

*A study on the*  
**Condition of Children**  
*in the*  
**Tea Gardens**  
*of Alipurduar district, West Bengal*

June 2016



**act:onaid**









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GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL



D. O. No.- 503/WBPCR

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### Foreword

It was 28<sup>th</sup> March, 2015. We had been discussing the problems of Internal Migration in the Workshop on Promoting Rights and Entitlements of Seasonal Migrants in an Enabling Policy Framework: Organized by Goal India in collaboration with West Bengal Commission for Protection of Child Rights. Shri Surajit Neogi, one of the panellists from ActionAid suggested that the prevailing conditions of the Tea Gardens of the State of West Bengal need to be studied thoroughly to understand the plights of the children in that area.

I immediately requested ActionAid to prepare a draft in order to work out a plan to explore the possibility of undertaking a study.

After several rounds of discussion, it was decided that ActionAid will prepare a questionnaire and methodology for the study. Accordingly, they prepared it and opinions of other experts were sought thereupon.

It was decided that the West Bengal Commission for Protection of Child Rights could initiate a study with the support of ActionAid Association and other NGOs in the Tea Garden area of West Bengal.



I am happy to state that the ActionAid Association did the study in the 20 Tea Gardens of Alipurduar district in West Bengal. The study findings have rightly explained various aspects of living conditions of plantation workers and its effect on the lives of the children. It is observed that prevailing socio economic conditions have been forcing many children to undertake various risks in absence adequate support system.

I would like to thank ActionAid for their sincere effort to accomplish the study with all recommendations. I also want to put it on records that all necessary support was obtained from the concerned districts Administration and I would like to thank them for their support. I also thank to the children and people in Tea Gardens for their input and support for the study. I hope the study report will provide us a more critical and accurate picture of the children residing in the Tea Gardens. As we are all trying to ensure right based, society I hope this study will contribute/guide us to bring a smile to the children of Tea Gardens.

It may be noted here that recommendations and suggestions made in this report do not reflect the views of the Commission; it is made by the study group itself based on their observations. West Bengal Commission for Protection of Child Rights desires to forward it immediately to the Government.

Further, I feel that this work may be extended to other districts to know the conditions of the Children in distress. I request all concerned stakeholders to come forward immediately.



(Asokendu Sengupta)

Chairperson, WBCPCR



**Ref. No.:**

**Dated:**

## **Foreword & Acknowledgement**

The condition of the tea gardens in West Bengal especially in the Dooars region of Jalpaiguri and Alipurduar districts has deteriorated drastically. Many of the tea gardens got closed or running in an irregular manner resulting crisis and deprivations in the lives of tea garden workers and their families. In this situation, the worst affected are the children and women.

ActionAid has been working in closed and sick tea gardens for the last couple of years. In the last year, ActionAid had proposed to conduct an empirical study to understand the condition of children in the closed and sick tea gardens of West Bengal. This idea was shared with the honourable Chair, WBCPCR and with their collaboration this study was conducted in 20 tea gardens (closed and sick) covering 3727 respondents (parents and children) in Madarihat and Kalchini Blocks of Alipurduar District. The study findings tried to cover the various deprivations of plantation workers and its effect on the lives of the children.

I would like to thank Ms. Meghna Mukherjee and her team to conduct this study. I also acknowledge the efforts of our partner G-NESEP which is working directly with community of tea garden workers and our partners Right Track and Digambarpur Angikar for their support to take forward the study. I also extend sincere thanks to Pratichi Trust and Save the Children for their valuable comments to make this report more comprehensive and pragmatic. I also thank the children and people in tea gardens for their input and cooperation in the study.



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I hope the study report will provide us a more critical and accurate picture of the present situation of the children in tea gardens. As we all are trying to ensure a just society, hope this study will contribute to bring a smile to the children of tea gardens.

Thanking you,

 17/06/2016

Chittaranjan Mondal

Regional Manager

ActionAid Association - Kolkata Regional Office.

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## II. ABBREVIATIONS & GLOSSARY

### ABBREVIATIONS

AAA	ActionAid Association
AFHC	Adolescent Friendly Health Clinics
AHTU	Anti Human Trafficking Units
AM	Alternative Medicine
ARSH	Adolescent Reproductive & Sexual Health
ASHA	Accredited Social Health Activist
AWW	Aangan W adi Workers
BCG	Bacillus Calmette Guerin
BDO	Block Development Officer
BEMOC	Basic Emergency Obstetric Care Centre
BPHC	Block Primary Health Centre
BPL	Below Poverty Line
BSY	Balika Samridhi Yojana
CD	Community Development
CDPO	Child Development Project Officer
CEMOC	Comprehensive Emergency Obstetric Care Services
CID	Criminal Investigation Department
CLPRA	Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986

DCPU	District Child Protection Units
DCWD	Department of Child & Women Development
DLHS	District Level Household and Facility Survey
DPT	Diphtheria, Pertussis and Tetanus
EBB	Educationally Backward Block
ECCE	Early Childhood Care And Education
FAWLOI	Financial Assistance to the Workers in Locked Out Industrial Units
FGD	Focus Group Discussions
GNESEP	Godhulibazar North East Society for Empowerment of the People
GOWB	Government of West Bengal
GP	Gram Panchayat
GPHQ	Gram Panchayet Head Quarter
IAY	Indira Awas Yojona
ICDS	Integrated Child Development Scheme
ITI	Industrial Training Institutes
ITPA	Immoral Traffic Prevention Act
JSY	Janani Suraksha Yojana
KGBV	Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya
KSJ	Kishori Shakti Yojana
MDM	Mid Day Meal
MGNREGA	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee
NABARD	National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development
NBCC	New Born Care Corner
NCLP	National Child Labour Project
NCPCR	National Commission for Protection of Child Rights
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OMC	Operating Management Committee
PCMA	Prohibition of Child Marriage Act 2006
PHE	Public Health Engineering
PSE	Pre-School Education
PTR	Pupil Teacher Ratio
PWSS	Piped Water Supply Scheme
RCH	Reproductive and Child Health
RIDF	Rural Infrastructure Development Fund
RMP	Registered Medical Practitioner
RTE	Right To Education
SAHAI	State Action against Hunger and Inequality
SC	Scheduled Caste
SCPCR	State Commission for Protection of Child Rights



