

# Socio-economic Conditions of Women Workers in Plantation Industry

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Government of India  
Ministry of Labour & Employment  
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## **P R E F A C E**

Since ancient times, women in India are making financial contribution for the betterment of their families. Their participation in economic activities of the country has grown enormously after rapid industrialization in post independence era. Increased participation of women in economic activities on one hand has helped them to narrow down the gap between their needs and resources, while on the other hand it has given rise to a number of complex problems having a direct bearing on their Socio-economic Conditions.

To solve the problems faced by the women workers engaged in various industries, a sound planning based on accurate and reliable data bank is needed. Accordingly, the present scheme titled "Socio-economic Conditions of Women Workers in Industry" was taken up by the Bureau, during the year 1975 - "The International Women's Year". Initially, the scheme was confined to the organised sector only. However, keeping in view the utility of the data so generated, it was considered to extend the scope of scheme to the Un-organised Sector as well. A beginning was made by covering Building and Construction industry followed by Handloom, Khadi, Beedi, Readymade Garments, Agarbathi, Lime Manufacturing, Cashewnut Processing and Food processing Industry (including Sea Food and Marine Products). The present report relates to the Plantation Sector.

I am thankful to the various departments of the Central Government, and the States, especially the States Labour Departments, for their whole hearted Co-operation in the conduct of the study. I also extend my thanks to all the employers and workers of the sampled units who willingly furnished detailed information for the study.

I would like to place on record my appreciation for the dedicated efforts put in by the team of officers and staff members of the SESDSL section of Labour Bureau for conducting the survey and bringing out this report.

Views, if any, expressed in this report are not necessarily those of the Ministry of Labour and Employment, Government of India. Suggestions for the improvement of such surveys are welcome.

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## **Executive Summary**

- To assess the socio economic condition of women labour in Plantation Industry the survey is conducted in six states where plantations are grown. Field work was undertaken during the period September – October, 2008.
- The survey is conducted in 4 plantations viz. tea, coffee, rubber and cardamom.
- A total of 132 unit level and 827 worker level schedules are canvassed during the survey.
- More than 50 per cent of the total workers employed in the plantations are women workers.
- In non-manual jobs majority of the workers are male.
- Majority of the workers are un-skilled and employed as plantation labourers.
- Most of the units surveyed are found paying annual bonus to their workers.
- Majority of the units are allowing weekly off without wages to the workers.
- A few cases of sexual harassment 3.0 per cent are reported during the last two years.
- About 60 per cent of units have put in place the mechanism to redress the grievances of workers.
- Around 63 per cent of the units surveyed are member of Employers' Association.

- Among manual workers Plantation Labourers constitute majority. Their average per day earnings work out to be Rs 67.6 at aggregate level.
- Only 48.5 per cent of the units are providing medical facilities to workers and their family members.
- In Karnataka state very few units are found providing medical facilities to workers.
- Crèche facility is provided by only 37.1 per cent of the total units surveyed.
- In coffee, rubber and cardamom plantations very few units are providing crèche facility.
- In coffee and cardamom, no unit is found providing education facility to the children of its workers.
- Housing facility is provided by 77.3 per cent of the total units surveyed.
- Housing facility to workers is provided by maximum units (97.9 per cent) in tea plantations and minimum units (50.0 per cent) in cardamom units.
- Maternity benefits are provided by 73.5 per cent of the total units surveyed.
- Among the cardamom plantation units, only 38.9 per cent are providing maternity benefit to their women workers.
- Only 17.4 per cent of the total units surveyed have appointed welfare officers.
- In coffee and cardamom units no welfare officers is found appointed.

- Concessional items are found to be provided only in the tea plantation units. At aggregate level, 23.5 per cent of the units are providing various types of concession to the workers.
- Canteen facility is provided by only 12.9 per cent of the units surveyed.
- In Assam state, from which maximum number of sample units are drawn, and which employs majority of the plantation workers, only 16.7 per cent units are providing canteen facility.
- The basic welfare amenities like urinals and latrines are provided by only 9.8 per cent of the units surveyed.
- Rest shelter is provided by 25.0 per cent of the units surveyed.
- A separate welfare facilities for women workers like washing facility, separate urinals, rest shelter are provided by 6.1 per cent, 7.6 per cent and 6.8 per cent and unit respectively.
- More than five percent of the plantation workers are migrated from other states.
- Average family size of the sampled women workers is 4.2 members at overall level.
- Majority of the sampled women workers (54.4 percent) are found to be illiterate.
- Average number of earners per women worker house hold is found to be two members.
- Very meager i.e. 1.1 per cent, women workers are found to be working beyond the normal daily hours of work.

- A very few i.e. 5.3 per cent women workers are provided educational facility by the employer.
- Around 59 per cent of the women workers have membership of a trade union
- Only 34.7 percent, 18.5 per cent and 43.5 per cent women workers are aware of Minimum Wage Act, 1948, Equal Remuneration Act, 1976 and Maternity benefits Act, 1961.
- About 42 per cent of the women workers are saving money.

## **CHAPTER – I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Agriculture has been the oldest form of activity practiced by people in the civilized world. Though many of the developed countries have moved away from agriculture to industrialization as their main stay of economic activity, there is no ruling out of agriculture as part of the basic economic activity in any part of the world. There are still certain parts of globe, where agriculture is predominantly influential in determining well being of the people.
- 1.2 India is also such a country, where about 70 per cent of the labour force is employed in the agriculture sector. Although in the recent years the share of agriculture in Gross Domestic Product is coming down, still agriculture is the dominant sector of the economy and it impacts the well being of the other sectors. Plantation is a part of agriculture and it directly employs more than 2 million workers in the country. Plantation plays a very crucial role in the export of agricultural produce. About 15 per cent of the total export earnings of agriculture products come from crops like tea, coffee and rubber, although these plantations occupy only one per cent of the total cropped area.
- 1.3 Plantations are economic entities connected historically with certain crops. A plantation crop normally is a monoculture and includes growing of variety of products like Tea, Coffee, Rubber, Pepper & other spices etc.
- 1.4 The cultivation of crops is taken-up in areas which are conducive to their growth and is mainly determined by the consideration of rainfall, altitude where estates are situated and availability of

labour. It is seen that the traditional areas of plantation crops are undergoing a change and newer and newer areas are taking to growing plantation crops. The main reason for such an expansion is the growth in markets, both domestic and foreign.

1.5 The main feature of plantations in India is their structural concentration in terms of their size. The bulk production of tea (80 per cent) is accounted by the corporate sector or by large estates, whereas the bulk production in rubber (87 per cent) and coffee (60 per cent) comes from the small holdings.

1.6 A majority of the workers in the plantation sector are women. The reason for this is that these plantations are historically linked with colonialism. The plantations are located in remote areas and were sparsely populated during the colonial period. As a result, families were employed rather than individuals, thus absorbing women in the labour force. This work force does not possess any skills other than plucking leaf and the workers are mostly landless.

1.7 In the overall economic activity in India, women workers constitute about one-fifth of the total work force, out of which only six per cent are employed in the organized sector. Rest of the women workers are engaged in the unorganized sector. In spite of the mandatory legislative protective provisions, the extent of their exploitation exists not only in unorganized sector but in the organized sector also. Due to unsatisfactory implementation of protective legislative provisions concerning women workers, there still remains a yawning gap between these provisions and the facilities actually made available to them. There are still cases where women workers are deprived of the benefits and amenities like equal remuneration vis-à-vis their male counterparts, maternity benefits, proper child care services, etc. Several factors responsible for their plight are, indifferent attitude of the employers towards women workers, their

weak bargaining power and in many cases the women workers themselves being unaware of their rights. Although the Government is seized of the situation, yet it continues to remain a problem area due to non-availability of reliable statistical data and other information pertaining to working, living and socio-economic conditions of women workers.

- 1.8 It has been a constant endeavor on the part of the Labour Bureau, Ministry of Labour & Employment, for providing reliable data on women workers employed both in organized and un-organized sectors and projecting a realistic picture aimed at enabling the Government to take ameliorative measures for the benefit of women.
- 1.9 The first enquiry for studying socio-economic conditions of women workers was undertaken by Labour Bureau in the year 1953 and a report titled “The Economic and Social Status of Women Workers in India” was brought out. The enquiry was conducted through mail-questionnaire method and was confined to important industries in the country employing women in large numbers, viz. Cotton and Jute Textiles, Coal Mines and Plantations. Later on, the Labour Bureau and Planning Commission jointly prepared a study in 1958 titled “Women in Employment 1901 – 1956”. There after the Labour Bureau brought out a few reports on the basis of available published/unpublished data. One such report “Women in Employment” was brought out in the year 1964 and another publication “Women in Industry” in the International Women’s Year (1975) presented an objective assessment of the trend of women’s employment, their wages and earnings and laws and regulations governing their employment and working conditions.
- 1.10 In the year 1975, a full fledged scheme namely “Socio-Economic Conditions of Women Workers” was entrusted to Labour Bureau

with the objective of assessing the working and living conditions of women workers employed in organized industries where they are significantly employed. In the earlier years, the scope of the survey was restricted to organized industries only where predominantly women workers were employed. However, in view of the importance of this labour force and also the dominant existence of unorganized sector in the Indian economy, where more than 90 per cent of the labour force is engaged in the unorganized sector/employment, the scope of the survey was extended to organized sector also. The first survey under the scheme was conducted in Mines sector in the year 1976-77. So far Labour Bureau has conducted 22 surveys on “Socio-Economic Conditions of Women Workers” including the present survey. The list of surveys conducted so far is at Annexure-I

- 1.11 Women workers have all along been an integral part of the labour force engaged in the Plantation Industry in India. A majority of the plantations labourers are women workers. Owing to the very fact that soft hands and nimble fingers are suited especially for tea leave plucking and picking of coffee seeds, women workers dominate the employment scene in these Plantations.
- 1.12 Significant contribution to the Indian economy by way of exports notwithstanding, the wages of workers in the plantation sector especially the women workers continue to remain low. The ineffective implementation of the statutory provisions has impeded the progress in the direction of alleviating the plight of women workers in this industry. Paucity of reliable data and other information have been the major drawbacks. In order to assess the ground reality in this regard, a survey on “Socio-Economic Conditions of Women Workers in Plantations” was conducted by the Labour Bureau during the period from September -October, 2008. The objective of the survey is to bring to the fore the actual working and living conditions of women workers.

- 1.13 Tea plantation provides employment to more than a million workers who comprise immigrant workers and their descendents. For example, the workers in the tea gardens of Tamil Nadu are not original residents of the region but are migrants from Karnataka and other nearby states. The labourers of Assam and West Bengal are people who migrated from Central India and Nepal. These workers have over the years settled down in the gardens and now have little or no contact with their place of origin.
- 1.14 India is one of the leading producer of tea in the world. The country produces both 'CTC' ("Cut, tear & Curl") and 'Orthodox' types of tea. The most commonly tea consumed in India is CTC. About 27 per cent of the world's tea is produced in India. India is also the world's largest consumer of tea. About 22 per cent of the world's consumption is in India. Tea production is both land as well as labour intensive activity.
- 1.15 Tea Plantations are predominantly located in hills and interior areas of North-Eastern and Southern states of India. Assam, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Kerala are the major tea producing states. Karnataka, Tripura, Himachal Pradesh, Uttrakhand, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Sikkim, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Bihar and Orissa are the other states where tea is also grown but to a small extent. Tea is grown from the plains to an elevation of nearly 2500 meters, spread over different climatic zones, which enables India to produce different types of tea.
- 1.16 The Plantation sector has been instrumental in developing the under developed regions of the country. As mentioned earlier, the bulk of coffee and natural rubber in the country is produced by small holdings. Some of the world's fine varieties of coffee, namely, Arabica and Robusta are grown in India on high elevations in geographically unique areas like Anamalis (Tamil Nadu), Araku

Valley (Andhra Pradesh), Nelliompathys and Wayanaad (Kerala). A wide variety of spices and fruit crops like vanilla, orange and banana grow alongside coffee plants.

- 1.17 India contributes about 4.5 per cent of the world production of coffee and it is pre-dominantly produced in Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. The share of Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu is 70.7 per cent, 21.3 per cent and 6.9 per cent respectively, whereas the share of other regions is about 1.0 per cent. Due to its labour intensive nature, it is an important source of rural employment for men and women, especially in parts of South India.
- 1.18 Rubber plays an important role in the industrial and economic development of the country. Rubber plantations provide the principal raw material required for manufacture of around 35,000 rubber products ranging from toy balloons to tyres of giant earth moving equipments. India is the fourth largest consumer of natural rubber.
- 1.19 Rubber is primarily grown in the states of Kerala and adjoining Kanya-kumari district of Tamil Nadu, which are the traditional rubber growing areas of the country. Both areas are geographically and agro-climatically suitable for rubber cultivation. Besides this, rubber is also grown in Tripura, Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, etc.
- 1.20 Rubber plantations are spread over 5.78 lakh hectares in 16 states of the country. The production of rubber is dominated by small holdings, which account for 91 per cent of the total production and 88 per cent of the area with an average holding size of 0.5 hectare. There are nearly 0.7 million people engaged in this rubber plantations as workforce either directly or indirectly.

1.21 Cardamom, the queen of all the spices, has a history as old as human race. It is dried fruit of an herbaceous perennial plant. Country's warm humid climate, loamy soil rich in organic matter, distributed rain fall and special cultivation and processing abilities make India's cardamom unique in aroma, flavor, size and colour, which is parrot green.

1.22 Cultivation of cardamom is mostly concentrated in the ever green forest of Western Ghats in South India. Kerala, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu are the main producers of cardamom. These states contribute more than 90 per cent to the total production of cardamom in India.

