

FAIRTRADE PREMIUM IMPACT



PRODUCER NAME: SINGELL TEA ESTATE UNDER - TEA PROMOTERS INDIA

FLO ID : 1551

COUNTRY: INDIA

PRODUCT: TEA

FAIRTRADE CERTIFIED SINCE: 2004

SALES AND PRODUCTION:

PRODUCT VARIETY: Organic Green & Black Tea.

ANNUAL PRODUCTION CAPACITY: 100000 Kgs

ABOUT THE PRODUCER ORGANIZATION:



Singell Tea Estate

Singell Tea Estate is a part of the wide profile of Tea Promoters India, an organic tea growing and packing company. They have several tea estates in Darjeeling, Assam and also South India. The company has a long standing commitment to organic and bio dynamic methods of growing and they place a great emphasis on maintaining the ecological balance and protection of the environment. Their tea workers and small farmers all belong to local communities and are keenly tuned to guarding their ecosystem through ethical practices of farming. Singell Tea Estate is under the umbrella of TPI and follows all the principles and ideals of its parent company.

The tea estate is one of the oldest in this region, having been in existence since 1860 and its tea commendably has still retained the elements of the original tea that was grown here one and a half centuries ago and is famed for carrying the flavor of the terroir.

FAIRTRADE PREMIUM IMPACT

The estate is located around 5000 meters above mean sea level, and lies ensconced in the picturesque Kurseong valley of Darjeeling.

Its lush, verdant green landscapes occupy a several hectares across the undulating terrain of Darjeeling. The actual tea plantation is segregated into 3 divisions and they have a work force of around 700 people between these divisions.

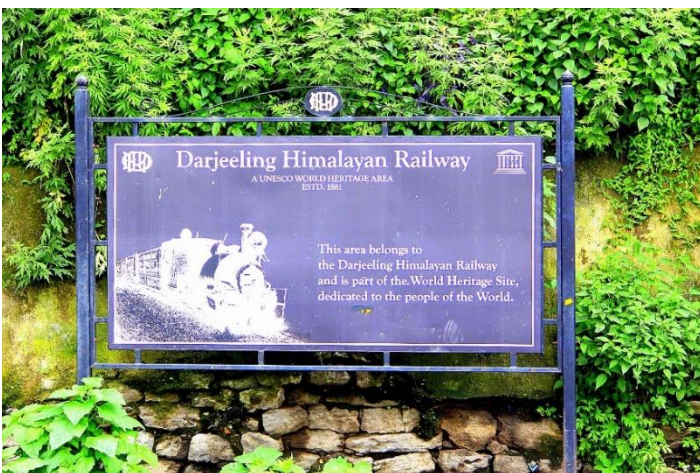


A view of Kurseong's landscape

Easily accessible from the nearby town of Kurseong, the picturesque winding road takes around 10 minutes to cover.

The convenience of the airport at Bagdogra 40 km away, fortunately puts Kurseong within easy reach of most Indian cities. One can cover the distance from the airport, in a relatively comfortable cab journey of around 1.5 hours. Kurseong also has decent hotel options to stay in, for those who wish to spend a few days exploring the scenic surroundings.

The Darjeeling Himalayan Railway DHR, with its UNESCO World heritage tag, also passes through this town, enabling access to a few popular places of tourist interest, including the famous Darjeeling city which is 30 km away and takes 1.5 hours on road.



UNESCO World Heritage recognised DHR



Locomotive shed of the DHR

FAIRTRADE PREMIUM IMPACT

SIGNALLING A POSITIVE CHANGE IN SINGELL !



The FTP committee

FAIRTRADE PREMIUM COMMITTEE

The FPC at Singell consists of 26 members, 4 from the management and 22 representatives from the workers. Due attention has been given to the fact that the percentage of female workers in the estate is around 70% and hence the representation of women in the FPC has also been proportionately maintained. Hence there are 18 females and 4 males from the worker's side. Every 3 years there is a selection process among the workers where new members are chosen to be a part of the committee. The workers themselves have a meeting to pick their representatives from among them and this is then indicated to the management.

The President and Fairtrade Premium Officer (FPO) are usually from the management side in order to provide guidance but the other office bearers like Vice president, Secretary, Assistant secretary and Treasurer are then picked by the management from among the members.

The Fairtrade Premium process – As in most of the other tea estates that benefit from Fairtrade premium, Singell too has put in place workable and viable processes to ensure an optimal and wise usage of the available funds. This results in highly advantageous outcomes and has a great impact on the development of their individual workers and the community as a whole. It has infused enthusiasm and hope in them, that the progress and improvement in their lives will be an ongoing activity.

