




THE
STARBUCKS
FOUNDATION

THE POWER OF PARTNERSHIP

**Commemorating 20 years of
sustainable programming in India**





**Over 20 years,
The Starbucks Foundation,
Mercy Corps, and local
organizations worked
together to improve
the lives and living
standards in tea-growing
communities across India
now—and for the future.**

What you'll learn from this report:

- 1** How building resilience starts with ensuring everyone in a community has a way to shape the decisions and solutions that affect their lives.
- 2** How The Starbucks Foundation and Mercy Corps partnered to quickly provide relief to communities in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 3** How connecting people to resources, skills, and new opportunities builds long-term community strength and supports well being among women and girls.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE, TOGETHER

A multi-level partnership with tea communities at the center.

India is the second-largest producer of tea in the world.* Three million people are employed on over 900 tea estates. Tea-growing communities face unique challenges in accessing resources and services. Low literacy rates, geographic isolation, lack of basic access to clean water, and susceptibility to disasters all threaten community development.

The Starbucks Foundation and Mercy Corps launched an innovative partnership in 2003 to address the needs of tea growing regions in India. This multi-level partnership was powered by the belief that a better world is possible.

CHAI (Community Health and Advancement Initiative) was launched in Darjeeling hills in West Bengal, India. The program aimed to improve the life and standards of the communities living on tea estates by helping people triumph over adversity and build stronger communities from within.

CHAI's priority areas in building community resilience:

- › Women's and girls' leadership including education, safety, and training
- › Creating economic opportunities through training young people
- › Expanding access to health services as well as clean water and sanitation (WASH)

Now, after 20 years, this initiative is transitioning to long-term community ownership, and we see the impact spanning generations. In this report, you will hear from the voices on the ground. Voices like Madhuri and Jyotshna, who completed vocational programs sponsored by CHAI and have been running their own successful businesses for over a decade.

Working together, The Starbucks Foundation and Mercy Corps turned breakthrough ideas into effective actions, helping change lives and build stronger, more resilient communities for tomorrow.

Here are their stories.



SECTION 1

Training and equipping local communities

**Improving standards of living starts
with the voices on the ground.**

CHAI joined forces with local partners, tea owners, government officials and community action groups to democratically identify common problems through a community mobilization process. The stories in the next few pages highlight some of the results of this research and the impact of the programming developed. From leadership development to creating sustainable economic opportunities, we worked together to create meaningful change from within.

LOCAL LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT



Mira Koya
President of Dhoedaam
Village panchayat

Gender inequality remains present in many dimensions of life worldwide. This discrepancy leads to women being vastly underrepresented in decision-making positions in government. Mira set out to change this.

Starting her leadership journey at a CHAI-sponsored community council, Mira worked over the years to grow the leadership opportunities for women in her community. She is committed to creating a brighter future for those around her.

Mira is now the president of Dhoedaam Village panchayat (local governing body) in the Dhoedaam tea estate (district of Assam).

“The [CHAI] team encouraged me and other female members...We were taught about the basics of community development as well as about the concepts of local self-governance, and that is what I fundamentally do every single day in my current role.”

– Mira Koya

SECTION 1 Training and equipping local communities

BRINGING LOCAL PARTNERS TOGETHER

Tea-growing communities in India are facing unique challenges. These challenges are complex and include: low literacy rates, geographical isolation, and lack of basic access to water and sanitation.

CHAI sponsored the creation of a consortium, bringing together community members, local stakeholders, and partners from the Indian tea industry. Infrastructure improvements were designed and implemented based upon local knowledge. Community members and partner staff were trained on key community mobilization processes and program management functions (including finance, operations, and HR management).

This collaboration ignited transformation across tea-growing communities—a change that has rippled through generations and sustainably transformed communities.



CREATING SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

Unemployment has damaging effects on young people, their communities, and the local economy. Sustainable and inclusive economic growth depends on the involvement of young people in local communities.