## **CHAPTER – II**

### **SAMPLING DESIGN**

#### **Scope and Coverage**

- 2.1 The scope of the survey is restricted to tea, coffee, rubber and cardamom plantations. All the major plantation growing states were asked to provide a list of tea, coffee, rubber, cinchona and cardamom plantations. However, due to non-availability of exhaustive list of Cinchona plantation could not be covered.
- 2.2 The survey was conducted in all the major plantation growing states. For tea plantations the states of Assam, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Kerala, and Tripura have been covered. In case of coffee, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka have been taken. The units under the rubber plantations are covered in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Kerala and Tripura and under the cardamom plantation these are covered from Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

#### **Sampling Design**

- 2.3 A two stage sampling design was adopted for the survey. In the first stage of sampling, the sample size of unit level or employer level schedules has been determined. Further from the selected first stage sampling units, worker level schedules have been canvassed as second stage sample.
- 2.4 The sample size of the unit level schedules has been determined in such a way that the estimates do not differ from the true values by more than 5 per cent with confidence co-efficient 95 per cent.

- 2.5 The first stage sample size is determined on the basis of the Co-efficient of variance of the average maximum wage rates revealed by the sixth round of Occupational Wage Survey done in Plantation Industry (2005). Accordingly, the sample size of Tea, Coffee and Rubber has been taken as 44 units, 32 units and 30 units respectively.
- 2.6 The sample size in occupational wage survey report of 'Plantation Industry' (2005) is available only for tea, coffee and rubber plantations. The sample size of these three plantations taken together is about 3.5 per cent of the total units in the frame. However, for cardamom plantation, a sample size of 17 units is taken, which is about 15.5 per cent of the total number of units in the cardamom plantation's frame.
- 2.7 The total number of units in each plantation has been further divided into two size classes, viz. Upper Size Class and Lower Size Class. The size class in any plantation is determined on the basis of average employment in the industry. The average employment is calculated as, total number of workers in the particular plantation divided by total number of units in that particular plantation. The sample has been allocated to a size class in proportion to the number of units in that size class to the total units in the frame. Further, it is taken care that at least two units are selected from each size class in a stratum. The total number of units in the frame and the sample selected from upper and lower size class is presented in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1

Number of Units in the Frame and Sample Selected Therein

Sl. No.	Stratum	No. of Units in the Frame	Stratum-I Upper Size Class	Stratum-II Lower Size Class
<b>Tea Plantations</b>				
1	Assam	743	10	14
2	Tamil Nadu	274	2	8
3	West Bengal	177	4	2
4	Kerala	67	2	2
5	Residual	76	0	3
<b>Total</b>		<b>1337</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Coffee Plantations</b>				
1	Tamil Nadu	294	2	6
2	Karnataka	941	5	17
3	Kerala	139	2	2
<b>Total</b>		<b>1374</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Rubber Plantations</b>				
1	Tamil Nadu	19	2	2
2	Karnataka	97	0	10
3	Kerala	140	5	10
4	Tripura	26	2	2
5	Andaman & Nicobar Island	2	0	0
<b>Total</b>		<b>284</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Cardamom Plantations</b>				
1	Tamil Nadu	6	0	2
2	Kerala	104	3	13
<b>Total</b>		<b>110</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>ALL PLANTATIONS</b>		<b>3105</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>93</b>

2.8 Further, the workers level schedules are canvassed from the units selected in the first stage. The worker level schedules are canvassed only for women workers in each selected unit. The actual number of women workers covered depends upon the women employment in the sample units as under:

Table 2.2

## Number of Workers Schedules to be Canvassed

<b>TEA PLANTATION</b>			
Sl. No.	Size of Women Employment	No. of Women Workers Schedules to be Canvassed	
		Minimum	Maximum
1	Women Employment ( 1 to 50 )	2	10% of Women Emp. or 5
2	Women Employment ( 51 to 150 )	6	06% of Women Emp. or 9
3	Women Employment (151 to 300 )	10	04% of Women Emp. or 12
4	Women Employment ( 301 and above )	13	02% of Women Emp. or 15

<b>COFFEE PLANTATION</b>			
Sl. No.	Size of Women Employment	No. of Women Workers Schedules to be Canvassed	
		Minimum	Maximum
1	Women Employment ( 1 to 15 )	3	30% of Women Emp. or 5
2	Women Employment ( 16 and above )	6	20% of Women Emp. or 10

<b>RUBBER PLANTATION</b>			
Sl. No.	Size of Women Employment	No. of Women Workers Schedules to be Canvassed	
		Minimum	Maximum
1	Women Employment ( 1 to 50 )	3	20% of Women Emp. or 10
2	Women Employment ( 51 and above )	11	15% of Women Emp. or 15

<b>CARDAMOM PLANTATION</b>			
Sl. No.	Size of Women Employment	No. of Women Workers Schedules to be Canvassed	
		Minimum	Maximum
1	Women Employment ( 1 to 13 )	3	30% of Women Emp. or 4
2	Women Employment ( 14 and above )	5	20% of Women Emp. or 10

**Objective of the survey**

2.9 The main objective of the study is to collect socio-economic data of women workers in the plantation industry with a view to studying the problems faced by them in their working, living and social conditions and the extent of welfare amenities available to them viz-a-viz the various labour laws.

## **Definitions**

2.10 **Plantation** : The term 'Plantation' has been defined under the Plantation Labour Act, 1951 to include any plantation to which the Act, whether wholly or in parts, applies and includes offices, hospitals, dispensaries, schools and other premises used for any purpose connected with such plantation. Section 1(4) of the Act applies to any land used or intends to be used for growing tea, coffee, rubber, cinchona and cardamom which measures 5 hectare or more and in which fifteen or more persons are employed or were employed on any day of the preceding twelve months.

2.11 **Worker** : Worker means a person (including any member of the medical staff) employed in a plantation for hired or reward, whether directly or through any agency, to do any work, skilled, unskilled, manual or clerical but does not include :-

- i) A medical officer employed in the plantation.
- ii) Any person employed in the plantation primarily in a managerial capacity or
- iii) Any person temporarily employed in the plantation in any work relating to the construction, development or maintenance of buildings, road, bridge or canals.

2.12 **Employer**: when used in relation to a plantation, it means the person who has the ultimate control over the affairs of the plantation and where the affairs of any plantation are entrusted to any other person (whether called a managing agent, manager, superintendent or by any other name) such person shall be deemed to be the employer in relation to that plantation.

2.13 **Family** : when used in relation to a worker, means

- i) his or her spouse and
- ii) the legitimate and adopted children of the worker dependent upon him or her, who have not completed their eighteenth year and includes , where the worker is a male, his parents dependent upon him.

### **Questionnaire Canvassed**

2.14 Two specially designed schedules were canvassed for the purpose of this survey. The unit level questionnaire was canvassed to capture the working condition of workers employed in the four plantations. A unit level questionnaire was designed to collect data for the unit as a whole on important parameters like, year of establishment, type of ownership, mode of employment, mode of pay period, wages and earnings of the manual workers, leave and holidays, daily hours of work, sex-wise employment of workers in the plantation, trade unions, welfare amenities available to workers, social security benefits, etc.

2.15 The worker level schedule is designed to collect the data on living conditions of women workers employed in the plantation. The schedule was designed to capture the important aspects like migration status, caste, demographic particulars (age profile, marital status, educational qualification etc.), wages & earnings, total household income & savings, indebtedness, medical expenditure, etc.

2.16 The survey was launched in the first week of September, 2008 and was completed by third week of October, 2008.

## **CHAPTER – III**

### **GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF PLANTATION INDUSTRY**

- 3.1 The Plantation sector has been instrumental in developing the under-developed areas of the country. Tea is cultivated in remote, hilly regions and coffee is an integral part of the ecology of the Western Ghats. While the bulk production of coffee, natural rubber and spices comes from small holdings, bulk of tea is produced by large estates owned by corporate sector. General characteristics of Plantation Industry are discussed in the forthcoming paragraphs of this chapter.
- 3.2 Plantation is a unique sector, where most of the establishments are known to be century old. To know the years, since the sample units is working, the establishment year of the unit is collected in the survey. It may be seen from Table 3.1 that, more than 50 per cent of the tea units are established before the year 1950. However, for rubber and cardamom, the results reveal that more than 60 per cent of the units are established after the year 1970. At aggregate level 25.0 per cent of the plantations are found established before the year 1950, followed by 15.2 per cent between the year 1950-60 and 13.6 per cent each in the year between 1960-70 and 1970-80. The details of establishment of the sampled units are presented in Table 3.1.
- 3.3 Information is also collected on the ownership type of the plantation. Generally the plantation may be owned privately, publicly, by a co-operative, or jointly. The results show that a majority of the sampled units are privately owned (82.6 per cent), followed by 16.7 per cent publicly owned and only 0.8 per cent by

some co-operative society. In Kerala sampled units of all plantations, except 13.3 units in rubber plantations, are found owned privately. However, all the units under rubber plantations in Karnataka and Tripura are publicly owned. At aggregate level, 54.5 per cent of the rubber sampled units are publicly owned. The co-operative units are observed only among the tea plantations of Assam state. About 4.2 per cent of the sampled tea units in Assam state are run through co-operative society. The details of distribution of the units by ownership type are presented in Table 3.2.

- 3.4 As discussed in the introductory chapter, majority of the plantation labourers are women workers. In tea Plantations, the highest share of women workers (61.5 per cent) is in Kerala, followed by 57.3 per cent in Tamil Nadu and 57.1 per cent in West Bengal. In all the sampled units of tea plantations, 53.0 per cent workers are women. In coffee and cardamom plantations, the trend is similar and the women workers are reported to be 55.2 per cent and 56.9 per cent respectively at aggregate level. The maximum proportion of women workers in coffee units is observed in Tamil Nadu (59.2 per cent) followed by Kerala (57.5 per cent) and Karnataka (53.0 per cent). However, in rubber plantations only 39.9 per cent women workers are reported to be employed in the units surveyed. In rubber plantations, the main work is collecting latex from the rubber trees and it is mainly done by the male workers. In Tripura, only 18.7 per cent female workers are reported which are the minimum as compared to all other plantations. Taking all plantations together, 51.2 per cent of the reported workers are female. The distribution of male and female workers plantation- wise and the share of women workers in total workers are presented in Table 3.3.

- 3.5 Table 3.3 shows that the sample units of the four plantations viz. tea, coffee, rubber and cardamom are located mainly in six states,

namely, Assam, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Kerala, Karnataka and Tripura. A total of 132 plantation units, comprising 47 units of tea (35.6 per cent), 34 units of coffee (25.8 per cent), 33 units of rubber (25 per cent) and 18 units (13.6 per cent) of cardamom plantation are selected for the study. The work in plantations industry is predominantly of manual type. Therefore information of manual and non-manual workers in the sampled units is collected separately during the survey. The non-manual jobs include Medical Officers, Teachers, Managers, Welfare Officer and clerical staff. On the other hand, in the manual category of workers, Field Supervisors, Plantation Labourers, Field Workers, Rubber Tappers, Watchmen are included. The survey results reveal that majority of the workers are engaged in manual jobs. In tea plantations, 95.1 per cent of the workers are doing manual jobs as Plantation Labour, Field Workers, Supervisor etc. The proportion of male, female and adolescents are 45.0 per cent, 54.3 per cent and 0.7 respectively in tea plantations. In coffee plantations the trend is similar and 90.9 per cent of the workers are doing manual jobs. Further, the proportion of male, female and adolescents in coffee are 39.0 per cent, 60.0 per cent and 1.0 per cent respectively. At aggregate level, the manual workers are about 95 per cent. No child worker is found employed in any of the plantation surveyed.

- 3.6 In tea plantation, 4.9 per cent workers are found employed in the non-manual category. Majority of the non-manual jobs are being done by male workers. In tea plantation, 82.3 per cent employment in non-manual jobs is of male workers. Similar trends on women's participation in non-manual jobs are found in other plantations. In coffee units 9.1 per cent of the total workers are employed in non-manual jobs and the share of male and female workers in non-manual jobs is 94.2 per cent and 5.8 per cent respectively. In case of cardamom plantation all the non-manual jobs are done by the male workers. At aggregate level 83.6 per cent and 16.4 per cent are

male and female workers respectively in non-manual jobs. No child and adolescent are found employed in any of the non-manual jobs in all the sampled units surveyed. The sex-wise details of the manual and non-manual workers are presented in Table 3.3.

- 3.7 The Plantation Labour Act, 1951 suggests that medical, housing and educational facilities etc. are to be provided by the employer to the workers employed in the plantation. Accordingly, during the survey, the information on the non-manual jobs linked to above stated activities is also collected. The percentage distribution of non-manual workers occupation-wise like Manager, Medical Officer, teaching staff, clerical and other workers is presented in Table 3.5. As discussed earlier, there are only 5.6 per cent non-manual workers employed in the sampled units at aggregate level. Further, in absolute terms there are 1,106 male workers and 217 female workers employed in non-manual jobs. The survey results reveal that majority of the male workers i.e. 32.1 per cent at aggregate level engaged in non-manual jobs are employed in clerical jobs, followed by 23.1 per cent in managerial and 11.3 per cent in medical profession. In teaching occupation only 4.0 per cent of the male workers are found employed. In the sampled units of coffee plantations, the trend is different, as 72.9 per cent of the non-manual male workers are found employed in managerial jobs. No male worker in the units of coffee and cardamom plantation is found working in the teaching occupation indicating that teaching facility to workers is not provided by these plantations.
- 3.8 The female workers at aggregate level in the non-manual job categories are mostly employed in medical occupations (55.3 per cent), followed by teaching (18.0 per cent) and clerical jobs (6.9 per cent). In the tea plantation units, 62.4 per cent of female workers are employed in medical jobs followed by 13.5 per cent in teaching and 4.1 per cent in managerial jobs. In coffee plantation units no

female worker is found employed in medical profession. In rubber plantation units, the majority of the female workers are in the teaching occupation 37.2 per cent, followed by medical occupation 32.6 per cent and clerical 16.3 per cent. No female worker is employed in any managerial position in the sample rubber plantation units. In cardamom units no female worker is found employed in any of the non-manual jobs.