Apart from the economic benefits, there has been a significant social impact too, with increased confidence levels, a discovery of inherent leadership abilities, a poise that enables interactions with outsiders and a capability of ideating and executing plans and ventures because of the empowerment that the system bestows.

The annual procedure to decide on what projects to select, is conducted by the people and for the people, where the workers hold meetings to discuss their needs and then prepare a list of projects that they would like to see implemented. Some of the senior members then represent the community and hand

over the letter to the FPC (Fairtrade Premium Committee). These members along with the rest of the FPC, then analyze the list and take decisions based on priority and available funds. This is a methodology that works smoothly and effectively and takes place without undue hindrance.

Since Singell Tea estate is a part of TPI, there is a central FPC at the head office and an individual FPC for the estate itself. The funds available at the central FPC are placed in a trust called Tea Action Trust (TAT) and based on the proposals of the various estates, the fund allocation and disbursement is decided at the central AGM, after which each estate is given their allotted amounts. Each estate AGM then decides the sharing of funds between the projects that they have approved for the year.

For the year 2018-19, the issues listed above were discussed and a consensus was arrived at with projects that were able to address the current problems in order of priority.

OUTCOME AND IMPACTS (2018-19)

The major Fairtrade Premium projects that have been introduced for the year 2018-19, as well as some that have been ongoing from the past few years are as below. Some of the earlier ones have been completed and some are ongoing such as the maintenance of ambulance, computers and stationery, water source management etc. Most of their projects have had a favorable impact, both on the environment and ecosystem, as well as on the social and economic aspects of the workers lives.

• ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

Prior to the Fairtrade premium projects, the workers were not aware of the importance of maintaining environmental sanctity and ecological balance. Water supply was erratic and there was no provision to capture rain-water and utilize it optimally owing to a lack of relevant knowledge. None of the homes had easy access to clean water and water scarcity was an acute issue.

Water source protection and conservation – In a wise movement, catchment tanks have been constructed deep in the jungles where the maximum volumes of rain water or stream water are found during the monsoons. This source is then tapped and the water is distributed through pipelines to all the villages of the tea garden. This has ensured that there is minimal drainage and wastage of rain water and also a year round supply for all the needs of the worker's households, factory, offices etc.

This year saw the construction of the 4th catchment area and there are plans to further increase the number in future with funds allocated from the Fairtrade Premium.

FAIRTRADE PREMIUM IMPACT



'The catchment areas that we have constructed are ensuring a permanent supply of good water for us and we no longer have issues with water scarcity' - Ema- FPC Treasurer

Solar Lighting for community areas - A total of 42 solar lights and panels have been installed across all 3 divisions of Singell, which includes the factory and residential areas.



Sushma Gajme, FPC member

"Before these lights were put up, we used to have a problem navigating the dark lanes near our homes. All of us, especially children and elderly people used to be prone to getting hurt in the dark. These lights are a boon for us at night and we can walk safely and confidently now. They have been placed at locations where we used to have a fear of accidents. We have also had these lights installed at our community hall and at certain crossroads on our driveways".

– Sushma Gajme- an estate workers and FPC member

● ECONOMIC IMPACTS

Economic difficulties are faced by retiring workers when they are no longer fit enough to earn for themselves. This is also a stage of their lives when there is a possibility of additional expenses due to failing health or getting their children married or other social commitments. Monetary assistance in the form of stable savings schemes would make a significant difference at this stage. Where healthcare is concerned, there was a need to educate people on the prevention of diseases and also being an organic and environmentally conscious estate, there was a concern over disposal of sanitary waste. The health and development of new-born babies and young mothers was also a factor that required attention.

FAIRTRADE PREMIUM IMPACT



Social security bonds - Keeping in mind the financial difficulties that retired workers may face, the FPC committee has allocated a certain amount towards those who are retiring each year. To assist in their financial security, a deposit is made in each one's name in the form of National Savings Certificate (NSC) which is Post office savings product. The 5 year deposit can then be invested or reinvested as per their decision and needs. This way they can have access to extra funds in case of medical needs or family commitments.