Through market-focused vocational skill building and apprenticeships, CHAI created economic opportunities for young people. New and alternative livelihood opportunities were fostered in tea estate communities—and the broadened expertise made a lasting impact. The local population could now enjoy the skills from newly trained tailors, beauticians, hospitality managers, carpenters, and electricians.

IMPACT:



The Starbucks Foundation and Mercy Corps partnership supported the start up of over **3,000** small businesses on tea estates, providing **2,826** loans.

LOCAL VOICES



Arfan Hussain
Director of SEWA

Across the globe, Mercy Corps works directly with communities to cope with and adapt to today's toughest challenges, while developing shared solutions to thrive into the future. Connecting our broad experience and resources to local knowledge is how we create—and sustain—transformational change.

Arfan Hussain has partnered closely with CHAI as the director of SEWA, an international nonprofit organization serving tea estate communities.

“CHAI has helped to identify and promote viable micro- and small-scale enterprises that offer employment and income generation opportunities to thousands of unemployed and underemployed people in tea and periphery communities in Assam...The interventions focused on improving people's well-being and giving them the chance to lift themselves out of hunger and poverty.”

– Arfan Hussain

LOCAL VOICES



Roshan Rai
Executive Director of
DLRP

Building a stronger tomorrow begins with identifying the changemakers in each community. Then we partner with governments, businesses, and civil society to participate in creating meaningful change.

The result of this long-term commitment is meaningful, generational change by and for communities.

“If today we are seeing the tea communities thriving and young people engaging in diverse economic and social activities, credit has to be given to the CHAI project which laid a strong foundation for the change two decades ago.”

– Roshan Rai



SECTION 2

Long-term improvement in health and well-being

**Building healthy communities
and supporting people
affected by disaster.**

Strengthening community resilience is important for sustainable change. This starts by supporting changes from within. Rather than addressing community problems through single-issue programs, CHAI looked for the connections between people and systems and worked towards integrated solutions.

IMPROVING THE HEALTH STANDARDS IN TEA-GROWING COMMUNITIES

Poor health negatively affects all aspects of society, in particular women and children. In the tea communities located in the remote Darjeeling hills, health services were known to be scarce.

CHAI addressed a spectrum of health issues, from preventative medicine and day-to-day care, to urgent medical care. Access to medical care was expanded by linking rural facilities with urban centers. The program also trained individuals from the community to become community health workers. These community health workers not only provided basic healthcare, but also facilitated community health camps and vaccination awareness campaigns.

“CHAI has improved the lives of thousands of community members in some of the remote areas by providing them access to safe drinking water, improved sanitation and hygiene facilities.”

– Roshan Rai



SECTION 2
Long-term improvement
in health and well-being



STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES AFFECTED BY DISASTER

In early 2020, a new kind of disaster was spreading throughout tea communities in India. COVID-19 affected all community members, ushering unprecedented loss.

When this new challenge arose, team members were positioned to provide critical support. CHAI leveraged partnerships to shape a pandemic response that helped communities stay healthy and stop the spread of COVID-19.

To prevent the spread of misinformation, loudspeakers were installed on top of vehicles to carry preventative measures messages in the local language. Hygiene kits were distributed and vaccination awareness campaigns were created to reach even the most remote villages.

The COVID-19 response in tea communities reached more than 117,000 people across 30 tea estates. The program also helped communities build back their livelihoods and increase resilience so they are more prepared for future challenges.

IMPACT:



COVID-19 prevention campaigns reached more than **117,000** people across **30** tea and coffee estates.

SUPPORTING GOOD HYGIENE AND SANITATION PRACTICES WITHIN COMMUNITIES

Women and girls suffer the most when water is scarce or difficult to reach. They are often responsible for water collection and may be required to dedicate a lot of their time to it. This can lead to increased school dropouts and the risk of sexual and gender-based violence.

CHAI sponsored a wide range of WASH programs, ranging from infrastructure construction to education campaigns. Tea estate workers and tea estate owners donated labor and materials. School children taught their families good hygiene habits.

The ripple effects on tea communities were wide-ranging: women and girls were more likely to attend work and school.

