

## **PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES OF WOMEN TEA WORKERS OF CLOSED TEA GARDENS: A QUALITATIVE STUDY IN NORTH BENGAL**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Women workers constituted a significant labour force in India in tea industry of North Bengal. They contributing a lot to achieve not only in tea production but also national earning in global market. However, women workers suffered a lot due to inequalities and gender discrimination. Women tea workers faced a serious exploitation, subordination in study areas. Hardly Plantation of Labour Act (PLA) is implemented in the area. Their situation is worse especially in closed tea garden areas. This paper attempts to understand the challenges of women tea workers of closed tea gardens of North Bengal. It also suggested how to overcome their problems and up-liften of women tea workers in North Bengal.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Women Tea Worker, Socio-Economic Status, Empowerment, Plantation of Labour Act (PLA), Tea Garden*

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The Northern region of West Bengal, referred as North Bengal, is predominantly known as a tea-producing place having natural beauty. The tea industry contributes a lot to national income. The contribution tea industry, plantation owners and management and role of tea workers cannot be denied. The tea industry requires a huge workforce, and since the inception of the tea industry women tea workers is the advantage. About 70 percent of the tea industry workers are women, the most potential and well-trained labour force from generation to generation (Sharma, 2013). On contrary, women tea workers have been deprived, and facing discrimination in all aspects of society. Instead of being regarded as assets and backbone of the tea industry, women tea workers who have efficiency and specialization have always been relegated to the bottom strata and considered the most abundant and cheapest labour force in tea industry (Gurung and Mukherjee, 2018). Nowadays, women's empowerment has been considered a significant centre of attention in raising the status of women. Empowerment indicates the direction of increasing the capacity of people or groups to make preferences into desired actions and outcomes and change into desired actions and results. It helps individuals to participate in profitable decisions and increase self-confidence (Das and Roy, 2019).

## OBJECTIVES

The study aim to understand socio-economic challenges of women tea workers of closed tea garden areas of North Bengal.

## METHODOLOGY

This study followed qualitative research based on case study design collected from various closed tea gardens of North Bengal namely, Dekhlapara, Bandapani, Surendranagar, Dharnipur, Redbank, Manabarie and Madhu. Besides, secondary data used from various reports, articles, newspapers etc.

## STUDY AREA

The present study is conducted in the seven closed tea garden at Dooars region of North Bengal. As per 65<sup>th</sup> annual report published by Tea Board of India (2018-2019) there are 11 closed tea garden in India, out of which 8 garden located in West Bengal and rest 3 garden situated in Kerala. Among the 8 closed tea garden of West Bengal seven is situated in Dooars region of North Bengal and rest one garden situated in Terai region.

**Table 1: Closed Tea Garden in India**

Sl. No.	Name of the Closed Tea Garden	State Name	District Name	Region Name
1	Dheklapara	West Bengal	Jalpaiguri	Dooars
2	Bundapani	West Bengal	Alipurduar	Dooars
3	Dharanipur	West Bengal	Jalpaiguri	Dooars
4	Redbank	West Bengal	Jalpaiguri	Dooars
5	Surendranagar	West Bengal	Jalpaiguri	Dooars
6	Madhu	West Bengal	Alipurduar	Dooars
7	Panighata	West Bengal	Darjeeling	Terai
8	Manabari	West Bengal	Jalpaiguri	Dooars
9	M/s Peermade Tea CO.Ltd.- Peermade&lonetree T.E	Kerala	Idukki	
10	M/s MMJ Plantations- Kottamala Bonami T.E	Kerala	Idukki	
11	Bonaccord	Kerala	Thiruvananthapuram	

Source: Tea Board of India (2018-19)

Details of the closed tea gardens are given below:

### DEKHLAPARA TEA ESTATE

This garden is situated at the village namely Madarihat, under the Birpara CD block, under the Sisujhumra G.P and it is a part of Alipurduar subdivision of the Alipurduar district of northern parts of West Bengal. Dekhlapara tea garden is a large village situated in Maadarihat. Total population of this garden is 2643, of which female 1321 and male 1322 (census 2011). As per data Tea Board of India 2019-2020, Permanent Workers of the garden is 604, and Temporary workers is 200(Approx).Date of Closure of the garden is 11.03 2006.