3.9 The percentage distribution of workers engaged in manual occupations has been given in Table 3.6. The main manual occupations have been identified as driver, supervisor, plantation labour, watchman, rubber tapper and field worker. The rest of manual workers which are not covered under above six occupations are placed in miscellaneous manual jobs category. It is observed that out of the 132 sampled units covered during the survey, 35.6 per cent units belongs to tea plantation employing 18,664 manual workers, which constitute about 83.1 per cent of the total strength of all the four plantations under study taken together. Further, 25.8 per cent units belong to coffee plantation and in these units 520 manual workers are employed, which is about 2.3 per cent of the total manual workers employed in all the 132 sampled units. Rubber plantations are about 25 per cent of the total sample and total manual workers employed therein are 3,039 i.e. 13.4 per cent of the total manual workers. In the cardamom plantation about 13.6 per cent and having 258 manual workers i.e.1.2 per cent of the total manual workers of all plantations taken together.

3.10 It is found that majority of the workers are working in the occupations plantation labour, rubber tapper and field worker occupations. Taking all the plantations together 89 per cent of male and 99 per cent of female workers are employed in the above three occupations. None of the female workers is found to be working as driver. In the tea plantations 86.0 per cent male workers and 94.4

- per cent female workers are engaged as plantation labour. In Assam, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal tea plantation units, almost all the women workers are employed as plantation labour.
- 3.11 In the coffee units 85.6 per cent male workers and 99.7 per cent female workers are plantation labourers. In supervisor and driver occupation 11.1 per cent and 2.9 per cent male workers are employed. In the rubber units, majority of manual workers are employed in rubber tapper and field worker occupations. Around 90 per cent male workers and 97 per cent female workers are employed in these two occupations. The details of the occupation-wise distribution of manual workers are presented in Table 3.6.
- 3.12 With a view to know the participation level of disadvantaged groups of society, like Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, information on caste of workers is also collected. The caste-wise information of the manual workers is presented in Table 3.7. The survey results reveal that in the 132 sampled units, 20.5 per cent of the male workers and 24.1 per cent of female workers belongs to Scheduled Castes category. Further, 10.6 per cent and 10.2 per cent of the male and female workers respectively belong to Scheduled Tribes. The majority of workers belong to other backward classes (OBC) category wherein 42.8 per cent and 41.3 per cent of the male and female workers are observed.
- 3.13 In the Tea plantation units, 20.4 per cent male and 23.8 per cent female workers belong to Scheduled Castes. However, in Tamil Nadu more than 90 per cent of male and female workers belong to Scheduled Castes. Further, under the OBC category 51.5 per cent male and 46.6 per cent female workers are employed in the tea units.

- 3.14 In the coffee units, majority of the workers belong to Scheduled Castes category. About 43.2 per cent male and 41.7 per cent female workers belong to this category. In the OBC category, 69.0 per cent male and 80.0 per cent female workers are reported from Kerala State.
- 3.15 In the cardamom units, 39.4 per cent and 42.1 per cent male and female workers respectively belong to Scheduled Castes category. A very low proportion (1.7 per cent) of Schedule Tribes workers is observed in cardamom units. The details of the caste-wise distribution of workers are presented in Table 3.7.
- 3.16 The age profile of manual workers is presented in Table 3.8. The workers have been distributed among five main categories of age i.e. below 14 years, 14 to 18 years, 18 to 35 years, 35 to 60 years and 60 years & above. The survey results reveal that no child worker is found working in any of the sampled units. About 99 per cent male and female manual workers fall under 18-60 years age group, at overall level. The adolescent and 60 years & above workers are found 0.7 per cent each for male manual workers and 0.5 per cent each for female manual workers.
- 3.17 In the units of tea plantations, 98.9 per cent women workers are in the age between 18-60 years of age. Only 1.0 per cent of the female workers in Assam are found to be in the adolescent age i.e. 14 to 18 years. Similarly in coffee plantations 98.7 per cent of the manual women workers are in the age group of 18-60 years. The female workers of 60 years & above in coffee plantations are found only in Karnataka (0.6 per cent).
- 3.18 In the cardamom and rubber units all the women workers are found in the age group of 18-60 years. The details of the age profile of manual workers sex-wise are presented in Table 3.8.

- 3.19 The information regarding the marital status of plantation workers is also collected during the course of the field study and the same has been presented in Table 3.9. The analysis of the data reveals that at all plantations level about 91 per cent male and 90 per cent female workers are married. The percentage of unmarried male and female is 8 per cent and 5 per cent respectively. Remaining are divorced, widowed or separated.
- 3.20 In tea plantations, it is observed that more than 91 per cent males and about 90 per cent females are married. Cent per cent male workers in Tamil Nadu are married. More than 98 per cent female workers are married in Tamil Nadu and Kerala, whereas the proportion of married females is 91 per cent in West Bengal and about 85 per cent in Assam. The unmarried males are more than 8 per cent with the highest percentage of 10.9 per cent in Assam (except the residual states) and the lowest 1.6 per cent in Kerala. The proportion of unmarried female workers is about 5.4 per cent with the highest percentage of about 8.3 per cent in Assam and lowest 0.3 per cent in Tamil Nadu. The proportion of widowed females is 4.6 per cent. The percentage of widowed females is highest in Assam state.
- 3.21 In coffee plantations it is found that 94.2 per cent males and 86.5 per cent females are married. Cent per cent male workers in Tamil Nadu and Kerala are married, whereas the highest proportion of married females is 89.5 per cent in Tamil Nadu and the lowest 78 per cent in Kerala. Unmarried male and female workers are around 6.0 per cent each. The highest proportion of widowed females is 12.0 per cent in Kerala and the lowest 2.3 per cent in Karnataka. Female divorcees are 1.9 per cent in the coffee units.

3.22 In rubber plantations about 92 per cent male and 93 per cent female workers are married. The highest proportion of married male workers is cent per cent in Karnataka, whereas lowest proportion is 74.4 per cent in Tripura. The proportion of married female workers is highest (about 99 per cent) in Tamil Nadu and it is lowest about 63 per cent in Tripura. Unmarried male and female workers are 8.0 per cent and 3.0 per cent respectively. The highest proportion of unmarried male and female is 25.6 per cent and 35.5 per cent respectively in Tripura.

3.23 Around 94 per cent male workers are married in cardamom plantations with 94.1 per cent in Kerala and 88.9 per cent in Tamil Nadu. Whereas the proportion of married female workers is 91.5 per cent at the plantation level with 93.5 per cent in Kerala and 63.6 per cent in Tamil Nadu. About 18 per cent each of female workers are unmarried and widowed in Tamil Nadu. The over all proportion of unmarried male and female workers is 6.4 per cent and 3.7 per cent respectively.

## **CHAPTER – IV**

### **WORKING CONDITIONS**

- 4.1 The working conditions of workers employed in plantations are governed by the Plantation Labour Act, 1951 and the rules promulgated by the State governments. The Plantation Labour Act inter-alia requires the employer to provide to the workers and their family members medical, housing, sickness and education facility and various other social security benefits. The act applies in the first instance to tea, coffee, rubber, cinchona and cardamom plantations. However, the state government may apply it to any other plantation.
- 4.2 In the present chapter, the working conditions of the workers like employment status, skill, mode of payment, rest interval, weekly off and various other social security benefits provided by the employer are discussed.
- 4.3 Information on sex-wise status of employment i.e. permanent, temporary, casual and contract, as on the date of visit is collected during the course of the study and is presented in Table 4.1.
- 4.4 It may be seen that in all the plantations taken together 80.5 per cent males and 85.4 per cent females are employed in tea plantations. The proportion of male and female in the coffee plantations is 2.0 per cent and 2.6 per cent respectively. In rubber plantations the share of male and female workers is 16.6 per cent and 10.6 per cent whereas their respective proportion is 0.9 per cent and 1.4 per cent in cardamom plantations

- 4.5 In tea plantations, 97 per cent male and 96 per cent female are permanent, and 2 per cent male and 4 per cent female are temporary. However, the proportion of workers under contract and casual labour categories is either nil or negligible.
- 4.6 In coffee plantations, 90 per cent males and 92 per cent females are permanent and the rest are temporary. No worker is found working in contract or casual category.
- 4.7 In rubber plantations 82 per cent males and 72 per cent females are permanent, whereas temporary males and females are 13 per cent and 19 per cent respectively.
- 4.8 In cardamom plantations, 81 per cent male and 91 per cent female workers are permanent and the rest are temporary. No worker is found engaged on contract or casual basis.
- 4.9 Taken all the plantations together, 94 per cent males and 93 per cent females are permanently employed, while 4 per cent and 6 per cent male and female respectively are temporary. In contract and casual category of workers a very negligible number of workers are employed.
- 4.10 The other aspect for which the data is collected in the survey is the skill category of workers. Generally, it is believed that the work force in plantation possesses no skill other than plucking leaf from the garden. The workers have been distributed into three categories, viz. skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled and the results are presented in Table 4.2. Taking all the plantations together, it may be seen that majority of the workers are unskilled. About 69.0 per cent of the male and 74.0 per cent of female workers are doing unskilled type of jobs. Further only 19 per cent male workers are skilled and 12 per cent are semi-skilled.

- 4.11 In the units of tea plantations the proportion of skilled male and female workers is 13.3 per cent and 10.4 per cent respectively. The highest percentage of skilled workers (37.3 per cent male and 36.1 per cent female) is in West Bengal, while the lowest proportion of skilled male workers (6.6 per cent) is in Assam and of skilled female workers (0.4 per cent) is in Tamil Nadu. A majority of workers i.e. 85.4 per cent male and 99.6 per cent female employed in Tamil Nadu belong to semi-skilled category. The proportion of unskilled workers is high i.e. 76.5 per cent male and 77.6 per cent female in the tea plantation units. The highest percentage of unskilled workers, i.e. 92 per cent male and 99 per cent female is in Kerala whereas the lowest percentage of (60.6 per cent male and 63.9 per cent female) unskilled workers is in West Bengal.
- 4.12 In coffee plantations, the percentage of male skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled workers is 15 per cent, 2.4 per cent and 82.6 per cent respectively. The highest percentage of skilled and semi-skilled male workers is employed in Kerala (20.7 per cent and 3.4 per cent respectively) whereas the percentage of unskilled workers is highest, i.e. 93 per cent, in Tamil Nadu. Cent per cent female workers are unskilled in Tamil Nadu state, whereas the percentage of unskilled women workers in Karnataka and Kerala is 90.9 per cent and 84.0 per cent respectively. Over all proportion of skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled female workers is 2.6 per cent, 5.1 per cent and 92.3 per cent respectively.
- 4.13 In rubber plantations around 50 per cent male workers are skilled, about 22 per cent semi-skilled and rest 28 per cent are un-skilled. In case of female workers about 48 per cent are skilled, 14 per cent semi-skilled and the remaining 38 per cent are un-skilled.

- 4.14 In cardamom plantations 97 per cent workers (male and female) are unskilled whereas the rest 3 per cent are skilled. Cent per cent male and female workers in Kerala are un-skilled, while in Tamil Nadu the unskilled male and female workers are reported 66.7 per cent and 54.5 per cent respectively.
- 4.15 During the course of survey, data is collected on the existing wage structure in the plantations, system of payment and the mode of employment etc. The information so collected is analyzed in the ensuing paragraphs.
- 4.16 All the plantations taken together, it is found that cent per cent workers in tea, coffee, rubber and cardamom plantations are directly employed by the employer. No contract worker is found employed i.e. no employment is made through contractors. Table 4.3 presents the percentage distribution of workers by mode of payment and employment. Generally the payment is made to workers either on piece rate or time rate basis. It is normally perceived that where the quality of the product matters most, time rated mode of payment is a better option whereas in cases where quantity matters, the more-preferred mode of payment is piece rated. Out of the total 18,664 manual workers employed in the sampled tea plantations, 68 per cent males and 80 per cent females are piece rated and the rest 32 per cent male and 20 per cent female are time rated. Cent per cent workers engaged in Tamil Nadu are time rated whereas in Assam 84 per cent male and 95 per cent female workers are piece rated.
- 4.17 In coffee plantations, out of the total 520 workers employed in sample units, all are paid on time rate bases. None of the workers is engaged on piece rate basis.

- 4.18 In case of rubber plantations, out of 3,019 workers, 61 per cent male and 68 per cent female workers are time rated. Whereas the percentage of piece rated male and female workers is 39 per cent and 32 per cent respectively. Cent per cent male and female workers in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu are time rated and in Tripura cent per cent females are time rated.
- 4.19 In cardamom plantation sample units, all the 258 workers are time rated.
- 4.20 The pay period of workers are divided into five main categories, viz., daily, weekly, 10 days, fortnightly and monthly. The distribution of workers according to pay periods is presented in Table 4.4. The survey results reveal that majority (38.3 per cent) of workers are paid wages on fortnightly basis, followed by 32.8 per cent on monthly basis, 22.4 per cent on weekly basis and 6.4 per cent workers on 10 days basis. At aggregate level no worker is found to be paid wages on daily basis.
- 4.21 In tea plantations, it is observed that 43.4 per cent of workers are paid wages on fortnightly basis with the highest percentage of 93.5 per cent in West Bengal and the lowest 3.5 per cent in Kerala. More than 22 per cent of the workers are paid on monthly basis, with cent per cent workers in Tamil Nadu and 96.5 per cent in Kerala are paid on monthly basis. Around 27 per cent are paid on weekly basis and 7.6 per cent after every 10 days. Weekly system of wage payment is prevalent only in Assam where 47 per cent workers are paid every week.
- 4.22 The overall position of coffee plantation units shows that 89 per cent workers are paid on monthly basis with the cent per cent workers in Karnataka and Kerala and 80.5 per cent workers in Tamil Nadu. About 11 per cent workers are paid on weekly basis.

