' wider 'Sourced with Care' programme, which was created with the goal of building healthier, more empowered and sustainable tea communities throughout its supply chain. Twinings pushed beyond the established ways of working which simply ensured that tea gardens had the required certification and met basic standards, instead choosing to engage directly with communities to address critical issues.



Assam, in India's North East region, contributes more than 51 per cent of the country's tea production. Despite representing around 17 per cent of Assam's total population of 32 million, those living in tea communities have faced deprivation and social exclusion for generations. Assam remains a key sourcing region for Twinings and therefore is an important focus for its Sourced with Care programme.

Bob Tavener, CEO, Twinings said: *"Our renewed partnership with UNICEF builds on the successes of the past eight years and represents an even more ambitious programme to improve the standard of living of tea workers, and that of their families, through access to vital basic services such as quality healthcare. It includes advocacy with both state and national government, that should lead to long-term, tangible change for the communities living and working in the region, and is an important part of driving positive change for the communities from which we source around the world."*

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Notes to editors:

- More information on Twinings Sourced with Care programme can be found here: www.sourcedwithcare.com
- The full Social Impact Report can be accessed here: <https://www.sourcedwithcare.com/media/1149/sourced-with-care-twinings-social-impact-report-2016.pdf>
- Full objectives for Phase III of the partnership with UNICEF include:
 - ❖ 90 per cent of women will have access to and benefit from quality health services in tea garden communities.
 - ❖ 70 per cent of children aged 6-23 months eat healthier, more nutritious meals, 20 per cent of children suffering from severe acute malnutrition receive treatment and 80 per cent of adolescent girls aged 10-19 receive weekly IFA supplements.
 - ❖ By 2022, adolescent girls and boys have the knowledge, skills and support to take action to protect themselves from violence, exploitation and abuse, and to make their communities safer.
 - ❖ By 2022, parents and community members support adolescents in seeking information, accessing services and encouraging decision-making by playing an active role in creating a protective and supportive environment to protect adolescents from violence, exploitation and abuse, including child marriage.
 - ❖ Government workers and tea garden management have the knowledge and skills to implement child protection related schemes and services at the tea garden level.

About Twinings

At Twinings, we like to talk about tea. That's because, for us, it's the most exciting thing in the world. With a host of experienced Master Blenders and flavour experts, we pride ourselves on challenging the status quo of tea, ensuring that new blends and infusions continue to engage the senses and delight new generations of tea lovers. With a history dating back to 1706, quality tea has always been at the heart of what we do.

Renowned for creating vibrant and aromatic blends that are loved by all, from Earl Grey and English Breakfast to Chai Lattes and super fruity infusions, at Twinings we know the details that matter most. Our expert blenders taste more than 3,000 cups of tea every week. Every cup of Twinings tea is designed to deliver a unique multi-sensorial experience so that you enjoy drinking-in all that your day has to offer.



About Unicef

Unicef is the world's leading organisation for children, promoting the rights and wellbeing of every child, in everything we do. Together with our partners, we work in 190 countries and territories to translate that commitment into practical action, focusing special effort on reaching the most vulnerable and excluded children, to the benefit of all children, everywhere. Unicef UK raises funds to protect children in danger, transform their lives and build a safer world for tomorrow's children. As a registered charity we raise funds through donations from individuals, organisations and companies and we lobby and campaign to keep children safe. Unicef UK also runs programmes in schools, hospitals and with local authorities in the UK. For more information please visit unicef.org.uk