SDH	Sub Divisional Hospital
SGH	State General Hospital
SHG	Self Help Group
SJPU	Special Juvenile Police Unit
SMC	School Management Committee
SNCU	Sick Newborn Care Unit
SNSU	Sick Newborn Stabilization Unit
SPO	Special Police Officer
ST	Scheduled Tribe
TE	Tea Estate
TG	Tea Garden
UIP	Universal Immunization Programme
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
VEC	Village Education Committee
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WBCPCR	West Bengal Commission for Protection of Child Rights

### GLOSSARY

<i>abas</i>	house
<i>arkathi</i>	agent
<i>anganwadi</i>	ICDS centre
<i>lakri</i>	wood
<i>dar</i>	fear
<i>kalipuja</i>	worship of goddess kali
<i>line</i>	row houses for labours in the tea gardens
<i>babus</i>	clerks
<i>pucca</i>	concrete
<i>pani</i>	water
<i>khichdi</i>	a cooked food made up of rice and pulses
<i>sajal dhara</i>	governmental scheme to provide drinking water to village households
<i>thali</i>	plate
<i>pradhan</i>	elected head of village council (panchayat)
<i>upa-pradhan</i>	elected deputy head of village council (panchayat)
<i>sardars</i>	head of a section of workers, generally belonging to a particular ethnic group
<i>kam</i>	job
<i>kam-dhanda</i>	search for job
<i>ghar</i>	home
<i>kothi</i>	house
<i>shohor</i>	city/town
<i>dhabas</i>	road side hotels
<i>fauli</i>	FAWLOI scheme

#### IV. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Low wage (lower than the minimum wage), deprival of kind components of the wage and above all closure and sickness of the tea estates of Dooars in North Bengal have created a situation of uncertainty and insecurity among the plantation labours. Geographic and cultural seclusion without alternative sources of livelihood has made the condition more acute. Prolonged governmental neglect has added to it. Although there are media coverage of death of hundreds of tea garden workers due to malnutrition since the beginning of this century, little is talked about the state of affairs in which the children in this distressed "enclave economy" are growing.
- Poverty essentially threatens every child right: survival, development, participation and protection. Children in the area under study are deprived of adequate nutrition, safe drinking water, decent sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education, information and protection (from trafficking, exploitation, abuse etc).
- To assess and to have first-hand experience, this study has been taken up in the 20 tea estates of Madarihat & Kalchini community development blocks of Alipurduar districts including closed, sick and distressed and running gardens. Data collected from 3727 respondents (children 18 years ), analyzed and interpreted. Some youth members are also included to understand the nature of trafficking and migration.
- Both Madarihat & Kalchini blocks are backward in almost in every aspect with poor communication, economy, facilities and amenities, literacy and education, means of livelihood (other than plantation work) etc.
- In both Madarihat & Kalchini blocks, additional AWCs have been sanctioned and established. There are 565 AWCs in Madarihat and 776 centres in the Kalchini block. General presence of children in centres has increased in last few years primarily due to closure and sickness of the tea gardens and virtual collapse of the crèche system in the tea gardens. But it is reported that most of the AWWs concentrate only on the task of providing supplementary food (khichdi) to the children with little attempt to give them basic lessons, but reluctant on other services like nutrition & health education, immunization, health check-up and referral services.
- Crèche system in the gardens of the study area has virtually collapsed.
- Although MDM has been introduced in almost all the government run schools, most of the schools have adverse PTR and poor infrastructures not in conformity of RTE.
- There is no SMC in any school under the study area. Respondents are not even aware of it. Same is the case for VEC.
- Both Madarihat & Kalchini blocks are educationally backward with poor rate of literacy. Nepali population is better placed than the tribes. There are few schools having Nepali as medium of instruction, but the number is less than the requirement.
- Recreation facility for the children is extremely poor all over the area either in the schools or in the community.
- 333 cases of drop outs have been detected during the survey primarily due to poor financial condition of the family, engagement as child labour, distance of the school and poor transport.
- Dropout is high among the STs. (due to lack of family support, poverty, first generation school goers, language problem, distance, transportation problem, etc) and among girls ( due to insecurity, distance, poor transport, family work etc)
- Lack of medical facility. Dispensaries & hospitals of the gardens in the study area are virtually non-functioning. Transport of patient to PHC or state general hospital at Birpara is a problem to the tea garden workers.
- It has been observed that the immunization is high among children of literate mother than children

of illiterate mother. Same observation is also for higher income households when compared with low income ones.

- The level of nutrition of the children in these closed and sick tea gardens is alarmingly bad. Protein intake is very negligible.
- At the time of closure & suspension of work (as in the case of tea gardens under Duncan Group), there is hardly any regular alternative job opportunity. Irregular jobs like daily labour, transport labour, stone collection & grinding at the nearby river bed, collecting & selling firewood, daily worker under road contractors, job under MGNREGA etc. are not sufficient to provide livelihoods to these thousands of destitute workers. Therefore, migration to distant places like Delhi, Bangalore, Kerala, Kashmir, even to cities like Dubai in the Middle-East countries in search of any kind of job is regularly reported.
- Not only the adults are migrating, children of varying age group are also leaving the gardens. In this survey, 45 cases of migration of children starting from the age of 7 years have been detected. Like the adults, teenagers are migrating to faraway places as well as to Sikkim, Bhutan & Siliguri.
- On average, elder migrant above 20 years of age send 2500 rupees to home through bank or acquaintances. For migrant under 20 years this is 1100 rupees and in a number of cases they are barely managing to survive even there making it difficult for them to send money home to their starving families.
- Some families have no connection with the migrant family members. They don't send money or make a call. Family members are doubtful whether they are 'missing'. This survey detected 40 missing cases below age of 20 years in Madarihat & Kalchini Blocks.
- In cases, members of the same family migrated to different geographic location and have no connection with each other. This is even true for entire family. This has also prompted trafficking.
- Closed & sick tea gardens of Dooars of North Bengal is now a hot bed of trafficking. Agents, both local (mainly Nepalese and few Adivasis) as well as outsiders are playing havoc in the disguise of so called "placement agencies" to allure to provide the girls and boys with better job and life in the top cities of the country. Apart from men, women also work as agent and notably, the agents are not unknown.
- Poverty, unemployment, lack of awareness, promise of better job/comfortable life elsewhere, broken family, poor wage, large family, illiteracy, false promise, drop out, earn more money, greedy parents, peer group influence, domestic violence, attraction of silver screen and entertainment medias, no action by police or local authorities /protest, lack of facilities, alcoholism etc. are causes of trafficking in the area.
- For being influential, almost no protest is made by affected families against these agents. Very few complaints are lodged in the police station. Even if it is lodged, it is done much after the real time of trafficking causing loss of vital clues and cases are weakly lodged as "missing diary", generally not under ITPA.
- Traditional modes like child marriage, fake marriage, abduction or kidnapping are hardly used to traffic a girl (few cases of child marriage have been found in this survey, but those are not related trafficking).
- As long as the boy or the girl sends money to home, parents disclose the facts. It surfaces when it stops. In no cases, parents/guardians check the authenticity & whereabouts of the placement agency or inform the local authority.
- In this survey 16 trafficked survivors have been detected who have been rescued mostly with the help of NGOs. To mainstream them is a big challenge.
- Madarihat & Kalchini blocks and even the district has practically no mechanism for the protection of children.



