

**LIVELIHOOD OF TEA GARDEN LABORER:
A STUDY ON SELECTED TEA ESTATES OF BANGLADESH**

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**Master of Development Studies (MDS)
BRAC Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD)
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A thesis submitted to the Department of BRAC Institute of Governance and Development in
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Development Studies

Master of Development Studies (MDS)
BRAC Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD)
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May 2023

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Declaration

It is hereby declared that

1. The thesis submitted is my/our own original work while completing degree at Brac University.
2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. The thesis does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
4. I have acknowledged all main sources of help.

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Approval

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Ethical Statement

I do hereby declare that this dissertation entitled “Livelihood of Tea Garden Laborer: A Study on Selected Tea Gardens of Bangladesh” is my own research under the supervision of Dr. Narayan Chandra Das, Assistant Professor, BRAC University Dhaka, Bangladesh. The total dissertation is prepared for academic purpose and solely aimed for the partial fulfillment for the degree of Master of Development Studies.

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Abstract

The main objective of this study was to determine the livelihood adopted by the tea workers in the selected tea gardens. The study was conducted at tea gardens of Sreemangal Upazilla of Moulvibazar districts. Data were collected from 160 people by simple random sampling, using household survey on 50 families, and interview. The study examines the livelihood of the tea workers, wages, education, food, ration and possible work source etc. The study generates new and updated knowledge on tea plantation workers life to identify and implement appropriate responses to ensure fair remuneration, education, good earning etc. In the study it is observed that most of the tea workers had very poor living and wage. Their level of education is also frightening and child labor exists inside the tea gardens. Tea garden people have already adopted some new profession as van driver, CNG driver, day labor outside the garden etc. other than working in the gardens. Most of the people work long hours throughout the month. Only 9% of the workers can earn more than Tk. 10,000 per month. 80% of the people have mentioned that they will prefer to work and stay inside the garden. One third of the people expressed their intention to leave the tea garden if get any chance of working and living outside. Very few of the tea workers can have breakfast regularly. Non-salary benefits are not as huge as it is claimed by the tea garden authority.

They want to change their condition by including themselves with the labor force outside of the tea garden, with the help of authority and government. The article also explores the thought of the tea people about their future work force. It also presents some policy recommendations which can help in making changes in their lives.

Keywords: Bangladesh, Tea Garden worker, Living condition, Child Labor, Profession

Dedication

TO MY PARENTS SATYA NARAYAN KAIRY & KUNTI RANI
KAIRY, WHO BROUGHT ME UP AND BROTHER SHANTO
KAIRY AND SOURAV KAIRY

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At the beginning I would like to express my greatest appreciation to almighty who has given me the knowledge and opportunity to perform my higher study in an internationally recognized institute like BRAC Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD), BRAC University. For duly performed my research I am indebted to many other persons and agencies.

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List of Acronyms

BBS	Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
BD	Bangladesh
BDT	Bangladeshi Taka
BIDS	Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies
BIGD	BRAC Institute of Governance and Development
BPATC	Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre
BTA	Bangladesh Tea Association
BTRI	Bangladesh Tea Research Institute
BTB	Bangladesh Tea Board
CNG	Compressed Natural Gas
DDL	Deputy Director of Labor
EU	European Union
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
IDEA	Institute of Development Affairs
ILO	International Labor Organization
KG	Kilo Gram

MDG	Millennium Development Goals
NGO	Non-Government Organization
RMG	Ready-made Garments
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SEHD	Society for Environment and Human Development
TK	Taka
UCANEWS	Union of Catholic Asian news
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations International Children Emergency Fund
USD	United States Dollar

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the research

Bangladesh is currently listed as the world's ninth largest tea producer, accounting for around 2% of the world's total production. There are 166 tea gardens in the country, employing 1,40,164 people in total (Bangladesh Tea Industry, 2019). According to a 2018 research by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, over 74% of tea workers are poor (BBS). A total of 90 of the tea gardens are currently in the district of Moulvibazar, which accounts for 55% of the tea produced in the country where Habiganj comes in as the second largest producer of tea, contributing 22% (Islam, 2019). According to Bangladeshi manufacturers, China, Sri Lanka, Kenya, Japan and India currently control the global tea market (Bangladesh Tea Board).

Despite the fact that tea is more expensive, the wages paid to tea workers are inadequate, and the standard of living is poor, In comparison to other neighbouring tea-producing nations, their compensation is lower (Kamruzzaman et al. 2015). Through its Decent Work Country Program, the ILO is dedicated to enabling both men and women the opportunity to obtain decent and fulfilling employment in conditions that uphold freedom, equity, security, and human dignity (ILO, 2015). It is vital to pay close attention to gender issues because female employees in the tea industry are more vulnerable than male counterparts (Hossain, 2015). Employee contentment directly affects productivity. Manufacturing labor costs can be reduced by strengthening labor productivity.

The tea workers endure extreme poverty since the majority of tea workers are members of non-Bengali ethnic minorities who speak different languages. Due to their separation from the majority of the population, their working conditions and means of support are also neglected. They struggle with both Bengali and their native languages, and the bulk of them lack literacy. Due to their socioeconomic disadvantage, they become an extremely easy target for the profiteers in the tea sector. The production of tea in Bangladesh is not organized. Statistics show that a number of variables affect the production of tea (ILO, 2015). Variations in tea production cause the country to lose a sizable sum of foreign cash. Aggression among tea workers and protests against management are frequent (Sarma, 2007).

1.2 Research Problem

Tea is one of the plantation crops that require a lot of labor. In the past, the development of tea and other plantations around the world has relied on migrant unskilled labor, and the majority of tea garden workers in India and Bangladesh are women (SOMO, 2008). One of the most underprivileged and impoverished groups of organized labor is thought to be the tea garden workers. The laborers in the tea gardens have maintained their current means of subsistence over time. Although it may be challenging to define what a living wage is, it is frequently asserted that minimum wage levels are woefully inadequate to provide basic necessities because earnings in the tea plantation sector are quite low, especially by the norms of the plantation sector (Sankrityayana, 2008).

The laborers in the tea gardens have maintained their current methods of survival over time. It may be challenging to define what a living wage is, but it is frequently argued that minimum wage levels are woefully inadequate to provide basic necessities because earnings in the tea plantation sector are, even by the standards of the plantation sector,

quite low. Families who depend on the tea estates for water, food, shelter, healthcare, and sanitation are particularly vulnerable to closures (Oldenziel, 2006).

