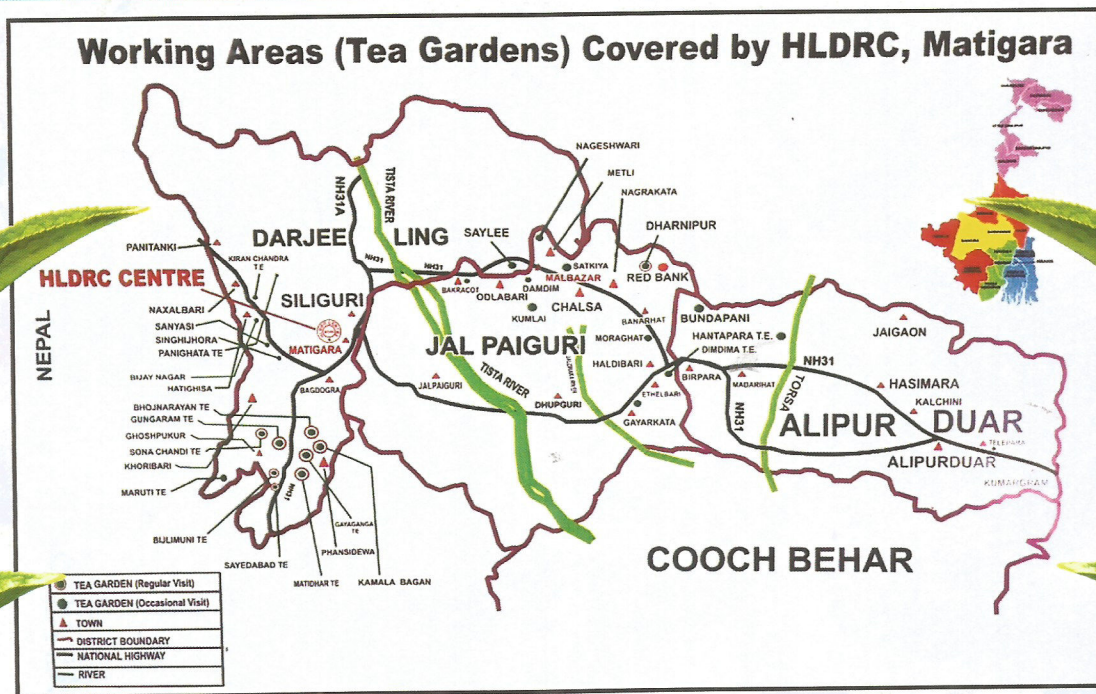


# HLDRC

## SOCIAL ACTION INITIATIVES

Program Quarterly Report 03

JULY - SEPTEMBER 2022



### Director's Message

How graduates are employed these days seem to have changed globally. As our experiences tell that degree alone is no longer sufficient for young people to get employed in a competitive job market but it includes soft skills, career education, interpersonal skills, information technology, study period in higher university's academic reputation, communication skills, teamwork, problem solving skills and so on.

On the other hand employers are slimming down their workforces due to unstable and unpredictable business environment caused by Covid 19 pandemic and other external factors. HLDRC is continuously making effort in addressing unemployment issues in tea gardens in North Bengal since 2016 through TATA CONSULTANCY SERVICES (TCS), COMPUTER HARDWARE & NETWORKING, AUTOMOBILE and NURSING TRAINING locally and in outstations with other partner organizations.

HLDRC strongly believes that the real economic empowerment takes place when a student or a person gets employed in job sectors or does engage in self employed activities with skilled human power.

Many thanks and wish you **Happy Durga & Deepawali celebration** to our project donors, TCS Executive Director, Trainers team, XESONB and HLDRC staff and associates in these collective initiatives to accompany the poor and marginalized youth in the tea gardens of North Bengal, India.



Fr. Pascal Xalxo, S.J.





*The picture file is from Taipoo , Birsing Jote Farm unit*

# **SOCIAL AGRICULTURE PROJECT (SAP)**

**Social Agriculture Project (SAP)** is one of the latest initiatives of HLDRC. This project is supported by SOS-INDIA with a Power Tractor and seed cost to poor farmers in the villages to use their land for food production. The entire program is community based program where women SHGs are the beneficiaries of the program. A large scale food production by villagers are making village to address food shortages. This program is becoming community action program.





