

TEA:TEAM BUILDING ACTIVITY

FAIRTRADE PREMIUM

GRADE VI ONWARDS

Aim:

- To understand team dynamics and work with a group of people
- To understand important issues of social justice, women empowerment and decision-making capacity
- To learn about Fairtrade Premium and how it empowers communities

Learning objective:

This activity enables students to hone their team-building skills by simulating a Fairtrade Premium Committee. Young people will practice negotiations, apply peace-building and conflict resolution methods and work on their decision-making skills to come to resolutions that benefit the entire community.

You will need:

- Annexures printed out
- Pens/Sketch pens
- Paper

Introduction:

Start by talking to your students about tea. Did you know that after water, tea is the most popular drink globally? That's right, 70,000 cups are drunk per second around the world.

India is home to many tea plantations that go back to colonial times. Tea is usually grown on plantations, and rarely by small holder farmers or co-operatives. See Annexure I.



Ask your students:

- What kind of tea do they know is available in the market? (dust tea which is made in the Indian chai, long-leafed tea which is considered more prestigious, green tea, fruit-flavoured tea etc.).
- Ask them what do they pay for a cup of tea or what does their family pay for a packet of tea? (for a dust tea, it's approximately Rs 100 for 250g).
- Let students tell which brands are they familiar with (Tata, Lipton, BrookeBond etc.)

Fairtrade and tea

In India, some tea estates are Fairtrade certified, which means they ensure growers and workers are treated more fairly, receive at least a fixed minimum wage as well as a Fairtrade premium.

ACTIVITY:

Divide the class into three groups and give them one card each:

Tea pluckers/Workers: You are a group of people – men and women – who work in a Fairtrade-certified tea estate. You work six days a week in shifts where you pluck tea and get paid per day. You live in a small cement house and each of you have a family. Your priorities are your children's education, retirement benefits, medical care, livelihood security.

Management of tea estate: You run a Fairtrade-certified tea estate. As part of the management, you also manage a group of tea pluckers. While you can help guide how the Fairtrade Premium Committee spends its premium, you cannot manipulate the decision. Your priorities are profits, a healthy work force which is also a happy one, good tea quality.

Fairtrade Premium Committee: You are a joint body that is democratically elected by the tea pluckers every three years. You are part of the tea pluckers community and also their representative voice. You have access to the Fairtrade Premium account and work with the management and workers to spend the money in a mutually acceptable way that is beneficial to the community. Your priorities are welfare of tea pluckers, transparency of the process.

Now organise a meeting of the three groups and tell them:

You have received a Fairtrade Premium of Rs 1 lakh. Decide how this money should be spent for the benefit of the entire community. At the end of the meeting, democratically come up with a mutually agreeable consensus on at least 3 things that the Fairtrade Premium should be spent on. See Annexure III for suggestions.

Rules for the meeting:

- No raised voices, no bullying, no coercion tactics to be employed
- All decisions should be reached by a democratic consensus and should benefit the entire community.
- Negotiate, point out pros and cons of each point
- Let every person have a chance to speak

Outcome:

As a teacher, you can watch the proceedings and step in if the children have questions or are faltering at any point. You can play devil's advocate – asking them why marriage would be important for the worker's family or what if a tea plucker doesn't have children, would they agree for the Premium to go towards education scholarship (in the past, it took time but everyone agreed because they realised it benefited the community).

After the meeting, ask students to reflect on the exercise:

- Does the Fairtrade Premium benefit the community how?
- How did the three groups come to a consensus? Was it hard?
- How important is team spirit in such an exercise?
- What do the students feel about the Fairtrade Premium format?



ANNEXURE 1

Tea Facts

Source: <http://www.fairtrade.net/tea.html>

- Tea is a diverse product with grades and types ranging from mass-market teas used in teabags to high-quality specialty leaf and organic teas. Market prices vary widely, not just according to grade and type, but also depending on the production methods used and the geographical origin. While market prices are currently high, producer costs have risen significantly due to significant increases in input costs (fuel, fertilizer, transport etc) linked to the price of oil and adverse currency movement versus the dollar, as tea is often traded in US dollars.
- Although labour and pay conditions for tea workers are often regulated by government, historically much tea work is considered unskilled and thus paid at minimal levels. The plight of plantation workers is a well-known issue in many tea-producing countries like India, Sri Lanka and Kenya.
- Tea workers living on tea estates often depend on the owners for basic needs, such as healthcare, housing, utilities and access to water and primary education for their children. However, poor profitability over the past 30 years has eroded investment in infrastructure and led to cost cutting measures. Basic needs are often unmet leaving workers and their children few alternatives but to continue the cycle of dependency and vulnerability.
- A shift in market demand has affected income as well. In leading Fairtrade consumer markets, such as the UK, there has been a shift toward cheaper African teas and away from tea sourced in India and Sri Lanka along with growth of green teas from China and Vietnam.

ANNEXURE II

Standards for tea plantations

Fairtrade has established standards in tea production for both plantations and small producer organisations.

Fairtrade Standard requirements for plantations with hired labour stipulate that:

- A Fairtrade Premium Committee, including workers and management, must be formed to decide on the use of the Fairtrade Premium,
- The premium cannot be used to cover operating expenses, but rather to improve living and working conditions,
- Forced labour and labour by children 15 years and under is prohibited. Work for children over 15 cannot interfere with their education. They cannot do work that could pose a health risk,
- Workers have the right to establish or join an independent union,
- Salaries must be equal to or higher than the regional average or than the minimum wage,
- Health and safety measures must be established in order to avoid work-related injuries.

ANNEXURE III

Suggestions for Fairtrade Premium plans:

- Education scholarships for the children of tea pluckers. (Remember that these workers want their children to lead a better life and not work on a tea estate plucking tea as well)
- Retirement benefits which include a pension fund for workers (Tea workers get a minimum wage and having a retirement fund would help secure their future in their old age)
- Casseroles to keep food hot in. (Tea workers work in shifts and have different hours. It leaves little time to cook and hot food is always welcome in chilly weather conditions plus in hot weather it means that the food won't spoil)
- Solar light torches (Tea workers work in tea estates that often border forests and can see animals such as leopards or elephants inadvertently wandering in. This can lead to man-animal conflict. Strong lights in the night can safeguard people from snakes and other animals as well)
- Smokeless chulhas (Rather than burning fuels that can pollute the environment and harm the homemaker's lungs, the smokeless chulha is less polluting and also more energy efficient)
- A doctor for the hospital (Tea estates are mandated by the law to have a hospital. However, there's always the need of an additional doctor for say dentistry, heart specialist, TB specialist and so on)
- Computer Centre for the school (In today's digital world, it is almost mandatory that children step out into it with the basic knowledge of computers. A computer centre can help kids learn better and also strive better in the world)
- Gold coins (An investment for the future where individuals can choose how to later spend that gold coin – child's marriage, education, house etc)
- An additional wing for the school (The school is very small and it urgently needs a new wing to house 5 new classes)
- Refrigerator (To keep perishables from spoiling)