## V. INTRODUCTION

The undulating lush valleys of tea estates in Dooars and Terai regions of West Bengal are turning into valleys of unemployment, underemployment, drop-out, out-migration, missing, unsafe migration, trafficking, food inadequacy, severe malnourishment and sudden deaths. Tea, clearly, is no longer the cup of cheers. Pathetic tales are the daily staple in the closed, sick or abandoned tea gardens – the deprived, dispossessed and starved workers cling on to their lives and homes waiting for some miracle to renovate their lives.

Caught in an enclave socio-economic condition for three or four generations and being completely dependent on tea industry, the plantation labours migrated mostly from Chotonagpur, Santhal Parganas & Nepal and without having no linkage with ancestral land are suffering from abject poverty continuously. The situation has worsened since last two decades in particular with regular closure and sickening of tea estates.

A number of studies and reports depicted this gloomy state of affairs of the tea garden workers – low wages, deprivation of fringe benefits, like subsidized ration, housing, medical facility, education of children, fuel for cooking, drinking water, sanitation & drainage, shoes, umbrella, blanket etc. and social security like provident fund, gratuity, insurance, pension etc. But, there is almost no such comprehensive study on the condition of children of the closed and sick tea estates in Dooars of North Bengal. Very little is available about hard realities through which offspring of these garden workers are passing the days of insecurity.

The present study is primarily focused on condition of the children of the tea garden workers in Dooars of North Bengal. The study has tried to understand and portray their deprivation from care and protection as children, lack of access to education, health & opportunities, their vulnerability and day to day struggle for existence. Although there are news and reports of death of workers in the tea gardens due to starvation and few about trafficking, the issues related children get rarely any place in the media or at the time of policy making. No agencies – the garden management, government, trade union or media – have ever given emphasis to this important issue. And that generates the rationale of this study.

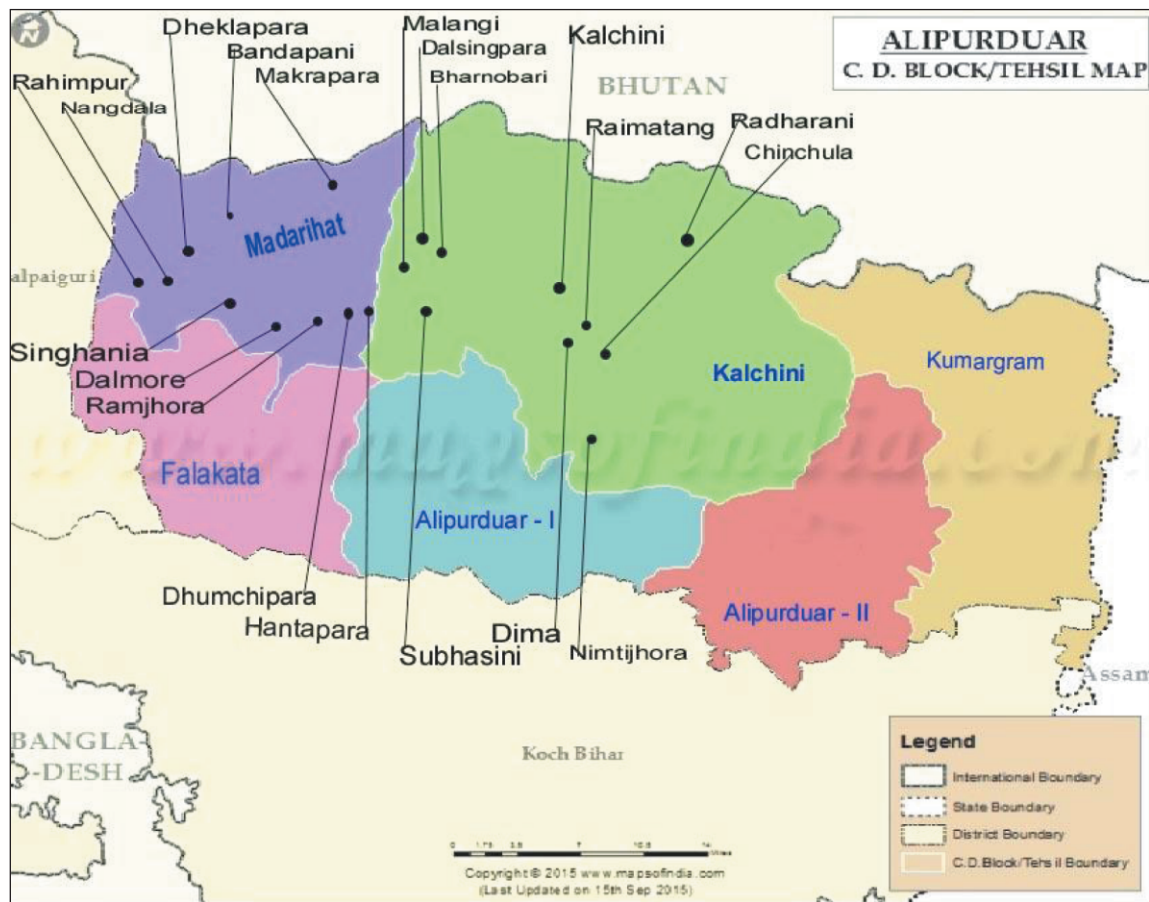
This report has 4 broad divisions –

1. **Field Area of Study**, methodology, description of the area with facts and figures derived from the Census, 2011.
2. The second division includes status of housing, drinking water, electricity, nutrition, crèche, ICDS, schools, MDM, drop-out, recreation and health care system as provided by the tea garden management and the governmental agencies.
3. Trafficking, missing, migration of children and child marriage in the area under study along with assessment of the prevailing system of mechanism of protection of the vulnerable children constitute this division.
4. Finally, there are recommendations to overcome this adverse situation of vulnerability.