Along with tea plantation Rice/paddy is the main food crop produced in North Bengal. It is a monsoon crop where the land owner cultivates paddy instead of vegetables. During lockdown time people learnt that how price of food grains and vegetables prices went high, and they might be saved the inflation price if they had own production. During this rainy season the project tractor has ploughed 36 acre land of individual family just because it is a social project all individual farmers get 20% discount rate as compared to the market price of ploughing cost. Now all paddy fields are full of greenery and we hope that farmers will increase food grains

## **Agriculture farming at Nowghat village:**

There is some 8 acre vacant land in Nawghat village which is an agricultural land under the possession of villagers, and a tea garden manager wanted to capture this land. The women of Self Help Group of village decided not to give that land to anyone else. Now, with the help of HLDRC, people are going to prepare that land for seasonal farming. The land is in 2 acres, where they are planning to cultivate vegetables grown in winter season like potatoes, cabbage, green leaf vegetables, etc. Women have taken an initiative to improve their livelihood in which HLDRC has contributed a lot.



# COMPUTER HARDWARE

Computer Hardware course has been very helpful to students to gain some knowledge on computer and repairing the computers in various organizations and in business hubs. 2nd Batch of Computer hardware in Gairkata, Jalpaiguri started in mid of June with six new students. These Computer hardware classes have been taken by a teacher Mr. Raj Tanti. All students of this batch belong to tea gardens and this would help them to come out confidently with computer expertise and improve their chances of employability in various job sectors.



# TATA CONSULTANCY SERVICES (TCS) AT GAIRKATA HLDRC BRANCH OFFICE

Covid 19 and lock down had hit the economic activity and this caused disruption in economic status of people and subsequently increased unemployment with job losses. HLDRC's support through **Employment Training** under **Tata Consultancy Services** had been helping many youths to get Job in leading service industries & IT Companies of India. On 11th July 2022 the



second batch of Tata Consultancy Service (TCS) training started at Gairkata HLDRC and the training was completed on 29th July 2022. About 22 students were attending regularly. The batch is being trained by **Madam Harshamanjri Nanda** from TCS. Seven students out of twenty two have given exam and in the process of getting job in its first list. And the remaining will continue to work hard for upcoming placement drive...



## **STUDY CENTRES PROGRAM**



In the month of July, August and September we reviewed all the 24 study Centers of Jalpaiguri District supported under SOS-India and Canadian Jesuits International and gave teachers orientation and training program on classroom management. Through various initiatives, non-formal education has commenced innovative and creative method of teaching and learning, which all the students are inculcating in their life. In the month of August, assessment of classes I to IV was done in all the study centres and the result is yet to be declared. Assessment for classes V to IX has been completed in the month of September.

HLDRRC team visited Hindupara Study Centre. There we spoke to some parents regarding the study centre. They were gratified with the quality education provided through the non-formal education, they liked the teacher-child interaction. Parent-teacher meeting is being held in all the study centers to review student's academic performance.

## **LIVELIHOOD SUPPORT PROGRAM FOR TEA PLANTATION WORKERS THROUGH WOMEN SHGs AND COOPERATIVES**



There have been several innovative programs from women SHGs over last four years. During Covid 19 HLDRRC initiated to have access to vacant land available around tea gardens and forest area. In four locations namely Lankapara , Dharnipur, Basaline and Bamandanga tea estates obtained government



## Program Quarterly Report 03

permission for agricultural activities. Livelihood program through women SHGs is one of the core program of HLDRC that supported by Canadian Jesuits International (CJI) where there has been a continuous support to expand its program to increase livelihood option among the poor.