Children of the tea workers cannot access service offered by educational institutions, and young people have no access to work opportunities. After graduating from the lowest elementary schools in the gardens, they are compelled to work as unskilled laborers in the tea industry with no other options for education or employment. They continue to be connected to the gardens through successive generations. Both their birth and their death take place in gardens. They are the very definition of forced labor and modern-day bonded labor (Lahiri, 2000).

According to the Wages Rate Index, both nominal and real wage rates have been on the rise but wage of tea laborer are still unchanged for a long time (Bangladesh economic review, 2012). Although the wage is very poor but very less percentage of tea workers or the family members tend to explore the outside work opportunities. They find it difficult to come outside the tea garden. Tea production requires a continual and sufficient supply of local labor to grow, process and market tea. The most crucial factor in the manufacture of tea is labor satisfaction. Six months ago, tea workers in Bangladesh earned 120 taka per day. However, in August 2022, tea workers from more than 150 tea gardens began to strike in protest over a pay raise to Taka 300 from Taka 120. Finally, the daily wage for the tea workers has been set at Taka 170 raising it from Taka 120, while the other facilities for them will be increased proportionately. In terms of non salary benefits tea workers do not get much and each tea worker receives 3kg and 200 gram of rice or flour a week as food ration while they pay BDT 1.50 for one kg of rice or flour. According to the tea workers, they suppose to get 10 kg of rice per week but it is not the scenario there.

In Bangladesh, many researchers have been conducted study on the livelihood of tea garden workers. However, there are inadequate number of study was done on the current employment patterns and possible income generating activities of the tea garden employees. As a result the current issue never got the limelight and this is why that their study of livelihood is important. Moreover, Millennium Development Goal (MDG) regards livelihood as a vital indicator for eradicating extreme hunger and poverty (UNDP, 2000). Therefore, the present study keeps an utmost attempt to the livelihood of tea workers and the labour force and the prospect of assimilation with the mainstream work force.

1.3 Objectives of the Research

The main theme of this study is to explore the living conditions tea laborers of tea gardens where they belong to and are forced to live and work. Along with the main goal, three specific objectives have been set for exploring the scenario. They are-

- To analyze the current livelihood pattern of tea garden workers.
- To find out the form of rations and others benefits provided by the authorities.
- To explore the nature of employment outside of the tea gardens.

1.4 Significance of the study

The study will contribute to explore unknown facts about the livelihood of tea gardeners. Current study objectives tend to contribute new information about the employment patterns, living conditions, salaries, non-salaried benefits, and other factors like education, health, housing, of tea people and give the appropriate solution to protect the fundamental rights, fair remuneration, and education and involve them in new income generating works. This will help address current shortage of research in this area. The study generates new and updated knowledge on their livelihood. The authorities of the tea garden, tea workers, the government, as well as any other interested groups or individuals will benefit from this study.

1.5 Limitations and constraints

Although the study area chosen is a broader area but the part is studied was narrow. The limitations of this study are that the tools that the researcher used could be more diversified, the data was collected in a short time and a small research area was taken. Moreover, more people surveying and in-depth study could be initiated to reach the tea people to have a better understanding but lack of budget made it hard. Finally the study finding may not be appropriate to the other industries.

1.6 Structural Outlines

In Chapter one, the context of the study has been introduced. The research objectives and questions have been identified, and the value of the research argued. The limitations of the study have also been discussed. In Chapter two, the existing literature will be reviewed to identify the livelihood and employment pattern of tea garden workers. In Chapter three, the adoption of a qualitative and quantitative research approach will be justified and the broader

research design will be discussed including the limitations thereof. In Chapter four, data from primary sources as well as secondary sources will be analyzed and the result and findings will be presented and argued. In Chapter five, conclusion and possible policy recommendations will be given.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Rural unskilled workers are the backbone of agro-based plantation industries in the developing countries, including the production of bananas and carpet in Pakistan and South Asia, as well as tea and strawberries in South Asia and Africa. These workers don't have enough labor power to significantly improve their lives. Wage exploitation and infringement of workers' rights are extremely common at work. Women make up the majority of workers in these fields, but women are mainly found in the lowest positions. Workplace power imbalances and gender discrimination make things challenging. The tea workers in Bangladesh are not any different from this. A number of literatures have been reviewed on the livelihood, work pattern, children education, food and nutrition, bonded labor status of tea workers of Bangladesh.

In both domestic and foreign markets, there is a significant demand for tea. By earning foreign currency and meeting consumer demand for beverages, the tea industry contributes significantly to the economic growth of the nation while also giving people new job opportunities, while their financial situation is deteriorating (Rahman et al., 2017). Tea workers are considered one of the most disadvantaged and marginalized communities in Bangladesh (Bhowmik, 2013). More than seven lakh people are employed in this community overall (Ahmmed and Hossein, 2016). Significant population of these tea people is engaged with tea labor; therefore their development can play an important role in the progress of the whole society and apparently the nation. Tea workers have been living with illiteracy, social and cultural deprivation throughout the history of tea. Generation after generation, they remain tied to the garden.

Nevertheless, their cooperation was fruitful. They cut down forests, tended to tea saplings, planted trees for shade, and constructed cozy cottages for the tea planters (Gain, 2009). Regarding their employment and work status, the workers in tea gardens primarily fall into the categories of permanent and temporary. They are employed on a temporary basis in the vast majority of cases. Their pay and other fringe perks are dependent on their job status. The majority of the workforce in the sector is made up of permanent employees. They receive different wages, benefits, and other compensation than temporary workers do. In contrast to permanent employees, temporary employees are not entitled to housing benefits, arable land, weekly rations, or festival bonuses. In addition to pay, a permanent employee who does not own land is given a weekly ration of 3.5-7 kilograms of rice or flour, depending on the number of dependent family members, and two festival bonuses totaling Tk. 3,400 each year. In contrast, a temporary employee simply receives their daily wage and no bonus pay, such as a weekly allowance or an annual bonus. When compared to the workers' living expenses, this modest wage is utterly insufficient. The employees of the nearby tea gardens seek out additional employment to boost their income. If the workers get sufficiently wealthy to leave the garden, the tea manufacturers may worry that they won't have enough labor (Islam, 2019).

Many tea garden children between the ages of six and twelve do not go to school. Poor socioeconomic conditions, a lack of parental interest, the absence of schools within and around tea gardens, as well as the unwillingness of tea garden administrators, are all obstacles to education for children in tea gardens (Hossain, 2007). Due to their ignorance of cleanliness and health, they are more susceptible to various health dangers, which make them sick (Ahmmed, 2012). It is clear that these all are the output of lack of education. According to a study, Children education is the third most important indicator for livelihood improvement and the respondents were aware of educate their children for better living.

