

# Social Security Benefits to Plantation Workers: A Case Study of Tea Gardens in West Bengal

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**V.V. Giri National Labour Institute**



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**V. V. Giri National Labour Institute**

An Autonomous Body under the Ministry of Labour and Employment

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## Preface

This study titled Social Security Benefits to Plantation Workers: A Case Study of Tea Gardens in West Bengal, has been conducted by a research team from the VV Giri National Labour Institute with the primary aim of understanding the social security provisions available to the workers in the tea plantations of West Bengal. The tea plantation sector plays a pivotal role in the economy of the region and provides employment to thousands of workers who rely on this industry for their livelihood. Despite this, plantation workers continue to face several challenges, including low wages, poor working conditions, and limited access to essential services such as healthcare, education, and housing.

Our study focuses on exploring these key issues and assessing the effectiveness of existing social security measures in improving the living and working conditions of the workers. A significant portion of the workforce in these plantations has been living in the estates for generations. For many, the tea gardens represent not only their place of work but also their homes, making it challenging for them to explore other employment opportunities. This often creates a situation of economic dependency, where workers remain tied to the plantations due to the housing benefits provided by the tea estates.

The study involved an in-depth analysis of five tea gardens in West Bengal, chosen for their geographical representation and significance within the industry. Through detailed interactions with the workers, managers, and local stakeholders, our team collected qualitative and quantitative data on the state of social security benefits. We analysed areas such as wages, housing, access to healthcare, and other welfare measures, highlighting the gaps in the system and offering insights into areas where improvements are urgently needed.

Moreover, the study draws attention to specific recommendations for policymakers, especially regarding the notification of minimum wage standards for tea plantation workers, which are currently set through a tripartite dialogue process. The absence of a standardised wage structure has created inconsistencies in the incomes of these workers, leading to widespread dissatisfaction and financial hardship.

We hope that this study contributes meaningfully to the ongoing discourse on social security for plantation workers and provides stakeholders with a clear roadmap for improving their conditions. By addressing the systemic issues within the plantation sector and implementing the suggested reforms, we believe that the quality of life for plantation workers can be significantly enhanced.



## Foreword

It gives me great pleasure to present this comprehensive study on Social Security Benefits to Plantation Workers: A Case Study of Tea Gardens in West Bengal. The tea plantation workers of West Bengal represent a workforce that has long been marginalised and often overlooked in discussions surrounding labor rights and social security. Their contribution to the state's economy is immense, yet they continue to face several challenges, including low wages, inadequate housing, and limited access to healthcare and education.

This study is not just an academic exercise but a crucial endeavor to highlight the pressing issues that these workers encounter daily. The findings of this research point toward a need for immediate policy intervention, especially in the areas of wage standardisation and improvements in living conditions. The research team has put forth practical recommendations that, if implemented, have the potential to bring about meaningful changes in the lives of these workers. The study also calls for a re-evaluation of the Plantation Labour Act to make it more relevant to the current socio-economic context.

I extend my heartfelt appreciation to the research team for their dedicated efforts in conducting this study. Their meticulous work has provided us with a wealth of data and insights that will be instrumental in shaping future policies aimed at improving the welfare of plantation workers. I am confident that this report will serve as a valuable resource for policymakers and researchers in labour studies.

**Dr Arvind**  
Director General  
VV Giri National Labour Institute



## Acknowledgement

We are immensely grateful to Dr Arvind, the director general of VV Giri National Labour Institute, for providing us with the opportunity and resources to conduct this comprehensive study on Social Security Benefits to Plantation Workers. Without the unwavering support of the institute, this study would not have been possible. We also extend our sincere thanks to the administrative staff of the institute, whose logistical support was crucial in facilitating the various stages of this research.

We are particularly grateful to Dr. MM Rehman, the consultant for this project, whose guidance and expertise were pivotal in shaping the direction of the research. His contribution at every stage of the study, from conceptualisation to final analysis, has been invaluable. We would also like to acknowledge the support of the local law enforcement officers, who ensured that our field visits were conducted smoothly.

Our profound gratitude goes out to the tea garden managers and their staff, who were extremely cooperative during our fieldwork. Their openness and willingness to provide detailed information about the working conditions and challenges faced by the workers made this study more robust and insightful. Furthermore, we would like to express our appreciation to the field investigators—Ms Smriti Chettri, Ms Priyanka Biswakarma, and Mr Gagan Lama—whose dedication and hard work were instrumental in collecting valuable data from the respondents—their ability to connect with the workers and bring forth in-depth insights greatly enriched the study.

Finally, we extend our heartfelt thanks to the workers themselves, who, despite their busy schedules, took the time to share their experiences and challenges with us. This study would not have been possible without their cooperation, and we hope our findings will improve their lives and working conditions.



## Chapter 1: Introduction

### 1.1 The context

Tea is one of the oldest industry in India. It has numerous implications for India's economy. First, it fulfils the internal demand for tea. It employs over 11 lakh people directly and the same number of people indirectly. Second, it brings forex through trade. Third, it boosts tourism and the local economy. About two hundred years ago, Major Rober Bruce discovered tea plants in India, and after that, tea cultivation spread in several parts of the country (Ukers, 1935). Today, Assam is the largest tea-producer state in India, employing more than 6 lakh workers, followed by West Bengal, employing over 3.3 lakh workers (PIB, 2019). In West Bengal, the first tea garden was established in 1841 by William Campbell (Parida & Kumari, 2021; Roy & Biswas, 2018). In the beginning, the plantation workers were brought from the present states of Jharkhand, Bihar, Odisha, and the neighbouring country Nepal (Bhowmik, 2015a; Gothoskar, 2012; Roy & Biswas, 2018; Siegmann, 2023). Subsequently, another British agent began to cultivate tea plants at the Kurseong range, and by the end of the 20th century, the number of gardens had increased to more than 50. Initially, the workers recruited were not provided with proper facilities.

**Table 1.1: Provisions of the Plantation Labour Act**

S. No.	Provisions	Specific facility
1.	Health	a. Drinking water b. Toilets c. Conservancy d. Medical facilities
2.	Welfare	a. Canteens b. Creche c. Recreation facilities d. Educational facilities e. Housing facilities
3.	Hours and limitations of employment	a. Weekly holidays b. The daily interval for rest
4.	Leave and wages	a. Annual leave with wages b. Sickness and maternity benefits

Source: GoI, 1951

However, in time, especially after independence, the condition of workers attracted the attention of the policymakers, and the government enacted the Plantation Labour Act of 1951. This act is a landmark legislation for the welfare of plantation workers (Besky, 2017; Bhowmik, 2015a, 2015b; Wal, 2008). It ensures the basic needs and welfare of plantation workers, including those in the tea gardens/ estates. The main provisions of the act can be categorised into four groups, presented in Table 1.1.

The act applies to tea gardens operating over 25 acres of land and employing more than



thirty workers. The act makes it mandatory for employers to provide housing, ration, firewood, drinking water, toilet, health care, primary education in case of 30 or more children, hospital in case of 500 or more workers, crèche facility in case of 50 or more women workers and subsidised canteen in case of 150 or more workers (Besky, 2017; Bhowmik, 2015b; Wal, 2008; GoI, 1951). These workers are entitled to other benefits like gratuity and provident funds (Wal, 2008).