Agriculture project for livelihood is one of the initiatives of HLDRC during Covid 19 pandemic period and thereafter. It was the emergency of health and food during Covid 19 pandemic the villagers were invited to find some local solution to the human suffering. It was a nature gift that was hidden and unutilized huge vacant land between the village and Gorumara reserve forest a long stretch of 20 acre land was converted into paddy field by seven women SHGs of total 75 women coming from the same village. This program united villagers to come together and engage themselves in agriculture at work. Since 2020 there has been a regular farming in about 15 acre of land .As per report about 200kg of paddy per household got their share sustaining for about 4 months rice for family consumption from last cultivation.



**Titli Guri Karamtola SHG** is doing very well. They have taken six lakhs (INR: 6,00,000) loans and are using the amount effectively. These women have created one more group whose name is “Maya” SHG. This group is created with the help of Karamtola SHG, Karamtola SHG helped this new group in each and every stage like from conducting meetings to opening of bank accounts and still it's under the supervision of this group. These women also encourage others to move forward along with their group. This is the real identity of a SHG, who along with them make others also self-dependent. On behalf of SHG, in every Gram Panchayat/ local administration, women are sewing uniform of primary schools and SSK schools. These uniforms are coming in G.P after getting cut /measured from the block and the women of SHG are sewing the



uniform here. Women are getting Rs 40 for each pair of dress, which means if these women sew more no. of dresses, the income opportunity also increases. This is a very good scheme for women of getting employment and earning income. HLDRC also provides six months tailoring and dress designing course at Matigara in its own head office.





**Self help group** has been very efficient to uplift women of tea garden through “**Women Empowerment Program**” by HLDRC. HLDRC is directly linked with 50 SHG Group and voluntarily helping them to empower themselves economically by providing them loan for no interest. As economic Empowerment allows women to control and benefit from resources, asset and income. **Miss Deepika Sarkee** is working as an animator who is handling these entire SHG groups of Dooars unit and currently she added six more new groups to the network. HLDRC is supporting **Juis SHG** group of **Tandoo Tea garden** to initiate their business for providing chairs and tables to rent out for public functions in that areas. They are very grateful of HLDRC's Support for this initiative. On 23rd August they inaugurated their business unit by lending their chairs and tables for family functions and earned Rs. 400. Per day.