## DIVISION – I

### VI. FIELD AREA OF STUDY

Two Community Development (CD) blocks, namely, Madarihat-Birpara & Kalchini of the newly formed Alipurduar District of West Bengal have been chosen for study. Alipurduar has as many as 61 tea estates spanning over hundreds of hectares of land of the district. For the purpose of our study, 20 tea gardens including closed, sick and running ones have been selected, shown in the table below—



**MAP 1: LOCATION OF TEA ESTATES UNDER STUDY [NOT TO SCALE]**

TABLE 1: TEA ESTATES UNDER STUDY WITH BLOCK, YEAR OF ESTABLISHMENT & AREA							
	<i>Tea Estate</i>	<i>CD Block</i>	<i>Year of Establishment</i>	<i>Gross Area (in Hectare)</i>	<i>Grant Area (in Hectare)</i>	<i>Plantation Area (in Hectare)</i>	<i>Present Status<sup>i</sup></i>
1	Beech	Kalchini	1893	934.66	934.66	758.63	Running
2	Bharnobari	Madarihat-Birpara & Kalchini	1930	867.12	867.12	726.35	Sick; closed on 29/12/2005 and reopened on 28/4/2008
3	Bundapani	Madarihat-Birpara	1897	1269.72	506.2	506.2	Closed since 2013
4	Chinchula	Kalchini	NA	NA	NA	NA	Sick; closed between 20/11/2003 to 25/6/2004, closed on 30/11/2005
5	Dalmore	Kalchini	NA	NA	NA	NA	Distressed
6	Dalsingpara	Kalchini	NA	1504.16	1504.16	873	Distressed
7	Dheklapara	Madarihat-Birpara	NA	NA	NA	NA	Closed since 22 August 2002
8	Dima	Kalchini	1897	956.3	1040.79	1230.09	Running
9	Dumchipara	Madarihat-Birpara	1896	956.3	1040.79	1230.09	Work under suspension, under BIFR [Duncan]
10	Hantapara	Madarihat-Birpara	1890	742.82	695.79	655	Work under suspension, under BFIR [Duncan]
11	Malangi	Madarihat-Birpara & Kalchini	NA	NA	NA	NA	Running
12	Mujnai	Madarihat-Birpara	1889	699.99	699.99	369.99	Sick; closed between 14/4/2004 to 11/10/2004
13	Nangdala	Kalchini Birpara	1919	870.07	870.07	468.75	Running
14	Nimtijhora	Kalchini	1912	575.45	575.45	352.6	Running
15	Radharani	Kalchini	1911	383.88	383.88	149.25	Sick; closed on 18/3/2009 and reopened on 23/3/2011
16	Rahimpur	Madarihat-Birpara	1928	315.63	315.63	135.71	Running
17	Raimatang	Kalchini Birpara	NA	634.31	634.31	535.27	Sick; closed between 1/10/2003 to 3/3/2004 ; closed on 28/2/2005 & reopened on 13/8/2010
18	Ramjhora	Madarihat-Birpara & Kalchini	1908	604.46	604.46	452.75	Sick; closed on 10/8/2002 & reopened
19	Shinghanian	Kalchini	1918	348.03	348.03	201.76	Distressed
20	Subhasini	Kalchini	1934	526.18	526.18	371.84	Running

<sup>i</sup> Source: compilation of field information, status report on relief measures in closed tea gardens as on 31.9.2007 by the Office of the District Magistrate, Jalpaiguri.



## VII. METHODOLOGY

The study has been conducted by way of collecting primary data using closed ended structured questionnaire, open ended questionnaire, focus group discussions (FGD), in depth interviews, meeting with different stake holders & officials, photographic documentation and audio recording.

For carrying out survey using closed ended structured questionnaire, 13 surveyors were selected. Almost all of them were from tea gardens – young educated ladies whose parents are workers of the garden itself. This was an advantage to us to go deep inside subject. Godhulibazar North East Society for Empowerment of the people [GNESEP], a NGO and local partner organization of Action Aid Association, Kolkata Regional Office provided 3 coordinators. Final questionnaire was developed by a day long discussion with the surveyors and coordinators after reconnaissance survey. Data collected from 3727 respondents of 20 tea estates have tabulated and analyzed using simple statistical tools.

The qualitative evaluation included conducting extensive personal in-depth interviews with teachers, AWWs, persons associated with health care, PDS staff, SHG, Panchayet Pradhan and members, District Child Protection Officers, CWC members and Trade union leaders on issues of education, health, child marriage, trafficking and the overall condition of life at these gardens to develop and strengthen our understanding of the system. As there was no CWC in the area during the study period and District Child Protection Unit was new in Alipurduar district, no such interaction could take place.

At the same time, a thorough search of secondary literatures including government & non-governmental reports, newspaper articles, books etc. have been accessed.