IMPACT:



56 community WASH projects implemented improving access to safe drinking water.



Decrease in the incidence of waterborne diseases among tea communities by **75%**.

SECTION 2

Long-term improvement
in health and well-being



OVERCOMING STIGMA

Traditional views surrounding menstruation are often barriers to opportunity. Lack of information and basic facilities can have a negative impact on a woman's health as well as her education and participation within the community.

CHAI worked with local partners to improve menstrual health of the women and girls from tea estate communities through an integrated approach. This included the construction and/or refurbishment of handwashing stations and latrines as well as the sponsoring of menstrual hygiene awareness campaigns in local schools.

These initiatives had a lasting impact: women and girls were more likely to be engaged in their communities. Compared to previous years, the percentage of schoolgirls' absenteeism has fallen by 13%.

**Menstrual health is
a human right.**



SECTION 3

Sustaining change by investing in the future

Making a positive impact on the lives of women, their families, and their communities.

With the growing population in tea estate communities, there is a high demand for other livelihood opportunities. CHAI collaborated with local stakeholders to create and support alternative sources of education and employment as well as provide support to local businesses. The result was a transformational change—young people have increased access to economic opportunities and local businesses have grown over the long-term.

BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

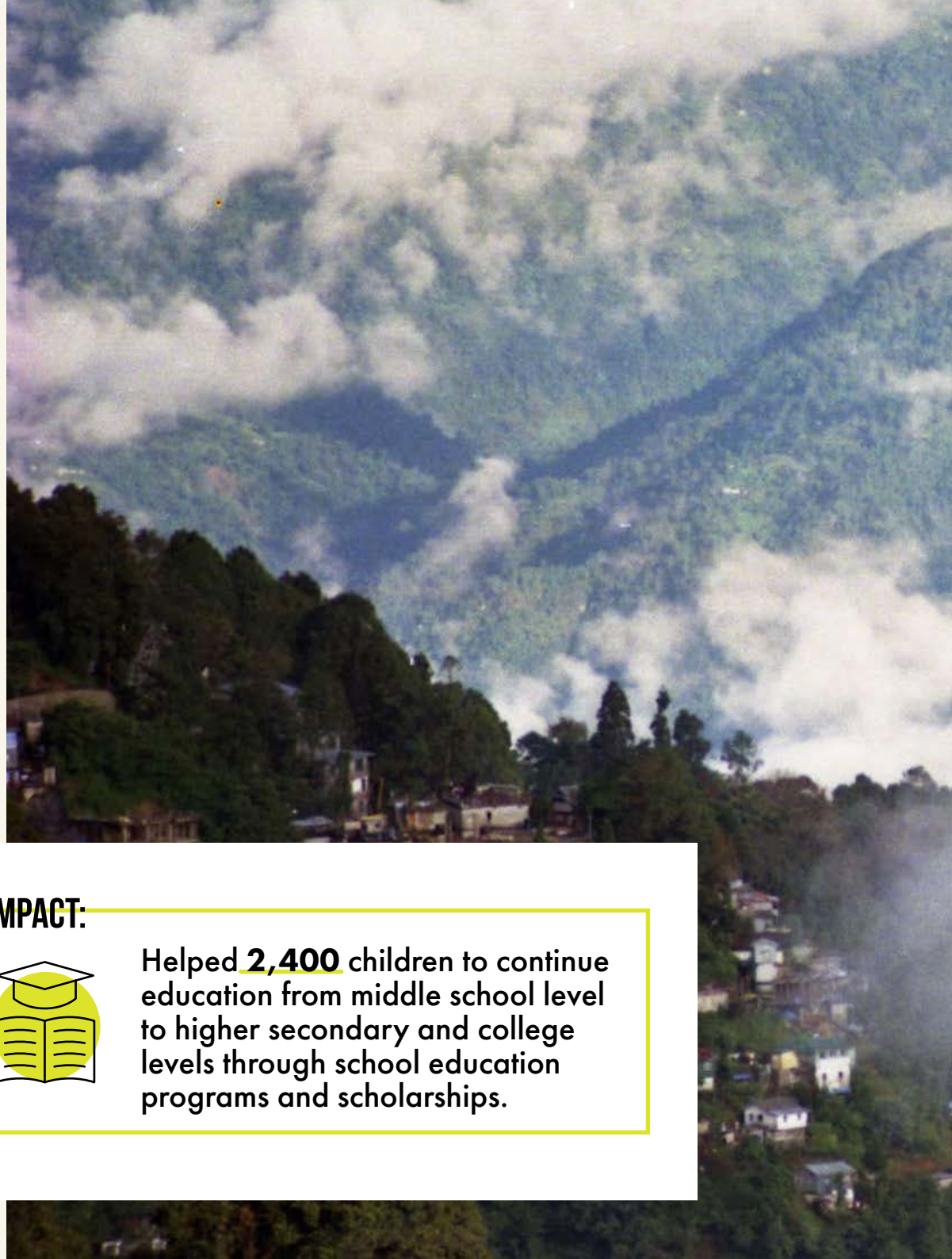
Many young people in tea estate communities have trouble completing secondary school. The lack of resources prevents young people who are falling behind to be given the necessary academic support. The cascading effects of the lack of education are lasting as their economic opportunities significantly decrease.

