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ASSESSMENT OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITION OF TEA WORKERS: A STUDY ON SELECTED TEA GARDENS OF CHUNARUGHAT UPAZILA, HABIGANJ DISTRICT, BANGLADESH

Biswajit Nath*

Nazir Ahammad**

ABSTRACT

Tea is one of the most important exporting cash crops of Bangladesh. The country's average export of tea per year is about 26 million kg of value of \$ 36 million. A large number of tea workers are directly or indirectly related with this industry. Their life style and social status are different from others. Habiganj district is the second largest tea garden of Bangladesh. There are 23 tea gardens located in this district out of 163 tea gardens of Bangladesh. This research paper attempts to highlight the socio-economic condition of tea workers in the selective tea gardens. All of the tea workers in these selected tea gardens are 'Hindu' and they are divided into some racial groups. The actual origin of tea workers are from different states of India i.e., Orissa, Bhupal, Assam, Bihar, Meghalaya etc. They are living within half to one mile distance from working place. Their weekly wage is only 330 Taka for 8 hours working in a day. Several socio-economic problems investigate and relevant information was collected through open precoded questionnaire method. Proper data dissemination from tea garden ownership along with tea workers is the main drawback. For the socio-economic development of tea workers as well as tea industry, it is high time to take proper steps considering implementing solutions with good co-operation by tea garden ownership, government and non-government organizations.

Keywords: Socio-economic, Tea Worker, Tea Garden, Habiganj, Bangladesh.

^{*} Assistant Professor, Department of Geography and Environmental Studies, Faculty of Biological Sciences, University of Chittagong, Chittagong-4331, Bangladesh

^{**} Post Graduate Research Student, Department of Geography and Environmental Studies, Faculty of Biological Sciences, University of Chittagong, Chittagong-4331, Bangladesh



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1. INTRODUCTION

Tea is a labour intensive industry and predominantly an agro-based expert oriented evergreen crop in Bangladesh and a perennial crop grown as a monoculture on large contiguous areas. The country occupies the 5th position in respect of production among the 30 tea producing countries of the world (Zaman, M. A., 1988). Bangladesh earns foreign exchange worth about taka 200 million every year from tea export. The country's average export of tea per year is about 26 million kg of value of \$36 million (National Brokers Limited, 2009). The present generation of tea garden workers recruited by the planters from Orissa, Bihar, Madras and the central province of India in the middle of the 18th century. These workers have been living in the tea gardens of Sylhet and Chittagong. They live permanently in houses specifically made for them. These people work in the tea gardens for long hours for a living. Socio-Economic survey is the best way to know a group or a group of people. By socio-economic survey it is known the race, religion, culture, life style, health and educational condition etc. of a group (Ahammed, K. M. 2007).

As regards investment in tea cultivation in Bangladesh, no systematic academic work has so far been undertaken. Even the academic circles of the country have conducted limited socioeconomic studies on tea cultivation of Bangladesh. However, BTRI has conducted a good number of studies which mainly covered biological aspects of tea such as improved agronomic practices, adoption of HYV clone in place of indigenous seed, improved seeds, soil and pest management, manufacturing process and standardization of Bangladesh Tea. In order to analyze the socio-economic aspects of tea cultivation "Tea Journals" published at home and abroad the bulletin-periodical newsletter of the BTRP published by PDU of BTB, monthly statistical Bulletin of BTB, Daily news paper, weekly magazines related books of economics, office circulars, ordinances on tea report of expatriate and local consultants etc. were consulted. British writer Francis Rolt mentioned, "The tea gardens are managed as an extreme hierarchy: the managers live like gods, distant, unapproachable and in comprehensible. Some even begin to believe that they are gods that they can do exactly what they like". The World Bank (1997) has found that the tea industry offers rural development opportunities especially to women and contributes greatly to poverty alleviation on the rural areas. They have opined that because of inefficient land and labor utilization, many tea estates are unprofitable. The usefulness of tea as a



