

# FAIRTRADE PREMIUM IMPACT



**PRODUCER NAME:** MAKABARI TEA ESTATE

**FLO ID :** 501

**COUNTRY:** INDIA

**PRODUCT:** TEA AND TEA TREASURES PACKETS

**FAIRTRADE CERTIFIED SINCE:** 1993

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## SALES AND PRODUCTION:

**PRODUCT VARIETY:** Organic Green Tea, Oolong, White Tea, Black Tea, Others

**ANNUAL PRODUCTION CAPACITY:** .50 MT

**COUNTRIES OF EXPORT:** US, Japan, UK, France & Germany

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## ABOUT THE PRODUCER ORGANIZATION:

Makaibari tea estate has the very impressive distinction of being the very first tea factory in the world and was established in 1859 by the founding father G C Banerji. It is one of the largest tea estates in Darjeeling, West Bengal, India. Having being tended exclusively through the hands of 4 generations of Banerjis, it is of note to mention that this was also the only tea estate that was never owned by the British Raj at any point of time. An added feather in its cap is that it sells the world's most expensive teas.



Figure 1 Makaibari Project

Their primary object is to develop and nurture a sustainable community, that revolves around building a harmonious relationship with Mother Nature, for the People, for Darjeeling and for the Planet!

Occupying a total area of 572 hectares, its actual tea plantations swathe 248.18 hectares of land.

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A 100 % organic estate, they stay loyal to holistic agricultural practices, embracing organic, biodynamic and permacultural processes. The 400 species of indigenous birds, a plethora of wild animals, the unique insects that are found nowhere else on earth, are their pride and joy. They go about their day to day business worshipping the humble tea bush they consider their God and Giver.

Makaibari has a workforce of around 800 people who benefit in various ways from Fairtrade Premium projects.



Makaibari literally translates to corn field, though the reason for that seems to be lost with the passage of time. Its beautiful verdant landscape lies shrouded in clouds in the midst of Darjeeling's rolling hills, alongside the Pankabari road. Easily accessible from the nearby town of Kurseong, the 5.5 km of picturesque winding road takes around 20 minutes to conquer.



The convenience of the airport at Bagdogra 40 km away, fortunately puts Kurseong within easy reach, 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.



## MAGICAL, MYSTICAL MAKAIBARI !

### FAIRTRADE PREMIUM COMMITTEE

The Fairtrade Premium Committee at Makaibari consists of a total of a total 27 members from the management as well as workers.

Makaibari, like most of the other tea estates that benefit from Fairtrade premium, 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.

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. 2 or 3 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 workable methodology and takes place without undue hindrance and the favorable outcomes of earlier endeavors is proof of this.

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 )

### • 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.

Being an organic estate, due consideration is always given to clean agricultural practices. Apart from this, a consciousness to maintain the ecological balance in the system, propelled them to conduct frequent environment awareness drives with the help of Fairtrade Premium funds. Since educating and empowering women and children in matters of environment, hygiene etc, was also high on the list of priorities, these activities were carried out mainly with the involvement of women and children who were taken outdoors in groups into the surrounding mountains and villages to gather waste which they then segregated into bio degradable and non -bio-degradeable items.

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On June 5<sup>th</sup> the World Environment Day was commemorated by the planting of saplings by the school children. These afforestation activities were conducted under the expert guidance of the forest ranger who also made this into a fun activity by educating them on the importance of greening the landscape. This has resulted in a greater awareness of their surroundings and the importance of respecting and conserving Mother Earth, while also improving their standards of hygiene.



*Tree Planting drive*



The rainwater harvesting project that had been installed earlier, also provides a continued supply of water and is an ongoing energy efficient way of ensuring a clean supply which is also economical.

## ● ECONOMIC IMPACT

Additional income is always welcome and it was important to enable workers with extra liabilities to have a means of generating further earnings by helping them stand on their own feet and starting some home based occupation or business.

To enable the workers to have additional means of income some of the past Fairtrade projects included helping some of them set up homestays. Now the businesses have blossomed with around 15-20 such homestays which are flourishing and helping the workers economically. The workers are confident that if any further aid is required in future, Fairtrade Premium will provide them the necessary support.

Likewise, the earlier Cow loan project enabled workers to earn an extra income from selling the milk that they obtained. Fairtrade took care of the initial investment of buying the animal and plans to recover the loan in instalments from the income that the worker generates from the sale of milk.



## • SOCIAL IMPACTS

**Right to Quality Education & Recreation :** Children though provided with basic amenities like schools were not exposed to the outside world and had limited learning activities. Likewise, the women too were a meek lot and not very vocal or empowered enough to speak up.

Fairtrade Premium takes care of the upkeep of the library in order to ensure a venue that provides a source of learning for children and adults and to train them in the usage of computers and technology. This has been ongoing for 3 years and includes salary for the librarian Ms Roopa Rai, general upkeep of the premises, procuring of books, maintenance of the computer etc.



Figure 2 Fairtrade Premium upkeep the Library

It is important for children to have exposure to learning, which is apart from merely going to school and learning from books. Through Fairtrade Premium, the children of Makaibari Tea Estate school were taken to the Science City in the city of Siliguri.

Sports and other extracurricular activities were also conducted by Fairtrade Premium by way of taking care of their transport, refreshments, prizes etc. This has infused a sense of achievement among the children and also helped in their all round development.