To improve retention rates in secondary school, CHAI developed coaching centers. Students coming from low-income families and enrolled in CHAI coaching centers were also selected for merit-based scholarships to encourage academic performance and higher education. Over 700 students received support to pay for tuition, books and uniforms. With improved access to education, girls could unlock new opportunities for themselves and their communities.

IMPACT:



Helped **2,400** children to continue education from middle school level to higher secondary and college levels through school education programs and scholarships.



THRIVING IN BUSINESS PAVES WAY TO IMPROVED EDUCATION



Jyotshna Wailung

Families often struggle in finding stable employment opportunities in tea estate communities.

“My husband and I were having difficulty supporting our family,” Jyotshna recalls. She applied for a micro-enterprise program with the CHAI project. Jyotshna was provided with start-up assistance and training. She was eager to set up a poultry farm and a dairy unit in her home.

Jyotshna Wailung, now 53, was able to diversify and grow her business at a time her family needed it the most. Mercy Corps’ global community of humanitarians is made up of people determined to build a world filled with new possibilities. Our work attracts some of the most dedicated and passionate people around the globe, including community leaders, local teams, and partners. People who share the same belief in a better world. People like Jyotshna.

“It is all because of the initial support which I received from the CHAI project that I could support my family and send my children to school.”

– Jyotshna Wailung

LOCAL VOICES

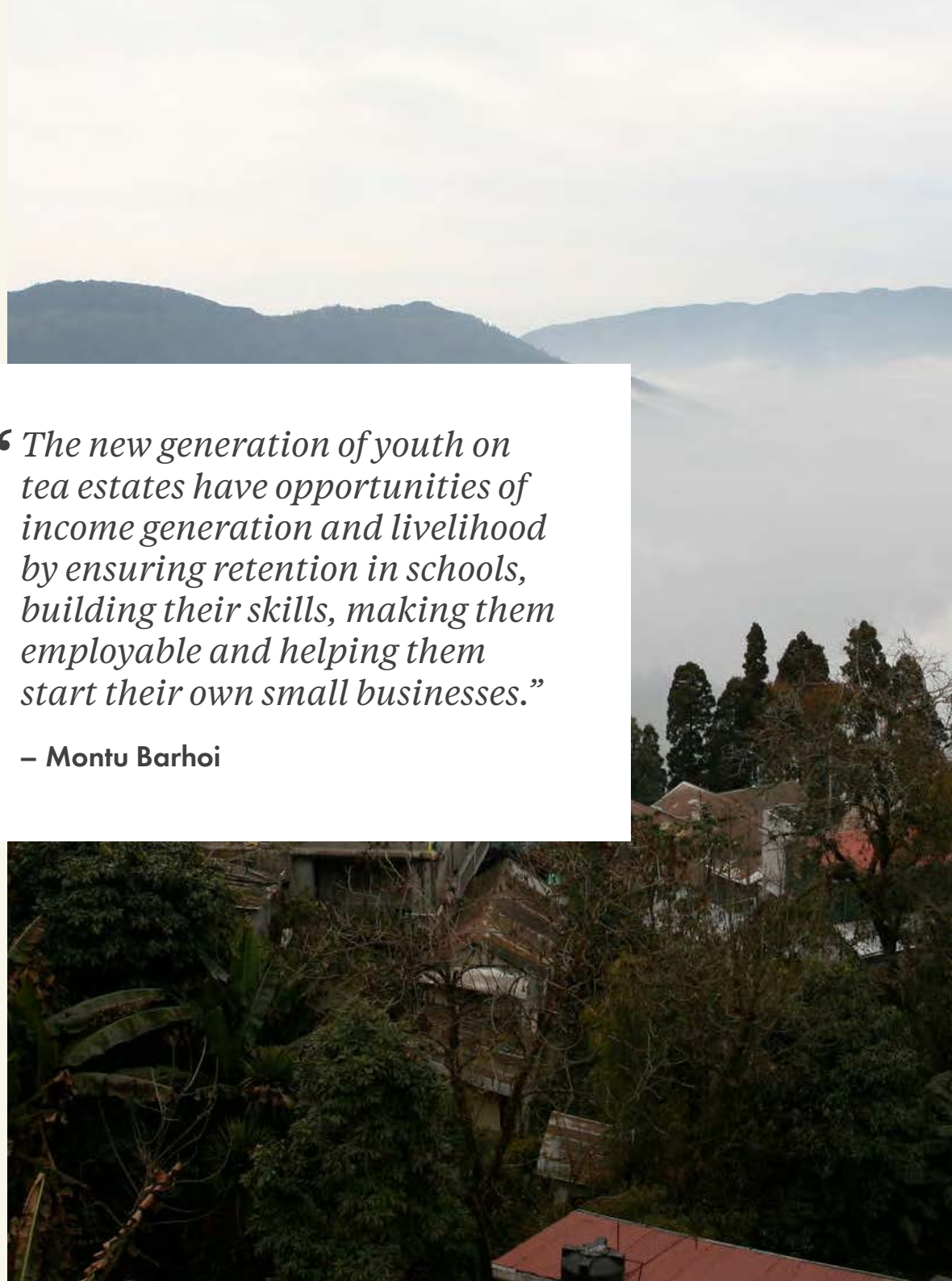
