

## **The CEO Water Mandate- COP Water Report**

Finlay (International) Limited owns tea gardens in Bangladesh where the plantation workers employed are of a particular community. Tea gardens in this part of the world were established about 150 years ago by the British businessmen. The British planters brought workers from Bihar and Orissa states of India to the tea plantations in Assam and Bengal. They are a community unique in their culture and social practices. Today almost all the tea garden workers are of this particular ethnic origin.

During the early days of tea plantation the owners had to do a lot of groundwork to clear dense forests and prepare lands for tea plantation. This necessitated full time presence of the workers in the plantations. Therefore, they were given land and housing in the tea estates by their employers. Finlay International Limited inherited the legacy.

Finlay (International) Limited has a population of 78000 in their 22 tea estates, which includes workers and their dependents. Out of this there are 48000 able hands who can work. The company has 16000 registered workers and 14000 casual workers who are engaged during the tea season.

The workers live in cluster of labor lines in each tea estate. They have the culture of living together with all their family members, including their parents who live as dependent of the workers. The houses have 2 rooms and an open space in front of the house.

Since mid 1980s the company has taken up extensive program to improve the living condition of the workers in the tea gardens. In order to ensure supplying clean drinking water to the workers, tube wells were sunk in addition to the “ring wells” for every 30 households in the locality. Recently a program has been taken in hand to supply tube wells for every 10 households. The wells for drinking water are marked in blue color to identify them for drinking purpose. There are also “ring wells” nearby for washing purpose, which are marked in red color. Those water bodies which are unsafe for drinking and washing purposes are marked off as such and sealed. This arrangement has greatly benefited the population of the tea gardens to get safe water on a regular basis, thus having a far reaching effect on their livelihood.

As a matter of custom tea garden labors prefer not to use latrines; they do not like to go to the same latrine which their parents use. The company has taken up motivation program to persuade the workers to use latrines impressing upon them the benefit of doing so from health and hygiene point of view. This is slowly yielding result. The company is constructing new latrines in each labor quarter on a phase wise basis and for this purpose more than 800 latrines are being constructed every year with a target to providing latrines to 12000 houses by 2015.

The company has also taken up a program to excavate lands in the tea estates to build reservoirs in order to catch water in rainy season for use in the dry season for irrigation purpose. This will greatly augment the water supply for irrigation of young and mature tea sections in order to increase crop and decrease mortality rate of young teas due to water stress during drought.

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