



Tales from New Ambadi:

Visits to a dying husband and auspicious months for childbirth

It's lunchtime and the waiting room at the Valliammai Achi Hospital is still empty, at 2pm patients will start arriving for the afternoon clinic. Right now all that can be heard is the sound of bare feet on the polished stone floor and a swishing noise: Vijayama is methodically sweeping the floor with a broom. Dressed in a salmon coloured sari with white flowers and a light blue blouse she gracefully bends and squats to get even into remote corners. The maternity ward is next on her list. The 42 year old is glad to have

casual employment as a sweeper at Valliammai Achi Hospital. She used to be staff, but that was before her husband, a day labourer fell ill. The hospital belongs to the New Ambadi rubber estate (part of the Murrugappa Group) and is financed by the Murrugappa Group Foundation. Not just rubber workers and their families come to be treated; Valliammai Achi is a hospital for all in the surrounding community.

The day Vijayama's husband suddenly couldn't breathe he was close to the medical college in a nearby town. He was diagnosed with cancer of the oesophagus and referred for treatment to Trivandrum, a 2.5 hour car journey away. Vijayama quit her job in order to look after her husband who passed away in the summer of 2012. By then Vijayama had spent over Rs 7,500 (ca.EUR 90) on bus fares to visit her husband and she needed to pay Rs 3,000 in medical fees. With her 22-year old daughter attending an IT course at a local college (annual fees Rs 20,000) and herself unemployed by now, Vijayama was in a desperate situation and approached the Fair Trade committee at New Ambadi for help (her 23-year old son is a casual labourer on the estate). The committee approved a Rs10,000 grant and Vijayama got her job back, at least on a casual basis until there is a proper vacancy. She's crying while we sit in the waiting room as she tells her story. Yes, it's because she misses her husband, but also because she's so happy that the Fair Trade grant covered the debt and her daughter did not have to drop



out of college but can continue her education.

Vijayama has finished her shift for the day and is on her way home – a small one bedroom house with stone walls and a palm leaf thatched roof where she lives with her two children.

At the hospital Dr Joseph Balraj has a few minutes to talk before the afternoon clinic for out patients starts. At the moment he is the only doctor at Valliammai Achi hospital, a second one is going to join the team soon. The most common problem are tropical fevers, in particular dengue fevers, says Dr Balraj and he is very proud that the hospital nursed patients with the often fatal haemorrhaging dengue back to health. Respiratory problems like bronchitis are also common, as are thyroid malfunctions. Only cancer patients and people with extremely complicated fractures or head trauma are referred else where, if need be emergency transport is provided by the New Ambadi rubber estate. Eye and dental care is also provided by specialists – everything else Dr Balraj will take care of. Surgery is scheduled for Tuesday that's when a visiting surgeon and anaesthetist, assisted by Dr Balraj deal with everything from appendicitis to caesareans
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the Fair Rubber and Fair Sex!



One of the oldest occupations - but let's not go there.

But certainly one of the most enjoyable pastimes: You've guessed it.

And, fortunately, it is also one of the first products available under the Fair Rubber scheme are condoms: Pioneer CPR from Germany has been 'at it' for years - and now a new member of the Fair Rubber Association, Sustain, is bringing the joys of Fairly Traded condoms to the USA, hoping, in particular, to reach female customers and give them more say in their own lives. Responsibility, fun, protection, Fair Trade - what more can you ask for?



Normality strikes:

2nd AGM of the Fair Rubber Association

It is actually quite difficult to pinpoint where the second regular Annual General Meeting of the Fair Rubber Association took place: Apart from a group meeting in person in Frankfurt/M, a number of members from the USA, Asia and Europe participated via the internet.

Looking back on 2013 it was good to be able to confirm that once again the income covered all expense. Furthermore some 70 tons of Fairly Traded rubber were traded which meant that approx. EUR 35,000 in Fair Trade premium money could be transferred to the producer partners. Thanks to solid financial

situation it has also been possible to expand the logo registration to Canada.

During the meeting a modification of the rules on logo usage fees were agreed upon for those members buying larger volumes of Fairly Traded rubber. It was also discussed, whether the workers at the main processing stages could be included in the Fair Trade scheme. This seems difficult at present, but will nevertheless be explored further. It was also confirmed that independent audits remain an objective for the Association - as long as they can be financed.

(See also box on right ->)

Fair Trade and Time to Play!

Fair Trade Premium in Action in Sri Lanka

The joint body elected to decide on behalf of the the workers of the Mahaoya rubber plantation in Sri Lanka allocated EUR 1500 of their Fair Trade premiums earned to build a playground for their children. This represents (weight wise) 750,000 condoms, 30,000 pairs of household gloves, or 150 single mattresses.



(continued from p1 column 3) and hernias to hysterectomies. The operating room is small but well equipped and immaculately clean. Next-door are two wards for men and women with six beds each - on Thursday they stand empty, the patients who had surgery on Tuesday have already been discharged. But the maternity ward upstairs is busy. Two babies have been born within the last few hours; relatives have come to visit and brought food. The walls are painted in cheerful pink and outside tall palms provide shade and protection from the glaring midday sun. On average 300 patients per month are



treated at Valliammai Achi hospital every month for a nominal fee of just Rs 5, medication and lab tests included. 'But from June through to August we are even busier', beams Dr Balraj, these months are considered very auspicious for giving birth.



New Chairperson: David Löw Beer

"I am glad that I can support the Fair Rubber Association in my new role as non-commercial chairperson in the board. The concept of Fair Trade has fascinated me - as a consumer - for many years. Since having worked a few years ago in a school for Teach First Germany, Fair Trade has also been of interest as a topic in education. At present I am writing my PhD thesis on economic education and sustainability. Having become part of Fair Rubber, I want to learn in cooperation with the suppliers as much as possible about the challenges of rubber production, the supply chains, as well as options for distribution Fairly Traded rubber. I hope to contribute to the further development of Fair Rubber."

Following the suggestion of one of our supplier partners: Fair Rubber is now on ...



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