There have been several studies in the past that have focused on various aspects related to the socioeconomic condition of workers in the tea plantation sector in India, including social security, socioeconomic situation, education, wages, etc. (Besky, 2017; Bhowmik, 2015a, 2015b; Gothoskar, 2012; Mishra et al., 2008; Raj, 2023; Sarkar, 2015; Wal, 2008). Those studies further claim that the tea gardens are situated in isolation, and workers are usually cut off from society (Besky, 2017; Bhowmik, 2015a, 2015b; Gothoskar, 2012; Mishra et al., 2008; Raj, 2023; Sarkar, 2015; Wal, 2008). Here, it is essential to mention that these gardens were in remote areas from the beginning; gradually, due to urban spreads, along with improved means of communication (i.e., transportation and telecom), the interaction of habitations in the plantations has increased over the years. Some of these studies have been listed in Table 1.2, which discusses the various aspects of the tea industry. However, most of the studies listed below do not have a robust methodological framework; the generalisations made are based on inadequate observations.

**Table 1.2: Studies highlight the problems of the Tea Industry**

Author	Period covered & type of the study	Key aspects focused
Besky (2017)	Contemporary Discussion on Tea 2030	Various aspects of the tea industry are discussed at length, such as labour-related issues, price determination, the situation of tea factories, and the industry
Bhowmik (2015)	Historical context and visits in 2013-2015; Field-based observations	The living conditions of the plantation workers, basic amenities, wages and working conditions
Bhowmik (2015b)	2009-2015, Secondary data-based study	A comparison of wages for plantation workers, including those in the tea gardens, between northern and southern parts of India
Gothoskar (2012)	Post-independence to 2011-12. Specific methodology is not mentioned	Status of working conditions and social security for tea plantation workers
Mishra <i>et al</i> (2008)	Post-globalisation in India to 2016-17; Management Case	The operation of the tea industry is not competitive with the global market, and rising operational costs are reasons for closure; lack of non-farm diversification in employment among the households living in the tea gardens



Author	Period covered & type of the study	Key aspects focused
Raj (2023)	2009-2018; Ethnographic study	Working conditions of tea plantation workers in the southern part of India
Roy and Biswas (2018)	2000-2015; Case study	Competitiveness of tea estates in India at the global level; Lack of diversification in other sectors of the economy
Sarkar (2015)	Case study of West Bengal and Assam	Competitiveness of tea estates in India at the global level; Systemic factors responsible for lack of diversification into non-farm employment among the households
Siegmann (2023)	2016; An empirical study based on a mixed method	Political economy of fairtrade policies; study of comparative advantage to the management; Gender aspects of working in the tea gardens
Wal (2008)	2006-2008: A cross-country analysis of six major tea producers	Status of the working conditions for plantation workers, basic amenities, education, etc.

Source: Authors' compilation based on available literature

**Table 1.3: The potential of the tea industry, changing land use patterns, and gender roles**

Author	Period covered & nature of industry data	Key aspects focused
Mita (2004)	Ethnographic	Females dominate the tea plantation sector in West Bengal; They play dual roles as workers and also manage familial roles
Datta (2018)	Cross-sectional study	The potential of tea tourism is immense for boosting the local economy
Parida and Kumari (2021)	2000-2020; Satellite-based mapping of the tea industry	The acreage and production of tea increased during the studied duration mainly due to market demand
Rasaily (2013)	2004-2008; Mixed method	The land use pattern is changing in the tea plantation, affecting the employment of garden workers
Rudra (2018)	Case study	High cost of production and rising global competition

Source: Authors' compilation based on available literature

A Study on 'Colonial and Neo-Liberal Trajectories of Plantation Labour in the Dooars of West Bengal' contends that the tea industry was founded on the use of colonial capital, unfree labour, and isolated territory that existed for a long time (Sarkar, 2019). Though Indian tea has been utilising cheap labour for a long time, in the post-globalisation phase, it has become less competitive due to the high cost of production. This further pushes management to cut costs, particularly labour costs by disengaging labour (Mita, 2004; Rasaily, 2013; Rudra, 2018). The changing land use patterns and gender roles in

the sector are other relevant issues (Datta, 2018; Parida & Kumari, 2021). Table 1.3 shows some studies that discuss the potential of the tea industry, changing land use patterns, and gender roles.

## 1.2 Tea industry in West Bengal

The economy of West Bengal, mainly North Bengal, heavily depends on Tea (Roy & Biswas, 2018). West Bengal is the second-largest tea-producer state in India (Tea Board, 2022). Its Darjeeling tea, produced in the Darjeeling tea district, is known for its unique taste and has global demand. The tea industry of West Bengal has gone through numerous ups and downs. In the era of globalisation, many tea gardens could not survive. They failed to stand against the global competition and meet the operational costs (Dey, 2018; Roy & Biswas, 2018; Rudra, 2018; Wal, 2008). The closure of tea has affected tea production and the lives of the garden workers. Several studies have reported that many workers were forced to migrate or move out post-closure, while those who stayed have faced further challenges (Bhowmik, 2015a; Roy & Biswas, 2018; Sarkar, 2019).

The total number of big tea estates in West Bengal was 451, covering an area of 114410.47 hectares (Tea Board, 2018; Tea Board, 2019). More than half of the estates are located in the Dooars area, followed by the Hill area and Terai region. The Board also gives figures about small growers and the area under them.

## 1.3 Distribution of workers in the tea industry

Tea is a labour-intensive industry and, hence, requires many workers. According to the Tea Board, the total number of tea plantation workers was estimated to be about 3.4 lakhs, most of whom were permanent workers, i.e., nearly 72 percent (PIB, 2019). At the same time, nearly 1 lakh temporary workers comprised the remaining 28 percent. In a survey conducted by the Labour Department, Government of West Bengal in 2013, the total population, depending on the plantation sector, was estimated to be 11,24,907 in all the areas, namely the Hill, the Terai, and Dooars (GoWB, 2013). The figures in Table 1.4 show the distribution of Tea Plantation workers in terms of the nature of employment.

**Table 1.4: Distribution of workers by permanent and non-permanent status in West Bengal, 2019**

Status	Total Workers	Male Workers	Female Workers	% of Females
Permanent	242294	104873	137421	56.71
Temporary	98341	29633	68708	69.9
% Permanent	71.1	78.0	66.7	-

Source: Tea Board (2019)

**Table 1.5: Distribution of workers in the tea industry by type, West Bengal, 2022-23**

Type of Tea Industry	Sex	Numbers (in thousands)					Percentage				
		SE: OA/E	SE: UFW	RS	CL	All	SE: OA/E	SE: UFW	RS	CL	All
Plantation	Male	30.2	1.7	240.7	64.3	336.9	9.0	0.5	71.4	19.1	100
	Female	0.0	19.7	247.5	151.1	418.2	0.0	4.7	59.2	36.1	100
	Person	30.2	21.3	488.2	215.4	755.1	4.0	2.8	64.7	28.5	100

Type of Tea Industry	Sex	Numbers (in thousands)					Percentage				
		SE: OA/E	SE: UFW	RS	CL	All	SE: OA/E	SE: UFW	RS	CL	All
Manufacturing	Male	0.0	0.0	69.8	0.0	69.8	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	100
	Female	0.0	0.0	2.5	0.0	2.5	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	100
	Person	0.0	0.0	72.3	0.0	72.3	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	100
Total	Male	30.2	1.7	310.5	64.3	406.7	7.4	0.4	76.3	15.8	100
	Female	0.0	19.7	249.9	151.1	420.6	0.0	4.7	59.4	35.9	100
	Person	30.2	21.3	560.4	215.4	827.3	3.7	2.6	67.7	26.0	100

Source: Unit Level Data, Periodic Labour Force Survey, 2022-23, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India

Notes: SE: OA/E - Self-employed: Own Account/ Employer; SE: UFW - Self-employed Unpaid Family Worker; RS - Regular Salaried; CL - Casual Labourer

The proportion of female workers was more significant in absolute terms, especially in the case of temporary employment, it was nearly 70 percent. The engagement of male workers is lesser than that of females, and in percentage terms, more males are permanently employed. The plantation workers can be further classified in terms of their activity, such as growing tea (this includes propagation, irrigation, plucking, and pruning) and tea processing or manufacturing (the entire process of making the final product). Most females are employed in growing tea, while males are engaged in processing. Table 1.5 shows this classification of workers in the tea Industry of West Bengal during 2022-23 using the latest available Periodic Labour Force Survey data. The table shows that 59.2 per cent of regular workers growing and plucking tea are females. In tea, females outnumber males in both regular and casual work. Further, most of the unpaid family work is carried out by women. On the other hand, tea processing is highly male-dominated; 96.5 per cent of the workers are male, and all are regular salaried. Apart from tea, males from this region are also involved in small businesses and self-employment related to the tea sector.