- 4.23 Taking all the rubber plantations together, it is found that 86.7 per cent workers are paid on monthly basis with the highest, cent per cent units in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu and lowest 5 per cent in Tripura. Remaining 13.3 per cent workers are paid fortnightly. Cent per cent units of cardamom have reported monthly payment of wages to their workers.
- 4.24 The proportion of units paying bonus under the Payment of Bonus Act, 1965 is presented in Table 4.5. The act applies to every factory and other establishments in which twenty or more persons are employed on any day during an accounting year. The act provides for the bonus to be paid to workers on the basis of profit on production or productivity.
- 4.25 The sampled units are a mixture of big estates and small holdings. The survey result reveals that 87.1 per cent units are under obligation to pay bonus to their workers under the Payment of Bonus Act, 1965. However, it may be seen that 95.5 per cent of the units are paying bonus, which means the unit which are not covered under the act, are also paying bonus to the workers to motivate them. The rate of the bonus varies between 8.33 to 20 per cent and majority of the units 98.4 per cent are paying annual bonus. Only 1.6 per cent of the units are paying festival bonus to the workers, at overall level. The units paying festival bonus are found from the states of Kerala and Tripura and belongs to rubber plantation.
- 4.26 Taken all the plantations together, there are 23,784 workers employed in 132 plantation units. Out of these 22,461 (94.4 per cent) are manual workers and the remaining 1323 (5.6 per cent) are non-manual workers. During the year 2007-08, 25,631 workers are

paid bonus by the sampled units. A total amount of Rs. 5,00,74,808 is paid as bonus to all plantation workers with an average of Rs. 1,953.70 per worker in the year 2007-08. The details of bonus payment are presented in Table 4.6

- 4.27 In tea plantations, 21,973 workers are paid bonus amounting to Rs. 3,70,64,201, with an average of Rs.1686.80 per worker. The highest number of workers paid bonus is in Assam (14,192 workers) with an average amount of about Rs. 1,257.8 per worker. In West Bengal an average amount of bonus Rs. 2,391.2 per worker is paid, whereas in Tamil Nadu an average amount of Rs. 2,888.4 per worker is paid as bonus to the workers.
- 4.28 In coffee plantation units, bonus is paid to 477 workers with an average of Rs.2,818.20 per worker. In Tamil Nadu the average amount of bonus paid per worker is Rs.3,207.80, in Karnataka the average amount paid is Rs.2,786.50 and in Kerala it is Rs.2,311.
- 4.29 A total of 2,911 workers are paid bonus in rubber plantation units, with an average amount of Rs.3,775.4 per worker. The highest amount of bonus Rs.4,496.9 per worker is paid in Kerala, whereas the lowest amount of bonus Rs.1,099.9 is reported in Tripura.
- 4.30 Out of a total of 288 workers, 270 workers are paid bonus in cardamom units with an average amount of Rs.2,504.6 per worker. In Kerala an average amount of Rs.2,522.8 per worker is paid as bonus whereas this average amount is Rs.1,537.6 per worker in Tamil Nadu.
- 4.31 Table 4.7 presents percentage distribution of units imposing fines, type of fines and the utilization of funds collected from fines. The

survey result reveals that a very moderate number of units are imposing fines on workers.

- 4.32 Out of 47 units covered for tea plantations during the course of field study, only 2.1 per cent units are imposing fines. The units are imposing fines for the damage or loss of tools, and they have reported the utilization of funds so collected for the welfare of workers. No case of imposing fine is reported in any coffee plantation unit. In rubber plantations, 13 per cent units in Kerala are found imposing fine for absence from duty and damage or loss of tools and are utilizing the funds partially for the welfare of workers. In cardamom plantations the imposition of fines is reported in Kerala state only in 6 percent of units, for absence from duty.
- 4.33 Table 4.8 presents distribution of units making deductions by reasons of deductions. Taking all plantations together 54.5 per cent units are making deductions for the faults committed by the workers. A negligible proportion of (1.4 per cent) units is making deduction on account of absence from duty. No deductions are being effected on account of house accommodation, house building advance or group insurance. About 87.5 per cent of units is making deductions on account of Provident Fund.
- 4.34 About 75 per cent of tea plantations units are making deductions, of which, 94.3 per cent units are making deductions for provident fund with the cent per cent units in Assam and Tamil Nadu and 75.0 per cent units in Kerala. About 6 per cent units are making deductions for 'other' purposes.
- 4.35 In coffee plantations deductions are made only for Provident Fund and 12 per cent of units are making deductions on this account.

- 4.36 Around 58 per cent Rubber plantations units are making deductions on account of absence from duty, provident fund and 'other' purposes. In Kerala 6.7 per cent units are making deductions on account of absence of duty, 66.6 per cent units on account of provident fund, while the rest 26.7 per cent units are making deductions for 'other' purposes. In Tamil Nadu and Tripura, 25 per cent and 75 per cent of units respectively are making deductions for provident fund only.
- 4.37 In cardamom plantations, 77.8 per cent units are making deductions, of which 86.0 per cent units are making deductions on account of provident fund and the remaining 14 per cent on account of 'other' purposes.
- 4.38 Table 4.9 shows that in 95.7 per cent of units of tea plantations, working hours are less than 8 hours, whereas in 4.3 per cent units the working hours are between 8 and 9 hrs. Around 92 per cent of units in Assam state observe less than 8 hours working in a day, while the remaining about 8 per cent of units observes 8 and 9 hours of working in a day. All the Tea plantations units of Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Kerala and the residual states observes less than 8 hours working.
- 4.39 Similarly, in coffee, rubber and cardamom plantations, cent per cent units observe less than 8 hours working.
- 4.40 It may be observed from table 4.10 that the number of rest intervals varied between one to three in a day and duration of rest intervals ranges between less than half an hour to 2 hours a day. Taking all the plantations together, 82.6 per cent units are allowing one rest interval, 15.9 per cent units are allowing two rest intervals and the remaining 1.5 per cent units are allowing three rest intervals in a day.

- 4.41 The duration of rest intervals is less than half an hour in 6 per cent of units, whereas 66 per cent of units observe half an hour to one hour and the rest 28 per cent units are having duration of rest ranging between one hour to two hours in a day.
- 4.42 Around 79 per cent tea plantations units are allowing only one rest interval, 17 per cent two rest intervals and the remaining 4 per cent of units are allowing three rest intervals. Cent per cent units of West Bengal and the residual states are allowing only one rest interval. About 79 per cent units in Assam are providing one rest interval to their workers and rest 21 per cent units provide two rest intervals.
- 4.43 As regards coffee plantations, in Karnataka 91 per cent units are allowing one rest interval, and the remaining 9 per cent two rest intervals. 9 per cent units have reported rest duration of less than half an hour and the rest 91 per cent units allow half an hour to one hour rest duration. About 75 per cent of units in Tamil Nadu allow one rest interval and rest of the units allow two rest intervals. The rest intervals allowed by 12.5 per cent, 62.5 per cent and of 25 per cent units are less than half an hour, half an hour to less than one hour and one hour to two hours respectively.
- 4.44 In rubber plantations it is observed that cent per cent units of Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Tripura provide only one rest interval. In Tamil Nadu 25 per cent of Plantations are allowing rest duration of less than half hour and the rest of the units are allowing rest duration of half hour to one hour. About 73 per cent units of Kerala allow one rest interval and the remaining 27 per cent allow two rest intervals.

- 4.45 About 81 per cent and 19 per cent cardamom units of Kerala allow one rest interval and two rest intervals respectively. The rest intervals allowed by 6 per cent units is less than half an hour and rest of the units are allowing 1-2 hours rest interval. Cent per cent units of Tamil Nadu provide only one rest interval with half an hour to one hour's rest to all the workers.
- 4.46 Table 4.11 presents the percentage distribution of units employing workers beyond the normal hours of work. Only 3 units (2.3per cent) out of 132 sampled units, have reported working beyond the prescribed hours of work. About 4 per cent and 10 per cent units of tea plantations in Assam and Tamil Nadu and 25 per cent units of rubber plantations in Tamil Nadu are working beyond the prescribed hours of work. All the sampled units employing workers beyond the normal hours have reported paying at double rate for overtime work, as is mandatory under the act.
- 4.47 The Plantation Labour Act, 1951 prescribes that for every adult worker, one day earned leave for every twenty days of work performed by him should be allowed and for a young person, one day for every fifteen days of work. During the survey, the information regarding the number of units allowing earned leave is also collected and presented in Table 4.12. Around 98 per cent of the tea plantations units are providing earned leave to their workers. All the permanent and 19.6 per cent temporary workers are provided the earned leave facility in the tea units. About 33 per cent units each in West Bengal and residual states, 25 per cent in Kerala and 21 per cent units in Assam are providing earned leave/ annual leave to the temporary plantation workers. The average quantum of earned leave allowed to permanent workers is reported in the range of 14 to 15 per year.

- 4.48 About 85 per cent coffee plantation units are giving earned leave to their permanent workers with an average of 14 days leave in a year.
- 4.49 About 97 per cent units of rubber plantations provide annual leave to all the permanent workers. About 7 per cent units have provided earned leave to temporary workers in Kerala with an average leave of about 15 days.
- 4.50 All the cardamom plantations of Kerala and 50 per cent units of Tamil Nadu allowed annual/earned leave to their workers. All the permanent workers are allowed to avail the earned leave. About 12 per cent units of Kerala and cent per cent units of Tamil Nadu are providing this facility to temporary workers also. The average quantum of earned leave permitted in a year is 14 days in Kerala and 12 days in Tamil Nadu for permanent workers.
- 4.51 The information on the number of units allowing sick leave is also collected and presented in Table 4.13. Taking all the plantations together, it is observed that 92 per cent units are permitting sick leave to their permanent workers. In addition to this, 13 per cent units are providing this facility to temporary workers also.
- 4.52 About 92 per cent Tea plantation units provide sick leave facility to permanent workers. Further, 30 per cent and 5 per cent units are giving sick leave to temporary workers and contract workers respectively. The average quantum of sick leave permitted to workers is 14 days in a year.
- 4.53 The proportion of coffee plantation units giving sick leave facility to their permanent workers is 85 per cent with an average number of 14 days sick leave allowed in a year.

- 4.54 Cent per cent rubber plantations units are allowing sick leave to their permanent workers and 7 per cent units in Kerala are also allowing this facility to temporary workers with an average number of 14 days leave in a year.
- 4.55 All the sample units of cardamom plantation in Kerala and 50 per cent units in Tamil Nadu provide sick leave to permanent workers. About 12 per cent units in Kerala are providing sick leave facility to temporary workers also. The average quantum of sick leave in Kerala is reported as 11 days in a year to permanent workers and 10 days to temporary workers, whereas 14 days sick leave is permitted in a year in Tamil Nadu state.
- 4.56 The data on the national and festival holidays reveal that all the 132 units give national/festival holidays to their permanent workers. Around 15 per cent units of tea, 12 per cent of rubber and 6 per cent units of cardamom plantations have given this facility to temporary workers also. The average quantum of national and festival holidays varies between 5 days to 13 days in a year.
- 4.57 Regarding observance of weekly off with or without wages in the sampled plantation units, it is observed that all the units are giving weekly off to workers. About 87 per cent of plantation units are allowing weekly off without wages, while about 12 per cent are having a mix trend. The proportion tea plantation units allowing weekly off without wages and according to mix trend is 74.5 per cent and 25.5 per cent respectively. In coffee plantations, such proportion is 97 per cent and 3 per cent, whereas in rubber plantations it is 88 per cent and 9 per cent respectively. Cent per cent units of cardamom plantations give weekly off without wages. Distribution of units allowing weekly off with wages, without wages, etc. is presented in Table 4.15.

- 4.58 At all plantations level it is observed that more than 90 percent of employers are maintaining proper records (Table 4.16) relating to attendance, wages and bonus. Majority of units are displaying boards outside their premises. Out of a total of 132 units covered during the course of the study, it is found that 98.5 per cent of the units are maintaining attendance registers with the maximum of cent per cent units in tea and rubber plantations and the minimum of 94.4 per cent in cardamom plantations.
- 4.59 About 96 per cent are keeping wage/muster registers, with a maximum of 97.9 per cent units in tea plantations and a minimum of 94 per cent units in coffee plantations. Advance registers are maintained by 59 per cent of the units, the highest proportions being 67.6 per cent in coffee plantations followed by 63.6 per cent in rubber plantations and the minimum of 48.9 per cent in tea plantations.
- 4.60 About 14 per cent units are keeping records of overtime work undertaken by the plantation workers with a minimum of 11 per cent units in cardamom plantations and the maximum 17 per cent in Tea Plantations. About 90 per cent plantation units are maintaining bonus / ex-gratia registers, a maximum of 97 per cent units in rubber plantations and minimum of 76.5 per cent in coffee plantations. A maximum proportion (66.7 per cent) of cardamom plantation units followed by 61.7 per cent tea plantations units and a minimum of 11.8 per cent coffee plantations units are keeping the records of fines and deductions. About 83 per cent of tea plantations units, 64.7 per cent coffee plantations, 63.6 per cent units of rubber plantations and 39 per cent cardamom plantations units are keeping the records of maternity benefits paid to female workers.