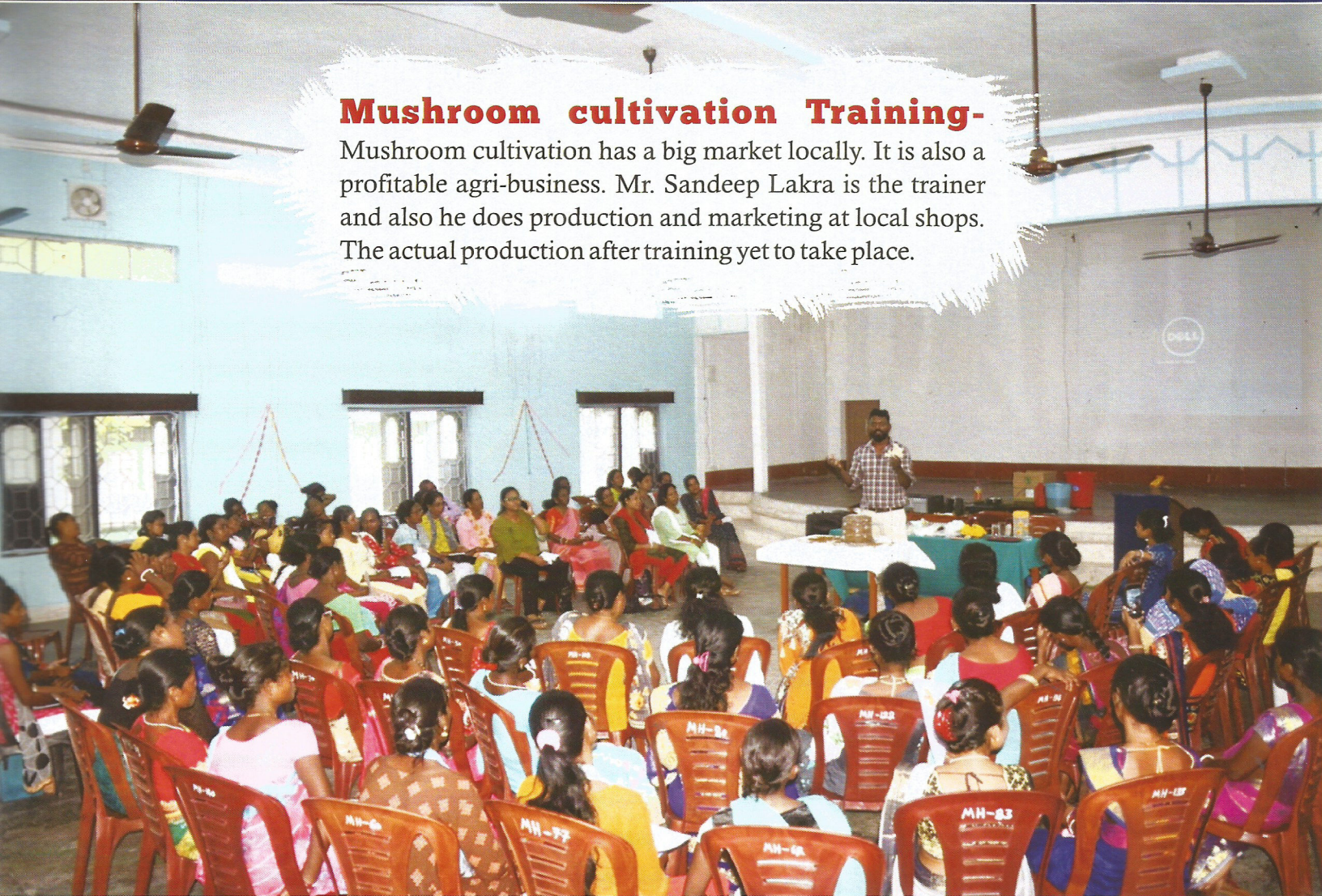
**Kitchen Garden Training-** To address the food crisis in tea garden families Kitchen Garden farming training was conducted on 24th September, 2022. The resource person was Mrs Priyanka Minj from Hansqua Tea estate who works as District Rural Development Coordinator(DRDC) Trainer of Phansidewa block, Darjeeling district. About 40 SHGs selected leaders attended for this training. HLDRC provides all technical and logistic support to the groups. We are following up the training program with village SHG level action program. Mrs Nishita Lakra continuously coordinates the progress of the groups..





### **Mushroom cultivation Training-**

Mushroom cultivation has a big market locally. It is also a profitable agri-business. Mr. Sandeep Lakra is the trainer and also he does production and marketing at local shops. The actual production after training yet to take place.



## **TEA GARDEN PROVIDENT FUND, GRATUITY AND PENSION HELP DESK-**

Tea Gardens of Terai-Dooars are in heavenly place where the majority of innocent tribal people are migrated from central part of Chhotanagpur to other part which is now known as West Bengal. When it comes to claim of PF/pension amount for these tea garden workers, the main problem arises is lack of proper documentation in PF record or mismatched details in many of their documents. Our core team member of HLDRC Gairkata, **Mr. Leos Hasapurty, Mr. Bikash Barla & Mr. Durgadas Karmakar** are working day and night to solve these critical issues prevailed in tea garden.







They are working in tea garden like **Chengmari, Sylee, Red Bank, Bhagatpur, Gairkata, Telepara, Huldibari and Hindupara Division & Gairkata tea garden**. Management of the tea garden does not extend his hand in this matter. Rising of such situation is promoting anti social elements of loot in workers PF, Pension and Employee deposit linked Insurance (EDLI). The prevailed corruption in PF office or in tea management eats up half of the claimant amount. Total amount claimed of PF amount from poor illiterate workers in month of July to September 2022 by beneficiaries is **Rs. 2 core and thirty eight Lacs (INR 2, 38, 00,000)**.