#### 1.4 Research questions and objectives of the study

As discussed earlier, since the available literature is mostly based on small observations having poor methodological frameworks, this study seeks to find detailed answers to the following research questions by taking an adequate sample size for quantitative surveys along with qualitative inquiries. These surveys were quite detailed, extensive, and comprehensive in terms of both coverage and information collected.

- (1) What are the various social security and welfare schemes and benefits available for the workers in the tea plantation sector of West Bengal? and
- (2) What is the coverage status under such schemes, and what are the key challenges in implementation?

The objective of this report is to critically examine the benefits and their coverage thereof provided to the workers in the tea plantations of the West Bengal region. The study evaluates the extent to which various statutory, non-statutory, and scheme-based benefits are accessible to the workers in the tea plantations. It also analyses the efficacy of government schemes in providing benefits and ensuring decent working conditions and the welfare of the workers.



## 1.5 Structure of the report

This report is organised into five chapters. The first chapter outlines the context of the study and provides a review of past literature, research questions, and objectives of the study. The second chapter discusses the methodology and description of the data. The third chapter discusses the working conditions of plantation labour. Chapter four discusses the living conditions of the plantation workers and their access to social security schemes. Chapter five concludes the study and provides policy guidelines.



## Chapter 2: Data and methodology

### 2.1 Introduction

Although tea is one of the oldest industries in India and has been researched well, numerous issues still have not been appropriately addressed. For instance, the work conditions of plantation workers are one such issue. In this study, we first used secondary information and data to understand the tea industry in general, whereas the primary data was also collected to understand the present scenario of the plantation workers.

The Tea Board of India (a statutory body of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India, under section 4 of the Tea Act 1953), the State Labour Department of West Bengal, and the Periodic Labour Force Survey are the secondary sources of information on production and labour related aspects of the industry. We heavily relied on it for our sampling frame as well, while we utilised reports from the government, non-government institutions, and peer-reviewed journal articles to provide background information for this study. We collected primary data from the plantation workers and tea garden managers to understand the work conditions and access to social security benefits.

### 2.2 Work structure of the tea industry

This section discusses the tea industry's various activities and work structures. In general, there are two types of tea gardens. The ones managed under the plantation act are usually big tea gardens, called organised tea gardens, and the smaller ones, known as unorganised tea gardens. There are also two types of workers viz. permanent and temporary. Permanent workers are entitled to statutory social security benefits (as provided under existing social security legislations), other than wages, which incur additional costs to the management, while temporary workers are compensated on a daily wage basis and are eligible for getting benefits under various flagship social security and welfare schemes of the government of India and West Bengal. Only organised gardens hire permanent workers. Temporary workers are hired when they need extra hands in the field.

On the other hand, the unorganised tea gardens are small in acreage and hire only temporary workers. These workers are not provided with any facilities like permanent workers. Hence, the operational cost of small tea gardens is low. The leaves plucked in organised tea gardens are processed for final output in a tea factory often owned by them, while an unorganised garden sells the leaves to a factory. The final product, made tea, can be sold directly in an open market or at an auction organised by the Tea Board.

### 2.3 Description of tea districts

The sampling frame of this study consists of three tea districts in West Bengal- Darjeeling, Terai, and Dooars- as defined by the Tea Board of India. These districts are classified based on the altitude and geographical position of the tea gardens. Each district has a distinct product and market value of its produce. According to the latest Tea Board statistics for 2022-23, Dooars produces the highest and the least by Darjeeling. However, the



demand for Darjeeling tea is unmatched; therefore, it has a distinct place in the market. A brief note on three tea districts of West Bengal is as follows:

1. **Darjeeling:** Tea estates or gardens of the Darjeeling district are at high altitudes; they are also called hills. Tiny leaves are manually plucked and processed primarily through orthodox methods, making the production cost high and productivity low. The Darjeeling tea has a separate client base and Geographical Indication (GI) tag due to its unique taste and aroma. Tea produced here gets a very high price in the auction due to its high demand. Green tea and orthodox tea are prepared in Darjeeling.
2. **Terai:** Terai's tea gardens are situated in the foothills. The yield in this region is high. Crush, Tear, and Curl (CTC) and Orthodox tea are produced here.
3. **Dooars:** Dooars are the third tea district of West Bengal, where tea production is massive. Dooars are the region along the mountains and plains near the Indo-Bhutan border. It is the gateway to the Northeast states of India and Bhutan. The economy of dooars depends on tea, tourism, and timber.

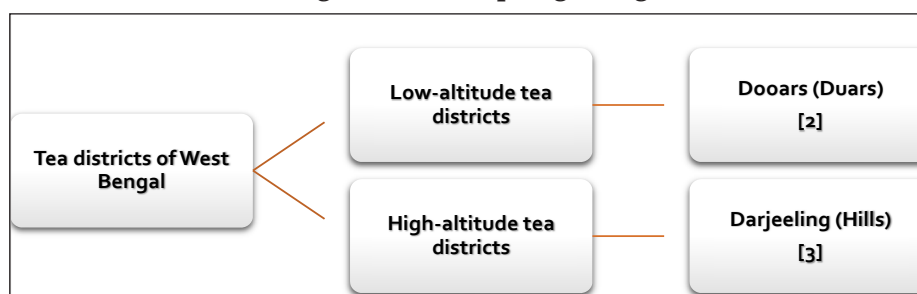
## 2.4 Sampling design

We employed a purposive sampling technique to select two tea districts out of three based on the following two criteria:

- a) **Geographical position:** Here, we considered the altitudes of the tea gardens. The tea gardens of Darjeeling are at high altitudes, while most of the tea gardens of Dooars and Terai are at the foot of hills or relatively low altitudes.
- b) **Productivity of Tea Districts:** The distinct size of tea leaf selection criterion while plucking affects the productivity of the tea. The Darjeeling tea requires more effort and time to produce the output than the tea of Dooars and Terai; therefore, the productivity is low. Among Dooars and Terai, the productivity of the Dooars region is high and cost-effective.

Based on the above two criteria, we selected two districts – Darjeeling and Dooars. Darjeeling is a high-altitude district with a low productivity level, and Dooars is a low-altitude district with the highest produce in the state. The research team visited seven operational tea gardens in these two districts: three in Darjeeling and four in Dooars. Here, we randomly selected five tea gardens on different terrains: three in Darjeeling and two in Dooars. To capture the diverse opinions and socioeconomic conditions of plantation workers and to reach a representative sample, we randomly interviewed the workers. A pictorial representation of the sampling design is presented in Figure 2.1.