- 4.61 Out of 132 units covered, 24 per cent are keeping the records of compensation paid to the workers in case of accidents as per the requirement of ESI Act, 1948.
- 4.62 Around 77 per cent tea plantations units, 74 per cent coffee plantations units and 79 per cent and 44 per cent of rubber and cardamom plantations respectively, are displaying notice boards in the premises, to provide general information/ instructions to the workers.
- 4.63 Under the provisions of Plantations Labour Act, 1951 for each of the plantation crop grown by them, the units are required to submit annual returns. About 96 per cent tea plantations units, 88 per cent coffee plantations units, cent per cent units of rubber plantations and 95 per cent cardamom plantations units are submitting their annual report/return to the concerned authorities.
- 4.64 Table 4.17 depicts the percentage of units reporting sexual harassment and constitution of machinery for the redressal of grievances of workers. Taking all the plantations together, 21 per cent units have set up separate machinery to handle the cases of sexual harassment. In Assam 12.5 per cent units have reported the machinery to handle sexual harassment cases and in Kerala and Tamil Nadu 50 per cent units each have set up the requisite machinery to handle the cases. About 8 per cent units of Assam state have reported cases of sexual harassment during the last two years.
- 4.65 About 38 per cent units in coffee plantation have reported the setting up of committee to handle such cases. The maximum (45.5 per cent) units in Karnataka and 25.0 per cent units each in Tamil Nadu and Kerala have set up such machinery to handle the cases.

One unit each in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu has reported a case of sexual harassment during the last two years.

- 4.66 Though no case of sexual harassment is reported in rubber and cardamom plantations units, yet 9 per cent units of rubber plantations and 11 per cent units of cardamom plantations have constituted a machinery to handle such cases.
- 4.67 Table 4.18 gives plantation/stratum-wise distribution of units having the grievance redressal machinery. From the 132 units surveyed, 61 per cent units have set up machinery for redressal of grievances of their workers. About 75 per cent units settle the grievances by mutual discussions between the workers and the management and only 1.2 per cent units settle the grievances through labour departments.
- 4.68 Out of 132 selected sampled units, 83 units (about 63 per cent) are member of Employers' associations whereas 88 units (around 67 per cent) have reported participation of workers in the trade unions. About 91 per cent units of tea plantations are members of Employees' Association with the highest proportion of members i.e. cent per cent in West Bengal, Kerala and residual states and the minimum proportion of 70 per cent in Tamil Nadu. Assam, West Bengal and Kerala topped with 100 per cent workers being member of trade union followed by 70 per cent workers in Tamil Nadu and 33 per cent in residual states. A total of 7,082 male workers and 8,669 female workers in tea plantations sample units are members of Trade unions.
- 4.69 About 44 per cent units of coffee plantations are members of Employers' Association. Kerala topped with 75 per cent units followed by Tamil Nadu where 50 per cent units are members of Employers' Association.

4.70 While none of units in Karnataka and Tripura are member of Employers' Association, in Kerala and Tamil Nadu 60 per cent and 50 per cent units respectively are member of employers' association. In Rubber plantations as a whole, 33 per cent units are member of Employers Association.

## CHAPTER – V

### WAGES AND EARNINGS

5.1 In plantation industry, majority of the workers employed are unskilled and many of them are not aware of the provisions of Minimum Wage Act, 1948, Equal Remuneration Act, 1976 and the various other labour acts enacted for their welfare. The high rate of illiteracy and low level of awareness make them more vulnerable to exploitation by the employer. During the course of survey, information on basic wage, dearness allowance, traveling allowance, various concessions (like free ration) etc. is collected for each manual worker employed in the sampled plantations. The minimum wages prevalent in different plantations States at the time of surveys are presented below.

Table: Minimum Wages of Plantation workers

States	Tea	Coffee	Rubber	Cardamom
	Plantation labour/field worker	Plantation labour/field worker	Rubber tapper/field worker	Plantation labour/field worker
Kerala	101.18	100.83	115.88/111.98	101.18
Karnataka		92.42	92.42	
Tamil Nadu	81.50	77.00	81.50	77.00
Assam *	79.6			
Tripura **			67.0/62.0	

(\*) Minimum wages taken from [www.paycheckin.in](http://www.paycheckin.in). Separate minimum wages of tea workers not available.

(\*\*) [www.paycheckin.in](http://www.paycheckin.in)

5.2 As discussed in the sampling design chapter, that the sample units are distributed into two size classes i.e. upper size class and lower size class to have comparison between the estates

having employees more than average employment and less than average employment. The information on earnings of workers has been compiled separately for these two size classes. In the ensuing paragraphs, occupation-wise average daily earnings of the workers have been discussed.

- 5.3 Table 5.1 presents occupation-wise average daily earnings of plantation workers. As discussed earlier, majority of the plantation manual workers are employed in the plantation labour occupation. The survey results reveal that the average daily earnings of the workers employed as plantation labour in the 132 sampled units, works out to be lowest i.e. Rs. 67.6, followed by Rs. 72.4 in watchman occupation and Rs. 101.7 in the field supervisory occupation.
- 5.4 In tea plantation units, where majority of the workers are plantation labourers, the lowest per day average daily earning is Rs. 68.2 in this occupation. The maximum per day earning of plantation labourer is in Kerala state (Rs. 110.8) and the minimum (Rs. 62.3) is in Assam state. Average per day earning of watchman, supervisor and field worker occupation works out to be Rs. 71.3, Rs. 93.8 and Rs. 105.7 respectively.
- 5.5 As stated earlier, occupation-wise details of earnings have been compiled separately for upper size class units and lower size class units for comparison purpose. It may be seen from the table 5.1(B) that in the lower size class tea plantation units, the average daily earning of plantation labour occupation is Rs. 66.0, with maximum per day earnings being in Kerala (Rs. 95.4) and minimum in Assam (Rs. 55.5). However, upper size class units, Table 5.1(A) where the employment is more than the average employment, the average per day earning of plantation labour is Rs. 67.4, with maximum Rs. 120.7 in Kerala state and minimum Rs. 62.7 in Assam state. By

and large, a similar trend of larger units paying more than the smaller units is visible in case of other occupation/plantations as well. This is probably due to the reasons that larger units have more capacity to pay and their workers have better bargaining strength.

- 5.6 In the coffee plantation units, the survey results reveal that at overall level the average per day earnings are Rs. 84.0 in case of plantation labourer occupation, with maximum Rs. 83.9 in Kerala state and minimum Rs. 74.0 in Tamil Nadu state. In the watchman, supervisor and driver occupations, the average per day daily earnings are reported as Rs. 93.5, Rs. 102.4 and Rs.105.3 respectively. The trends in average daily earnings of upper size class and lower size class coffee units shows similar type of results as seen in tea plantation units. In the lower size class units, the per day daily average earning under plantation labour is reported as Rs. 82.8 with the maximum of Rs. 85.6 in Karnataka and the minimum of Rs. 70.6 in the Kerala state. In the upper size class of units, the average per day daily earning of the occupation is Rs. 85.0 with maximum of Rs. 100.9 in Kerala and minimum of Rs. 67.5 in Tamil Nadu.
- 5.7 In Rubber Plantation units, majority of workers are employed in rubber tapper and field worker occupations. The survey results reveal that in the rubber tapper occupation, the average per day earning is Rs. 116.8 with maximum being Rs. 127.6 in Tamil Nadu and minimum being Rs. 77.8 in the Tripura state. For the field worker occupation, the average per day earning is Rs. 109.4. Further, by comparing the per day average earnings of upper size class units and lower size class units, it may be seen that contrary to the general trend, the per day average earnings of rubber tapper is more in lower size class units than in upper size class units. In the 24 sampled units of lower size class, their average daily earning

- is Rs. 127.0, with maximum being Rs. 179.0 in Tamil Nadu and minimum Rs. 77.0 in Tripura. In the upper size class units the average daily earning of rubber tapper is Rs. 114.4 with maximum of Rs. 118.8 in Kerala and minimum of Rs. 78.4 in Tripura state.
- 5.8 In the cardamom units, the workers are found employed as supervisor, plantation labour and field worker. In the plantation labour occupation, the average daily earning is reported as Rs.93.0, with maximum Rs. 97.6 in Kerala and minimum Rs. 76.0 in Tamil Nadu. In supervisor category which is reported only from Tamil Nadu, the average daily earning is Rs. 95.0. Similarly the field worker category is in Kerala state only and their average daily earning is Rs. 98.2. The occupation-wise result of the average daily earnings of all workers, upper size class workers and lower size class workers are presented in Table 5.1, 5.1(A) and 5.1(B) respectively.
- 5.9 Majority of the workers are leaf pluckers in the tea gardens/ estates. The earnings of male and female workers have been compiled separately for comparison purposes. The survey results reveal that under plantation labour occupation the average daily earning of male worker is Rs. 67.2 with maximum Rs. 107.7 in Kerala state and minimum Rs. 62.1 in the Assam state. However, for lower size class and upper size class, it may be seen that in the plantation labour occupation, the overall average daily earnings are Rs.66.0 with maximum Rs.96.5 in Kerala and minimum Rs.57.4 in Assam state and Rs.66.1 at overall level with maximum Rs. 113.3 in Kerala state and Rs. 62.0 in Assam state respectively. It shows that the average daily earnings of the upper size class workers are slightly more than the workers employed in the lower size class units.

- 5.10 While comparing the average daily earnings of male and female workers it has been observed that under plantation labour occupation, where majority of the workers are employed, the female workers' earnings are slightly higher than the male workers in the 47 tea plantation units studied. The average daily earnings of female workers are reported as Rs.68.8 in the plantation labour occupation. However, for supervisor occupation the average daily earning of female workers is reported as Rs.78.1, whereas for male workers, it is Rs. 95.5. In the watchman occupation, the female workers are found employed only in Assam state and the average daily earning is reported to be Rs.46.3. The details of occupation-wise average daily earnings of male workers are presented in Table 6.2, 6.2(A) and 6.2(B).
- 5.11 In the coffee plantation units, the average daily earning of male workers is reported as Rs. 84.1 under the plantation labour occupation with maximum Rs. 99.0 in Kerala and minimum Rs.71.8 in Tamil Nadu state. However, in case of female workers the average daily earning is Rs. 83.9 with maximum Rs. 91.5 in Kerala and minimum Rs. 74.9 in the Tamil Nadu. In Kerala state, the average daily earning of plantation labour in the coffee units is reported as Rs.99.0 for male workers and Rs. 91.5 for female workers.
- 5.12 In the rubber plantation units, the average daily earnings of male rubber tappers is reported as Rs. 113.5, with maximum Rs.147.0 in the Karnataka state and minimum Rs. 77.8 in Tripura state. However, for female workers the average daily earning is Rs. 121.8 with maximum Rs. 148.0 in Karnataka and minimum Rs. 117.6 in Kerala state. In Tripura no woman worker is found employed in the rubber tapper occupation.

- 5.13 In the cardamom units, the average daily earning of the male workers working as plantation labour is reported as Rs.91.8 with maximum Rs. 97.7 in Kerala and minimum Rs. 80.0 in Tamil Nadu state. For the female workers the same is reported as Rs. 93.3 with maximum Rs. 97.6 in Kerala and minimum Rs. 73.0 in Tamil Nadu state. The details of the occupation-wise average daily earnings of female workers are presented in Table 6.3, 6.3(A) and 6.3(B).
- 5.14 During the survey, a comprehensive schedule was designed to collect information on all the important aspects of the working conditions of workers. In the wages block, worker-wise information separately on basic wages, dearness allowance, travelling allowance and concessions in kind is also collected and compiled.
- 5.15 Table 5.4 to 5.6 present information on average daily basic wages of workers in different occupations by sex and size class. The basic wages of upper and lower size class of workers in an occupation are also compiled for comparison purpose and are given in Table 5.4(A) and Table 5.4(B) respectively. Similarly, to assess the implementation of Equal Remuneration Act, 1976 in the sampled units, the data on average daily basic wages of male workers are presented in Table 5.5. It needs to be mentioned that the system of wage fixation and payment in tea gardens varies from State to State. In many states, the wage rates of workers are fixed through bipartite agreements between the representatives of employers and employees of the tea gardens. Whereas in Kerala, the wages are fixed at minimum wage levels stipulated under the Minimum Wages Act, 1948. In some states, the basic wages and dearness allowance are paid to the workers as separate components. In others all the allowances, except concessions in kind are clubbed with basic wage and paid as a single component.

## **CHAPTER – VI**

### **SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS**

- 6.1 Provisions of welfare amenities in plantations were commented upon by the Royal Commission on Labour, the Rege Committee and Dr. Llyed Jones in their reports. A legislation known as the Plantations Labour Act, 1951 was passed in October, 1951 which came into force with effect from 01.04.1954.
- 6.2 The conditions of plantation labour are governed by the Plantation Labour Act, 1951 and the rules promulgated there under by the appropriate Government. The Plantation Labour Act is unique in the fact that it requires employer to provide the workers with medical facilities, housing, sickness, maternity benefits and other forms of social security measures. The act also provides for setting up of canteens, crèches, recreational facilities, suitable accommodation and educational facility for the benefit of plantation workers and their families in and around the work place in the plantation estates. During the survey, the information on most of the social security benefits is collected and discussed in the ensuing paragraphs.
- 6.3 Section 10 of the Plantation Labour Act requires that every employer shall provide medical facilities for workers and their families. The Plantations Labour Act makes it obligatory on the part of employers to provide and maintain such free and easily available medical facilities for the workers and their families as may be prescribed by the State Government. An attempt is made to collect information about the number of units providing such facility to the workers and their families.