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It is important for children who are on the threshold of completing their high school, to be able to decide what direction their career is going to take. Finding the right educational path and being able to achieve their ambitions, is a very important aspect that will shape the lives of young adults. Decisions can be made easier with some assured financial help and due to assistance from Fairtrade Premium funds, many of them have an easier transition into the next stage of their lives. Students of Class 10 are given a scholarship of Rs 2000 and those of Class 12 are given Rs 3000 annually. This scheme was started in 2015 and every year around 60 – 70 students have benefited from it.



Students who are continuing their higher education are also given some financial assistance and guidance. Help has been given to join vocational courses like Hotel management, Tea management and other courses in the surroundings as well as other cities. 4 students this year have joined institutes like the Kurseong college in Kurseong and the Salesian college in Darjeeling.

Mina Tamang is an employee of Makaibari and is also a NAPP board member, the FPC vice president and a community health worker. Her daughter was a beneficiary of the scholarship this year. Mina gratefully speaks about how this has been of great help and how it has paved the way for her daughter to pursue her dreams.



**"My daughter was in the 12<sup>th</sup> standard last year. Because of this Fairtrade Premium scholarship that we were given, I used the Rs 3000 towards paying her college fees and I am really grateful for this help. My daughter can now complete her graduation and have a chance of pursuing a suitable career in future"- Mina Tamang**



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**Women empowerment:** Women are also encouraged to take part in sports and it is commendable that they play football and have team of their own. Their voices are heeded during Fairtrade Premium meetings and they have also learnt to function as leaders who can confidently converse with everyone and also make decisions on behalf of the community and labor force.

**Right to decent standard of living :** Work starts early on a tea estate and in order to be at the factory by 7.30 am, the workers have to get up much earlier and prepare their food for the day which they then carry to the estate. Due to the cold rainy weather in the hills of Darjeeling, they had to consume the food and drink that would obviously lose its warmth by lunch time.

Food gives sustenance and is one of the most important factors in the life of a worker who toils physically all day in the open plantation. A hot, fresh meal is far more palatable than that which has lost its zing through the course of the morning. During the first flush (the first plucking of the tea leaves after winter), all the workers and staff were presented with flasks and hot cases in every household.

With the addition of these, workers now have meal times that are worth looking forward to and the result of this is a renewed energy with which they can proceed with their jobs for the rest of the day.



*Chanda Gurung, FPC Secretary*

The soft spoken Chanda Gurung who is also the FPC secretary, proudly displays her 2 precious possessions saying **“Fairtrade has presented all of us with the flask and hot case and we all love it because it keeps our food and drink piping hot.”**

Around 800 numbers of each item were distributed to all the families this year and last year.

**Right to Medical and Health Care-** Where healthcare is concerned, there were clinics that could take care of small issues like first aid and common illnesses but there was no facility for treatment of major diseases and surgeries.

It goes without saying that health is wealth and apart from the mandatory health care policies, Fairtrade Premium funds are also set aside for the treatment of cancer, heart diseases etc that would require additional intervention or surgery in hospitals that are located in larger cities. An amount of Rs 10,000 is given per head to those who require it. An average of around 4-5 people availed of this additional help this year.

Some of the funds were also used in the local dispensary in the form of conducting health awareness programs from time to time. The medical staff also visited the homes of workers and educated them on how to prevent seasonal diseases during the monsoons.

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## Community Development Projects:

The Indian culture thrives on community activities and hence there is the importance of having a common venue for such events. While these halls provide a venue for cultural, and celebratory happenings like festivals, marriages, religious ceremonies etc, the larger and very significant societal impact of this, is a blurring of the lines of caste and religion which otherwise are very prevalent and divisive. A hall built from common funds, gives everyone a sense of ownership and people gladly mingle and get together for events held in such places, with no distinction being made based on communal and social hierarchical differences. Continued interactions in such common locations will help to eliminate man made lines and pave the way for a future mindset that is inclusive and progressive, which is definitely the need of the hour.

FTP has aided in the construction and renovation of 7 community halls and is also in the process of further construction.

***Vishal Lama is the Secretary of the Makabari Tea estate Graam Sudhar Committee (village betterment). He is very happy with the community halls that have been provided and says -***

***"I am extremely happy with Fairtrade Premium. When the hall/club was established in 1981, it was a very tiny shack with barely any of the necessary features and we were highly constrained due to the size and lack of amenities and we used to find it very difficult to function here. But ever since FTP stepped in with their funds, we are now enjoying the convenience of the large space and all the facilities that we can afford, like furniture, stage etc. that we could construct in 2016-17. We are very grateful to Fairtrade Premium because of which we have been able to make so many improvements to the hall and all the members of our community now have a venue for various cultural and social events and we all come together as one when there are programs for entertainment etc. Everyone is enjoying the outcome of this. All our 7 halls have benefited and we are also in the process of building further. We have pinned great hopes on FTP to provide continued support because of the enormous difference it is making to our lives"***

## 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. 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.



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*Sanjay Das, estate manager and FPC President*

“Workers of this estate have highly benefited by Fairtrade Premium. They have also become close to the management and enjoy very cordial relationships with each other due to the interaction during FTP activities. The Fairtrade Premium has a great impact and encourages our workers to do good for the community and the environment”

*Mr. Sanjay Das – Estate Manager and FPC President, Makaibari*

*Tea Estate*

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