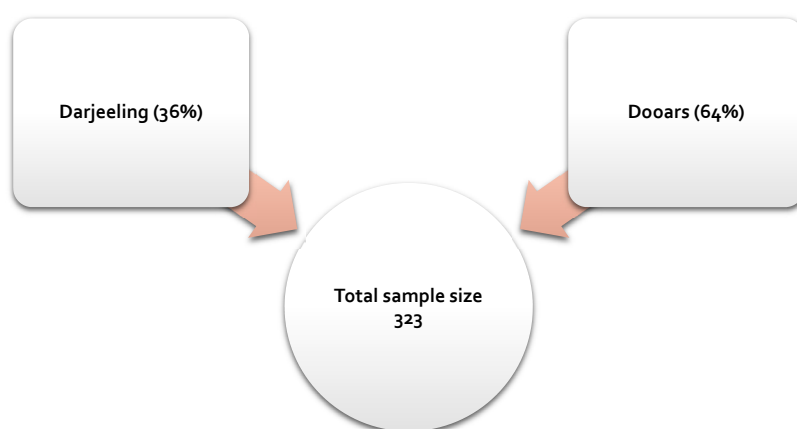
**Figure 2.1: Sampling design**



Note: 2 and 3 are the number of gardens surveyed in respective tea districts.

Key Person Interviews (KPIs) and Focused Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted with garden managers and their supporting staff to get their points of view on the issues in consideration. The management team of the gardens was inquired through both structured and unstructured questionnaires. We also had discussions with a few Tea Board officials and researchers specialising in the tea plantation sector. In addition to this, more than three hundred individuals took part in the qualitative inquiry through general discussions, FGDs, and KPIs. The structured survey was conducted with 323 tea garden workers in different estates; 64 percent of interviews were with workers in Dooars and 36 percent in Darjeeling. A pictorial representation of the sample size is presented in Figure 2.2.

**Figure 2.2: Sample size**



The names of the tea gardens are not mentioned to maintain the research ethics and anonymity. Pictures of two visited tea gardens are shown below in Figure 2.3.

**Figure 2.3: Tea Garden of Darjeeling and Dooars**







Source: Primary survey.

Note: the first picture at the top is from Darjeeling, and the second picture at the bottom is from Dooars.

## 2.5 Description of data

The tea gardens are generally situated in places far from the district headquarters and surrounded by other tea estates, making them a principal economic activity of the region. Many people in such areas depend directly and indirectly on tea. Small businesses and shops are also run by locals whose primary customers are plantation workers and sometimes tourists.

**Figure 2.4: A group picture of the respondents from one of the tea garden**



Source: Primary survey.



The average age of these surveyed workers was 49 years, and they all were adults aged 25 to 69. Unlike other industries, women not only outnumbered males but they also are preferred over males. In our survey, 66.3 percent of the respondents were females, and with an average age of 49 years and 25 years of work experience, they belonged to the age group of 27 to 64 years. On the other hand, the average age of males was 49.2 years, work experience was 26.4 years, and their age group ranged from 25 to 69 years.

A majority of the workers were Hindu (79.6 percent), followed by Christian (7.4 percent), Muslim (2.8 percent), and Others (10.2 percent). The majority, 66.9 percent, of respondents belonged to Scheduled Tribes, 10.5 percent to Scheduled Castes, 8.4 percent to Other Backward Castes (OBCs), and 14.2 percent to other social groups. The average household size was 4.6 persons. Table 2.1 shows the religion and social group of respondents.

**Table 2.1 Religion and social group of respondents**

Religion	Social Group				
	SC	ST	OBC	Others	All
Hindu	23	180	24	30	257 (79.6)
Islam	05	04	00	00	09 (2.8)
Christian	05	02	02	15	24 (7.4)
Others	01	30	01	01	33 (10.2)
All	34 (10.5)	216 (66.9)	27 (8.4)	46 (14.2)	323 (100)

Source: Authors calculation based on field survey

Note: The value in parenthesis shows the percentage

## 2.6 Education

The Plantation Labour Act of 1951 ensures the welfare of the plantation workers. Under this act, garden management is supposed to provide various amenities to the workers. Free primary education is one of its components. Although Aanganbari Kendra and primary school were there, many kids were sent to private schools near the estates.

On the other hand, the respondents themselves were not much educated. About 14.6 percent of workers were illiterate, 22.3 percent could not complete primary schooling, 35.3 percent had studied up to the primary level, and 20.4 percent were studied up to the middle level of schooling. Table 2.2 provides insight into the education of the respondents. At different levels of education, male respondents are more educated than females; even the number of illiterates is far less in the case of males. Further, only 5.1 percent of females were educated up to secondary level or above out of the total 214 females or 323 respondents, suggesting a biased familial/societal attitude towards women's education.

**Table 2.2: Education level of respondents**

Gender	Level of Education				
	Illiterate	Below Primary	Primary	Middle	Secondary or above
Male	3.7	14.7	38.5	31.2	11.9
Female	20.1	26.2	33.6	15	5.1
Total	14.6	22.3	35.3	20.4	7.4

Source: Primary survey

## 2.7 Languages

The plantation workers in Darjeeling and Dooars are not very educated but can speak more than one language. Bengali is the most common language in West Bengal. However, the people in the hills of Darjeeling speak Nepali. Most people speak Bengali, Nepali, and Hindi, while educated children also know English.

## 2.8 Summary

In this chapter, we discussed the source of our data and the detailed methodology that we employed in the study to conduct the qualitative survey in the tea gardens in Darjeeling and Dooars. The chapter also presents a description of the age, social and religious composition of plantation workers, and their education level. In the next chapter, we discuss the working conditions of the plantation workers.



## Chapter 3: Working Conditions of Plantation Workers

### 3.1 Introduction

In plantation work, two kinds of workers are employed: permanent and temporary. Permanent workers are entitled to statutory and non-statutory benefits other than wages. They get housing, water supply, firewood, and other essential amenities from their employers. They are responsible for various activities in a tea garden, primarily plucking tea leaves.

Although the benefits extended to the permanent workers seem promising, their difficulties also need careful consideration. A worker in the tea plantation receives a daily wage of 250 rupees with additional support in terms of ration, water supply, housing, education for children, and medical care, to mention a few. However, one member's earnings can be insufficient for a family. It has been discussed adequately by the researchers (Besky, 2017; Bhowmik, 2015a; Mishra et al., 2011; Raj, 2023; K. Sarkar, 2015). As observed in the minimum wage circular of the Labour Department, Government of West Bengal (dated 12/12/2023), the minimum daily wages being provided to the tea plantation workers were found even lesser than the minimum daily wage for the unskilled agricultural labourer i.e., 312 rupees excluding food and 290 with food (GoWB, 2023). The minimum wage rates for tea plantations are not notified by the labour department as it is determined through a tripartite dialogue process/ agreement in which the government, tea garden management, and trade unions are involved.

The tea garden does not employ other family members; employment opportunities are unavailable locally. In these circumstances, people of young age migrate to far places such as Kerala, Bangalore, Chennai, Delhi, and Mumbai, and a few of them also migrate to gulf countries (Roy & Biswas, 2018).

### 3.2 Historical context

In West Bengal, tea plantation was started in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Initially, the Britishers brought workers from Nepal, Jharkhand, Bihar, Odisha, and other places far away.<sup>3</sup> Over the years, they lost ties with their origin and permanently settled there. Since the migrants were from various locations, they bagged different social, cultural, religious, and linguistic identities. In later years, they formed a multicultural, diverse society. Today, people with various social and cultural practices are living together. They maintain marital ties locally, and they help each other.