TABLE 2: DISTRIBUTION OF STUDY SAMPLE – GARDEN WISE & CASTE WISE					
<i>Tea Estate</i>	<i>General</i>	<i>OBC</i>	<i>SC</i>	<i>ST</i>	<i>Total</i>
Beech	14	24	27	92	157
Bharnobari	10	1	13	210	234
Bundapani	40	42	4	205	291
Chinchula	7	110	27	34	178
Dalmore	74	78	54	166	372
Dalsingpara	10	16	37	27	90
Dheklapara	8	0	26	146	180
Dima	9	17	20	101	147
Dumchipara	35	0	17	188	240
Hantapara	55	3	65	68	191
Malangi	24	12	43	215	294
Mujnai	20	13	24	195	252
Nangdala	0	0	2	64	66
Nimtijhora	0	0	0	47	47
Radharani	38	7	16	110	171
Rahimpur	30	39	7	47	123
Raimatang	11	43	10	45	109
Ramjhora	51	13	13	113	190
Shinghania	11	13	6	59	89
Subhasini	47	15	9	235	306
<b>Total</b>	<b>494</b>	<b>446</b>	<b>420</b>	<b>2367</b>	<b>3727</b>
Percentage	13%	12%	11%	64%	100%

## VIII. ABOUT AREA UNDER STUDY

The district of Alipurduar flanking in the foothill of the Himalayas is surrounded by Bhutan in the north, Assam in the east, Coochbehar in the south and Jalpaiguri in the west. The district is primarily rural with more than 80% of rural population. The percentage of Scheduled Tribe population is 18.87 % and the percentage of Scheduled Caste population is 36.71 % and the total SC / ST population is 55.58%. Relatively sizeable population resides in tea gardens and forest villages. A major portion of the land in the district is occupied by these tea gardens and a sizable population lives in tea garden areas. There is a chequered pattern of land distribution in the region where tea gardens, human settlements and forests are intermeshed with each other. The main economy of this district depends directly or indirectly on this industry.

TABLE 3: GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT MADARIHAT-BIRPARA & KALCHINI CD BLOCKS		
	<i>Madarihat-Birpara</i>	<i>Kalchini</i>
<i>Location</i>	26°42'00"N89°16'59"E	26°41'34"N 89°28'18"E
<i>Area</i>	380.96 km <sup>2</sup>	820.63 km <sup>2</sup>
<i>Total population as per Census, 2011</i>	2,02,026	2,98,458
<i>Rural population</i>	1,88,265	2,01,808
<i>Urban population</i>	13,761	86,650
<i>Male population</i>	1,01,536	1,54,829
<i>Female population</i>	1,00,490	1,43,629
<i>Scheduled Castes</i>	28,813	30,157
<i>Scheduled Tribes</i>	78,314	1,20,282
<i>Total number of literates</i>	1,20,391	1,81,946
<i>Male literates</i>	67,717	106,237
<i>Female literates</i>	52,674	75,709
<i>Gram Panchayats (GP)</i>	Bandapani, <u>Birpara</u> I, Birpara II, Hantapara, Khairbari, Lankapara, Madarihat, Rangali Bazna, Sishujhumra and <u>Totopara</u> [10]	Chuapara, Dalsingpara, Garopara, Jaygaon I, Jaygaon II, Kalchini, Latabari, Malangi, Mendabari, Rajabhatkhawa and Satali (11)
<i>Transport</i>	NH 31C passes through the block. Madarihat & Hasimara are the very nearby railway stations while New Jalpaiguri Railway Station is major railway station (93 KM away).	NH 31C passes through the block. Kalchini is on the New Jalpaiguri-Alipurduar-Samuktala Road Line.

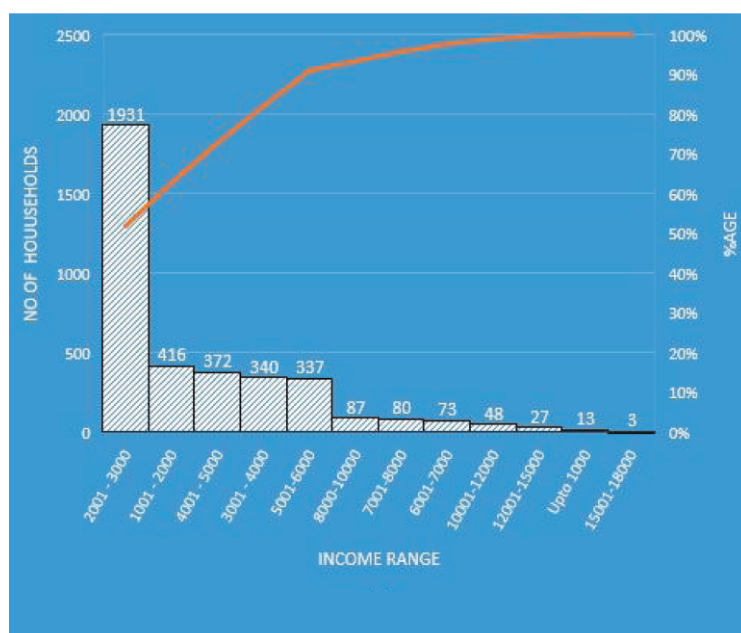
## **IX. FEW IMPORTANT FACTS OF THE TWO BLOCKS DERIVED FROM CENCUS, 2011**

- Only 49.6% households in Madarihat & 55.6 in Kalchini have permanent type of houses.
- Roof of most of the houses are of G.I. / Metal / Asbestos sheets (86.3 % in Madarihat & 81% in Kalchini). Only 3.8 % and 3.5% houses have concrete roof in Madarihat & Kalchini respectively. Few houses are having grass/ thatch/ bamboo/ Wood/ Mud Plastic/ Polythene roofs (7.2 % in Madarihat & 5.5% in Kalchini)
- Wall of 38.6 % houses in Madarihat & 29.4% houses in Kalchini are made of grass/ thatch/ bamboo. Only 36.5 % houses in Madarihat & 42.2% houses have burnt brick wall.
- In Madarihat 43.3 % houses have floor made by mud. In Kalchini the percentage is 31.9.
- 42.3 % households in Madarihat & 41.2% households in Kalchini live in single room. 37.2% (Madarihat) & 37.9% (Kalchini) have two rooms.
- 29.1 % & 30.4% households in Madarihat & Kalchini have to collect drinking water from sources far away from home.
- Only 12.8% & 25.3% households in Madarihat & Kalchini have access to tap water from treated source.
- 52.9 % & 60.5% households in Madarihat & Kalchini have electricity.
- Households having latrine facility within the premises in Madarihat & Kalchini is 48.4% & 50.8% respectively. 49% households in Madarihat & 46.1% in Kalchini have to do open defecation. Still night soil removed by human in 221 households in rural Madarihat and the figure is 141 in case of urban Kalchini.
- Number of households having no bathing facility within the premises is 71.1% in Madarihat & 52% in Kalchini.
- 84.6% households in Madarihat & 76% in Kalchini use firewood for cooking.
- 32.6 % households in Madarihat & 29.1% in Kalchini have no assets like Radio/
- Transistor, television, computer/laptop, telephone/mobile, bicycle, scooter/moped/ motorcycle, car etc.
- Average rate of literacy in area under the study is 61.68% as per Census, 2011 ( rate of literacy of male is 71.51% while that of female is 52.08%. The rate in both cases is far below the state and district average. Rahimpur Tea registered the lowest rate of 49.37% (male-54.56% and female-44.56%).
- As per the Census, 2011, The area under study comprising of 20 tea gardens has a population of 1,25,573 in 27,238 households (male - 62,380 & female - 63,193) and the 0-6 years population is 14,721 (male- 7540 & female- 7181)

Thus, from the above facts and figures as observed in the Census, 2011, it is evident the both the two are backward in most of the parameters. Most of the inhabitants are deprived of proper housing, drinking water, electricity, latrine, drainage, bathing facility. Asset possession is extremely low. Literacy rate is far below the national, state and even district averages. Child sex ratio is exceptionally good.