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health drink and protector of environment along with long term finance is a prerequisite condition for tea development and lack of long-term lease agreement and maximum credit limit are two barriers to tea financing (Quaderi, 2001). Improved socio-economic condition of tea labor would contribute positively in the production system of tea sector, more new primary schools for increasing literacy rate among the tea population, the micro credit programmed through NGOs such as rickshaw and vegetables production would increase the income of the tea workers which in turn would increase the efficiency of workers and upgrading sanitation and family planning facilities would result small family sizes with healthy labor force (Saha and Jiban Krishna, 2001). British human rights worker Gordon Bruce mentioned, there are constitutional safe guards ensure human dignity, but for the tea workers human dignity is only a dream, their conditions 'violate the maximum provisions of Bangladeshi constitutions, different instruments, laws and rules that commit social economic and human dignity.

According to Strategic Plan for the tea industry of Bangladesh (2004-2023), Tea in Bangladesh was mainly export oriented in the past. But due to increased tea drinking habit, population growth and rapid urbanization domestic consumption has been rising to a noticeable extent. If it continues at this rate and production does not keep pace, export will soon shrink to a standstill and even tea may have to be imported in near future.

Tea is a second cash crop of Bangladesh. The tea sector contributes about 0.8% of the GDP in Bangladesh. About 0.15 million people are directly employed in the tea industry, which constitutes about 3.3 percent of the country's total employment (International Tea Committee, annual bulletin of statistics: 1994, 2002, 2003). Many more people are indirectly employed in other sectors related to tea. There are about 163 tea gardens in Bangladesh and among of these gardens, about 23 gardens are located in Habiganj district which is the 2nd largest tea garden area of (Bangladesh Bangladesh Tea Board, 2002) The spatial extent of the surveyed study area in between 24⁰ 06′ 14.3″N to 24⁰ 09′ 29.9″ N latitude and 91⁰ 29′ 57.5″ E to 91⁰ 31′ 19.2″ E longitude (Fig. 1 and Table 1). Fig. 1 shows the location map of the study area. As tea is the major economic contributing sector of Bangladesh and a large number of workers are related to tea industry and for that reason researcher particularly focused on the selective tea gardens and the tea workers to know their socio-economic status.

This research highlights the socio-economic condition of tea workers of Chunarughat upazila in Habiganj district and to find out necessary improvement with some policy guidelines for betterment of the tea workers.

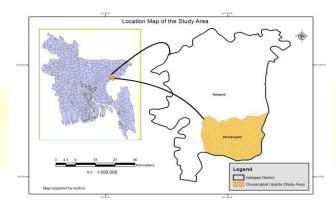


Fig. 1 Location map of the Study Area

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The major objective of the present study is to know the socio-economic condition of tea workers.

In order to fulfill the main aim of the research following objectives are taken:

- To assess the socio-economic condition of the tea workers in the study area.
- To find out necessary improvement for betterment of the tea industry and tea workers.

3. DATABASE AND METHODOLOGY

In order to study the socio-economic condition of tea workers in Chunarughat Upazila under Habiganj district, 17 tea gardens are located in this upazila out of 23 which exist in the total district area. Due to major tea gardens concentration, Chunarughat upazila was selected for this present research and within this upazila four sampling stations (tea gardens) were taken through selection of sampling method. This method was followed for the subjective judgments of the author on the basis of importance of areas as well as the density of tea gardens in the area. The geographical locations of selected tea gardens were collected by GPS device (Garmin E-trex Model) during field survey (Table 1).