### 3.3 Working condition

Tea is a labour-intensive industry, where the entire process of planting tea to the finished product, called made tea, requires abundant human resources (Sarkar, 2019; Wal, 2008). In this

<sup>3</sup> About 200 years ago, Britishers forcefully brought people from far places like Nepal and modern-day states such as Jharkhand, Bihar, Odisha, and North Eastern states. These forced workers helped them commercially run the plantation and keep the production cost low. These workers lived in extreme poverty and adverse situations. Although the problem remained the same for a more extended period, the conditions of these workers started to change only after India's independence when the union government brought the Plantation Labour Act of 1951. The act provided an extended safety net against the exploitative behaviour of management and ensured basic facilities for the plantation workers (Besky, 2017; Sarkar, 2019; Siegmann, 2023).



section, we briefly explain the activities of a tea garden and how people work, followed by the details of working conditions in the surveyed tea gardens.

Tea can be grown in two ways: first through seed and second through cutting and replanting. The new plant would be able to give an expected yield after three to five years and may last up to 50 or more years. Once the plucking is started, tea needs proper care, such as timely pruning, adequate irrigation, and pest control; the plucked leaves need to be processed on the same day, or else its taste (quality) degrades. The plucking season lasts from April to September, and pruning is conducted from October to January; pest control is a continuous process. Further, plants need to be saved from drought or water-logging situations (Gothoskar, 2012; Mita, 2004; Nandy, 2005; S. Sarkar, 2019; Wal, 2008). A trained workforce must always be present in the tea garden. For this reason, many workers are encouraged to stay inside the tea garden, and the management fulfils their basic needs. It does not imply that a worker is assigned a 24/7 job; instead, there are various categories of workers whose primary jobs are fixed.

Our survey found that the majority of workers are responsible for plucking the leaves. These workers are supposed to pluck specific types of leaves (two new leaves along with a bud and, in the case of white tea, only a bud). These workers keep a basket or a bag to carry the green leaves. On average, one person plucks 25 kilograms (kgs) of green leaves, depending on season and region, for which the person gets 250 rupees a day. Workers are paid per kg basis for leaves plucked beyond 25 kg (for 25 to 31 kg, they are paid 3 rupees a kg; from 31 to 40 kg, they are paid 3.5 rupees a kg).

Since this work is laborious and tiring, every worker gets a break after three to four hours, and the total time does not exceed eight hours a day. Further, all workers get a weekly off day on Sunday, while all working activities remain suspended during festivals. We visited a garden on Sunday and cross-checked that it was an off day.

Field survey data reveals that the plantation workers were between 25 and 69 years old, and there were no cases of child labour; this claim is further supported by the latest available official data as well (i.e., PLFS data for 2022-23). Few people are assigned the task of spraying pesticides, and they spray in different parts of the garden where the plucking activity is not going on. In the case of organic plantations, pesticides are not used.

Plantation workers are given protective equipment to ease their work in adverse climatic situations such as during rain, cold, or sun; some items are distributed yearly, while others are distributed in alternate years. We found that 20.7 percent of workers have not received protective equipment. A list of such equipment we saw being distributed in surveyed tea gardens is presented in Table 3.1.

**Table 3.1: Protective equipment provided by the garden management**

Twice in a year	Once in a year	Alternate years
- Handkerchief or <i>Rumaal</i>	- Sleeper (in Plains) or Gum Boots (in hills) - <i>Tarpaulin</i> or apron (Plastic sheet to cover body also called ' <i>Tirpal</i> ' locally) - Basket	- Umbrella - Blanket - Gloves (in hills)

Source: Primary Survey.

### 3.4 Wages, bonuses and benefits

As discussed earlier, the wages of the workers are determined through a tripartite agreement where representatives from the government, tea gardens, and trade unions participate. We found an average wage rate of 250 rupees daily in all the surveyed gardens. When we inquired about the disbursement of wages on time, the workers stated that they received wages on time and that they received them in their bank accounts. The garden management said that they provide wages timely; however, it gets delayed rarely.

In the survey, the average monthly salary in Darjeeling was INR 5850, while in Dooars, it was INR 7000. The main reason for this difference in monthly wage is that in Darjeeling, yield is low due to the tiny nature of leaves and lower weights, while in Dooars, leaves weigh more; hence, a worker earns more by plucking extra leaves. Further, the hilly terrains make it challenging to pluck leaves in Darjeeling.

#### Box 3.1: The labour cost is meagre in tea plantations, so why is this sector not doing well?

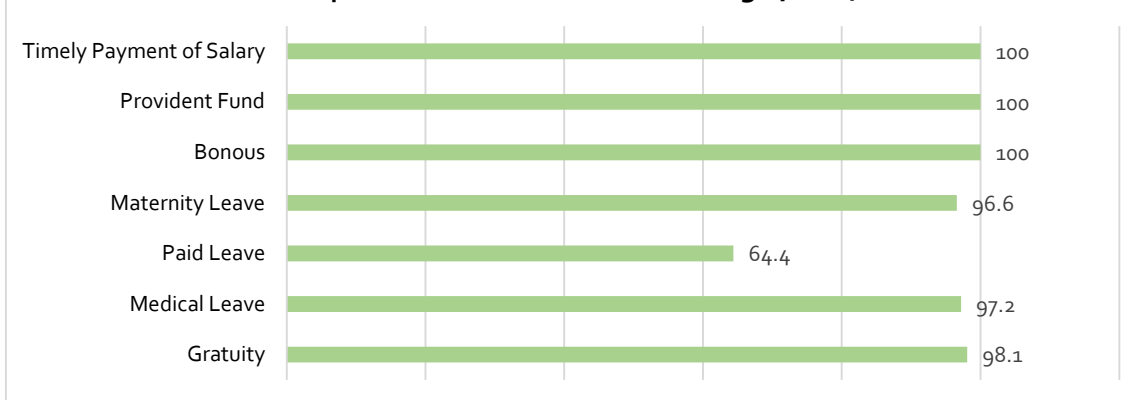
Garden Manager: “The wage on the plantation is low, but the expenses for benefits like housing, water, health, etc., are enormous. The workers compare the wages in the tea and other sectors, and they often go out to earn more, which leads to absenteeism.

The cost of production has rapidly increased due to the rise in the cost of fertiliser and other inputs, and we often face a shortage of it. At the same time, the cost of made tea has marginally increased. Furthermore, no minimum price is determined for tea, making it difficult for the producers to get a decent return.”

The garden also gives bonuses during the *Durga Pooja* festival. The tripartite agreement decides the actual range of bonuses between 8.33 percent and 20 percent of total annual earnings. So, a worker who has worked more in a year is entitled to a bigger bonus. All workers said that they received bonuses last year.

For the last few years, wages have been regularly credited to workers’ accounts; they all have Provident Fund accounts<sup>1</sup>. Employees’ Provident Fund or EPF is a long-term savings scheme

**Figure 3.1: Percentage access to various provisions among the tea plantation workers in West Bengal, 2024**



Source: Primary survey.

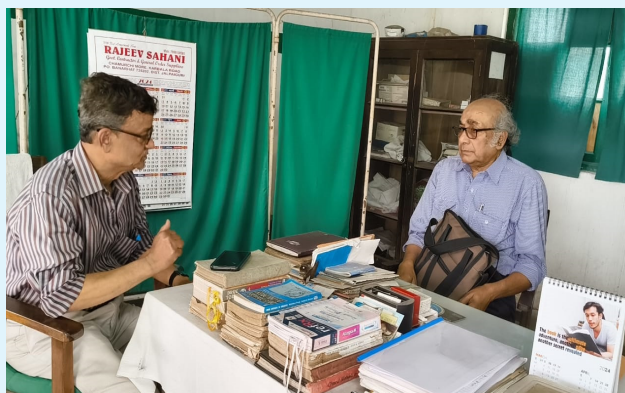
Note: N= 323

introduced by the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) under the supervision of the Government of India. The EPF scheme aims to provide financial security post-retirement. In the plantation sector, workers are eligible for this EPF scheme. A contribution made in this scheme provides a compounded return in the future. In addition, most of the workers reported that there is a provision for gratuity<sup>2</sup>; however, 2 percent said they would not receive it.