### BUNDAPANI TEA ESTATE

Bundapani tea estate is located also in *Madarihat, Birpara CD block in the Alipurduar* district of in the state of West Bengal. As per 2011census location code of this tea garden area is 307066. Total Population of the garden is 5390 of which female 2634 and male 2756 (census2011). As per data Tea Board of India 2019-2020, permanent Workers of the garden is 1215, Temporary workers is 68. (Approx). Date of Closure of the said garden is July 13, 2013.

### **DHARANIPUR TEA ESTATE**

The garden situated in *Looksan G.P, Nagrakata Block of Jalpaiguri district* of west Bengal. Workers: As per data Tea Board of India 2019-2020, permanent Workers of the garden is 357, and temporary workers of the garden is 450. (Approx). Date of closure of the garden is 19.10.2013

### **RED BANK TEA ESTATE**

Redbank tea estate in Dhupguri, falls under Jalpaiguri district of West Bengal. It comes under *Banarhat G.P.* It belongs in rural region and one of the 102 villages of Dhupguri Block of Jalpaiguri district. Total population of the garden is 4,114 of which female population is 2099, and male population is 2015 according to 2011 census

As per data Tea Board of India 2019-2020, number of permanent workers are 888, temporary workers 700. Date of Closure of said garden is October 19, 2013

### **SURENDRANAGAR TEA ESTATE**

This tea garden area comes under the Banarhat G.P, and Banarhat Block and Jalpaiguri district of West Bengal. As per data Tea Board of India 2019-2020, permanent Workers of the garden is 301 and temporary worker is 150. Date of Closure of the garden is October 19.2013

### **MADHU TEA ESTATE**

The tea estate comes under Kalchini Block, in Alipurduar subdivision in the Alipurduar district of West Bengal. Population of the area is 4540 according to 2011 census, male 2233 and female 2307 worke: As per data Tea Board of India 2019-2020, permanent workers of the garden is 947. Date of Closure of said garden is August 23. 2014.

### **MANABARI TEA ESTATE**

According to the 65<sup>th</sup> Annual report of Tea Board of India (2018-19), Manabari is also one of the closed tea garden in West Bengal as well as India. It is situated in Mal Tehsil of Jalpaiguri district of North Bengal. Total population is 2,147 of which female 1064, and male 1083 according to 2011 census. As per data Tea Board of India 2019-2020, permanent workers of the garden is 452 and temporary worker is 101. Date of closure of the garden is October 8. 2016

### **Women in Tea Plantation Work in North Bengal: A Review**

The tea plantation of India has a long history of over 150 years. This traditional industry has laid the first stone in India by British planters to make an effort to interrupt the Chinese patent on tea. In India on 1823 the first indigenous tea bush was invented in Assam by Major Robert Bruce of the British army (Bhowmik, 1981). During this period tea production was a very much laborious job with entirely non-automated processing system. Gradually to fulfil the huge task the import of labour force was started a compulsory (Banarjee, 1989). Tea workers were drawn from various places of plain and hilly India. Tea industry began to flourishing in West Bengal after 1860s. Planters enslaved labour from externally. Local labour was not so affordable; therefore it was extracted labour from outside to manage the ever-growing labour in early phase of its initiation in West Bengal. It became imperative to enlarge the tea plantation workers by importation of labourer from outside the state. Different migrant groups from Chotanagpur, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Nepal moved to North Bengal gradually and settle down for tea plantation work in West Bengal. A large numbers of women migrated along with family and relatives in tea producing districts of North Bengal (Bhadra, 2004).