*HLDRC Gairkata office has been upgraded to facilitate the tea workers PF online filling by our staff.*



## CAREER GUIDANCE TO YOUTH IN THE TEA GARDENS



HLDRRC has a large numbers of youth in its program in Study Centres, Computer Hardware & Networking, Computer Application, Spoken English, Tata Consultancy Services, and Youth Employability Program (YEP). It is also realized that students to be guided even in class VIII onwards to make their foundation strong when they reach to class X. On this perceived background junior level Career Guidance is provided in tea gardens and villages. Bikash Barla from Dharnipur Pipe Line has started this program in Nagrakata block in Chengmari Tea estate, Carron Tea Estate, Loksan Tea estate, Red Bank Tea Estate, Tandoo Tea Estate, Bamandanga Tea Estate, Grass more tea estate and Dharnipur Tea Estate. During last quarter HLDRC has reached out to about 300 youth in its ongoing program.

## TATA CONSULTANCY SERVICES (TCS) AT MATIGARA BATCH

There is near about 2% government job available as compare to youth population. Privatization of public sectors is one of the major reasons of youth losing government jobs. Every year HLDRC organized thrice Tata Affirmative Action Program/ Youth Employability Program to maximize job opportunities in tea garden area. 27 graduate students from different tea garden have enrolled for training program which has started from 19 Sept. 2022. During counseling of the students it is found that the batch was needed extra classes of “Spoken English” and “Computer Knowledge”. One week support classes were offered by HLDRC .







**Study Centres in Lankapara Tea Estate :** Lankapara is situated closer to Bhutan. It is a closed tea garden since 2014. There are 1241 workers in the tea garden who became jobless when tea garden was shut down, however due to active leadership of village community they formed a cooperative by name Lankapara village cooperative Society. HLDRC assisted the community to face the economic and educational crisis, drinking water crisis as a major threat to life. HLDRC started study centre from class I to class X with about 70 students who did not have school bus to reach their schools. Study centre also minimized school dropout, child labour and child trafficking.

## PROMOTION OF INDIGENOUS CULTURES

On 9th August HLDRC and its two collaborators celebrated **International Day of the World's Indigenous People** at Madati Labour Welfare Centre. More than 300 women were present from different tea





garden of Phansidewa and Khoribari Development block. 2022 Adivasi Diwas theme was totally focused on the role of indigenous women in the preservation and transformation of traditional knowledge. The main resource persons were on that day Miss Prafulla Minj, Ms Shabnam Kiro, Mr Lajrus Ekka, Ms Ranjita Ekka and Fr Pascal Xalxo.



## ANTI HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND MIGRATION ISSUES IN NORTH BENGAL

*Human Trafficking and distressed migration from tea gardens in North Bengal is increasing day by day.*

India's tea gardens are popular as a scenic Northeast vacation destination, but behind the serene facade of the acres of gently rolling green hills rich is a culture that is exploitative and cruel to young women and children. The extreme low daily wages INR 202/- (Less than three Euro) for eight hours of work in tea plantation is pushing thousands of young population to migrate to other states in India where they can earn better wages..

On this background Migrant Assistance and Information



Network (MAIN) is an initiative of the Jesuit collective, which supports migrant in distress, across India. It is based on the perceived need for a coordinated, collective and innovative response to reach out to the distressed migrant workers, internal and interstate.

HLDRC has started its MAIN-Help Desk at Matigara and its branch office in Dooars region at Gaikata from the month of August 2022.



## TAILORING CENTRE UNDER HLDRC (SELF EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM)



From the month of July HLDRC has enrolled 57 girls in the Tailoring which is one of the best employment training program for six month, In these program-most of the girls belong to marginalized community where they are provided golden opportunity to develop their skills in Tailoring and live a independent life and also backbone of their family by supporting financially, along with that they also get the confidence to have a bright future. **Mrs Sandha Paul** is the regular trainer for the batch.

## SENIOR STUDENTS CLASS X SPECIAL COACHING CLASSES AT FIVE TEA GARDENS

New batches of class X has been started at Ramjhora tea estate, Upper Chengmari Study Centre, Bamandanga Tea estate and Gairkata Tea Estate. A major development in education, has been triggered in this rural area which is helping a lot to the students coming from extremely poor quality government schools. **Mr. Dipak Oraon**, the teacher of this batch is effectively teaching Mathematics and English. **Mr. Rupesh Dahal** and **Miss Nikita** are the teacher at Ramjhora tea eastate and Bamandanga Tea Estate respectively.