Primary school near the tea gardens helps them to access education. Moreover, the literacy rate of Bengalis is significantly higher than the ethnic minorities (Kamuzzaman et al, 2015).

The tea garden workers are characterized by their lack of access to food. Most of them find it difficult to properly satisfy their hunger (Islam, 2019). According to Hossain et al. (2017), although nutrition is an important aspect that is connected to socioeconomic status, eating patterns, hygiene, etc., these indicators are unsatisfactory in tea gardens.

Children do not even work as full-time employees; instead, they fill in for or work in addition to another family member. Some kids fill in for a parent who is unable to work in order to maintain their living situation. The existence of child labor is particularly obvious during the busy season. The tea garden authorities encourages kids and their parents to complete the picking within the allotted times. In order to reach goals or increase revenue, workers may also bring their kids to work. Children of tea plantation workers may occasionally labor on weekends, after school hours, or on days off (Ahmmed, 2015).

One of the nations where bondage and labor exploitation are said to be most pervasive, negatively affecting the lives of low-wage workers and their families, is Pakistan. Approximately 3,186,000 people are thought to be living in modern slavery in the nation, which ranks ninth on the global slavery index. Carpets, coal, and bricks are among the things that might be produced with forced labor, in addition to cotton and sugar cane. It involves landlords owning, selling, and maintaining private jails to punish the workers. There have also been reports of landlords and cops raping female workers (UCANEWS, 2021). Forced or mandatory labor occurs when employers use both indirect and direct threats to coerce workers into working, such as denying them access to food, land, or wages, abusing them physically or sexually, restricting their movement, or locking them up (ILO, 1998). According to data from the ILO 2015 research, just 26.9% of workers have direct experience with forced labor, making up the majority of workers (71.7%). It is important to note that

although there isn't direct proof of forced labor in tea gardens, there are indirect signs of it. Each employee is required to collect 21 to 23 kg of leaves each day. To maintain their residence, employees must be employed in the tea garden. They are forced to work with tea growing because there are no jobs available outside the garden.

Tea plantation communities work and live inside tea garden areas and are mostly isolated from mainstream peoples' habitats. Language barriers, unconsciousness, illiteracy and simplicity are obstacles in easy interaction with mainstream people (Ahmmed, 2015). This may be the reason that they cannot grab alternative works outside the tea garden. If given the choice, the tea labor households would prefer to continue working in the gardens themselves for a variety of reasons. Changes in employment are frequently decided upon at the household level rather than the individual level. Lack of education and skills is a significant barrier for people who desire to change careers (Mishra et al, 2011).

As the tea industry in South Asia shows, there are similar exploitative and insecure labor conditions in plantation areas all over the world. Despite the fact that the Plantation Labor Act of 1951 established a number of guidelines for plantation workers' living and working conditions, including permanent structures with sanitary facilities and access to drinking water, recreational amenities, affordable canteens, and free primary education for kids. Bhowmik (2011) finds that No agribusiness has complied with all requirement. Despite these international norms, rules governing occupational health and safety are regularly ignored and usually excluded from these laws. As agricultural employees are sometimes obliged to work long hours, one of the biggest protection gaps is the working time.

Most of the literatures reflect the scenario of the current livelihood, wag, income, working of the tea workers of Bangladesh which gives a clear view on the life of them. However, they haven't given information about current employment condition and other external work

opportunities. In the present study current employment condition, types of workers, wages, food consumption and nutrition, non salary benefits is studied. Moreover, possible employment options of earning for better living are also explored.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

The following methodological strategies were used to conduct this investigation. First, six tea gardens have been chosen following a thorough discussion with the supervisor, and a standardized questionnaire has been used to carry out the primary survey. Second, in addition to the household survey, the researcher used interviews with the tea workers to try and uncover current problems from them. The worker who left the tea garden and is now employed elsewhere was the subject of a semi-structured interview by the researcher.

The research project used both qualitative and quantitative methodologies to conduct an in-depth investigation into livelihood, work pattern both inside and outside of the tea gardens. The qualitative design's purpose is to portray the participants' reality as accurately as possible from their own perspectives. The qualitative design could aid researchers in gathering information through ordinary discussion and observation in order to assure an in-depth study of psychological, social, and economic elements of tea plantation workers' lives. The quantitative method aided the study in acquiring data, which is crucial for creating and selecting intervention strategies for worker well-being.

3.1 Factors Studied

Subjects were interviewed to investigate age, gender, education of 6 to 12 years old children, child labor, current working condition, employment pattern, income and expenditure, rations, food consumptions, outside employment etc. To assess outside employment discussion and interview were conducted.

3.2 Study Area

The study population was selected from Satgaon Tea Garden, Varaura Tea Garden, Kanihati Tea Garden, Amrail Tea Garden, Shamsdernagar Tea Garden and Ali Nagar Tea Garden at Sreemangal upazilla of Moulvibazar district, Bangladesh. Considering the easy communication and transportation facilities, easy access to the gardens and having a good connection with the authority those gardens were selected purposively as the study area.

3.3 Sampling method

Sampling from each spot, around 160 respondents from 50 households were drawn through repeated visits within the timeline. The representatives of tea laborer union worked with the researcher as volunteers with the consent of the employer. The researcher has visited all sections of the workers. A random sampling method had been used to study livelihood of the tea garden workers. And purposive sampling method was used to find out the outside work force and opportunities. Data were collected through a questionnaire and by personal interview method. Sample selected from all section and interviewed them. The researcher had visited employer office several times. She also had visited workers' house physically and talked to their families to observe their living conditions. In the sample, attempts were made to include all the categories of workers. Some of them are skilled, some of them are non-skilled, some are working inside the garden and some have created their own living.

3.4 Survey period

Data were collected from December 18 to December 26 of 2022 and from January 12 to January 20 of 2023. The researcher worked inside the tea garden areas with the help of the

laborers because the researcher has a strong tie with the tea garden. The researchers paid special attention in the fieldwork phase, where data was acquired through a participatory procedure because the research conclusions are strongly reliant on accurate data. Because gender and ethnicity are crucial to this research, gender sensitivity was maintained throughout the sample selection, data collection, and analysis. One female research assistants were included in the research team to provide trustworthy and gender sensitive information, such as on women's status in the family and community.

3.5 Data Collection

Data was collected from both primary and secondary sources.