- 6.4 Table 6.1 depicts the percentage distribution of units providing medical facilities to their workers. The study reveals that 48.5 per cent of the units are providing medical facilities to their workers and their family members. However, only 42 per cent of the units are having their own dispensaries, with 51 Medical officers and 165 Nurses employed in the dispensaries. It may be seen that while in the tea plantations about 89 per cent units are providing medical facilities to the workers, in other plantations, viz., coffee, rubber and cardamom, such proportion of units is about 33 per cent or less.
- 6.5 The position regarding the provision of medical facilities in tea plantations shows that out of the total 47 units covered during the course of the field study, 42 units (89 per cent) are providing medical facilities to the workers and their family members. All the units providing medical facilities in all strata, except Residual stratum are having their own dispensaries equipped with 37 medical officers and 144 nurses/attendants.
- 6.6 Out of the 34 units covered in coffee plantations only five units (about 15 per cent) are providing medical facilities. Out of the 5 units which are providing medical facility, four are having their own dispensaries with 4 medical officers and 4 attendants to look after the health of plantation workers and their family members.
- 6.7 Only one third of the total rubber plantation units covered during the course of the survey are providing medical facilities to the workers and their family members. About 27 per cent of the units covered are having their own dispensaries with 8 medical officers and 17 nurses/attendants. In Kerala 47 per cent of the units are providing medical facilities with 6 medical officers and 12 nurses/attendants. In Tamil Nadu 75 per cent units are providing

- medical facilities while in Tripura only 25 per cent units are providing medical facilities.
- 6.8 Only 33 per cent of the cardamom plantation units studied are providing medical facilities to the workers and their family members. Five units out of 16 in Kerala and one out of 2 units in Tamil Nadu are providing medical facilities to the workers. Only 2 units, one each in Kerala and Tamil Nadu cardamom plantations are having their own dispensaries with 1 medical officer each. However, no nurse/attendant is found employed in any of the cardamom units dispensary.
- 6.9 From the foregoing paras, it is evident that adequate medical facilities in the form of well equipped dispensaries are provided in tea plantations but the position is not satisfactory in other plantations. The employers of some plantations expressed their inability to comply with the entire legal requirement due to high costs involved. They are of the view that government should also share the expenditure on these facilities. According to them government bodies like ESIC could be involved in providing medical facility to workers in the plantations.
- 6.10 From women workers point of view, the major problem is to consult male doctors in the dispensary. Women workers, who are by and large, illiterate, feel shy of consulting male doctors especially in gynaecological problems. In view of the large number of women workers in the plantation industry, a statutory provision for appointment of lady doctor seems to be essential. Facilities for pre-natal and post-natal treatment are also inadequate and are to be improved. Frequent and regular medical check-ups also go a long way in improving the health of the plantation workers in general and the women workers in particular.

- 6.11 Table 6.2 presents the percentage distribution of units providing crèche facility in plantations. The Plantations Labour Act, 1951 stipulates that any plantation employing 50 or more women workers on any day during the preceding twelve months should provide and maintain suitable crèches for the children below the age of six years. Such crèches should have adequate accommodation and it should be adequately lighted, ventilated and maintained in a clean manner. Further, each crèche is required to be under the charge of women trained in the care of children and infants. The survey results reveal that only 37 per cent units are providing crèche facilities for which 32 women workers are appointed.
- 6.12 The position regarding providing the crèche facility in tea plantations shows that 77 per cent units are providing crèche facilities to their women workers and for that 24 trained women workers are hired to look after the crèches occupied by 1277 infants. Cent per cent units in West Bengal are providing crèche facility.
- 6.13 The study further reveals that out of 34 sample units of Coffee plantations, only 5 (15 per cent) units, viz. 3 units in Karnataka and one each in Tamil Nadu and Kerala are providing crèche facility to their women workers.
- 6.14 In rubber plantations, it is observed that only 6 (18 per cent) units have provided the crèche facility to their women workers to look after the infants and 56 infants are availing this facility. 3 units (about 20 per cent) in Kerala have provided crèche facility with trained women worker in each unit to look after 23 children, while in Tamil Nadu 2 Units (50 per cent) are providing this facility to 8 infants and all of them have engaged women worker to look after

them. However, no crèche facility is provided by all the 4 units surveyed in Tripura state under the rubber plantation.

- 6.15 The position in respect of providing the crèche facility in cardamom plantations shows that only 2 units (about 12 per cent) in Kerala are providing crèche facility
- 6.16 The Plantations Labour Act, 1951 make it obligatory on the part of employers to maintain primary schools in the plantations where the number of children between the age group of 6 and 12, exceed 25. However, an employer can be exempted from this obligation, if there already exists a school run either by the State Government or a local body providing free education to enough number of children.
- 6.17 Table 6.3 gives the percentage of units providing free education facilities to the children of the workers. It may be seen that only 22 units (17 per cent) are providing education facility to the children of plantation workers. A total of 4,010 children are availing this facility in the 132 sampled units surveyed during the course of field work.
- 6.18 Due to the remote location of the plantations, adequate schooling facility for workers children is a dire necessity. Out of the total of 47 Tea plantation units covered during the course of field study, it is observed that only 19 units i.e. about 40 per cent are providing education facility to the children. In Assam and West Bengal state, 50 per cent of the units are providing education facilities. A total of 3,618 children are availing this facility in the 19 units.
- 6.19 About 10 per cent Rubber plantation units out of a total of 33 units covered during the course of the survey are providing education facility for the children of plantation workers. A total of 392 children

- are getting education facility provided by the employers in rubber plantation units.
- 6.20 None of the coffee and cardamom plantation units is providing education facility to the plantation workers.
- 6.21 Section 15 of the Plantation Labour Act requires every employer to provide and maintain necessary housing accommodation.
- a) for every worker (including his family) residing in the plantation
  - b) for every worker (including his family) residing outside the plantation, who has put six months of continuous service in such plantation and who has expressed a desire in writing to reside in the plantation.
- 6.22 Data pertaining to housing facility provided by the employers are presented in Table 6.4. About 77 per cent of plantation units are found providing housing accommodation to their workers and in majority of the units; the accommodation is within the plantation itself, i.e. 99.0 per cent. All the units are providing housing facility free of cost to the workers and 8,520 women workers in all the 132 sample units are reported to avail this facility.
- 6.23 In the tea units, all the units surveyed, except 10.0 per cent units in Tamil Nadu, have reported to provide free housing facility to 7,452 women workers. Around 71 per cent coffee plantation units have reported to provide housing accommodation to the workers with the maximum 90.9 per cent number of units in Karnataka and minimum 25.0 per cent in Kerala state. Further, 70 per cent rubber plantation units have provided accommodation to workers with the highest proportion (cent per cent units) in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu and lowest proportion (i.e. 25 per cent of units) in Tripura state. Around 96 per cent of units are providing

- accommodation with in the plantation and rest 4 per cent units provide it outside the plantation.
- 6.24 About 50 per cent cardamom plantation units are providing housing facility to their workers which is provided with in the plantation and free of cost. Around 44 per cent units in Kerala are providing accommodation to 69 women workers and cent per cent units provide accommodation to 11 women workers in Tamil Nadu.
- 6.25 Appropriate measures for the protection of health and provision of pecuniary benefits during the maternity period are of vital significance for the working mothers. Initially, relief on this account was provided under various state legislations and the Plantation Labour Act, 1951. However, a new Central Act, viz. the Maternity Benefits Act, 1961 was enacted by the Government of India for this purpose. It applies to every establishment in the factory, plantation and mining sectors, excluding, however, those establishments which are covered by the Employees State Insurance Act, 1948. The Act provides for payment of maternity benefits to women workers at the rate of average daily wage for the actual period of absence before and after confinement. The maximum period of entitlement is six weeks prior to and the other six weeks after confinement including the day of delivery.
- 6.26 Table 6.5 depicts the percentage of units providing maternity benefits to the women workers. In the 47 tea plantations units, it is found that 91 per cent units are providing maternity benefits with the maximum cent per cent units in West Bengal and minimum 75.0 per cent units in Kerala. Around 92 per cent units in Assam and 90 per cent units of Tamil Nadu are providing maternity benefits to the women workers. The average amount of compensation paid to 603 women workers is Rs.3,921 and on an average number of leave allowed is 83 days for beneficiary.

- 6.27 About 73 per cent coffee plantations units are providing maternity benefits, the highest proportion of 77 percent units is in Karnataka and the lowest proportion of 62 percent in Tamil Nadu.
- 6.28 In rubber plantations, 67 per cent of units are providing maternity benefits to their workers.
- 6.29 Around 40 per cent of cardamom plantations units are providing maternity benefit to the workers. An average amount of Rs. 7,612 is paid as maternity benefit per beneficiary with an average of 84 days of leave.
- 6.30 The Plantation Labour Act provides that every plantation, wherein three hundred or more workers are ordinarily employed, the employer shall employ welfare officers. Table 6.6 shows the percentage of units appointing welfare officers. The sample units are mixture of big and small estates. In the tea plantations, the average employment is more than 600 workers whereas in all the other plantations the average employment is less than 150 workers. In the tea plantation units 38 per cent units are having welfare officers. About 50 per cent tea plantations units in Assam have total 14 welfare officers. Further, 67 per cent units of West Bengal have 4 welfare officers.
- 6.31 In case of rubber plantations only in Kerala state 33.3 per cent units have appointed welfare officers. In rest of the rubber, coffee and cardamom plantations, no unit has appointed welfare officer.
- 6.32 Table 6.7 gives percentage of units providing different kind of concessions to the workers e.g. rice, free products, free meals etc.. About 66.0 per cent of the tea plantation units provide concessions in kind, out of which 93.5 per cent units provide Rice/Atta to workers and rest 6.5 per cent units give free products. No other

concessional facility like subsidized canteen facility and free meal is provided in any of the sampled units. None of the units in coffee, rubber and cardamom plantations provide any concession in kind to their workers.

- 6.33 The State Government may prescribe rules requiring that in every plantation, wherein 150 workers are ordinarily employed, one or more canteen shall be provided and maintained by the employer for the use of the workers. Table 6.8 depicts the percentage distribution of units providing canteen facilities to the workers.
- 6.34 In the 132 sampled units surveyed, it is found that 13 per cent units provide canteen facility, and only 4 per cent units are having a management committee to run the canteen. All of the 4.0 per cent units are allowing workers to participate in the committee. In tea plantations units, 23 per cent units have provided canteen facility and 6 per cent units have formed management committee. Out of the 34 coffee plantation units, only 1 unit is providing canteen facility but no management committee is formed. About 15 per cent of rubber plantation units have provided canteen facility to their workers, and only 6 per cent of units are having a canteen management in which workers are participating.
- 6.35 Table 6.9 gives the percentage of units providing various welfare facilities to the workers. About 65 per cent sampled units, are providing safe drinking water facility to the workers and 25 per cent provide the washing facilities. The urinals and latrine facilities are provided by 10 per cent of units, whereas 25 per cent and 17 per cent of units have provided rest shelter and recreational facilities respectively to the workers.
- 6.36 In the tea plantation units 80 per cent units are providing drinking water facility and 36 per cent are providing washing facilities to the

- workers. Around 11 per cent units are providing urinals, latrines and other type of facilities. Rest shelter and recreational facilities are provided by 47 per cent and 32 per cent of the units respectively.
- 6.37 Around 12 per cent of coffee plantation units are providing drinking water facility to their workers, whereas only 3 per cent units are reported to provide washing facilities.
- 6.38 It is reported that 85 per cent of rubber plantation units are providing drinking water facilities, while 48 per cent are giving washing facilities. Urinals, latrines and recreational facilities are provided by 21 per cent of units each, whereas 30 per cent units are providing rest shelter to their workers.
- 6.39 In cardamom plantation units, drinking water facility is reported to be provided by the owner of only one unit.
- 6.40 Table 6.10 depicts the percentage of units providing various welfare facilities separately to women workers. Out of 132 plantation units covered during the course of the study, it is observed that only about 12 per cent units are providing separate drinking water facility to women workers. Separate urinals, latrines are provided by only 8.0 per cent of the units each and rest shelter by only 7 per cent of the units. Recreational and other type of facilities are provided by only 1 per cent of units.
- 6.41 Separate drinking water and washing facility for women workers is provided by 34 per cent and 15 per cent of tea plantations units respectively. About 6 per cent units have provided separate urinals and latrines for women workers. Separate rest shelter and recreational facilities are provided by around 13 per cent and 2 per cent units respectively.

- 6.42 About 3 per cent coffee plantation units are providing separate washing and recreational facilities to the women workers.
- 6.43 No separate welfare facility for women workers is provided in the coffee and cardamom plantation units.
- 6.44 It is observed that 89 per cent of units are implementing social security scheme for the benefits of workers. In the tea plantation, 95.7 per cent units are having some social security scheme for workers. Except in Tamil Nadu state, where 80.0 per cent units have reported social security scheme, in rest of the strata all units are implementing social security scheme. Plantation/Stratum-wise details of the units implementing social security benefits and the category of workers eligible are presented in Table 6.11

## **CHAPTER VII**

### **Living Condition**

- 7.1 One of the objectives of the present survey in plantation industry is to assess the living conditions of women workers employed in this industry. For that, a special worker level schedule was designed to capture data on the important aspects of the living conditions. The information on the migration status, reason for migration, employment status, demography particulars like marital status, educational qualifications, etc. have been collected. Further, the data on the household indebtedness, purpose of loan, source of loan etc. are captured in the household indebtedness block of the schedule. The important results of the living condition are presented in the forthcoming paragraphs.
- 7.2 As discussed in the earlier chapter, majority of the plantations workers are employed as plantation labour. In the worker level schedule, the information regarding the occupation of sampled women workers is also collected and the results are presented in Table 7.1. The results corroborate the fact that majority of the workers i.e. more than 99 per cent are plantation labourers in the tea plantations. Almost similar situation exists in the coffee plantations where the proportion of plantations labourers is 92 per cent and rest 8 per cent are field workers. In rubber plantation units, rubber tappers and field workers constitute a huge chunk i.e. 90 per cent of workers and remaining about 10 per cent are plantation labourers or miscellaneous workers. At the aggregate level, the proportion of plantation labourers is highest (72 per cent).
- 7.3 Table 7.2 displays employment status of the sampled workers. The permanent workers in all four plantations are evident by their huge

proportion where as the proportion of temporary and casual workers are comparatively very less with the exception in rubber plantation units. In Tripura state one- fourth of the workers surveyed are temporary and another one-fourth are casual. No sampled women workers in all the four plantations are reported to have been employed on contract basis. Further all the women workers surveyed in all the four plantations in Tamil Nadu State are reported to be permanent workers.