In case of labour intensive tea industry placed second position in India next to Indian Railways. In 2015 Tea Board of India conducted a baseline survey. In accordance with this survey, the total number of permanent worker was 726247 and temporary worker was 405695 in all over India. In West Bengal, the total number of permanent worker was 241144 and 95172 was temporary workers. Their livelihoods were entirely dependent on the tea industries. In India women workers comprises a large number of work-force as compare to men. Tea industry experiences a regular increase of women labourers' since its establishment (Bhadra, 2004). After independence the engagement of women worker in tea garden of North Bengal has followed the same pattern of recruitment like British Planters (Dutta, 2015).

There are various factors responsible for it. Some of the factors are discussed in this section.

As tea is an agro based the women workers capable to work. They easily can adjust to work place and put hard labour devoting time suitable for the garden. There is a constant engagement of chief labour force from women in view of mechanization and demand of tea market. They thus became very vital for existence of this industry (Jain, 1983). In North Bengal tea planters have a tendency to employ more women labour, as they believe, women are generally more capable to pluck tea leaves. Women are considered more efficient in plucking of tea leaves than men. Men are better in other work relating to maintenance of the plantation (Sarkar and Bhowmik, 1999). The work-force from the various places reaches in tea garden areas from plains and hilly India. The migration was mainly on family bases and a large number of women migrated in tea district of North Bengal along with their husbands and relatives (Bhadra, 2004). Tea industry prefers to recruit the work force from families working since its inception. Women tea worker of closed tea garden are being deprived in various manners. On the one hand, as compared to others the wages of tea workers in West Bengal and Assam are the lowest (Bhowmik, 2011). Though wage disparity between male and female labourer was put an end to December, 1976, but many tea planters in West Bengal denied to provide same wages to the women worker as per the male worker even after equal wages for equal work act was passed. In some tea gardens it was not executed up to July 1979. (Bhowmik, 1981). They are paid two third of the wages of an adult labour. In this way many adult women labourers are paid lesser wages and thus wage differences are still there in a different form (Bhadra, 2004). In some tea gardens there is high number of female casual workers as compared to males. This is significant because practice casual workers are not entitled to the same benefits as permanent workers (Fact Finding mission report 2016).

Women workers in tea garden area also suffer from superstition and it is atypical problem. live with social stigma like witch-hunting. *Witchcraft* still practicing in recent days due to hunger, epidemics, disease, non-availability of drinking water, lack of health care facilities, illiteracy, poor implementation of Government health policies, etc (Misra, 2003). It is important to note that most of the time women workers are regarded as '*daini*' or '*witch*'. There are two reasons behind it. First, majority of the community believed that *witch* are always female and second, tribal women hold lower status than their male counterparts in all aspect including social, political, and rituals matters of life, which led them in a vulnerable situation of which hunting (Choudhury, 2012).

Domestic violence consists of various kinds such as sexual violence, physical abuse, and psychological violence. Women tea workers are always being exploited and deprived of in their work place as well as home. Though within the family they have to undergo physical toil taking part in the domestic activities, starting from child rearing they play major role in collecting food and other sustenance goods and thereby contribute to the economy, but they are subjected to sexual discrimination (Biswas et al 2018). Gender based violence is very common in tea gardens. But not a single women and girl are willing to disclose family matter.

## Women Worker in Closed Tea Gardens: Some Insights from Case Studies

### Case No: 1

Name: Shila Oraon,

Age 35,

Caste: Scheduled Tribe,

Religion: Hindu,

Income: 2000-2500 (per month)

She was a permanent worker of Manabarie closed tea garden. She belongs in tea dependent family and lives in a garden quarter with her husband, mother-in-law and her son, who is 4 years old. Due to closure of tea gardens all of her family members lost their jobs. Presently she has no permanent work. Some time she works as “*Bighawala*”, mean working in others gardens namely Pathorjhora, Mangilas, Ramachira etc as labourer. Not only this to sustain her family she took more vulnerable step without caring her life risk and goes to *Sevoke* hill and there is a river namely Teesta where she works as stone collector. For this work she has to travel long way through train and every day she travel without ticket. During her break timed she also collects fire wood from *Shivoke* hill. In her word as her husband is quite alcoholic and idle in nature and does not have any interest in others kind of work, she has to take all the responsibility of her family. But her husband extracts her earnings and some time he uses it for taking alcohol. Some time quarrel arise due to excessive drinking, and she is beaten by her husband, which is one of the indicators of domestic violence. She and her family members are passing through extreme economic crisis.