3.6 Primary data

For the present study, survey and observation techniques were used. Survey method is a research method that collects data from respondents through a series of questions either in a form of a questionnaire or an interview (Kothari, 2006). Data was collected directly from the participants. Participants were selected purposively maintaining gender ration of the population. Both the permanent and temporary workers were the participants. And both the tea garden workers and the inhabitants who were not working were also interviewed. Students and people from the outskirts of the tea garden were interviewed to learn about the pattern of work available outside of the tea garden.

3.7 Secondary data

Secondary data were collected from related books, literature published in reputed journals, newspapers, conference papers, reports etc. Information was gathered during informal discussion with few leaders and officials of tea gardens and was considered as the source of secondary data. More secondary data have been collected from reports of the plantation board, associations, organizations and various websites.

3.8 Survey questionnaire development

Questionnaire was developed based on the objectives of the study. It was prepared considering the indicators of wage pattern and livelihood of laborer.

3.9 Testing survey questionnaire

Interview and observation methods were mostly used to collect requisite data for the study. At first a draft questionnaire was prepared considering the objectives of the study. Then the questionnaire was pretested in the selected area among a few tea garden workers. After making necessary modification and correction, the final copy was prepared. The survey questions were both close and open ended.

3.10 Data Analysis

To analyze and interpret the data statistics was used and it was both descriptive and in figure. Moreover, data was analyzed using MS Word and MS Excel. Then data were presented in tabular and graphical forms with significant interpretations.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

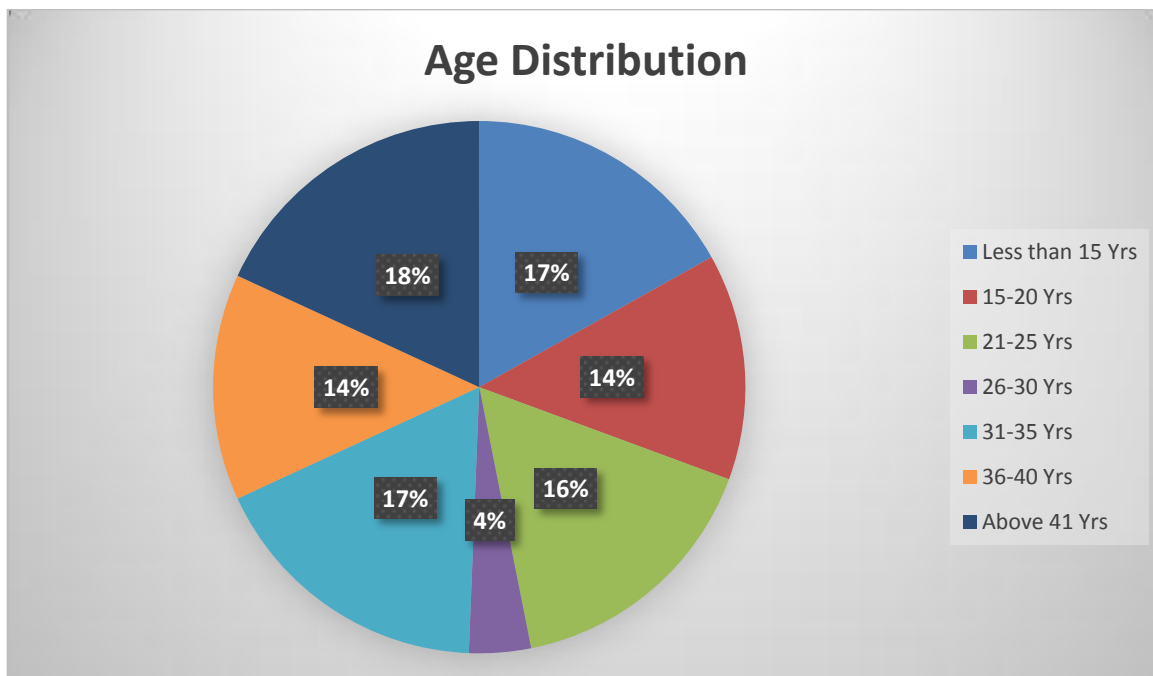
This chapter will commence by presenting the sample demographic data to understand the composition and representativeness of the sample. Next the data will be analyzed to assess the livelihood, rations, and employment opportunities of the tea garden workers.

Results

4.1 Socio- Biographic Profile of the Tea Garden Worker

4.1.1 Age Distribution

The age distribution of tea workers shows that 17% workers are up to 12 years old, 14% are between 13 to 20 years, 16 % are between 21 to 25 years, 4% belong to the age group of 26 to 30 years and 17% belong to the age group 31 to 35 years, 14% belongs to age group 36 to 40 and 18% belongs to above 41 years. The majority of the workforce (82%) is below 40 years old. However, the highest number of respondents belongs to the age group above 41 years and that is 18%. It is shown in the following chart 1.



Graph 1: Age Distribution of the Respondents

The employees on tea plantations were found to be descendants of tea cultivators. They view tea plantations as being their primary source of income. For them, switching tea gardens is also uncommon. Employees of tea plantations typically continue working in the tea gardens as long as they are physically active. The data also indicate this.

4.1.2 Gender and Education

It was found that mostly all of the tea garden workers are ethnic minorities. They are Hindu in religion and they are thought to be lower caste. Their ancestors migrated from different part of India during British rule but the workers currently living inside the tea gardens are all born and brought up in Bangladesh. These people have no intention to take other profession that the tea plucking and also leave the tea garden. Women workers dominate the tea gardens.

Respondents	Number of respondent	Percentage (%)	Average Age (Years)	Average Education Year
Male	74	46	53	7
Female	86	54	49.5	4
Total	160	100		

Table 4.1: Gender and Education

Among the respondents, 86 (54%) are female whereas 74 (46%) are male. Male workers' have the average age 53 years and female workers' average age is 49.5 which is less than their male counterpart. Average education year is also less for the female workers than the male workers. Their average education also varies and that is 7 years for the males whereas 4 years for the female inhabitants.

4.1.3 Education Level

The education level of the respondent is categorized into five groups (illiterate, only literate, primary and secondary) to easily interpret educational information. It is shown in the following Table 4.2.