- 7.4 A perusal of Table 7.3 reveals that a vast majority of workers, i.e. 85 per cent belongs to Hindu religion, followed by Christians whose proportion is 10 per cent. These comprise of 13 per cent scheduled tribes, 23 per cent scheduled class, 25 per cent other backward classes. Predominately 74 per cent women workers surveyed in the tea industry in Tamil Nadu state were scheduled castes. Around 53 per cent of workers in coffee plantations in Kerala and 50 per cent of workers in Tamil Nadu state of rubber plantations belongs to OBC category. Further 83 per cent of the workers in cardamom plantations and 63 per cent in coffee plantations in Tamil Nadu state respectively are scheduled tribe workers.
- 7.5 Table 7.4 shows the proportions of women workers migrated from other states. A very negligible number of women workers migrated from other states are reported during the survey. The migration is 5 per cent with maximum migration is taking place in respect of cardamom plantations where this proportion is 59 per cent. The migration of workers started from the period 1970-90 onwards and maximum i.e. around 41 per cent are migrated after the year 2000. All the migration cases are reported in the Kerala state.
- 7.6 Table 7.5 presents the variety of reasons which could be attributed to the workers mobility to the present place. While no case of migration having taken place in coffee and rubber plantations. The main reasons for migration are reported as no work at the native place by 45.0 per

- cent workers, followed by motivation by friends and relatives 43.0 per cent.
- 7.7 Table 7.6 shows the occupations in which the workers were engaged prior to their migration. It reveals that in tea Plantations, three - fourth of workers were either plantation or agricultural labour and one-fourth was unemployed, whereas in the case of cardamom plantations in Kerala 62 per cent workers were unemployed prior to the migration.
- 7.8 Table 7.7 presents the family size of women workers surveyed in the four plantations. Average family size at overall level plantations level is 4.2 family members. In the tea plantation units, the average family size is highest with 4.7 members, whereas in the other plantation the average family size is below 4.0 members. The size of sampled women workers states that 3 per cent women workers are staying single. Majority of the women workers have family size of four members i.e. 30.6 per cent, followed by three members 20.0 per cent sample women workers. However, the family size of six members & above six members is reported by 10.6 per cent and 8.3 per cent sampled women workers.
- 7.9 Table 7.8 gives distribution of women worker by age and marital status. A perusal of the table unambiguously indicates that at aggregate level, 35-39 age groups have emerged as the most productive group except in the case of Kerala state of coffee plantations where 19-34 age groups is dominated. Of all women workers surveyed, 76 per cent are married, 8 per cent are unmarried, 14 per cent are widowed and 1 per cent each is separated or divorced.
- 7.10 Table 7.9 presents the ratio of male and female members in the total family members. It may be seen that the proportion of female and male members are about 50 per cent each at aggregate level. In other

words, the male-female ratio of family members is virtually 1:1 at all plantations level as also in respect of all the individual four plantations surveyed. Around 60 per cent of workers are in the age group of 19-59 followed by 26 per cent below the age of 15. The details of the male ratio and age profile of family members are presented in Table 7.9.

7.11 Table 7.10 indicates the literacy level of women workers. It reveals that 54 per cent women workers are illiterate. Around 17 per cent workers have attained education up to primary level, 13 per cent middle level, 8 per cent matric or higher secondary level. No worker in any of the plantations surveyed has education of graduation and above. The proportion of illiterate workers in tea and coffee plantations are quite high i.e. more than 60 per cent.

7.12 Table 7.11 presents the average number of earners per household. It may be seen from the table that in tea plantation units the average number of earners per household are 2.1 members. In all the tea plantation states, where the survey is conducted this average lies between 1.8 members to 2.3 members per household. In coffee, rubber and cardamom plantation units, the average number of earners per household is 2.0 members, 1.9 members and 2.0 members respectively. The minimum average earners are reported 1.3 members in Tamil Nadu state under the rubber plantation units.

7.13 Tables 7.12 elaborate the pay period according to which wages are being paid to the workers. It reveals that the pay period in respect of 45 per cent workers surveyed in tea plantation are fortnight whereas for 29 percent and 26 per cent workers it is weekly and monthly respectively. In coffee plantations, the pay period is monthly in respect of majority of the workers i.e. 97 per cent, remaining about 3 per cent have weekly as their pay period. Similarly 84 percent workers are monthly paid, 10 per cent fortnightly paid, 3 per cent weekly paid, 2

per cent daily paid and 1 per cent are having others as their pay period in the rubber plantation units. All the workers in cardamom plantations are monthly paid. At aggregate level, 56 per cent workers are monthly paid, 27 per cent fortnightly paid, and 17 per cent weekly paid. While most of the workers surveyed received their wages in time, there is one exception in the case of cardamom plantations in Tamil Nadu where the wages are not paid in time to any of the worker.

7.14 A vast majority i.e. 82 per cent tea plantations were piece rated workers whereas in rest of the plantations, the system of payment is time rated. In majority of plantations where the piece rated systems is prevalent the accounts are being maintained by the management itself. Only in 1.0 per cent of units in Assam have reported the maintenance of records in case of piece rated by women workers. The details of the mode of payment and maintenance of record are presented in Table 7.13.

7.15 Table 7.14 gives overtime and night shift working in respect of women workers. Very few instances of overtime and night shifts working are reported. The proportion of such women workers is quite meager being 1.1 percent and 1.5 per cent respectively at aggregate level. The rate of payment for working beyond normal working hours is double in case of tea plantations. Whereas it is ordinarily, in coffee plantations and double for three fourth workers and ordinary in respect of one-fourth workers in rubber plantations. No worker is reported to have worked over time in cardamom plantations. At aggregate level, two third of women workers get the overtime payment at double rate and rest is receiving this payment as per ordinary rates. All the workers working overtime have the facility of transportation.

7.16 Table 7.15 presents type and nature of leave admissible to women workers. At all plantations level, the proportion of women workers getting weekly off is 97 per cent out of which only 3 per cent have paid

weekly off and for rest of 97 percent have this off without wages. About 91 per cent women workers have availed annual leave and the proportion of workers getting maternity leave is 40 per cent. In coffee and cardamom plantation units, no women workers is getting weekly off with wages.

7.17 Table 7.16 gives information about deductions in wages and reasons therefore. About 9 per cent women workers have reported deductions in wages. In majority of cases i.e. 77 per cent the deductions are made by the employers owing to the absence of the workers from duty. However, in the case of tea Plantations, because of the prevalence of the piece-rate systems, the deductions are made on account of lesser output and this proportion being is 63 per cent. Further, 39 per cent women workers have reported that the deductions are done arbitrary by the employer. However, 53 per cent is of the opinion that these are deducted by taking their consent also.

7.18 Table 7.17 provides information relating to welfare facilities available to women workers. Out of the total number of women workers surveyed, only 10 per cent workers are availing the education facility offered by the employer in tea plantation units. It is in the form of full fee reimbursement in respect of 70 per cent workers, partial fee reimbursement for 3 per cent workers and other type in respect of 27 per cent workers. This facility, however, is not available to workers in other three plantations. The proportions of women workers who are aware of the welfare schemes are quite small i.e. 4 per cent. The benefits of welfare schemes were accrued to and were availed by one-fifth of women workers. All the women workers surveyed in residual sates of tea plantations, Kerala states of rubber plantations and cardamom availed the benefits of the welfare schemes.

7.19 The cases of discrimination and harassment against women workers were also collected during the survey. While no case of discrimination

is reported in any of the plantations, the proportion of women workers having undergone sexual harassment at the work place is also negligible being only 0.1 per cent. Out of which only 3 per cent reported matter to the concerned authorities.

7.20 Table 7.8 presents the cases of discrimination with regard to wages and welfare facilities. Majority of workers i.e. 96 per cent received their wages in time. The proportion of women workers reporting discrimination with regard to wages and facilities are negligible being almost less than 1 per cent. Proportion of women workers receiving advances is 27 per cent.

7.21 Table 7.19 presents the awareness in women workers of their rights, enactment machinery and their bargaining power. It reveals that 59 per cent workers are members of different trade unions, majority of them being ordinary members. Around 35 per cent of women workers are aware of the Minimum Wages Act, 1948, 19 per cent of Equal Remuneration Act, 1976 and 44 per cent of the Maternity Benefits Act.

7.22 Table 7.20 provides information about the family environment of women workers. Out of the total women surveyed, 39 per cent women workers have adopted the family planning programme with coffee plantations being in the forefront. Further 52 per cent workers are those who could independently spend money on their personal needs. In this context, the proportion in coffee plantations is quite higher, being 91 per cent.

7.23 Table 7.21 gives details regarding savings made by women workers. At the aggregate level, 42 per cent workers exercised savings. Individually the proportion of such workers is 47 per cent in the tea plantations, 45 per cent in coffee plantations, 34 percent in rubber plantations and 22 per cent in cardamom plantations. Bank is the most popular

institutions where 54 per cent workers have deposited their savings, followed by 15 per cent who opted for the deposits in post offices. An average amount of Rs.288 is being saved by the women workers at overall level. However, in rubber plantation, the maximum average saving is reported with Rs.439.

7.24 Table 7.22 presents proportion of workers provided dwellings by the employees either free of cost or on rent. It reveals that at the overall level, 77 per cent of the workers surveyed are provided dwellings by the employers in the plantations. The proportion of such workers plantation-wise, ranged between 45 per cent in cardamom plantations to 90 per cent in tea plantations. While the accommodation provided by the employer is rent free to all their workers in coffee, rubber and cardamom plantations, a paltry 0.8 per cent had to pay rent for such accommodation in the tea plantations.

7.25 Table 7.23 pertains to remaining 23 per cent of women workers who are not residing in the plantations and had to cover some distance to the work place. About 94 per cent workers had their dwellings up to 5 kms away from work place, 4 per cent had to cover a distance of 6 to 10 kms to reach the plantations whereas a mere 2 per cent had to cover 11 to 5 kms.

7.26 Table 7.24 provides information on status, type and structure of the dwelling units. Majority of workers i.e. 76 per cent are provided dwellings by the employees rent free. Dwellings in respect of 23 per cent workers are self owned. About 54 per cent workers are residing in independent houses followed by 30 per cent workers who inhabited other type accommodation. About 71 per cent houses had semi -pucca structure, 10 per cent are pucca and the remaining 19 per cent are kutcha houses.

7.27 Table 7.25 indicates the conditions of the dwellings where the women workers resided. Of all the workers surveyed, 79 per cent workers are residing in dwellings having walls made of bricks, 49 per cent had roofs made of tiles and the floors in respect of about 46 per cent are pucca which obviously point to improved housing conditions of workers. More or less similar conditions are prevalent separately for each of the plantations wherein the survey was undertaken in respect of the women workers.

7.28 Table 7.26 provides information in regard to the accommodation and facilities available in the dwellings being inhabited by the women workers. On an average, approximately two rooms are at the disposal of the women workers. Facilities of separate kitchen, bathroom and latrines are available in respect of about 87 per cent, 59 per cent and 65 per cent respectively. Exclusively separate kitchen had been provided to all the workers in Kerala and Tamil Nadu state of rubber and cardamom plantations respectively as also in the Karnataka state of rubber plantations. Separate bathrooms are available to all the workers in Kerala state of cardamom plantations. All the workers in Kerala stratum of coffee plantations and Tamil Nadu state of rubber and cardamom plantations had the separate facility of latrine

7.29 Table 7.27 relates to the availability of facilities in the dwellings. At the all plantations level, the supply of water is shared from the source located outside the dwellings in respect of 77 per cent workers surveyed. The source of energy is electricity in respect of 70 per cent workers with and 29 per cent using kerosene oil for lighting. A huge majority of workers i.e. 91 per cent are using firewood for cooking whereas only 7 per cent are using cooking gas. More or less similar trends could be seen across the plantations except in the case of supply of water in the rubber plantations where the source of water in respect of 57 per cent is independent

with 40 per cent workers reporting the source to be shared outside. In respect of Kerala state of coffee plantations the source of water is shared inside for 71 per cent workers. The source of lighting energy is electricity in respect of all the workers in Karnataka state of rubber plantations and Tamil Nadu state of rubber and cardamom plantations respectively.

7.30 Table 7.28 presents the availability of transportation facility from their residence to the work place in case of those workers who did not reside in the plantations. About 94 per cent of workers in all the plantations prefer to reach there by foot. About 6 per cent in coffee plantations and 2 per cent in rubber plantations are provided conveyance by the plantations. About 8 per cent in coffee plantations and 5 percent workers in rubber plantations travelled to the unit in the public transport.

7.31 Table 7.29 indicates the incidence of indebtedness as also the amount of loan raised and the rate of interest thereon. At the all plantation level, 59 (i.e. 7 per cent) workers out of the 827 workers surveyed are reported to be under debt. Taking into consideration the individual plantation separately, the incidence of indebtedness is 6 percent in tea, 3 per cent in coffee and 16 per cent in rubber plantations respectively, whereas no worker is reported to be under debt in cardamom plantations. Peculiarly, out of a total amount of loan of Rs 1,63,7000 at all plantations level, workers in the state of Kerala alone in different plantations combined accounted for about 71 per cent of the total amount. Around three-fourth of the workers in debt paid interest in the range between 12 to 18 per cent whereas the remaining about one-fourth are in the interest rate category of less than 12 percent.

7.32 Table 7.30 gives distribution of women workers according to the nature of loan. About 48 per cent of loans are raised in cash, 31

percent are hereditary loans and 22 per cent loans are taken in kind.