### Case No: 2

Name Piljira Kheria,

Age- 57,

Caste: Schedule Tribe,

Religion: Christian,

Income: 3000-3500 (during pick season)

She worked as a permanent worker in Surendranagar closed tea gardens. She belongs to a nuclear family having four members including herself, her husband, one daughter-- who is special child and a 25 years old younger son who works as construction labour in Bangaluru. And her elder son lives separately with her wife. As her husband unable to work as he is too old. She presently works as casual labour in others garden like *Lookshan*, *Salbolni*, *Gedhelbari*, etc. But during slake season she become entirely jobless using entire income she can only arrange two square meals of food a day. Sometimes it also becomes tough for her to arrange it. She lives in a self-made house, which is very bad in condition but unable to fix it due to lack of money. Poverty is part and parcel of her day to day life. Though she is an important earning member of her family but her husband take all decisions regarding family matter.

**Case No: 3**

Name: Chintamoni Oraon;

Age 65

Caste: Scheduled Tribe,

Religion: Hindu,

Income: 1000(per month)

She is an elderly tea worker. She has no job now. She is unable to go outside of garden for work She did not get any facility that she deserve as per PIA (Plantation Labour Act).In this situation she become burden to her family. She mentioned that it is very difficult for her to arrange sufficient food, medical treatment etc.

**Case No: 4**

Name: Nilima Tanti,

Age-49,

Caste- Scheduled Caste,

Religion: Hindu,

Income: around 3000-3500 (per month in pick season)

She is a permanent tea worker of *Bandapani* closed tea garden. She belongs to a women headed family and she is the only earning member. Before closure the number of earning members were four; she, her husband, father-in-law, mother-in Law, herself. But closure of tea garden it lead to their jobless situation. Closure turned her from a permanent worker to a temporary or casual worker. Closure compelled her children to stop their study. Her son has developed some bad habits like alcoholism, addiction in mobile phone. During pick season income of her family raise to Rs 3500-4000 per month but in slake season it stand on Rs 1500-2000 per month. She gets money under FAWLOI (Financial Assistance to the Workers of Locked out Industries) scheme. She is quite aware of trafficking, not interested to send her daughter for outside to work. As a result her daughters are engaged in housekeeping work in a very low wages in surrounding village. She is interested in other kind of work for her children, where job security prevails. Closure of tea gardens in the area declined the standard of living. They live in a very poor condition. They could not fix marriage of her daughter as they live with abject poverty.

**Case No: 5**

Name: Martha Toppo,

Age 64,

Caste: Scheduled Tribe,

Religion: Hindu,

Income: around 1000-1200 (per month)

She was a worker of Red Bank closed tea garden. She lives alone now. She depends on her own income. She work as casual labour and rear a few live stock animals. She does not get any kind of facility from welfare scheme from government like ration, Financial Assistance to the Workers of Locked Out Industries (FAWLOI), old age pension etc. Extreme poverty and unemployment pushed her younger daughter to migrate outside for work. She is still now unknown regarding the nature of work of her daughter doing. She has no contact with her daughter and also unknown the present situation. It seems it is a case of trafficking. Her living condition is very poor. Live along with live stock in a same room. She never left her house in fear of stealing. She is living with an environment of alcoholism, extreme poverty, closure of tea gardens and joblessness of women tea workers.