Classification of respondent	Frequency	Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent
Illiterate	50	31	31
Only literate	93	58	89
Primary	10	6.25	95.25
High School	7	4.375	100

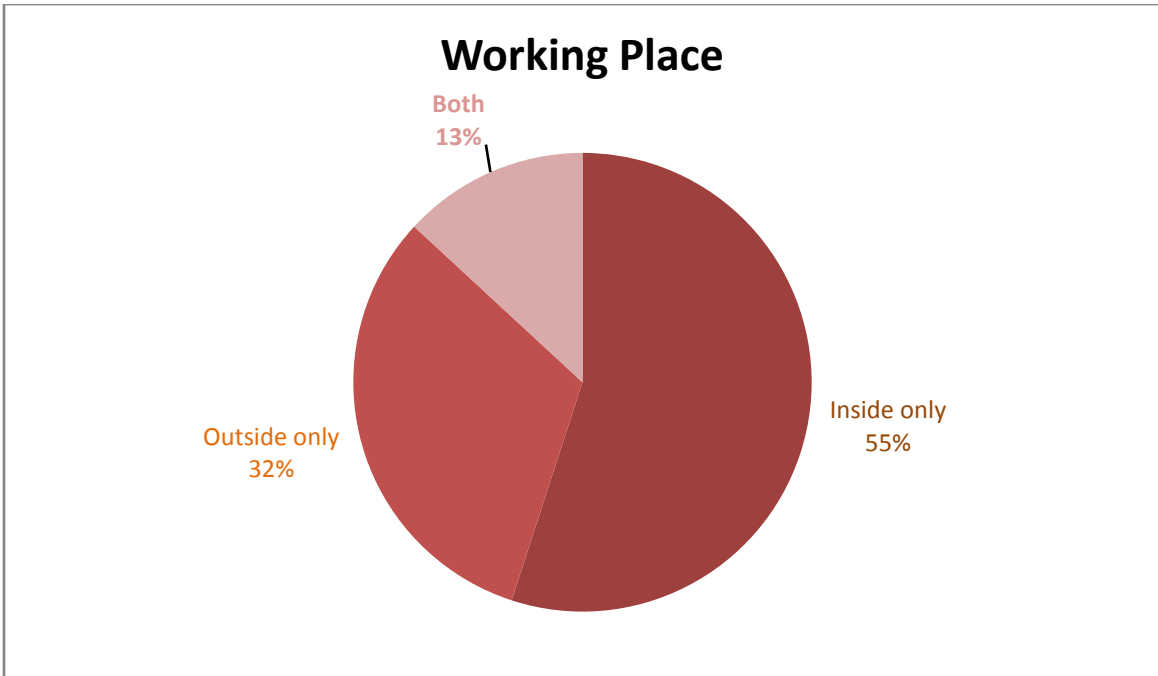
Table 4.2: Education Level

After examining the primary data, the laborers in tea gardens are generally divided into four groups according to their level of education. Additionally, it was discovered that only around 4% of respondents had a degree from a secondary school or lower. According to the data, 31% of respondents are illiterate, 58% are only literate, and only 10% have completed primary school. Only 58% of respondents are literate. A respondent who is only literate can only sign their name. According to Ahmmed (2015), the reason behind stop going to school, they widely mentioned poverty, the lack of schools in the area, and parents' lack of understanding of the value of education.

4.2 Employment

4.2.1 Work Place (Outside or Inside the Garden)

It is seen that majority of the temporary workers are involved with other income generating activities. Among them 32% work outside the tea garden. They work in the tea garden occasionally or as a day laborer. They work in the tea garden only to get them attached with the tea garden. They also live in the tea garden. Although temporary workers are not entitled with housing facilities but they are the family members of a permanent worker. Hence, 55% workers work inside the tea garden and 13% of the total workers work both inside and outside the tea garden. They work the whole day in the tea garden and in the afternoon they go for other form of works. Other forms of work will be discussed later.



Graph 2: Employment Status

4.2.2 Temporary vs. Permanent Workers

The respondents are categorized into two groups (permanent or temporary) to find out the respondent job status whether their jobs permanent or temporary. It is shown in following Table 4.3. The data revealed that 30% of the respondents are in permanent job and rest 70% of the respondents are in temporary or casual job. The Table 4.3 says that most of the respondents are with temporary job. However from the study of ILO, 2015 it is found that most of the respondent interviewed were a permanent worker which is totally different from the current study. Permanent employees receive Tk. 170 as a wage per day whereas temporary workers get Tk. 120. It is possible that the authority doesn't want so many permanent workers because they have to pay the permanent workers Tk. 50 more than the temporary workers. Every day, an employee must pick 22 kg of leaves. A laborer receives BDT 2 in addition to 22kg for each kg of leaf picked.

Types of job	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Temporary	98	61.25	61.25
Permanent	62	38.72	100.0

Table 4.3: Employment Status (Permanent or Temporary)

Permanent workers are eligible for provident funds. No provident fund is offered to casual workers. Entry-level employees must be 18 years old, and the retirement age is 60 years. The laws governing the provident fund were established in 1960 for plantation workers in Bangladesh. 7.5% of the total basic pay is withheld from the salary each month. The employee receives a twofold deposit plus bank interest at the time of retirement. They receive two festival bonuses each year. The maximum bonus sum is Tk. 700. The amount is determined by experience and the type of the tasks. But casual workers are not given a bonus.

Respondents work in the garden cutting grass, cleaning to tea plants, fertilizing, spreading plantation areas on cleaned forest land, removing weak tea trees, mending canals and roads, and doing household chores in the residences of managers and assistant managers. Some employees work as security guards, manufacturing workers, or housekeepers at the houses of managers. All employees are recognized as tea garden employees, and management assigns them according to the needs of the garden and their own preferences.

4.2.3 Profession of the respondent family

Respondent are categorized into seven groups from the data (farmer, daily laborer, rickshaw puller, garments worker, small business and others) to find out their family

profession. It is shown in the following Table 4.4. Dramatically it was observed that only three categorized respondent are found (tea garden worker, daily laborer and CNG/ auto/ rickshaw puller) are the most acquired profession among the tea workers.

Types of profession	Percent
Tea Garden worker	60
Day laborer (inside or outside of tea garden)	16.25
Shopkeeper	7.5
CNG driver/Van/Rickshaw Puller	11.88
Factory (Outside)	1.87
Farmer	2.5
Total	100

Table 4.4: Profession distribution

From the field data, it is seen that most of the respondents' profession was found as tea garden worker and that is 60%, 16% of them work as a daily laborer either inside or outside the garden. Some other members were found working as CNG driver, auto rickshaw and van driver and they consist 11.88% of the respondents. Rests of them are shopkeepers, factory workers and farmers which consist 7.5%, 1.87% and 2.5% respectively. Three members were found working in the nearby factories and this profession is the least common among the people. This indicates that they are not welcomed to that sector and also not eligible and well trained to work there. Education is another fact working behind this. We have seen that 52% of our respondents are only literate; they barely can read or write. Four members were found working in the fields as a farmer inside the garden. It was found that tea workers are not permitted to acquire lands for cultivation and other purposes. However, they can have land

for cultivation with the permission of the manager of the garden. So they are far from cultivation and cattle rearing. It is noticeable that driving is a popular profession. When asked they said that driving gives a good earning so they are involved with that. From the field it is also found that some people are doing multiple works in a day. They mentioned that living expenses are very high these days; they are not able to support their family with low wages.