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Table No.1: GPS Value of Surveyed Tea Garden

Stations	Name of the garden	GPS Value
Station-1	Chandpur	N 24° 09' 29.9"
		E 091° 29' 57.5"
Station-2	Chunddicherra	N 24° 08' 40.0"
		E 091° 29' 25.0"
Station-3	Amo	N 24° 07' 08.6"
		E 091° 30' 40.0"
Station-4	Nalua	N 24° 06' 14.3"
		E 091° 31' 19.2"

Source: Field Survey-2013

Methods which were followed to achieve the objectives are mainly based on a number of primary and secondary data as well as on direct field observation and detailed questionnaire survey. At first the geomorphic units of the total area have been identified by the help of a base map which have been justified by a plot to field survey. The questionnaire was designed with some specific questions to identify the different socio-economic parameters. All the collected information's were coded in the excel table under different socio-economic parameters. Collected data from different sources has been analyzed and different charts have been developed through MS Excel and SPSS. For initial survey series of satellite imageries were acquisition from Google Earth 7.0 to know the tea gardens location. Satellite imageries were geo-referenced with the help of extracted co-ordinate points from Google earth later field GPS points (tea garden location) were incorporated and plotted over satellite image (Fig. 2). Finally required map has been prepared using ArcGIS 10 software.

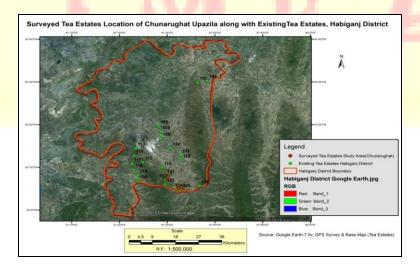


Fig. 2: Surveyed Tea Garden Location of Chunarughat Upazila along with Existing Tea Gardens

The methodology which was adopted in this research is shown in the following Fig 3.

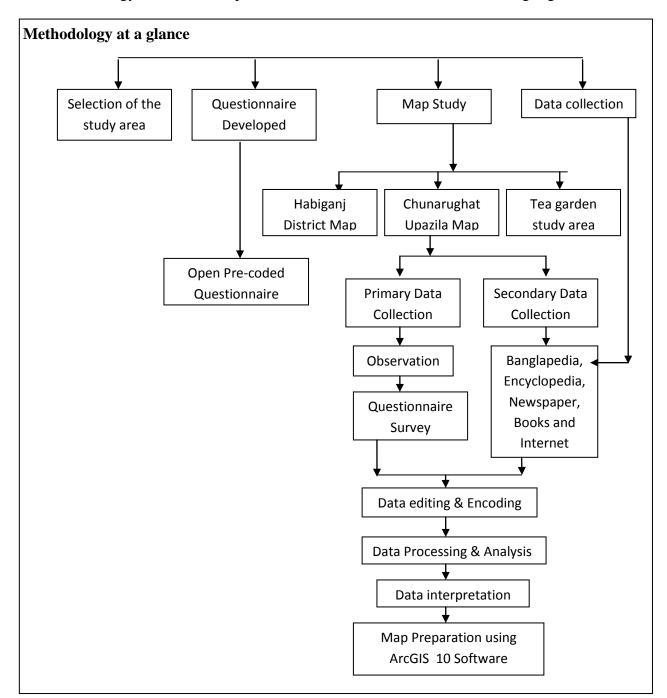


Fig. 3: Methodology of the research

4. DEGLIFEG AND DEGGEGGGGAN

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A large number of tea workers are related in the tea industry. Their economic and social status is different from others. The socio-economic condition of the tea workers include the personal, occupational, educational, health and sanitation, information related to the environment and NGO, Insurance and other information's.

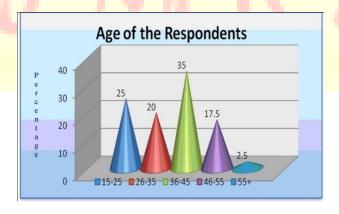
4.1 Socio-economic condition of Tea workers

4.1.1 Personal Information of the Respondents

Personal information of the respondents reflects the overall research, particularly in socioeconomic aspects. This research mainly based on questionnaire survey and visual observation for collecting data from tea workers about their socio- economic condition as well as their personal life.