A new batch of class X has been started from the month of August at Girkata office. To make appropriate the level of learner's development, with new content and experiences is being introduced. The teacher **Anjan Minj** is leading the batch and is learner- centered. **Mrs Ritu Panna**,



Non Formal Educational at Trainer giving additional inputs to class X students and teachers as well.



## ENSURING SOCIAL PROTECTION AND BUILDING CLIMATE RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

Many people filled the caste certificate form in the **Duare Sarkar camp** (Service at the door step welfare schemes by government). There was a special camp of Duare Sarkar held in Bhojnaraian, Taipoo and Gangaram T.E of Hetmuri GP. The CL leaders helped in filling the forms in these Tea Gardens. In the month of September caste certificates of more than 200 people were made ready and came in the GP office under Phansidewa block. This time people filled the form of one more scheme named “Bina Mulya Jeevan Suraksha Yojna.” The beneficiary's age limit should be 18 to 60 years. Many people filled this form.



## UNITED FORUM FOR AADIVASI RIGHTS (UFFAR) ON CAMPAIGN MODE



United Forum for Adivasi Rights (UFFAR) in the Terai region of North Bengal is on ongoing mode of Campaign in Minimum wage and land right for the people living in the Tea Garden Region. The Forum is taking initiative to motivate the tea garden people from the grass root level to fight for land Right and increment in the Daily wage of Tea Garden worker, so as to live minimum standard of life and also support their children to have education for their better future. In addition to that the Forum is also dealing with the corrupt Rationing system in PDS in the Terai Region where most of deserving people are being deprived of dry ration.



## LAND RIGHTS ADVOCACY IN TEA GARDENS OF NORTH BENGAL



Workshop was organized for the community who are holding the tribal land. In this workshop three major cases were discussed who are really fighting against the industrial lobby. These cases are related to community intervention and they want to handholding support by the community. **Advocate Navin Prakash Kerketta** was the resource person, who explains the laws, way forward, a road map to these community members to address the issues. Power of **Right to Information (RTI)**, and how it works, what type of information can we seek etc are taught.

## COMMUNITY LEADERS INTERVENTION IN REOPENING OF CLOSED TEA GARDEN FROM LABOR LINE TO SHRMIK BHAWAN SILIGURI

Totapara Tea Garden is established in 1918 with registration no. 633. This tea garden is currently owned by **Nath Mal Kedia, Sudip Bhowmick, Nayan Kishor Das, Debojit Phukan, Subrata Bhowmick and Treebendra Das**. There are four Trade Unions exist in tea garden. The permanent tea garden workers have been complaining about the PF scams which have been done against them. No trade union stands out for them to call out these scams. Through **Lok Manch**, **HLDRC** has been connected with totapara since 2017 and it continually supporting the community leaders of Totapara. For this year the annual bonus for tea garden workers and employees in the plains of North Bengal was fixed 20% but totapara tea management announced 12% payment to its workers and this caused tea workers to ask the management for negotiations for the fixed bonus, resulted for 13 days work suspensions of the tea garden. Our Totapara's CLs with help of our core staffs **Leos Hasapurty and Miss Chandrika Beck** with networking of other social organization voluntarily united the workers & hold meeting with Tea workers to resolving





the issues legally. On 20th September 2022 meeting at North Bengal Zone Shramik Bhawan Dagapur, was done with Joint Labour Commissioner, Deputy Member, Union leaders of Totapara, Tea Garden Management of Totapara & Tea garden workers volunteer. In meeting it was decided to pay the entire due amount which hasn't been paid in PF account. Management has got only 3 years to resolve these issues. The decisions is pretty much positive for tea garden workers as their hard earned money was in stake because tea management was not in mood to resolve the issues any earlier.



*"Educate the people, organize the people and fight for justice."*

Fr. Pascal Xalxo S.J., Director,  
Human Life Development &  
Research Centre (HLDRC)



P.O Matigara-734010,  
Dist. Darjeeling, (W.B.), India



xalxopascal@yahoo.co.in



www.hldrscoialcentre.org



7076172890 (whatsapp)