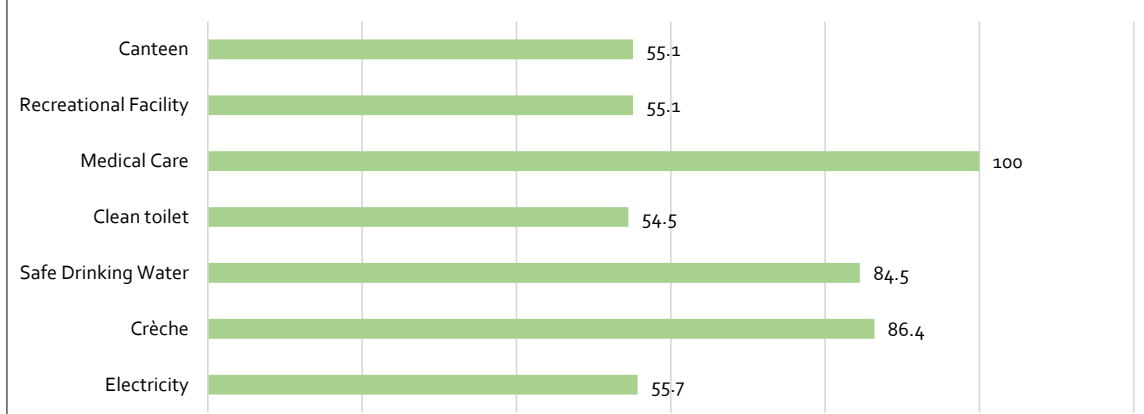
Regarding leave-related issues, 97.2 percent of the respondents have access to medical leave, while only 64.4 percent can get paid leave in non-medical cases. The female plantation workers also get maternity leave for 182 days for the first two children and 84 days for the third or more. Nearly 97 percent of the total respondents reported that there is a provision for maternity leave. Figure 3.1 shows the percentage of workers having access to different work benefits among all 323 surveyed workers. All respondents said that they have no health insurance from their employer. However, the garden provides basic medical facilities. In case of emergency or critical cases, workers are sent to referral hospitals.

### Box 3.2: What kind of patients often come for consultation?

Doctor: "Most people come with symptoms of fever and gas. Last year, we witnessed mosquito-related cases. In the last few years, especially after COVID-19, many people have been having issues of neck and back pain, and females are having menstrual irregularities. Neck and Back pain may be a symptom of occupational diseases associated with Musculoskeletal disorders (MSD). Other than this, cases of Tuberculosis are also common here; there are 16-17 positive cases of Tuberculosis."



**Figure 3.2: Access to essential amenities at work place in the tea plantations of West Bengal, 2024**



Source: Primary survey.

Note: N=323



**Figure 3.3a and 3.3b: Canteen and tea shops in a tea garden (above and below, respectively)**



Source: Primary survey.

Tea gardens provide some essential amenities to workers, ensuring workplace safety and hygiene. We asked a few questions about workplace amenities and found that these facilities are provided in a few tea gardens, while some have inadequate arrangements. A medical facility was available near all the tea gardens, and there was a crèche facility too for women. Nearly 45 percent of the total respondents reported the absence of a canteen and a recreational facility in the plantations. However, it is essential to mention that the demand for canteens is minimal in rural areas, and people go home during breaks<sup>3</sup>. In addition, only 54.5 percent had access to a clean toilet. The majority of the households (82 percent) have access





to safe drinking water (piped). Figure 3.2 describes access to amenities at the workplace, and Figure 3.3 shows a canteen and a tea shop in one of the surveyed tea gardens.

### **3.5 Issues related to livelihood diversification, skill upgradation, unemployment, migration, absenteeism, etc.**

Lack of opportunities to diversify in different economic activities locally, along with growing unemployment among the youth, is the central issue of the tea plantations, as reported by the respondents. On one side, the gardens do not provide employment opportunities to more than one member, and on the other side, one member's income is insufficient to meet the household's needs. In such a situation, migration of other household members occurs on a large scale, preferably among youth. Many respondents said they need local employment opportunities for their children so they do not have to migrate to far places such as Kerala, Tamilnadu, Mumbai, and Delhi. The migration of women is not uncommon. Women also migrate for employment, generally engaging in household work in urban centres like Delhi and Mumbai. In the survey, we do not find such migrants, but such migration trends have long existed and have been reported in past studies (Sarkar, 2019). Few people opined that some vocational training related to small and cottage industries, tailoring work, handicrafts, etc. can be beneficial for the workers to earn more and diversify their household's income.

On the other hand, garden management is witnessing absenteeism, affecting plucking and yield. In such cases, management hires temporary workers. It is also argued that many workers continue to work in the gardens because their families will be evicted if they do not work, and they have no other place to go as they do not have adequate skills, education, and know-how to easily adapt themselves to other alternative jobs. In such a situation, the housing scheme acts as a barrier for a few plantation workers to look for and diversify into other activities, upgrading and expanding their skills and scope. However, it does not pertain to any potential situation/ form of slavery or exploitation by the employers.

### **3.6 Summary**

This chapter discusses the working conditions of the plantation workers and the various amenities available to them. A discussion on growing unemployment and migration is also given. The study found that the workers in the tea plantations of West Bengal have fair access to both statutory and non-statutory benefits as envisaged in the Plantation Labour Act of 1951. The workers are provided with benefits such as a provident fund, annual bonus, gratuity, maternity leave, and paid leave. They also receive amenities such as protective clothing, drinking water, medical care, etc. The next chapter discusses the living conditions of the plantation workers and their access to social security.



## Chapter 4: Living Conditions, Access to Social Security and Welfare Schemes

### 4.1 Introduction

The activities related to production and sale are monitored by government agencies like the Tea Board of India. At the same time, the labour department looks upon activities associated with labour, such as working conditions, decent wages, basic amenities, and the overall welfare of workers. Although the industry has been there for about two hundred years, the history of this sector is not glorious, at least in terms of its foundation on exploitative labour conditions in the past. Like any other industry in colonial days, the British forced native people, especially from places like Nepal, Jharkhand, Bihar, Odisha, and North Eastern states, into tea plantation activities (Besky, 2017; Bhowmik, 2015a, 2015b; Gothoskar, 2012; Mishra et al., 2008; Raj, 2023; Wal, 2008).

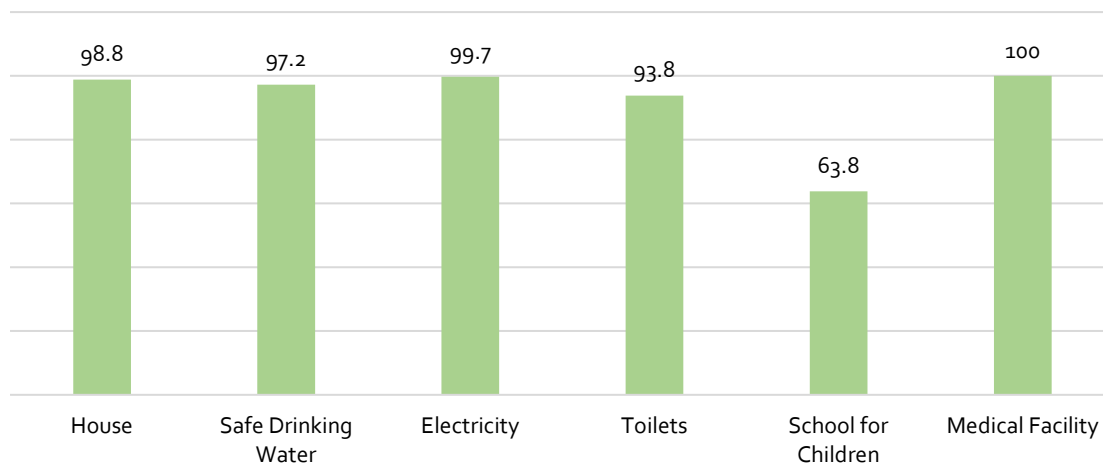
The entire process of the tea industry is laborious and labour-intensive; despite that, the welfare of workers, the most crucial input, was overlooked. The first attempt to incentivise the workers came through the Plantation Labour Act of 1951 of the Government of India. The Act not only promised a decent wage to the workers but also ensured their living and basic amenities within the premises of a tea garden (Besky, 2017; Bhowmik, 2015a, 2015b; Wal, 2008). The state government has the authority to implement the Plantation Labour Act. From time to time, the Union government, through the Tea Board of India and the state government through various schemes, have supported the industry.