**Case No: 6**

Name: Sangita Hembram,

Age-42,

Caste: Scheduled Tribe,

Religion: Christian,

Income: Around 3000-4000 (per month)

She was a permanent tea worker of Dharnipur tea estate and possess 22 years work experience. She lives with five members - herself, her husband, two sons and one daughter. After the closure of tea garden both of them work as 'Bighawala' (local term of casual labour). Apart from working as a casual labourer in other tea gardens, both of them works in the nearby river namely 'Daina'. As it is very heavy and difficult to work and requires a lots of strength. It is very tough for them to work in river bed as compared to the garden work. Additionally there is great probability to be injured while loading the boulders. They earned around Rs 350 to 400 per day. They are depending now to work in river bed since last one and half year, but this job is stopped. As there is no certainty in work in tea garden and additionally lack of other livelihood she and her family passing through extreme poverty. Both of them (herself and her husband) gets FAWLOI (Financial Assistance to the Workers of Locked Out Industries) and ration which has become some time only income source to sustain their entire family. According to her "the amount of money both of them earns from garden and other secondary sources is not sufficient for sustain life as she have three dependent children (Two son and one daughter) and her both of sons studied in school and her only daughter who is sixteen years old had stopped her study in class VII due to extreme poverty." In the one hand she has extreme poverty in her family and also have not certainty of jobs additionally her husband spent money on consuming alcohol, sometimes her husband sold her household utensils, furniture, etc and lend money to others to arrange alcohol. Extreme poverty, uncertainty of job, lack of minimum treatment are the part of parcel of her life it is very unfortunate that she is gradually become used to in it and is also reflecting her appearances during interviewing. Hardships of life made her strong and taught her how to survive in difficult situation.

**Case No: 7**

Name: Laxmi Suri,

Age 65.

Caste: Scheduled Tribe,

Religion: Hindu,

Income: Rs 3500-4000 (per month in pick season)

Laxmi Suri was a former permanent women tea worker of Dekhlapara tea garden. She worked around 30 years in that garden as tea leave picker. She lives with her son and daughter-in-law and three granddaughters. As she treated as retired worker, she does not get any kind of facilities from tea garden and also don't get FAWLOI (Financial Assistance to the Workers of Locked Out Industries). She only gets 1000 Rs per month from government as 'Bardhoka Bhata', what is known as old age pension. During the pick season she work in garden around two or three days per week, and earn 300-400 Rs per week, but in a slake season there is no option to get this type of job. In her language before the closure of tea garden their life was better than the life they living now. Her son work as a temporary worker who works as a casual labourer but he is also unable to get job for whole week and daughter-in-law is a house wife. Their whole family has to run with Rs 150 around per day, while the total members of family are 6. Due to lack of money her grand son and daughter could not continue school and college on a regular base, as the travelling cost is around 50 Rs per student per day which is too expensive for them. She does not get proper treatment. She mentions that, they also compromise with their food. To eat fish, meat, egg, fruits, milk on daily is a dream for them. Only rice, pulse, swabin, chapatti, vegetable etc they take for their survival. Fish and meat they eat once in a month, though some time it also become impossible to arrange such items. They have no savings in bank account. The quarter in which they resides, is very poor condition.

**Table 2: Demographic Profile of Respondents**

Variables/Factors		Case No	No of Women Worker	Percentages (%)
Education	Illiterate	2, 3,6,7	4	57.14
	upto primary(class-v)	1,4,5	3	42.86
Occupation	No permancy/casual labour/wage earner	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	6	85.72
	Unemployed/Jobless	7	1	14.28
Income	Nil	7	1	14.28
	1000-2000	3,5	2	28.57
	2001-3000	1, ,4	2	28.57
	3,001-4,000	2,6	2	28.57
House - Owned	garden quarter	1,3, 4,7	4	57.14
	Self-made hut/house	2,5, 6	3	42.86
Livestock	Nil	1,2, 3,4, 6,7	6	85.72
	Hen/Chicken/duck	5	1	14.28
Nature of family	joint family	1,6,7	3	42.86
	Nuclear	2,3,4,5,	4	57.14
Caste	General	Nil	0	0
	SC	4,	1	14.28
	ST	1,2, 3, 5,6,7	6	85.72

### Socio-Economic Profile of Women Tea Worker

It is observed that

- 57.14% are illiterate,42.86% educated up to primary label upto VI<sup>th</sup> standard;
- There is no permanent wage earner among respondents, 85.72% are temporary wage earner or casual labour and one 14.28% is unemployed or jobless.
- 28.57% constitute income ranges from Rs. 2000, 28.57% upto 3000 and 28.57% are upto 4000; and 14.28% respondent have no earnings at all.