## DIVISION – II

Children have the right to an adequate standard of living, health care, education and services, and to play and recreation. These include a balanced diet, a warm bed to sleep in, and access to schooling and health care. PLA, 1951 & WBPLR, 1956 stipulated the provisions of housing, subsidized food ration, cooking fuel, drinking water, medical facilities, crèches, and schools for children of the workers of the tea gardens. It is not that the tea garden managements generously give all these facilities free to the workers and their family members. The daily wage of a tea garden worker is Rs 122.50 only which is much below the minimum wage. Actually, the wage here has two components – cash & kind component (fringe benefits). In reality, workers of sick and distressed tea gardens are being deprived of almost all the fringe benefits and the management of these gardens is passing all these responsibilities to the government in spite of low wages of the workers. In this section, we will look into the state of affairs of these important provisions which are directly linked with the upbringing of children in the area. From the following two tables, the income range and family size of the respondents can be deciphered



**GRAPH 1:**  
INCOME RANGE  
AMONG  
HOUSEHOLDS

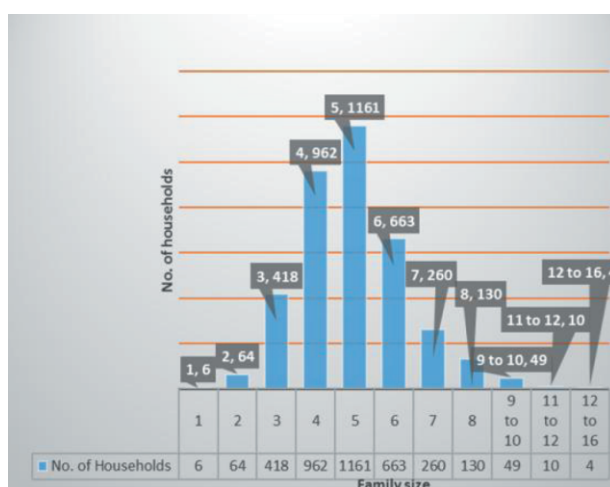
TABLE 4: INCOME RANGE  
AMONG HOUSEHOLDS

Income Range	No. of Households	%age
Upto 1000	13	0.35
1001 - 2000	416	11.16
2001 - 3000	1931	51.81
3001 - 4000	340	9.12
4001 - 5000	372	9.98
5001 - 6000	337	9.04
6001 - 7000	73	1.96
7001 - 8000	80	2.15
8001 - 10000	87	2.33
10001 - 12000	48	1.29
12001 - 15000	27	0.72
15001 - 18000	3	0.08
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3727</b>	<b>100.00</b>



TABLE 5: FAMILY SIZE  
OF HOUSEHOLDS

Family Size	No. of Households	%age
1	6	0.16
2	64	1.72
3	418	11.22
4	962	25.81
5	1161	31.15
6	663	17.79
7	260	6.98
8	130	3.49
9 - 10	49	1.31
11 - 12	10	0.27
12 - 16	4	0.11
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3727</b>	<b>100.00</b>



GRAPH 2: FAMILY SIZE OF HOUSEHOLDS

## X. HOUSING

It is interesting to note that the habitations in the tea estates are grouped in different clusters, commonly known as 'line'. There are generally 10 to 20 lines (Babu Line, Nepali Line, Munda Line, Chetri Line, Chaibasa Line, Station Line etc.) in a garden. Most of the lines are composed of same ethnic group; some have mixed population of Adivasi & Nepali. Babu lines are for the *babus* (clerks, supervisors etc.) and have better housing facilities than those for the labours. Managerial section of the garden is provided with exclusive facilities. Within the lines or bustees, there are privately built houses as also there are few "Indra Abas" (houses built by Indira Awas Yojana, a scheme for rural housing for the homeless). Benefits from the Indira Awas Yojana (IAY) have started trickling in but one needs to be really well connected to avail it. This too has allowed plantation owners to evade provision of housing as per law. The cost of provision of housing has been more or less shifted to government.

As per PLA, workers of the garden are to be provided with proper housing and there will be regular repairing of the same. Only permanent workers can have housing. Casual workers have no such entitlement. This guaranteed supply of labours through generations. As we travelled from one garden to another, the condition of the houses found to be in bad shape, it has been reported that there has been no repairing for last several years. In the closed & sick gardens, there are a number of dilapidated houses abandoned the workers. In Bundopani & Dheklapara, workers of labour line shifted to the vacant houses of the clerks with the help of the trade union. Good number houses are semi-*pucca* type. Number of rooms in houses varies from 1 to 4 in general. Some are devoid of kitchen, latrine and bathroom. The status is more or similar with the Census, 2011 (see annexure) figures. Closed drainage is almost absent in all the labour lines.