4.2.4 Respondent monthly Working days and hours

As from the earlier data it is seen that workers are involved with different types of work and some of them are doing multiple jobs. This chart shows that female workers are working on an average of 26 days in a month and 9 hours a day including any sort of overtime. However, a male worker works on an average of 28.6 days in a month and 11.8 hours a day, which is more than a female worker. Some of them are working the whole month. This indicated that they have no time to rest or participate in any kind of leisure activities.

Monthly Working Details	Male	Female
Average Days of work	28.6 Days	26 Days
Average Hours of work	11.8 Hours	9 Hours

Table 4.5: Work days and Hours

Some of the permanent workers do over time. This also proves that they are hard working. Mostly female workers work in the tea garden to clean the tea bed, pluck tea leaves, water them etc. But the male workers have other sort of works in the garden as they have to work in the bungalow of a manager, as a watchman in the core tea garden area, weighing the leaves, or as a store keeper etc. These works need long time to pursue and also some of them works outside of the garden.

4.2.5 Respondent Income (Last month)

From the field data, respondents' last month income was categorized in four sections. One fourth of the respondents earn below Tk. 4000, more than 50% of them earn from Tk. 4000 to Tk. 6000. Around 15% of them can earn more than Tk. 6000 per month. This is far less than other industry of our country. According to a study of BIDS (2021), the minimum monthly wage for RMG sector is Tk. 8000. In contrast, in the tea gardens this minimum wage is not standardized. Moreover, different gardens have different wage structure, permanent workers have different wage than temporary workers.

Respondent Income last month	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Below BDT 4000	43	26.875	26.875
BDT 4001-6000	91	56.875	83.75
BDT 6000-10000	17	10.625	94.375
Above BDT 10000	9	5.625	100

Table 4.6: Income (Last month)

The lowest monthly minimum salary among South Asian countries, at \$48 or around Tk. 4,070, was paid in Bangladesh in 2019, according to the Global Salary Report 2020-21. The ILO report calculated the "Gross Monthly Minimum Wage Levels in Asia and the Pacific" using the Purchasing Power Parity figures. Bangladesh was the fifth-worst country in the world out of 136.

4.2.6 Average income (last month)

The chart 4.7 below shows that the average income of a male worker who works inside the tea garden is 3,461 Taka but for a female worker it is 3,365 Taka which is less than the male workers. Again, the workers work outside the tea garden earns 5,538 Taka on average which is 60% more than a worker who works inside the gardens. No female workers found to work outside the garden in the study area. From the interview it is found that the working areas are far from the tea garden thus the families do not allow the female workers to go outside for work. Also, if any female worker goes to work outside she has to come back to home by

evening. No female workers are allowed to stay outside the garden and work outside. Some respondents mentioned the high transportation cost of going for outside work. An outside worker spends around Tk. 800 for transportation in a month.

Average Income (Last Month)	Male	Female
Inside tea garden	3461 Taka	3365
Outside tea garden	5538 Taka	0

Table 4.7: Average income (Last month)

4.2.7 Average Expenditure (Last month)

Average expenditure and per capita expenditure of last month of the tea workers are shown below. It is seen that the workers who are working inside the tea garden spent Tk. 5706 last month whereas the other workers afford to spend Tk. 6,202 last month. From the chart 4.7 it can be infer that both the inside and other workers who work outside earned less than what they spent last month. Though the outside workers earn more than the tea garden workers but their average expenditure is also higher than their average income. Also they have to earn that much from other sources. Thus they are tending to search for work outside because tea gardens do not have ample of work options. They work casually in the garden whenever authority calls them to work. From a data of CEIC (2016), Bangladesh annual household expenditure reached around 592 USD which is ten times more than the tea garden workers.

Respondents	Per capita Expenditure	Average Expenditure per month
Working only Inside the garden	1141 Taka	5706 Taka
Others (Inside + Outside)	1378 Taka	6202 Taka

Table 4.8: Average expenditure (Last month)

Per Capita Expenditure is total expenditure divided by the total population of a given economy. Per capita expenditure measures the standard of living in an economy. This can be expressed either in real or nominal terms. In the study area, the mean per capita expenditure is different for people working inside and outside of the garden. The people working inside the tea garden it is 1,141 Taka and for other workers 1,378 Taka.

4.2.8 Preference of working (Inside or Outside of the garden)

The data shows that around 80% of the respondent prefers to work and reside inside the tea garden who is working inside. Again, 39% of the people who work inside the tea garden prefer to work inside the garden and 61% of the workers who work outside the garden prefer to work outside the garden. It is also noticeable that people working inside are less likely to work outside and who are working outside are not interested to work inside the tea garden. Work preference to outside is 61% for the outside working people but it is around 20% for the people working inside.

Working Preference	Prefer to work inside of the tea garden (%)	Prefer to work outside of the tea garden (%)
Work Inside the garden	79.375	20.625
Work Outside the garden	39	61

Table 4.10: Preference of working (Inside or outside of the garden)

Although inside the tea garden there is a low wage exists and the security of their lives gets hampered but they are not ready to leave the tea garden at any cost. They think the authority as their life savers and parents.

4.2.9 Thought about leaving the tea garden

The data shows that one third of the people think about leaving the tea garden for work purpose or for living. However the majority will never leave the garden. Reason behind this will be discussed later in this chapter. From Table 4.10, it is seen that significant percent of people intend to work outside of the tea garden as well significant percent of people would like to leave the tea garden. Still majority of them will never leave the garden.

Leaving the Garden	Frequency	Percent
Leave	54	33.75
Will not leave ever	106	66.25
Total	160	100

Table 4.11: Leaving the Tea Garden

4.2.10 Routine of a male labor of the garden

Usually a male labor starts his day by daily Morning Prayer. After that he takes breakfast and starts for his work. If his wife also works in the garden, they go together to the work. Then, in the afternoon he usually returns to home and have his lunch. Some workers do overtime and they return to home in the evening. In the evening they offer their daily prayer. After the prayer they have evening tea. Some of the workers go for their second job while some labors go for hangout to nearby shops of their friends. It is not stated that how they do hangout with their friends. At night they return to home and sleep after having dinner. Sarma(2018) described that, 43.1% male adolescent do smoke and 82.7% consume alcohol in the tea gardens of Upper Assam. Same practice also exists here in Bangladesh but the workers technically avoided talking about that. Again, young generation is so much concerned about the alcohol consumption of their elderly members. They stated that the garden authority provides the drinks to the gardens and the male labor buy from the wine shop. Male labors tend to spend a substantial amount of their income to these wine shops.