- 57.14% are living in garden quarters, 42.86% respondents have self-made house;
- 85.72% respondents are not having any livestock, only 14.28% has hen/duck;
- The nature of family three (42.86%) are joint family and four (57.14%) are Nuclear family;
- 85.72% belongs ST category, 14.28% belong Scheduled Caste.

**Table 3: Problems and Challenges of Women Tea Workers**

Problems	Nature of Sufferings	Case No	No of Women Worker	%
Job uncertainty	Work as casual labourer or wage earner. They engage in highly risk work and heavy workload. Migration of family members.	1,2,4,5,6,7	6	85.72
Poverty and Poor living Condition	Unable to fixed marriage of children, compromise with food and health issues.	2,4,6,7	4	57.14
Unemployment	Dependent on others and become burden to the family members.	3	1	14.28
Alcoholism	Extract earning from worker, quarrel and beaten, extreme economic crisis	1,4	2	28.57
Domestic violence	Quarrel and physically assault	1	1	14.28
Dropout	Develop some bad habits (Mobile addiction and alcoholism)	4	1	14.28
Single earning member	Entire responsibility of family	4	1	14.28
Changes in working status	Transformation from permanent worker to casual worker	1,2,4,5,6,7	6	85.72
No benefit from close tea garden	Poor socio economic condition	1,2,3,4,5,6,7	7	100
Migration among family members	Broken family.	2,5	2	28.57

## PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES

It is observed from Table - 2 that the respondents faced a lot of problems and challenges. As observed from case studies that:

- They face job uncertainty among six workers i.e.85.72% observed among the women tea workers.
- They are suffering from abject poverty among four worker i.e.57.14%. observed among the women tea workers
- 14.28% women tea workers are still unemployed and not doing anything
- 28.57% respondent members having alcoholic family members.
- 14.28% respondents faced domestic violence.
- 14.28% family members found school drop-out.
- 14.28% respondents are single earning member.
- 85.72% are now became casual worker from permanent worker.
- 100 percent women workers responded lost their benefit from garden.
- 28.57% members are moving out as migrant working in the family.

## FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

- Women worker in tea gardens are spending their days in a deplorable stage with no regular basis job in tea gardens and surrounding areas. Extreme poverty, uncertainty of job lack of minimum treatment poor living condition are the part and parcel of their life.
- Unemployment (Joblessness), wage exploitation in surrounding areas is a part and parcel of their life. Mostly they work as wage earner in surrounding areas. Researcher has found entire respondents of study area become casual workers from permanent workers. They have lost their social position. Women members of family took financial responsibility to maintain the family. They cannot take part in the decision making of their affairs, their husband are taking the decision.
- Extreme poverty and unemployment push female young member of their family in vulnerable situation. Sometime they migrate out of state without any information or no information regarding the job.
- They have no control over their materialistic possession. Their husband's have habits of alcoholism. Whatever, the women members earn; they take away by their husband due to such bad habit.
- Women workers who are at the age of retirement suffered most as they do not get any assistance from Financial Assistance to the Workers of Locked out Industries (FAWLOI). They also unable to work, and become burden to their family members.
- Closures leads not only hamper the life of women tea workers it is also hamper all the members of their family. Dropout, addictions observed in the area etc. Extreme poverty compels the children of women tea worker of close tea garden to discontinue their study.
- Occupational mobility is confined among the male workers. Women tea workers hardly have facility to occupational mobility other than wage earning in local source. Study has found women tea workers of closed tea garden are mainly tea-leaf pluckier. They never found to be selected in the managerial, clerical or supervisory work.
- Illiteracy is a great problem to them. Researcher found that most of the women tea workers are either illiterate or hardly able to write their name. Only out of 7 respondents 4 are illiterate and 3 only studied upto class V. But they are very much interested to teach their children, but due to financial crisis they hardly able to do so. Many dropouts among children of women tea workers of closed tea gardens have been found during field visit. There is also lack of scope of education for elderly people.
- They live either in garden quarter or self-made house on gardens land but in both cases housing condition is very poor. Out of seven respondents four lives in garden quarter and rest are in self-made house. Due to lack of money they also unable to find accommodation in outside.
- Researcher also found that they also forcefully compromises their food as some time their earning does not permit to arrange two square meal in daily bases. They also compromise with their health while they become sick, as they have lack of money for the treatment.