*A HOUSE IN THE CHAIBASA LINE OF BUNDAPANI TEA ESTATE*



*INSIDE OF A HOME OF A TEA GARDEN WORKER*





*AN ABANDONED HOUSE IN DHEKLAPARA TEA ESTATE*



*INSIDE OF A HOME OF A TEA GARDEN WORKER*



TABLE 6: STATUS OF HOUSING IN THE TEA GARDENS UNDER STUDY							
<i>Tea Garden</i>	<i>Pucca House</i>	<i>Semi-pucca House</i>	<i>Other Houses</i>	<i>Govt. Scheme House</i>	<i>Housing total</i>	<i>Total workmen</i>	<i>%age of housing</i>
Beech	1687	0	115	0	1802	2393	75
Bharnobari	1130	143	234	0	1507	2145	70
Bundapani	302	153	252	0	707	1215	58
Chinchula	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Dalmore	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Dheklapara	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Dima	401	1069	0	0	1470	2017	73
Dumchipara	1111	0	48	0	1159	1918	60
Hantapara	990	0	119	0	1109	1898	58
Malangi	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Mujnai .	454	6	395	0	855	1095	78
Nangdala	661	0	190	0	851	1250	68
Nimtijhora	488	124	35	0	647	970	67
Radharani	160	40	121	0	321	424	76
Rahimpur	11	11	210	5	237	240	99
Raimatang	252	602	0	0	854	1261	68
Ramjhora	155	545	146	0	846	962	88
Shinghania	400	25	0	0	425	733	58
Subhasini	625	0	75	0	700	910	77

Nearly half of households in Madarihat & Kalchini blocks have electricity. In the tea gardens under study, some of the households have separate meters while rests have cluster meters. On an average they have to pay around 300-400 rupees monthly for electricity. Crisis becomes acute when the garden is closed and management has huge unpaid bill of electricity, the connection is cut off for obvious reasons. Supply of water suffers most.





## XI. DRINKING WATER - A PERENNIAL PROBLEM IN THE TEA GARDENS

The photographs in the next page are of the water pipe line from a mountain stream in Bhutan to Bundopani. There are 2 pipe lines— one is 'garden line' and other is 'GP line'. Former one was made by the tea garden company while the second one by the Gram Panchayat (GP). We could not have this information had we not met Sumit Subba, a Nepali young person of 28 years of age, at a small all-in-one shop (mainly keep groceries) at the village road of the chaibasa labour line in Bundapani tea estate. While discussing about the availability of water there, he suddenly asked “can you go with me 2 kilometers; I will show how we get water.” We agreed. It was nearly a 2 kilometer shortcut walk along the pipelines through jungle to the border of Bhutan, water from a mountain stream of Bhutan hill are being stored and pipes are connected to it. The pipes are



*WATER PIPELINES FROM ADJACENT HILL OF BHUTAN TO BUNDAPANI TEA ESTATE*



regularly damaged by elephant and broken boulders; there is no provision of repairing either by the Panchayet or by the garden. As there is no other source, with the damage villages sometimes are without water for consecutive days. In rainy season, pipes are clogged by dust and pebbles.

Sumit Subba and his friends usually take the responsibility to find out the fault and repair the cracked pipes with rubber tube cuts, clothes etc— *“do tin din bad pani banana parta hay”* (have to repair water pipe lines every two to three days). Garden being closed, like others he has no job in the garden. He finds at most 15-16 days' job as mason with daily wages of about 400 rupees. He is unmarried. He plans to migrate to Bangalore or Kerala. He is worried who will maintain the pipes.

Safe drinking water is a very big crisis in the closed & sick gardens. Politicians, activists and media are not as vocal on this issue as they are on the food crisis. One will find little boys and girls are carrying water in big polythene jars hanging on both sides of cycle from far away sources. Sometimes, the comparatively well off families buy water from them with paltry sum. Next to provision of food, collection of water is the most important issue in the daily life of these plantation workers. Crisis exists in the running gardens too. Very few are lucky to get piped water from treated source. As the drinking water supply in the gardens is mostly electricity dependent, when the garden is closed or abandoned and electricity is cut off, the workers receive no drinking water. Labour lines are far away from any other habitation and therefore any other source of drinking water, workers and their families have in some cases forced to depend on river water that is unfit for drinking purposes. These streams are polluted because of dolomite-waste from the cement factories in Bhutan. The same source of water is also being used by the workers to cremate their dead. In Hantapara, the chief source of drinking water was a tube well that was installed 100 years ago. Workers have been repairing it of their own. It breaks down at times and workers are forced to use water from a mountain stream.

The workers there have been contributing money on their own and have been arranging for water from the stream through a pump. They also get water supply 1 hour a day as and when the generator is switched on, provided they have diesel to run the same. Otherwise they have to walk almost 3 km to Jamtala *Basti* to fetch drinking water. In Dumchipara tea estate, water supply is available only for 2 hours a day which is again managed by the Management itself by running a generator twice a day. In Mujnai, tube wells installed are insufficient in number. Repairs for breakdown of government installed points are not taken by the government. PHE water lines have been installed in Ramjhora tea garden, but water supply is available for insufficient period of time, in dribbles for 4 hours in upper lines, instead of 6 hours. Lines run dry when there is no electricity. In Dheklapara, government installed tube wells are insufficient compared to population. Government does not repair if there is a breakdown. While interviewing Sri Buddha Lama, Pradhan of Birpara II GP, he categorically stated that there is no such provision to maintain steady water supply by the panchayat. When tube wells do not work, they have to go on cycles a long way to get water. Here, OMC manages to run the pump installed in the otherwise dilapidated factory premise for few hours a day.



COLLECTION & TRANSPORTATION OF DRINKING WATER IN MADARIHAT



Children are hugely affected by scarcity of drinking water. Firstly, in most of the households they have to take the responsibility to fetch water from distant places by cycle and everyday they have to spent considerable time for water only. Whenever there is problem in getting water midday meal (MDM) may be discontinued, '*khichdi*' in ICDS centres may not be cooked. Moreover, consumption

of unsafe water from untreated sources regularly causes dysentery, diarrhea, jaundice and other water borne diseases. This puts extra burden on the family for treatment.

A common sight was that of scores of cycles laden with 20 to 75 litre containers winding their way to the nearest reliable water point almost five kilometres from the villages. Children of poor families fetch water from distant sources for comparatively well off households buy and manage to get some pocket money.