Montu Barhoi Welfare Official, Thowra Tea Estate

The lack of economic opportunity is one of the greatest challenges facing tea communities today. Not everyone can work on tea estate plantations. Without stable employment, young people struggle to provide for themselves and their families.

Montu, a Thowra Tea Estate welfare official, said that the CHAI project has filled many of the gaps in tea communities over the years. “The work that Mercy Corps has done on the tea estates... has been very much tailored and relevant to the needs of the communities on [the] ground.”

“The new generation of youth on tea estates have opportunities of income generation and livelihood by ensuring retention in schools, building their skills, making them employable and helping them start their own small businesses.”

– Montu Barhoi





INCREASE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES BY TEACHING NEW SKILLS

Montu Munda

As a young man without employment, Montu would often sit at home with little to do. Like many young people in his community, Montu was unable to find employment on the local tea estate.

Despite the lack of opportunity, Montu did not give up. He was determined to find new ways of supporting his family. Through a community outreach program, Montu was connected to a CHAI-sponsored vocational training program. He received training in mobile repair, becoming a valuable resource for his community.

Montu now owns his own mobile repair small business. He reshaped his situation through courage, creativity, and resilience.

“ I have no idea what I would have done... I am glad and consider myself lucky.”

– Montu Munda



SUSTAINABLE EDUCATIONAL INITIATIVES

Rajib Barik

“If CHAI projects helped me to pursue my dream, I want to help others to pursue theirs as well.”