In this study, we surveyed the tea gardens of Darjeeling and Dooars, the two tea districts of West Bengal, to understand the day-to-day life, socioeconomic conditions of tea plantation workers, and access to social security and welfare schemes among them.

### 4.2 Living Conditions of Workers

The permanent employees of the tea gardens are entitled to housing amenities within the garden premises. Our study found that 98.8 percent of workers were provided houses by the garden management, whereas 1.2 percent had their arrangements. These houses were equipped with a safe water supply (tap water); however, nine households reported a problem related to it. The toilet facilities were not there in 6.2 percent of houses. Electrification was completed in nearly all houses of the tea garden. A common medical facility arranged by the management was there in each garden surveyed. Figure 4.1 summarises the housing and living conditions of the plantation workers in graphical form. All the respondents in the Darjeeling tea district stated that there is no school near the tea garden, while in the Dooar region, there were a free primary school and several Aanganwari centres.

**Figure 4.1: Status (coverage in percentage) of housing and living conditions of the Plantation workers in West Bengal, 2024**



Source: Primary survey.

Note: N=323

#### Box 4.1: Why all the children are going to a private school?

**Tea garden workers:** “*ab sab kuch English me hota hai, bina English sikhe bachhon ko Naukri nahi milega...* (Everything is in English now; our children will not get a job without learning English)”. The transportation facility is arranged by the management of a surveyed garden for the children going to an English medium school.



In the tea gardens of Dooars, we found that the workers were sending their children to a private school instead of a local free school managed by the garden. The main reason is that the families wanted to teach their kids in English medium schools. Even the garden management was providing transportation facilities for this purpose.

### 4.3 Access to social security and welfare scheme

The governments of India and West Bengal run numerous welfare schemes to provide a safety net against socioeconomic distress and life challenges. In this section, we briefly discuss the schemes that benefit plantation workers (also, please see Figure 4.2).

- 1. Public Distribution System (PDS):** The PDS scheme is essential in providing food security in India. It ensures food at affordable prices, along with other essential ration commodities (often free). In the plantation sector, land rights are skewed in favour of tea,

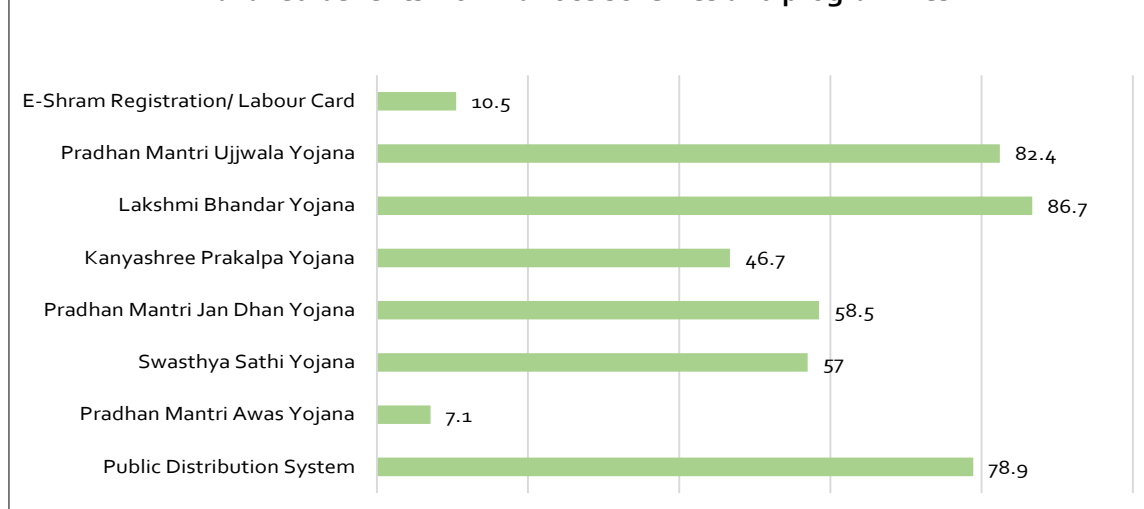


and food grain production is generally absent. In such a situation, PDS becomes vital for workers and their families. In our study, we found that 78.9 percent of the workers were receiving the ration from a PDS shop, while the rest of the respondents had no ration card to receive it. Most of the surveyed workers who were not receiving a ration were from Darjeeling.

2. **Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana** is a central government's major flagship scheme that aims to provide affordable housing to eligible households. Under the scheme, the government provides financial assistance to construct the house. Land ownership is a must to get the benefit under the scheme. Since the tea gardens in West Bengal are state government property, people are not eligible for this scheme. However, nearly 7 percent of the total respondents benefited from it. These beneficiaries managed to get a small piece of land near the tea garden.
3. **Swastya Sathi Scheme** is a major flagship health insurance scheme of the Government of West Bengal. Under this scheme, comprehensive coverage for medical treatments is provided to the residents of the state. Many empanelled hospitals provide cashless medical care. We found many beneficiaries of the scheme in the tea gardens. These 57 percent of people have a smart card to avail the benefits of the scheme.
4. **Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana** is a financial inclusion programme of the government of India. It aims to provide a banking facility to individuals left behind. In our study, we found that all the plantation workers were receiving wages, as well as a few subsidies such as that of LPG, directly in their bank accounts. A total of 58.5 percent of respondents said that they opened a bank account under this scheme.
5. **Kanyashree Prakalpa Yojana** is an initiative of the Government of West Bengal to ensure the education of girls and to delay their marriage. The target beneficiaries of the scheme are girls of 13 to 18 years of age. In our survey, 46.7 percent of respondents had a family member who benefited from this scheme.
6. **Laxmi Bhandar Scheme** is an initiative of the Government of West Bengal to provide financial assistance to poor women of working age to meet their immediate financial needs. Under this scheme, 1000 rupees is transferred monthly to the bank account of the women beneficiaries from the Scheduled Tribe community, while in the case of other social groups, the amount is 500 rupees a month. Survey data reveals that 86.7 percent of the respondents or their family members benefited from the scheme.
7. **Pradhan Mantri Ujjawala Yojana** is an initiative of the Government of India to provide free LPG connections to poor women. The objective is to provide clean cooking fuel and improve women's health and well-being. Survey data reveals that 82.4 percent of the total respondents have obtained a gas connection under this scheme. However, they also said that the cost of refilling has increased significantly, and they cannot afford it.
8. **E-shram portal registration/ labour card** is an initiative of the government of India to collect information on workers in the unorganised sector. The portal intends to provide social security and find employment opportunities. The awareness about this scheme was non-existent. It is worth noting that the portal registers only unorganised workers. In that situation, only the eligible family members of permanent workers and the

temporary workers engaged in the tea gardens and their family members, are eligible for registration.

