

**BREW IT FAIR:  
THE PEOPLE  
BEHIND THE TEA**



**FAIRTRADE**



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## MS VIJAYA KUMARI

### TEA PLUCKER AT MATHESON BOSANQUET, SOUTH INDIA

With 19 years of experience as a Tea Leaf Plucker, Ms Vijaya Kumari has experienced the difference Fairtrade makes on her estate. This includes achieving one of her most important aims: providing a better education for her daughter than the one she received.

*'My parents couldn't afford to let me study beyond [14 years old]... Nowadays, girls should study. ... We want them to take their life in their own hands and take care of their future'.*

Vijaya has been able to educate her two daughters using the Fairtrade Premium. Each child received funding for their education from the age of six, an amount that increased all the way up to college. Vijaya has been happy to see one daughter become an engineer, and the other a nurse.

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Comparing life as a Plucker back then until now, Vijaya has noticed one difference: a changing climate. Increasingly erratic rainfall, and changes to the ecosystem it brings, has made working conditions more challenging. *'Because of climate change, ... there is more water flowing where we work, and the path becomes slippery and we might fall. Leeches will bite us... Climate change is difficult for us'.*

In response to the growing challenges, Vijaya and other Pluckers have been provided with leech repellent, and free healthcare, through the Fairtrade Premium: *'Now when I work, if I slip and fall down... they give us medical money through Fairtrade. They take care of that'.*





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**MR MURUGARAJ**

**SUPERVISOR AND MEMBER  
OF THE FAIRTRADE PREMIUM  
COMMITTEE AT STANES  
AMALGAMATED ESTATES,  
SOUTH INDIA**

As the third generation in his family to work at Stanes, where his wife also works, tea means a lot for Mr Murugaraj and his family's livelihood. He is dedicated to the continuation of tea by improving sustainability on the estate, and he's using the Fairtrade Premium to do it.

Murugaraj explains how climate change affects the livelihood of tea workers: *'...our crop yields go down. If the crop yield goes down, our tea production reduces. And if that goes down, our income also comes down... when this happens, we face hardship.'*

*Using the Fairtrade Premium, Murugaraj has developed a reforestation project to protect the environment: 'we've bought and planted trees.'*

*Through this, we are creating more forests. That helps bring in more wildlife... we protect these areas and safeguard the water sources.'*

As a Fairtrade Premium Committee member, Murugaraj has driven further change in his community by improving the safety of workers and their families.

Solar-powered street lighting has been installed to keep families safe at night, especially from wildlife attacks. *'Our children have evening classes... if there's lighting in those areas, animal movement will reduce. It will give us a sense of safety.'*





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## MS UMAWATHI

### TEA PLUCKER AT MATHESON BOSANQUET, SOUTH INDIA

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Ms Umawathi has worked at her tea estate for the last 35 years as a Tea Leaf Plucker. Starting as a temporary worker, she gained the security of a permanent position in 1990. Back then, the salary was just 34 rupees a day (less than 30p) and she brought up her family on that wage.

‘Before Fairtrade came, wages were low. Us and the children had to survive on those wages. We had to manage everything within that.’

Born and raised in the tea growing hills of South India, Ms Umawathi is raising her two sons here. ‘Here, the children’s education is supported by Fairtrade. ... They pay for the tuition as well... they also provide bus services... Those elsewhere don’t get all of this’.

With support from the Fairtrade Premium, her husband underwent an important eye operation. The tea estate now offers a regular eye clinic to its workers, their families and surrounding communities, providing glasses to those who need them and diagnosing any medical issues.

Ms Umawathi feels passionately about improvements made to her working conditions: ‘For me, Fairtrade is about environmental health. It should be a plastic-free area, and the drinking water should be clean. Bathrooms should be... nearby.’





## MS SUNITHA KUMARI

### SUPERVISOR OF A GROUP OF TEA PLUCKERS AND MEMBER OF THE FAIRTRADE PREMIUM COMMITTEE AT THE UNITED NILGIRIS TEA ESTATES (UNTE), SOUTH INDIA

Working at the Chamraj garden of UNTE, nestled in the hills of South India, Ms Sunitha Kumari supervises a dedicated team of women Tea Leaf Pluckers. Sunitha is unusual in her line of work, as Supervisors on tea estates are most often men.

Sunitha takes great care of her team of women pluckers, and feels it is important for another woman to be in charge. *'As a woman, I can take better care of other women... women face many kinds of issues – stomach aches, monthly periods...'*

Sunitha feels her team members can come to her with complaints about their health. She ensures they get time off when needed, receive proper medical care, and always follows up with them.

Sunitha is a leader in more ways than one. She is also a member of the Fairtrade Premium Committee at her estate, which chooses where to spend the Fairtrade Premium funds and drives change in her community.

*'We must say that honestly Fairtrade has helped us a lot... Even for our children's education... the fees are being paid... If we fall sick, we get treated here. ... an ambulance has been purchased.'*

# THANKS FOR READING

## CONTACT INFORMATION

For any questions related to this document,  
please get in touch with the campaigns team

[hello@fairtrade.org.uk](mailto:hello@fairtrade.org.uk)