Age and Sex of the Respondents

During questionnaire survey, data was collected from both of male and female respondents which share equal percentage (50%). forty (40) tea workers of four tea gardens in Chunarughat upazila were interviewed. The workers age ranges are 15-25, 26-35, 36-45, 46-50 and above 55 years. Among the different age ranges the maximum respondents are fallen within 36-45 age range which shares 35% of the respondents and next one falls within 15-25 age range which shares 25% and remaining percentage are other age ranges category (Fig. 4).

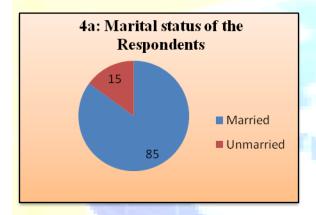


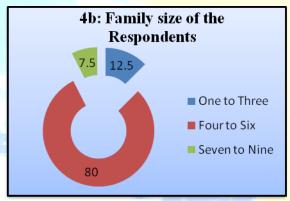
Source: Questionnaire Survey-2013

Fig. 4: Age of the Respondents

• Marital Status and Family Size of the respondents

Marital status of the respondents is an important aspect of research. The field data shows that that most of the respondents (85%) are married and a few (15%) are unmarried Fig. 5 (5a). Most of the cases married person is more experienced and practical in the tea processing rather than unmarried person. Next to focus on respondent's family size which shows the internal social and economic status of a family. In tea garden, most of the respondent's (80%) family size is 4-6 and 12.5% respondent's family size is 1-3 and remaining 7.5% is 7-9 ranged. These percentages of family size are shown in Fig. 5 (5b).





Source: Field Work-2013

Fig. 5 (5a and 5b): Marital status and Family size of the respondents

• Types of house of the respondents

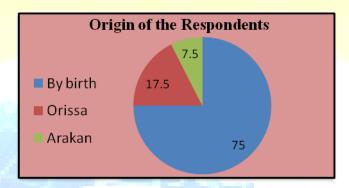
Housing condition or house type shows the economic and cultural status of a society. In tea garden, most of the respondents lived in katcha and semi-pacca houses and their percentage is fifty-fifty (Field survey, 2013).

• Tenure status of the respondents

In tea garden, company provide house for their workers and also repaired by them when it is broken. In this study, all of the respondents said that their house is made by company and they have no own house.

• Origin of the respondents

The origin of tea workers is not in Bangladesh, though at present they are said that they are Bangladeshi. They came from Bihar, Bhupal, Assam and Meghalaya in India. In this study, most of the respondents (75%) said that they are Bangladeshi and living by birth and 25% are living for 20-30 years in the study area where 17.5% express their comments that they came from Orissa and remaining (7.5%) said that they came from Arakan. These percentages of origin of the respondents are shown in the following Fig. 6.



Source: Field Survey, 2013

Fig. 6: Origin of the respondents

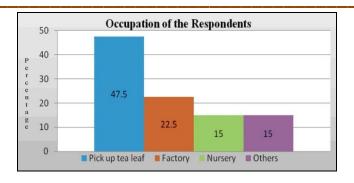
4.1.2 Information related to Occupation of Tea workers

Occupation is an important part of human life. The nature of occupation defines the nature of life style in a society. In this research, it is found that tea workers work in different section of the tea garden. Their life style is different from other kinds of occupational society.

• Types of occupation of the respondents in tea garden

In tea garden, tea workers are working in different section such as picking up tea leaves, nursery, factory and others. The surveyed data shows that, most of the workers (47.5%) are working in picking up tea leaves and rest of the respondents are working in factory, nursery and others sections of tea garden and their percentage are 22.5%, 15% and 15% respectively (Fig. 7).





Source: Field Work-2013

Fig. 7: Occupation of the respondents

Reason of this occupation

Maximum tea gardens are located in remote hilly area. It is hard to find varieties of job in the tea garden. As a result, most of the people of tea gardens must choose as a tea worker. In this study, most of the respondents (40%) choose this occupation because they have no opportunity of other job. Another (40%) respondents said that this job is easier than the other job, only (20%) said that it is their father's occupation and that's why they choose this job. As they are currently involved with the tea garden so that, researcher focused on to know their earlier status also and found that 62.5% have no job, 20% respondents were day labor and they worked in the outside tea garden and the remaining 17.5% were involved in others sector (Field survey, 2013).