– Rajib Barik

Rajib comes from a community where very few young people complete secondary school. Fueled by a passion for learning, Rajib worked against all odds to finish high school.

“I was lucky to get the scholarship through the CHAI program which helped me to complete my education,” Rajib says.

Rajib volunteers as a teacher at the nearby primary school and is now pursuing a bachelor's degree in a nearby city. He is committed to giving back to the community.

A VOCATIONAL PROGRAM TO CREATE GENERATIONAL IMPACT



Madhuri Gowala

Like many young adults living in tea estate communities, Madhuri found herself with the responsibility to help provide for her family. Her parents' income was not enough.

In 2017, Madhuri participated in Mercy Corps' vocational training program through CHAI. She chose to train in a tailoring program. Soon, she was sewing clothes for members of the community and was able to contribute to her family's income.

As her business continued to thrive, Madhuri enlisted the help of her father. Together they were able to keep up with the growing demand for their services.

“[The tailoring business] has really helped me to support my family.”

– Madhuri Gowala



SUPPORTING THE COMMUNITY

Debashish Pator

Debashish was a young man who was struggling to make a living. He was unable to market his skills and often worried about the future of his family.

Believing deeply in the potential of people, we work with local partners to train young people, helping them build their skills and their livelihoods. Through CHAI's vocational training, Debashish became specialized in mobile phone repair.

His business thrived, enabling him to invest in the tailoring business of his wife. The couple now employs multiple people and is looking to expand their business.



IMPACT:



252,769 people reached with
vocational training and support.

THE NEXT GENERATION OF CHANGEMAKERS





Women pluck tea on the Moran Tea Estate in Assam. On estates like this one, Mercy Corps and partners supported tea workers to improve living conditions and build better, stronger lives for themselves.

SUSTAINABLE CHANGE

A note on the legacy of partnership in India

Having had the opportunity to help guide the implementation of this 20-year long program, I have certainly witnessed sustainable change in our communities, as they are more resilient now.

Today women are business owners, community leaders, and part of the panchayat (local self-governance) system. Through their advocacy, we have learned to focus on areas otherwise overlooked. We made improvements on infrastructure to support the promotion of menstrual health and we've decreased barriers to enrollment of girls in schools. Likewise, young people now have access to alternative sources of income generation within their communities, reducing their dependency on family members for economic support.

The legacy of CHAI is widespread. Even the name itself has its own influence. "CHAI" is often referred to locally as a synonym of community-led development programs. The collective knowledge and experiences of our local teams working on the CHAI project has been a key source of organizational learning. We have applied the models we learned over the course of working together with CHAI in many other initiatives, including a number of WASH community awareness campaigns.

Twenty years of working together with communities in India is being carried forward by future generations—now that is transformational, sustainable change I am tremendously proud of.



Wasim Manhas
Country Director, India

We share a belief that when people are connected to the right opportunities, they can learn, adapt, and recover in the face of crisis, building better lives for themselves and strengthening their communities.

Over the past twenty years, we've witnessed the transformation by and within tea communities in India, in particular for the most vulnerable—women and girls. We worked with communities to deepen understanding of the underlying causes of these complex and interrelated challenges. The partnership between Mercy Corps and The Starbucks Foundation has led to long-lasting, sustainable changes in capacity building, health, and economic opportunity.

Alongside local leaders, community members, governments, businesses and civil society, we built strength and restored stability, supporting people as they navigate the uncertainty of today.

Now, the next generation of changemakers is equipped to solve the problems of tomorrow.



A woman wearing a vibrant, multi-colored headscarf with floral and geometric patterns is shown in profile, focused on harvesting tea leaves from a dense bush. She is wearing a light-colored, long-sleeved shirt. The background is a soft-focus landscape with green trees and foliage under natural light. A dark green rectangular box is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing white text.

**A better world is possible,
and this is how we helped
build it together.**

Read more about our impact by visiting:
mercycorps.org stories.starbucks.com