**Figure 4.2: Percentage of respondents (their family members) availed benefits from various schemes and programmes**



Source: Primary survey.

Note: N=323

The plantation workers were not aware of the flagship schemes of the Government of India and West Bengal on old-age pensions such as Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maan Dhan Yojana, Aam Aadmi Bima Yojana, etc. In this context, it is worth noting that the plantation workers are already entitled to statutory benefits under schemes specified by the EPFO (as discussed earlier). Apart from this, there are other schemes of state and central governments, but the awareness level of the people is low; therefore, many such schemes are not reaching these plantation workers, namely Chaa Sundari Scheme, Bina Mulya Samajik Suraksha Scheme, Hasir Alo, Bandhu Yojana, etc.

#### **Box 4.2: Girls' Education and Child Marriages: Perception vs Reality**

"We do not marry our children at an early age. The situation in the garden has changed; all our children are going to school, and we are sending them to English medium schools. Some of the girls are graduates now but are not getting any employment. Our sons are migrating to Kerala and other destinations, but we can not send our girls far away. The government should create employment locally," a group of tea plantation workers.

### **4.4 Summary**

In this chapter, we discussed the living conditions of the plantation workers and their access to social security and welfare schemes. Apart from the statutory benefits, as discussed in the previous chapter, the workers are well-covered under various safety nets by both central and state governments. The workers are provided with a house and other basic amenities; however, these benefits are uneven due to physical and agro-climatic factors. The workers of Darjeeling have a comparative disadvantage in this regard as compared to those in Dooars. The majority of the workers are unaware of many schemes and policies that could help them improve their lives.





## Chapter 5: Summary and Policy Implications

### 5.1 Summary

To understand the living and working conditions of the plantation workers in detail, we surveyed 323 such workers from five different tea gardens, and we found that the lives of these workers were not uniform. Some survived on the tea garden's sole earnings, while many households whose members had migrated to work at places like Kerala, Tamilnadu, Bangalore, and Delhi provided them extra security against any financial risk.

For many plantation workers, the tea garden has been the only place to live; they have lived there for generations, and if they do not work there, their housing entitlement will be lost. Therefore, the majority of them see it as a compulsion. In addition, a section of the tea plantation workers take it as an opportunity, particularly those not having any house to live in. Apart from houses, they also receive firewood for cooking, water to drink, ration, and free primary education for children. These benefits are not given in any other similar profession. It is essential to mention that only permanent garden workers get these facilities. However, the closure of a garden curbs most of these benefits, and workers can only get a stipend from the government's Financial Assistance for the Workers of Locked Out Industries (FAWLOI) scheme. A closure makes workers' lives vulnerable. In such a situation, migration is obvious, but those who do not move suffer the most.

The gardens we visited in this survey were adequately managed. Workers were getting their wages on time, directly in their bank accounts. There were Anganwari centres and primary and high schools for children. However, such facilities were not evenly available in Darjeeling. These gardens were providing medical facilities to their workers.

Other than the statutory and non-statutory benefits, many government schemes benefit the plantation workers, such as Pradhan Mantri Ujjawala Yojana, Swasthya Sathi, and Laxmi Bhandar Yojana. It was realised that they are unaware of various government schemes; therefore, they do not get them, while in some cases, they are already covered under similar schemes provided under the Plantation Labour Act.

When we discussed the general problems of plantation workers, management mentioned their limitations regarding financial position and policy. They mention that over the years, the wage, cost of inputs for the tea garden, especially fertilisers, and the cost of social securities being provided by them have increased, resulting in the rise of production costs, but the price of tea in the auction has marginally risen, which puts pressure on the garden's survival. In this situation, no garden can provide proper facilities to their workers. Many strict regulations on gardens do not allow for innovative solutions; for example, on one side, the government promotes LPG use and has distributed free connections, while gardens are bound to provide firewood under the plantation act. Similarly, the government does not provide medical facilities to the garden residents, and the entire cost is borne by garden management. Some of these gardens have the infrastructure; if the government bears the cost of medical professionals such as doctors and nurses, it will significantly reduce the garden's expenses. In addition, the workers are eligible to be



covered under the Employees State Insurance Scheme, a statutory health benefit provided by the Government of India to the workers in the organised sector. Therefore, various benefits such as medical treatment, injury, and maternity care could be extended to the tea plantation workers and their family members. Further, it also compensates for the loss of wages in case of abstention due to sickness.

In a tea garden, the overall condition of the workers depends on its management. In the case of an operational tea garden, workers live a decent life. However, there were cases where gardens were inadequately managed. In such a garden, the management tends to provide basic facilities until it is open. In a closed tea garden, their registered workers can get compensation of 1500 rupees a month from the West Bengal government under the Financial Assistance for the Workers of Locked Out Industries (FAWLOI) scheme.<sup>4</sup>

The current study does not find any case of exploitative labour or forceful employment. Workers were given proper rest during the work day and weekly holidays on Sundays, in addition to the holidays declared by the state. Further, we would like to mention that on any working day, the plantation workers work for three to four hours, then return to weigh the plucked leaves, rest for a few hours and then again go for plucking. Their plucking varies in different seasons and different regions.

## 5.2 Policy implications

Many government policies related to skill development, animal husbandry, poultry, small and cottage industries, self-help groups, etc. are either unavailable in tea gardens or not popular. The downside is that it limits the income diversification capacity of the households living in the tea plantations.

The Labour Department of West Bengal needs to notify the minimum wages for the tea plantation workers. Also, it is strongly recommended that there has to be a separate daily wage rate for the workers in extreme physical and agro-climatic situations. In addition, there is a need to relook into the provisions of the Plantation Labour Act and make them context-specific and relevant to the present time. For instance, the provision of fuelwood to the workers from the garden management could be replaced with the provision of providing improved/ greener sources of energy to the households. The government may provide a subsidy to the employers if needed.

Other than this, the land rights in the tea garden do not allow any uses beyond the plantation. Due to this, the entire food is outsourced from the outside, which costs dearly to the workers as they have only one avenue to earn. Limited use of fallow land may help the workers, just like the tea tourism policy.

The garden workers do not want their children to work in the gardens; they send their kids to English medium private schools; the schools of garden do not provide quality education, and their medium of instruction is also a regional language, which may have a bearing on children's capacity to adapt to the rapidly changing labour markets in future. An improvement in it will ensure quality education and will boost the accumulation of human capital.



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## Endnotes

- 1 Women are believed to be more efficient in plantation activity, where plucking the right tea leaf is necessary. Further, males are more migratory from these areas (Sarkar, 2019; Siegmann, 2023).
- 2 As per the Payment of Bonus Act of 1965 of India.



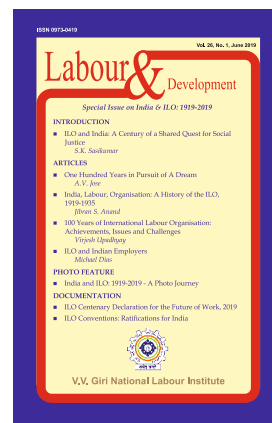
## Endnotes

3. All the workers are part of pension schemes being run by the Employees Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) under the Act 'the Employees' Provident Funds & Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952'. It is a statutory benefit provided to the workers in the formal setups. As on date, the Act extends to 187 classes of establishments. Any establishment falling in any of the 187 categories mentioned above and employing more than 19 persons automatically comes under the purview of this Act. Once there under the purview, it is mandatory for the employers to comply with the relevant statutory provisions.
4. than nine workers. The employer pays a one-time gratuity to retired workers who resigns after a minimum of 5 years of service. The tea plantation workers are also entitled to this benefit.
- 5 of more than 150 workers.

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