4.1.3 Distance of work place from living place of the respondents

The living place of tea workers is mostly near to the working place and is within the tea garden. Most of the respondents (87.5%) living place is within ½-1 mile, and 22.5% respondents living place is within 2-3 mile from working place.

4.1.4 Working hour and target of production

The working hour of the tea workers' is eight hours in a day in every tea garden in the study area. All of the respondents said that they worked eight hours in a day and after the week; they paid only 330 BD Taka by company. In eight hours working time they have no target of production, they can work in their own interest. But after the ending of working hour some records are noted by Supervisor or Sarder in different sections of the garden.



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4.1.5 Total income of the respondents

In tea garden, salary of workers paid in weekly. Their weekly salary is only 330 Taka. But total income is calculated in monthly with other income of the respondents. The field survey data shows that most of the respondent's (75%) total monthly income is only 1320 Taka and another 25% respondents have total income level is 2500-3000 Taka (Field survey, 2013). In tea garden, tea workers have limited scope of work as the means of other source of income out of working in garden. Most of the respondents (75%) have no other source of income. 15% respondent earn some money by rickshaw driving and the remaining (10%) selling vegetables in local market after the ending of working hour of the tea garden (Field survey, 2013).

4.1.6 Security in working place of the respondents

Tea garden is most secured than the other type of working organization. In the study area, 72.5% respondents said that they have good security system and only 27.5% respondents said that they have no good security system in working place.

4.1.7 Education related information

Education is the backbone of a nation. It is the mirror of a society. For any research, educational information of the respondents is reflecting the overall condition of the study area. In this study, all of the respondents are tea worker; their educational qualification is very poor because they have no satisfied educational facilities and scope of the study. The educational status of the study area is shown below:

• Educational qualification of the respondents

Educational qualification of the respondents is a major reflect of any research. The reliability of survey information actually depends on the educational qualification of the respondents. The maximum portions (57.5%) of the respondents are in between classes 1-5. Another highest portion (25%) is illiterate. Only (15%) are between classes (6-10) or S.S.C level and a few (2.5%) are under and above H.S.C level.



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Availability of educational institution in the study area

According to surveyed data, 70% of the respondents said that they have no available educational institution and another 30% said that they have available educational institution.

• Number of educational institution

In this research, data was collected from four tea gardens. It is a matter of sorrow that every tea garden has only one govt. primary school but have no high school. As a result, most of the people stop their school after class five. Due to the lack of educational institution, a large part of the tea workers are illiterate. At present time, some of the NGO's are tried to provide education by building primary school in the tea garden. BRAC is one of the NGO's which build some primary school in every tea garden and provided free education.

4.1.8 Cultural information of the respondents

Cultural information of the respondent is an important aspect of socio-economic research. The cultural information of the respondents like religion, race, dress, food habit and cultural festival are noticeable.

Race of the respondents

In this study area, tea workers are divided into some racial groups which is based on their religion. The racial groups of the respondents are Mondda, Oti, Boraik, Mohali, Kurmi, Urang etc. and their percentage are 35%, 12.5%, 17.5%, 7.5%, 17.5% respectively. Mondda is the highest of all of these racial groups.

4.1.9 Information related to health and sanitation

Everyone we know that 'health is wealth'. Health and sanitation status helps to reflect the socioeconomic condition of an area.

• Source of drinking water

Pure water is essential for the survival of life. In this study, it is found that all of the respondents in tea gardens are collected their drinking water from tube-wells. They use this water for all types of domestic works.