4.3 Child Labor

4.3.1 School going children involved in earning

In the sample there were total 27 respondent of age group 6-12. Among them only 10 children goes to school and rest of them do not go to school. The children who are not going to school are like helping hands in the household. Because their parents go to work and they do the cooking, look after the younger siblings and finish all the household chores. Beside that they also work somewhere inside the garden.

School Going Children (6-12 years)	frequency	Percent	Working	National Level Enrolment Data
Go to school	19	70.37	44.44	97.42% (2021)
Do not go to school	8	29.63	50	
Total	27	100.0		

Table 4.12: School going children distribution

The majority of the tea workers expressed their desire for their children's education. If there are schools nearby, the cost of transportation is low, and the cost of education is low, laborers will send their kids to school. In reality, garden laborers don't want to invest in education because it has a slow return because their primary objective is making money. When asked why they had stopped going to school, they widely mentioned financial hardship, the lack of schools in the area, and parents' lack of understanding of the value of education.

There are significant numbers of children who are casually involved in income generating activities and the ratio is 44.44%. This number is so alarming that almost half of the schools going children are working. This indicates that they have poverty at home so they are trying to help their parents. Again those children who do not go to school they are also involved in income generating activities and the number is 50%. Moreover after school they are busy with works they have no time to study at home. And when this happens, they find study as a burden and leave school as a result. This also means that child labor exists in the tea gardens.

4.4 Respondents' daily meal and nutrition

From the data it is seen that 18.75% can take breakfast, around half of the respondents can have lunch. It is also found that the dinner is the main meal of the tea garden workers as they return to home after a long working period. It is important to search for the food items they can eat in a day. According to the data most people can have something before going to work like raw tea with muri (puffed rice), or dry roti with tea. For lunch the persons stay at home take rice or roti with dal or vegetables sometimes or mashed potato etc. As dinner is their main meal, mostly in the entire household have rice dal, vegetables. Sometimes very poor households take rice with tea. Malnutrition problem in Bangladesh is a sign of poor eating habits, which reflect ongoing food insecurity at the household level according to Hossain et al (2017)

Number of meal taken	Frequency	Percent
One meal	160	100
Two meal	103	64.38
Three meal	57	35.62

Table 4.13: Access to food

Also, when they get weekly wages only then they can eat milk and egg. A few decades ago these ethnic people could not eat egg, fish and meat due to religious reasons but now they consume non vegetarian food. According to the workers, they can have good food during festivals. They hardly take meat in a month. Sometimes they rear poultry in home and then they can take meat.

4.5 Non Salary Benefits (Last month)

Respondents were asked about the Non salary benefits provided by the garden authority. Of them 101 respondents said that they get rice or flour as ration but mostly they get flour. The ration is 3 Kg 300 gram flour per week, and the average monetary value makes Tk. 840-1000. For housing purpose nobody got anything last month. For health purpose only two people get some kinds of assistance. These two people avail the benefits because they were injured in the factory while working and the amount was near about Tk. 2000 to Tk. 2500. Usually the tea gardens do not provide health benefits. There are dispensaries for the sick employees. Few over the counter medicine are provided. Sometimes family members of the employees also get the treatment and medicine from those dispensaries. The data also shows that for education purpose nobody was given anything. There are schools run by the gardens but not all the gardens have their own schools.

Non salary benefits	Frequency	Percent	Amount in BDT
Rice or Flour	101	63.125	840-1000
Health	2	3.75	2000-2500

Table 4.14: Non- salary benefits (Last month)

4.6 Bonded Labor

Although there hasn't been any concrete evidence of forced labor but the workers said they had been made to work against their will. Owners of tea plantations claimed that although there isn't direct proof of forced labor there, there are indirect methods. Every employee must pick 23 kg of tea leaves each day. A worker's pay is proportionally lowered if they fall short of this goal. Although they are not required to work overtime, laborers feel obligated to because of their poor income and their desire to make more by picking more than the

intended amount. They must work in the tea garden in order to maintain their housing, which is another kind of forced labor. Again, if anyone wishes to work outside the tea garden authority take strict steps towards them. They threat the workers of uprooting them from the tea garden. Therefore they are not permitted to work outside. Even if somebody wants to open a shop after the assigned work of the garden, the manager sends his people to close the shop immediately. The tea people have their own survival features against it. In every family there are one or two people who work permanently in the garden. Rest of the family members find temporary works inside the garden or start working outside. By this they can live in the garden and beside that earn some extra money to survive.

4.7 Employment opportunities outside of the garden

From chapter 4.1.10, it is seen that very little percentage of people are really interested in working outside of the tea garden. Now in this section outside employment option will be discussed. Tea workers have mentioned so many work options outside the tea garden. They are- working in a shop, van driver, day labor to nearby towns, working in a factory, CNG driving, farmer, poultry farm etc. From the survey, it is seen that tea people already adopted some of these professions. However the popular selected works are working as a CNG driver and as a day labor outside the garden. When they are asked about their preference they told that they get 170 Taka daily inside the garden but if they work as a day labor outside the garden they get around 300 Taka. Again, if they drive a CNG driven vehicle they can get around 600 Taka after all costing which is somewhat 3 times more than the wage of tea gardens. They also mentioned that the amount that the outside works pay is Tk. 6000 to Tk. 10,000. The people who prefer to work and stay inside the garden they explained that they will always prefer the tea gardens. Because, they have born there, their relatives are there, they get the housing facilities and nothing to worry about the future. They can never leave

those people behind and the community means a lot to them. They feel safe and secured there. They also mention that it is true that the outside work pay more but this land of the gardens means a lot to them. The people working outside the garden told something different. They told that they will prefer outside works because they pay more, future is good, they easily can send their children to schools. Some people mentioned that they will work both inside and outside the tea garden. It is beneficial for them because from this they can make some savings for the future. Therefore it is clearly visible that outside work options are getting popular among the tea workers.

DISCUSSION

Tea workers in Bangladesh face social and economic disadvantages, making it difficult for them to obtain alternative employment. They are forced to choose low-paying work in Bangladeshi tea plantations, where they would be cruelly mistreated. Since they typically come from lower caste origins, the general public views them with contempt and avoids interacting with them because they live and work on tea plantations. They lacked legitimate property rights in Bangladesh because they were from the less affluent parts of society. Only permanent employers leave aside some land for homes and farms where they can raise a few crops for a living. The employer provides housing for the employees.