- Male folk of the garden are lazy do not want to work in outside of the gardens and spend a part of their earning - for drinking rice-beers known as *haria*. Though male counter parts do not take any responsibility to maintain family but they extract earnings her wife who took all the financial and social responsibility to the all family members. Sometime quarrel and physical assault arise due to excessive drinking, which is one of the indicators of domestic violence.
- Though all the laws and regulation has been enacted for the benefit of the tea workers but in reality they do not received it like maternity benefit, crèche facilities, equal wages etc. In case of closer tea garden all of these are like dream, where survival is only Moto of life.
- There is a lack of awareness regarding welfare scheme. It was observed that, for the welfare of the worker government has declared various scheme like FAWLOI (Financial Assistance to the Workers of Lock Out Industries), *Bardhakabhata* or old age pension, ration from Public Distribution System and lack capacity building training, etc, Most of them are not aware regarding this scheme.

## SUGGESTIONS

Though tea garden is contributing a huge national economy, the condition women workers are far away from satisfactory condition. They suffer a lot specially in closed tea garden are as Some suggestive guidelines given below to overcome the problems and challenges as observed.

- Plantation of Labour Act (PLA) and other Acts strictly mention even during the closure of any tea garden the worker as well as women worker be given satisfactory support and welfare measures for their decent sustenance. As per the information of the respondent instead of 58 years FAWLOI should provide every workers of close tea garden as workers who belongs in the age between 58 to 60 do not get other facilities like (old age pension)and management should arrange alternative livelihood during the close tea garden.
- As most of the women worker are illiterate or only able to write their name, to improve their literacy rate and awareness it is necessary to arrange various kind literacy programs, which will help them to generate consciousness against all kind of exploitation by the management and employer, and also empowered tem to find out various kind of job to sustain their life.
- For the betterment of socio-economic life of tea worker, the daily wages should be provided as per govt instruction that is minimum wages Rs 232 per day.
- It is necessary to pressurize the tea garden employer to recruit the entire women worker on the permanent bases as only permanent worker are eligible to get facilities accordingly plantation Labour Act (PLA)and also instructed not to shut down the garden on frequently. Management should take initiatives for enhancement the skill and technique of women workers as the can perform not only work in their gardens, its surroundings areas but also the skills which can help in getting alternative source of livelihood.
- As it is observed the cases of domestic violence, low decision making power of women tea worker, and alcoholism etc in her study, these problems can be addressed by Government intervention or NGO should arrange various awareness program, literacy program, capacity building and help them to protect themselves from every kind of violence exploitation etc.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

The women workers in closed tea garden areas are confronted with various kinds of problems and challenges like low wages, poor health care facilities, poor living conditions, migration, lack of occupational mobility, illiteracy, malnutrition, superstition, alcoholism, which expressly or impliedly effected in a bad manner to the entire tea working community associated with tea industry. Now-a- day these problems are becomes more specific due to growing problems of closure and sickness of tea gardens, which leads to the specifically to the women workers in a vulnerable situation. Some time it becomes a challenge to them to save from violence and also to protect them from vulnerable situation. Therefore the problems of working women in tea garden areas should be dealt with by legal measures wherever required, including action programme from various NGO, civil society organizations, trade unions and employer of tea garden should take initiative to elevate the condition of labour force in tea gardens including women tea workers at least to take care their deplorable state.

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