• Number of medical centre and the medical service

Medical centre is the prerequisite of better treatment. In the study area, every tea garden has only one central medical centre which provides all primary medical services. But it is not sufficient for patient. Emergency patient faced problems whenever they need to require medical treatment. They have taken treatment near the Chunarughat Sadar Upazila hospital. Some NGO'S provide health and nutrition services in the tea gardens.

• Sanitation System of the respondents

All of the respondents in the tea gardens are low income people and they are aware about their sanitation system. According to surveyed data, 82.5% of the respondents are used katcha latrines, 17.5% respondents are used semi-pacca latrines and no one used pacca latrine.

Status and types of health hazard

Tea workers are faced some health hazard in a specific time of the year. Diarrhoea and fever are the common health hazard in the study area. The percentages of the respondents of these hazards are 87.5% and 12.5% respectively. These percentages of health hazards are shown in Fig. 8.

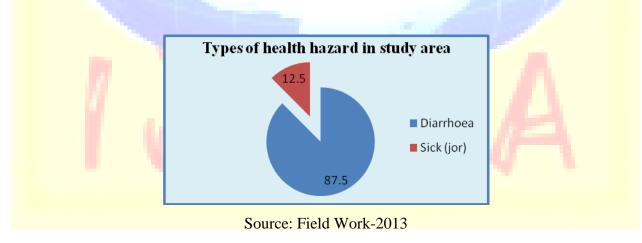


Fig. 8: Status and types of health hazards in the study area

4.1.10 Information related to environment

Environment means the sum total of surrounding condition. It may be physical or human. Different types of environmental problems are found in the study area.



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• Types, causes, impacts and solutions of environmental problems

The environmental condition of the tea gardens is quite good than the other area. In the study area, it was not found the major environmental problems. Some physical environmental problem such as arsenic problem and some social environmental problem such as energy problem are found. Most of the respondents (80%) said that they have no environmental problems, 7.5% said they have arsenic problem and 12.5% said they have faced energy problem.

Arsenic problem caused by the lack of deep tube-well and its cause's skin cancer. To solve this problem, most of the respondents said that they have needed deep tube-well. Energy problem caused by the lack of production of electricity which hampers the general activities of the respondents. To solve this problem production of electricity should be increased.

4.1.11 NGO, Insurance and other information

NGO's are played important role in the development of society. Government activities are not sufficient for proper development. So, it is important to maintain good co-operation between Govt. Organization and NGO's. 0

• Types of NGO's and their activities

Some NGO's are tried to provide facilities in the tea gardens. The NGO's are BRAC, ASHA, PROSHIKA, PASA, INDEVAR etc. BRAC is the highest facilitator of these NGOs which provide primary school, health services, and awareness programmed by documentation etc.

• Insurance of the respondents

Insurance is the important way for the savings. The surveyed data shows that 60% of the respondents have no insurance policy and another 40% have taken some insurance. In 40%, all of the respondents have taken life insurance and this facility is taken from Progati Life Insurance Ltd.

• Financial or other helps from the garden ownership

From the study area of tea gardens, it is found that tea companies provide some facilities to the tea workers. Some major facilities are:

- Tea garden companies provide house for the tea workers,
- They provide medical services to the tea workers,
- They provide relief to the tea workers,
- They provide donation for religious or cultural programme.

4.2 Opinion of the respondents for betterment of their life

Tea workers are faced the lacking of some essential facilities. For the betterment of their socioeconomic condition, they have provided some opinions which are given below:

- Salary must be increased and should be monthly payable,
- Communication system must be developed,
- Number of primary school must be increased and high school must be build up,
- Deep tube-well must be set up and number of tube-well must be increased,
- For the development of sanitation system, they have need pacca latrine,
- They have need gas and electricity facilities,
- They have need timely and largely relief from tea gardens ownership,
- They have need profit bonus from tea garden companies.

5. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

From this overall socio-economic study, it is found that the socio-economic condition of tea workers in Chunarughat Upazila is deprived. It is also find the following results:

- Maximum respondents are married and most of them are young and aged. Number of male and female workers is same (50%).
- Most of the tea workers are lived in Kutcha house which is provided and also repaired by company.
- Maximum respondents family size is (4-6) ranged. Most of the family members are worked in tea garden. Their salary is paid by weekly and it is 330Tk only.
- In one sense, all tea workers are not Bangladeshi, their origin from Bihar, Bhupal, Orissa, Assam, Meghalaya and another sense they are Bangladeshi because most of them are lived in tea garden area by birth.



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- All of the respondents are worked in different sections of the tea garden such as Tipping and Plucking, Nursery, factory etc. Their working hour is eight hours. They have no target of production. They have chosen this occupation because they have no opportunity of other job and their working place is not so far, it is (1/2-1) mile from living place. The opportunity of other job is limited and most of the respondents were unemployment before this occupation. The security in working place is good than the other kinds of occupation.
- Maximum respondents are illiterate and a large number of respondents are stopped their school after class five because they have no any high school and have only one primary school in the garden.
- All of the respondents are Hindu and they are divided into some racial groups such as Mondda, Oti, Boraik, Mohali, Kurmi, Urang etc. They drink tea two times and eat rice one time in a day. Different types of cultural festival arranged by Tea Garden Company in the Times of 'Puja'.
- All of the respondents are used tube-well for drinking water and other purposes.
 Sanitation system is very poor of the tea workers. Most of them are used kutcha latrine.
 Diarrhoea is the major health hazard of the respondents. A Central hospital provided medical facilities to the tea workers which are made by company and it is not sufficient for emergency patient.
- Environmental condition of tea garden and the respondents is quite good than the other area. No major environmental problems have found except arsenic and energy problem.
- Some NGOs are provided facilities to tea workers. NGO i.e. BRAC are the highest facilitator which provides primary school and health services. Some of the respondents have taken life insurance from Progati life insurance.
- The ownership of gardens provides some facilities to the workers such as housing, medical services, relief, arrangement of cultural festival etc.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

To improve the present socio-economic condition of tea workers in the study area following recommendations should be considered:

Role of tea gardens ownership

The socio-economic development of tea workers is largely dependent on tea garden ownership. Following steps should be done by garden ownership:

- At first gardens ownership should be responsible and friendly with tea workers,
- Salary of the tea workers should be increased by monthly payable,
- Number of schools should be increased in the garden,
- Medical facilities should be developed,
- Pucca and Semi-pucca latrine should be provided among the tea workers,
- Deep tube-wells should be set up and number of tube-well should be increased,
- Transport and communication system should be developed,
- Amount of relief should be increased,
- Profit bonus should be provided to the tea workers.

Role of Government

- Strong labour law should be developed,
- Road network should be developed,
- Gas and electricity facilities should be increased,
- Early marriage should be stopped by rules and law.

Role of NGOs

- Primary and high school should be provided in the tea garden,
- Health and sanitation facilities should be increased,
- Different types of micro credit or easy loan should be given to the tea workers,
- Other source of income for the tea workers should be developed,
- Need to concern the people about their rights.

7. CONCLUSION

Bangladesh is a developing country. The countries economy largely depending on foreign exchange, in which tea plays a great role because it is the 2nd exporting goods of Bangladesh. A



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large number of workers are related with tea industry but their social and economical value is not satisfied with respect to other types of works. So, it is needed to find out the problems of tea industry and socio-economic condition of tea worker's. After solving the problems of tea industry and tea workers, country will be achieved more foreign money and will be improving a lot in near future as a tea exporting countries of the world.

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PHOTOGRAPHS



Photo 1: Name Plate of Nalua & Amo Tea Gardens



Photo 2: Main Gate of Chundeecherra & Chandpur Tea Gardens



Photo 3: Central Hospital at Tea Garden



Photo 4: Female Tea Workers at Nursery



Photo 5: House Type of Tea workers



Photo 6: Male Tea worker at Nursery



Photo 7: Tea worker at Tea Factory



Photo 8: Poor Sanitation System of tea workers