Open spaces are used by tea plantation employees for defecation, child malnutrition, intestinal and respiratory illnesses, fever and diarrhea. The health advantages are appalling. The majority of them use alternative medicine. Children of tea plantation employees attend primary school but are unable to continue their education due to the high cost. Their sons begin working as tea laborers, while their daughters marry young. Because a worker's child will typically become a worker, employers do not offer any facilities for the education of tea workers because they do not want to permanently lose cheap labor. Workers in tea gardens are very malnourished. Their pay is insufficient to feed their entire family. They mostly rely on rations.

Recently, the workers have adopted works outside the tea garden but they are not willing to leave the tea garden due to any valid reason. They are used to this kind of living pattern. They are getting low wage as Tk. 170 per day, working multiple jobs which are also low paid. The people who are working outside getting as high as 15,000 BDT per month, they wish to leave the tea garden but feel strong affection to the tea gardens as the gardens provide them

accommodation and their relatives are there. Outside employment is also not as easy as the distance, transportation and their ethnicity have big role to play.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The livelihood of tea garden workers of Bangladesh is not satisfactory compared to other countries. They are still away from a better life, education and other facilities in life. Their lives were never out of struggle. The tea plantation employees still have goals and wish to improve their life despite their challenging circumstances. Both union leaders and tea plantation workers believe that education is essential for bringing about community development. All of them expressed a strong desire for their children to receive an education and find employment outside instead of working as laborers in tea gardens. A sizable portion of them anticipate that their children will attend school and work in tea gardens. The majority of respondents expressed dissatisfaction over the fact that educated members also do not receive formal jobs in the tea plantations.

Since the tea garden industry no longer pays well, people are involved in a variety of activities both inside and outside the tea garden. They and their kids are forced to work in the tea gardens since they lack education. Nonetheless, because tea gardens offer free housing, practically all tea plantation employees wanted to keep some sort of connection with the garden. There are plenty of works and employment opportunities exist outside the garden but they are too unable to avail them. Based on the findings, the following suggestions are given to the improvement of their livelihood status.

5.1 Policy implication

Due to the substantial demand for tea on both the domestic and foreign markets, the tea sector has bright potential opportunities. Therefore, it is important to focus on developing the tea

sector. Numerous factors contribute to the importance of the tea industry's development. Employment opportunities are created by this industry, and the nation's tea consumption is rising rapidly. Without placing enough emphasis on the growth of the tea sector, unemployment will rise in the nation and tea imports will cost the government money. It has been noted that neither the government nor owners of tea gardens pay the tea industry enough attention. The success of the communities that support tea plantation workers is closely related to the growth of the industry. Considering the importance tea industry in Bangladesh, the study recommends following interventions-

- To address the issue of unemployment, extensive socio-economic development projects, particularly revenue generating activities need to be performed in the tea garden areas. The importance of increasing laborer pay and wages cannot be overstated. Wages and non salary benefits should be provided to all the families according to the law.
- Children of tea gardeners may be given access to both formal and informal education; to raise awareness of education a campaign among tea gardeners must be launched. Both the employer and the government should take steps to ensure that children of tea laborers receive a primary and secondary education. Children of tea laborers should be required to attend school, and each child should receive books and school uniforms. To enable children to receive education, child labor should be prohibited and children should not be employed in any capacity.
- Tea people must be inspired to learn about their fundamental needs, government, national labor law, and gender equity. Regular communication between the residents of tea gardens and the general public should be established in order to prevent the mainstream community from degrading the status of the residents. The

government is needed to take immediate and serious action to address the situation now and provide a better future for the following generation.

- Initiatives should be taken to spread awareness of health and nutrition. Workers might not demand higher wages if they had the opportunity to raise cattle and the authority must give the permission to the workers though the current wage is inhumanly. In order to improve the diet of their families, it is important to urge the tea laborer to grow the five nutrient-dense vegetables as well as raise poultry on their property. More land should be allotted to the laborers so that they can utilize them in a better way. This can work on reducing the issues regarding food and nutrition.
- The authority of tea gardens must conform strictly to labor laws. The labor law should be followed when providing wages and benefits. To build a sustainable, capable community, improving educational and healthcare facilities should be given higher emphasis. Both temporary and permanent workers should have the same wage. It must be same in all the gardens. Wage cut in different aspects should be prohibited. Wage should be increased according to the money inflation every year. In the dry seasons workers should be involved with alternative works so that they can live well.

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Appendix-1

BRAC INSTITUTE OF GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT

BRAC UNIVERSITY

Master of Development Studies

Survey on

"Livelihood of Tea Garden Laborer: A Study on Selected Tea Estates of Bangladesh: "

Field Survey Questionnaire

[This study attempts to measure livelihood of tea garden workers, Srimangal, Sylhet.

I am a student and researcher of Master of Development Studies of BRAC University. I seek your kind help to collect some information. Your information will be used only for academic purpose and your personal identity will not be disclosed.

Your kind cooperation in this aspect will be highly appreciated.]

Selected Tea Garden

Satgaon Tea Garden	1	Amrail Tea Garden	2
Varaura Tea Garden	3	Shamshernagar Tea Garden	4
Kanihati Tea Garden	5	Ali Nagar Tea Garden	6

Household

Serial No	Name	Age	Gender	Does he/she go to school? Yes=1, No=0	Working while studying, Working=1, Not working=0
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					

Current Employment Condition

Serial No	Working inside Garden=1, Outside Garden=0	What kind of work do you do inside the garden?	Working hour per day	What kind of work do you do outside of the garden?	Per day salary in garden	Income last month inside the garden	Per day income when work outside

Other benefits

Non salary benefits	If provide-1, Not provided-0	If provided, what are they given?	Amount Given
Housing			
Ration			
Health			
Education			

Last Month Expenditure

Food	Education	Clothing	Treatment	Transport	Others

Food Consumption (Yesterday)

Food Item	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner
Rice			
Roti			
Muri/Chira			
Vegetables			
Daal			
Egg			
Fish			
Meat			
Milk			
Tea			
Fruits			

Interview on

Outside Employment

- What kinds of works are available outside the tea garden?
- How much do they pay?
- They pay less or more than the tea garden?
- Will you prefer to work inside/outside the garden?
- If inside, why do you prefer that?
- Have you ever thought of leaving the tea garden?

- If not why you prefer tea garden?

❖ What is the routine of a male labor of the family?