7.33 Table 7.31 gives purpose which forced the workers to take recourse to raising loan. In tea plantations, 40 percent of workers took loan to meet the requirement of house hold consumption. In coffee plantations three-fourth of workers raised loans to meet the expenses on account of education of their children and remaining one-fourth utilized the amount for repayment of debts. One-fifth of the workers in rubber plantations took loan for marriages or childbirth, with another one-fifth owing to repayment of debts. At the all plantations level, the maximum proportion i.e. 24 percent each of workers took loans either for household consumption or for the education of their children.

7.34 Table 7.32 displays various sources from which the workers raised loan. Co-operative Credit Society is the source, which is most popular with the workers who wished to raise loan, the proportion of workers availing loan facilities from this source being the maximum i.e. 83 per cent. Another 10 per cent workers took loans from the Banks, rest of 7 per cent taken loans by the shop Keepers.

7.35 Table 7.33 presents the type of security mortgaged against loan. As majority of the loans are raised from the Co-operative Credit Societies the procedure of raising loans is less cumbersome and hassle free as surety of co-member sufficed. While 17 percent of the workers mortgaged their land, 10 per cent workers did not have to submit any sort of security.

7.36 Table 7.34 depicts the manner in which repayment of loans are made. It reveals that for all the workers individually in each plantation and at all the plantations level combined there is only one mode of repayment i.e. Cash.

## Case Study –I

Present survey's findings indicate that economic condition of the Workers, particularly women workers, in rubber plantations of Tripura is poor. About 50 per cent sampled women workers in the plantations in the state are employed either on temporary or on casual basis. At all-India level only 7 per cent women workers are temporary or casual. Housing facility is available to only 15 per cent workers in rubber plantations of Tripura whereas at all-India level this figure is more than 75 per cent. The average daily earnings of workers are also lowest in the state's plantations of rubber when compared with these plantations of other states covered during the survey. Various other benefits provided to the workers are also minimal in the state vis-à-vis other states.

Miserable conditions of plantation women workers in Tripura are also reflected in the study of Radha Rani Das, a casual worker employed by a Rubber Plantation of Tripura Forest Development Plantation Corporation. Poverty, lack of education, non-availability of regular work throughout the year and natural adversities are responsible for miseries of her life.

Radha Rani was born in Chandena village, Dhaka, Bangladesh. She is the second eldest daughter of her parents. She has two sisters and two brothers. She does not know her exact date of birth but claims to be

around 35 years old. She spent her childhood in Dhaka. Her father is a fish monger and the only bread earner in the family. He owns a small pond where he breeds fish to earn his livelihood. His earnings from this activity are not sufficient to provide even two square meals to his family throughout the year. As such he was not able to provide Radha Rani any education, though she had the desire to do so.

Radha spent her childhood at home and at the age of 15 she was married to a mason boy working in Tripura. Both of them belong to scheduled castes category. Her marriage was solemnized by her elder sister, who was married and residing in the Udaipur area of Tripura. Though her father was not in a position to properly feed the family, yet he had to shell out a dowry of Rs.6000/- for Radha's marriage. About 20 years back it was not a small amount for the poverty stricken family. This was, however, done to enable Radha to migrate to India, where job prospects and earnings are better than Bangladesh. This is how Radha migrated from Bangladesh to India. Her husband is about 5 years elder to her.

Radha Rani now stays in village Bhagber, Kulshimoura, West Tripura. Her husband does not own any agricultural land and as stated earlier, he worked as mason. After her marriage, Radha also started working as an agricultural labourer to economically support her husband. Availability of work in agriculture is not regular and very often, she has to shift from agriculture to plantation and vice versa, wherever work is available. In agriculture, working hours are lengthier and the tasks are

relatively difficult but payment of better wages compensates these hardships. To earn still better wages, Radha, however, desires to work on a regular basis preferably in a corporation owned plantation in Tripura.

Her life, however, has become more miserable. Her husband has of late been suffering from brain tumor and is not able to work. Village dispensary has no facility for free treatment of his illness. The situation has rendered Radha as the only earner in her family while her income remains intermittent, due to non-availability of work. On an average she gets work for 15 days in a month. Underemployment coupled with low wages of Rs.71 per day make it difficult for her to feed a family of 5 people. Many a times she has to arrange food for family on credit. Obviously, she does not have sufficient funds for the treatment of her husband's disease.

She has two children, a son and a daughter. Her son is 9 years old studying in 3<sup>rd</sup> class and daughter is 7 years old studying in 2<sup>nd</sup> class. Both the children are studying in a government school where education is provided free of cost. Her mother-in-law also stays with the family.

As a casual plantation worker, Radha's job is to clear forest bushes, which grow very fast in the forest land, for making way for the Rubber Tappers. Her work starts early at 8 O'clock in the morning and

continues till late in the evening. Her house is about 2 km away from the plantation, which she walks barefooted.

Being casual worker, Radha is not provided accommodation by the plantation and she is residing in a self owned Kutchi hutment with roof made of bamboo and straw. The dwelling has only one living room with a provision of electricity. Other amenities like kitchen, bathroom and latrine are not provided in the dwelling. The source of drinking water is a shared tap located outside the house. She uses firewood for cooking food. Because of her casual nature of employment, she is also not getting medical facility, leave, etc. Rice and fish is the staple food for the family. No family member consumes intoxicants.

Radha Rani is not sure about the future of her children as she is not able to provide them good education. She, however, desires that her children get regular employment, preferably in a government owned corporation.

Radha Rani has visited Bangladesh 8-9 times after marriage. Every alternative year she visits Dhaka where her parents stay with her two brothers. She does not have a passport and official permit to visit Bangladesh, yet she is able to attend most of the family functions/ceremonies held there.

## **Case Study-II**

In Plantation Industry, women workers constitute a big chunk of labour force as their softer hands are most suited for the tea leaf pruning and plucking jobs. They are mainly employed as plantation labour/plucker. The work falls in the un-skilled category and workers are required to achieve output as per the norms for fixed plucking by the tea estates so as to get the minimum wages fixed for that output. The working hours stretch from 8'o clock in the morning to 5'o clock in the evening. In addition, the women workers have to perform multifarious household activities which, inter-alia, include preparing food, taking care of children and other household chores. The life of women workers is very hard yet they are contributing to the growth of industry besides discharging the responsibilities towards their families.

This case study is of a woman worker, Vijay Rani, who is employed in a tea estate in Munnar, Kerala. The place has several tea estates and because of its scenic beauty, is becoming more and more popular with the tourists. Munnar is a hill station connected only by road and located at a distance of 140 kms. from Ernakulum.

Vijay Rani works in Kannan Devan Hills Plantation Company (P) Ltd., named after two tribals "Kannan and Devan". The legend is that these two tribals were instrumental in discovering the hill and thus in the establishment of the tea estate.

In search of work, Vijay Rani's parents migrated from Tamil Nadu to Munnar in Kerala long back. They started working as plantation labourer in this plantation and are staying in the dwelling provided by the employer. Vijay Rani was born in 1973 at Munnar.

She is the elder daughter of her parents. She studied upto fourth standard in the free school run by the estate. Thereafter, her parents

sent her to their close relatives in Tamil Nadu for further education as Tamil medium is available only up to fourth standard in the plantation school. After studying upto middle standard, she was called back by her parents to attend to the domestic work and to take care of her younger brother. This enabled her brother to study up to higher secondary and to take up work in a textile unit at Tirupur. The incident depicts the characteristic of our society, particularly rural society, where in interest of male child gets precedence over that of the female child.

Vijay Rani married in the year 1996 to a local boy working in the same plantation. Her in-laws had also migrated to Munnar from Tamil Nadu long back and settled. Her husband who is matric pass and was employed as a driver in the plantation. He was, however, dismissed from the unit about 4 years back for a case of theft. Now he is without a job and is dependent on her earnings. Initially, Vijay Rani started working in the plantation to increment her family earnings. On dismissal of her husband from service, Vijay Rani has been additionally burdened to single handedly support her family in financial terms.

Vijay Rani has two daughters and a son. The son is the youngest amongst them. Her elder daughter is 13 years old. Both of her daughters have studied up to fourth standard in the plantation school free of cost. Vijay Rani and her family are still attached to their roots in Tamil Nadu and prefer that their children study in Tamil medium. The provision of free education up to the higher secondary standard in the plantation school notwithstanding, she is willing to pay for acquiring education in Tamil medium. Accordingly, after completion of fourth standard from the local school, Vijay sent her daughters to Tamil Nadu for studying in Tamil medium. One of her daughters is studying in Chennai and the other at Coimbatore where they stay with her relatives. Her son is youngest and is studying in third standard in the

plantation school. As per the Plantations Labour Act, 1951, the estate has provided a crèche facility and her son is looked after in the crèche after school time.

Vijay desires that her children get good education and is ready to bear expenses for this. She is already paying a small amount of fees for the studies of her daughters in Tamil Nadu and feels happy about it.

Vijay is a permanent worker in the unit and enjoys all the benefits which are due to her category of workers. Her job is to pluck tea leaves and the work starts early in the day at 8'o clock. With the recent revision of wages from July, 2008 she is able to earn between Rs.2800 to Rs.3000 per month. This corroborates the finding of the survey that the average daily earnings of tea plantation workers are found to be highest in Kerala, where workers earn on an average Rs 110.8 per day as compared to the average daily earnings of Rs. 68.20 at all tea plantations level in the country. Better earnings have empowered her economically enabling her to get a Life Insurance policy and a R.D. account in the post office in her name. After the dismissal of her husband from the job, her family is, however, facing financial hardship as now she is the lone earner in the family.

The Plantations Labour Act, 1951 makes it obligatory on the employers to provide dwellings to their workers as the plantations are generally located in areas away from habitations. Vijay has also been provided dwelling free of cost by her employer which is quite near to her work place. The dwelling provided to her has two rooms, a separate kitchen, bathroom and latrine. It is electrified and the electricity is available most of the time. Her parents and in-laws are also staying in the houses provided by the same estate where she works.

Rice is the staple food of the family. Tea estates usually provide firewood to workers free of cost. For cooking Food Vijay Rani is using firewood and cooking gas.

Vijay has availed the maternity benefits thrice from the plantation when she was given 84 days leave with wages. Vijay is satisfied with the facilities provided by the estate and is happy to have free housing, medical and education facility. The wages are higher as compared to other states and she acknowledges this fact. Above facts testify the better implementation of the Plantation Labour Act's provisions in the State.

Vijay wishes that her children get good quality higher education and become independent in their life. She does not want her children to work in a plantation as the scope of career growth is limited and life remains restricted to the area. Awareness about better job opportunities available outside plantations has also inspired her to provide good education to her children.

### **Case study-III**

Sushila is employed as Plucker in Kannan Devan Hills Plantation Company (P) Ltd., owned Tea Estates in Munnar, Kerala. Munnar is famous for tea estates managed by Tata Tea and other big corporate.

This place borders the state of Tamil Nadu. Most of the plantation workers in Munnar are migrated from Tamil Nadu and have settled here permanently. However, these workers are still attached to their roots. Most of them speak Tamil and prefer to provide higher education to their children in Tamil medium. The proportion of local workers in Munnar area plantations is very low. The locals are not interested to do manual work because of high rate of literacy among them.

Sushila was born in the year 1974 at Munnar. Her parents migrated to this place from Tamil Nadu in search of better jobs and settled here permanently to work in plantations. Sushila's parents are literate. Her father is matriculate and her mother attained education up to primary level.

Sushila is the eldest child of her parents. She has two younger brothers. Sushila spent her childhood in this estate as her parents were staying in the accommodation provided by their employer. Sushila studied in the school run by the estate and completed her studies up to 7<sup>th</sup> class.

Sushila had the opportunity of getting education as it was provided free of cost by the estate. After passing 7<sup>th</sup> class, she, however, had to leave her studies to take care of her siblings. This enabled her elder brother to study up to higher secondary level in the plantation school and thus getting a job in textile unit in Tiruppur. Her younger brother studied up to 7<sup>th</sup> class and got employed in plantation. Owing to the availability of better wages and the facilities like free accommodation,

free medical and education in Kerala as compared to other states, the less educated workers prefer to work in these tea estates. On completion of her brothers' studies, Sushila got employed in the Plantation to economically support her family.

A plantation is a small world for its workers and in most of the cases their family marriages are solemnized amongst the workers/families in the same unit. Sushila also got married in the year 2000 with a plantation labour Ramesh working in the same unit. No dowry was paid for the marriage though it was an arranged marriage. Her husband also belongs to Tamil Nadu and his parents were also working in this unit and settled here. Ramesh was born and brought up in Munnar. He has also studied up to 7<sup>th</sup> class in the school run by the estate free of cost.

Now Sushila has a daughter and a son. Her daughter is elder and was born in the year 2001. The son is two years younger to the daughter. Both children are studying in the school run by the estate free of cost. Her daughter is studying in 3<sup>rd</sup> class and son is in 1<sup>st</sup> class. Crèche facility is available in the estate and after school hours her children are being looked after there.

The working hours for Sushila and her husband are from 9 am to 5 pm. Sushila and her family are residing in a dwelling provided by the employer free of cost. The dwelling has two rooms, a kitchen and separate bathroom and latrine. The house is electrified and the electricity is available most of the time.

Sushila and her husband together earn Rs 5000 per month. Besides, the employer is providing them free accommodation, medical facility and education facility for the family.

Her family's staple food comprises of rice and rice products. Her family is totally vegetarian and does not consume intoxicants. Better

economic condition has enabled Sushila to take a loan of Rs 15000 from worker's co-operative society for purchasing household goods at the rate of 12% per annum. She pays an installment of Rs. 550/- per month towards repayment of loan.

Sushila has no regrets for working in the plantation and is fully satisfied with the facilities provided by the unit. She, however, wishes that her children get proper education, even if it involves incurring expenditure and are able to pursue better paid jobs.