• SOCIAL IMPACTSS

Safe movement of people was a concern in the unlit paths of the villages and quarters and there was need for energy efficient solutions. Access to clean drinking water is critical to prevent water borne illnesses. Due to drinking contaminated water, workers used to fall ill frequently with various diarrheal diseases. Though children were provided with basic amenities like schools, economic conditions sometimes made it difficult to complete their schooling. Some assistance especially for those in higher classes who were on the brink of completing their 10th and 12th would prevent them from dropping out after having made it this far.

People on the tea estate work hard through the year and some diversion from their routine lives in the form of social and physical activities like organised games and sports goes a long way in rejuvenating them and also instilling a sense of self worth.

Right to Medical and Health Benefits: Premium funds are also used for conducting health camps like eye camps etc. Assistance is also given for procuring nutritious food for pregnant women and new mothers during pre and post delivery. Financial help is also extended when there is a need to buy healthy food for babies and young children in creches. Fairtrade Premium funds are also being used for the maintenance and for the insurance and other documentation of the in house ambulance. This is a joint venture between the company and FPC.

"Company rules mandate that a vehicle should be provided for medical emergencies but Singell has gone a step further and procured a proper ambulance itself at the suggestion of the FPC and this makes a big difference when there are major emergencies" *CD Gurung (Manager)*

A very significant activity was the distribution of eco-friendly, reusable and bio degradable sanitary napkins to the female workers, in keeping with the organic emphasis of the estate. Besides having an enormous positive impact on the environment, this also goes a long way in busting social taboos about menstruation and brings about a big change in the stigma and thought processes attached to it. Of course it goes without saying that the economic saving is also significant and there is a highly reduced burden on the eco system.

A total of 535 such pads were distributed to the female workers across 400 families. These pads can be reused up to 1 year.

FAIRTRADE PREMIUM IMPACT



Games and sports, worker's annual sports – Workers toil all year round in the tea estates and an annual sports day breaks the monotony for them, apart from providing them some entertainment and excitement by way of competitions and tournaments. The tea estates of Tea Promoters India, have inter estate football matches that are played round robin and the Fairtrade premium funds are used to host the finals at Singell. The transport, food, ball etc are managed with this amount.

Water filter – A total of 495 filters were distributed to all the casual and permanent worker's households. This has ensured that they have access to clean water which is an important factor in preventing several diseases.



"Before we had these filters we had to waste a lot of time and fuel on boiling the water for drinking and cooking. Diarrhoea and other water borne diseases used to be common among our family members. Ever since the filter has been a part of our homes, we have easy access to clean water and the incidence of sickness has also greatly reduced. We have been using them from the past 4 months and they have proven to be extremely convenient for us" - **Arathi**

Tamang is an FPC member and a tea estate worker.

Right to Education: From the past 10 years, financial assistance to students of 10th and 12th standard has been annually given during the 2 months of winter just a few weeks before their final board exams. In 2019 the beneficiaries were 30.



"The school authorities send the bill for the fees to be paid, which the parents then present to the FPC. This money is then paid to the school on behalf of these students and covers their 2 months of tuition before their board exams. My daughter is studying in Higher Secondary (12th std) and she will be getting this scholarship this winter. This is quite a relief for me since the burden is lessened to that degree".- **Ratan Singh is a worker in the tea estate and also the Secretary of the FPC.**

FAIRTRADE PREMIUM IMPACT

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Fairtrade Premium has positively impacted the lives of all the workers and there is great hope among them that it will provide continued support in future so that there will be continued progress, development and empowerment. Huge impacts have been created by some of the environmental friendly initiatives which have also boosted the confidence of the women and broken some social taboos.



“ The estate has highly benefited by Fairtrade Premium. There is a visible impact in the general upliftment of the workers lives. Fairtrade premium gives us a guarantee of sustainability towards all our betterment projects, both current and for the future. We have also contributed significantly towards safeguarding our environment.”- **CD Gurung, Estate Manager, Singell Tea Estate**

DISCLAIMER: NAPP has attempted to ensure the accuracy of the data it is collecting, it makes no representations or warranties, expressed or implied, as to the accuracy or completeness of the information

NOTE: The Premium story is produced by Network of Asia and Pacific Producers (NAPP) for the purpose of highlighting the impacts created in the lives of beneficiaries (workers, farmers & producers) by the Fairtrade premium investments. All the information and pictures have been captured and produced in accordance with Fairtrade Communication, Media and Social compliance policies and procedures. Consents have been obtained from the Producer Organisation, Premium authorities of the organisation and guardians or school authorities in case of pictures of person falling under the category of ‘Protection of Child and Vulnerable Adult Policy’ of Fairtrade.