In the following table situation of provision in the gardens of our study area is shown in the table –

TABLE 7: PROVISION OF DRINKING WATER IN THE TEA GARDENS UNDER STUDY <sup>i</sup>											
Name of the Tea Garden	Source	Last Fitness Certificate obtained on	"Sajal Dhara"	Methods regarding supply of drinking Water							
				Deep Tube wells		Hand Tube wells		Ring Wells		Pipeline	Total Houses covered
				No.	Houses covered	No.	Houses covered	No.	Houses covered		
Beech	DEEP TUBE WELL	22.11.12	NO	3	1687	0	0	0	0	yes	1687
Bharnobari	DEEP TUBE WELL,HAND TUBE WELL	22.8.12	NO	3	1162	25	345	0	0	yes	1507
Bundapani	DEEP TUBE WELL	2009	NO	2	355	12	357	0	0	no	712
Dima	DEEP TUBE WELL	NA	NO	5	1150	37	185	0	0	yes	1335
Dumchipara	DEEP TUBE	03.09.2011	NO	2	1111	0	0	56	227	no	1338
Hantapara	DEEP TUBE WELL, BHUTAN PIPELINE	09.12.2011	NO	4	635	0	0	0	0	yes	635
Makrapara	PHE,DEEP TUBEWELL	26.04.2012	NO	4	400	0	0	0	0	no	400
Mujnai	TUBE WELL, PIPE LINE	1995	NO	0	0	0	0	0	0	yes	205
Nangdala	DEEP TUBEWELL, PIPE LINE	15.07.2011	NO	3	851	7	140	0	0	yes	991
Nimtijhora	DEEP TUBE WELL	APPLIED	NO	1	647	0	0	0	0	no	647
Radharani	DEEP TUBE WELL	Did not obtained	Yes [2010]	2	321	2	0	2	0	yes	321
Rahimpur	DEEP TUBEWELL, HAND PUMP	17.07.2012	NO	1	70	25	162	1	8	yes	240
Raimatang	DEEP TUBE WELL	Did not obtained	NO	2	853	0	0	0	0	yes	853
Ramjhora	OWN SUBMERSEBLE, PHE	Did not obtained	NO	3	846	0	0	0	0	no	846
Singahania	DEEP TUBEWELL	24.07.2012	Yes [2012]	2	425	4	-	0	0	yes	425
Subhasani	DEEP TUBE WELL	22.06.2012	NO	1	641	35	140	4	16	yes	797

<sup>i</sup> Source & note: Synopsis on Survey of Tea Gardens conducted by Regional Labour Offices under the jurisdiction of Joint Labour Commissioner, North Bengal Zone [survey was conducted in the fourth quarter of 2012]. In this survey no information is available for Chinchula, Dalmore, Dheklapara & Malangi tea estates. The facilities as shown to available in Bundapani Tea Estate is totally unavailable at present due to closure of the garden. Dheklapara & Dalmore tea estates were closed at the time survey by the Labour Department.

To have another view, we have taken the task to compile data from Census, 2011 which depicts the same picture (for detail, please see the table in the annexure). Only 14.59% households in Madarihat & 23.46% in Kalchini CD blocks get tap water from treated source. Nearly 4000 households have no other alternatives but to collect drinking water from springs, river, canal, tank, and pond or from lake.

Then we accessed data from Public Health Engineering Department of the Government of West Bengal. This department is in charge of providing drinking water in the state, particularly in the rural areas. PHE data indicates that only 52.33% of rural population covered under PWSS (Piped water supply scheme) and even after completion of ongoing projects, coverage will be enhanced to 63.98%. Total number of functional tube wells for the entire district is 12,870. Thus, a vast part of the district remains uncovered by PWSS and whatever exists are in bad condition.



## XII. CRÈCHE

Section 12 of the PLA stipulates that the employer must provide and maintain suitable rooms for children where the number of workers is more than fifty or the number of children of women workers is twenty or more and crèches are to be maintained in clean, safe and sanitary conditions and are to be run by a woman trained in the care of children and infants as per the law. Some gardens, like Raimatang have no crèche at all. Creches of Mujnai, Radharani, Rahimpur, Ramjhora, Shinghanian and Subhasini have no latrine facility.

TABLE 8: STATUS OF CRECHE IN THE TEA GARDENS UNDER STUDY

<i>Tea Garden</i>	<i>No. of Crèche</i>	<i>Washing arrangement exists or not?</i>	<i>Latrine exists or not</i>	<i>Milk etc. supplied or not?</i>	<i>No. of attendants</i>	<i>Whether dress provided?</i>	<i>Drinking water available?</i>
Beech	2	yes	yes	yes	6	yes	yes
Bharnobari	2	yes	yes	yes	6	yes	yes
Bundapani*	1	yes	yes	yes	2	yes	yes
Chinchula	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Dalmore	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Dalsingpara	3	yes	yes	yes	1	yes	yes
Dheklapara	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Dima	1	Yes	yes	yes	2	yes	yes
Dumchipara	3	Yes	yes	yes	2	yes	yes
Hantapara	6	Yes	yes	yes	6	yes	yes
Malangi	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Mujnai .	2	yes	no	yes	6	yes	yes
Nangdala	2	Yes	yes	yes	4	no	yes
Nimtijhora	1	Yes	yes	yes	4	yes	yes
Radharani	2	no	no	yes	3	yes	yes
Rahimpur	1	No	no	yes	2	Yes	yes
Raimatang	2	no	no	yes	3	no	yes
Ramjhora	0	no	no	no	0	no	no
Shinghanian	1	yes	no	yes	2	yes	yes
Subhasini	1	no	no	yes	2	no	yes

\* At present the crèche and other facilities are not available in Bundapani tea estate due to closure.



### XIII. ICDS & ECCE

The importance of ICDS centre has further increased with the virtual collapsing of the system of crèches of the tea estates. Although the duration of keeping babies in the crèches of the gardens is compatible with the working hour and having provision of milk for the babies and even having mobile crèches in few gardens, considering the wholesome approach of development of 0-6 years' children, ICDS with few modifications as per local need is always a better option.



*OUTSIDE & INSIDE OF A NEWLY BUILT ICDS CENTRE IN DHEKLAPARA TEA ESTATE*

During the last 3 years many new ICDS centres have been constructed in both the blocks (detail shown in the table below). Cost of construction was Rs 6,17,591 for each centre. It is important to note that the Government of West Bengal is considering seeking direct loan from Rural Infrastructure Development Fund (RIDF), a wing of NABARD to set up more ICDS centres in the stressed tea gardens of the districts of Alipurduar and Jalpaiguri. We have visited such new centres during this study. These are obviously better than the old ones having separate provision for kitchen and store room and better TLM. The Department of Child Development, The Department of Women Development & Social Welfare(DCW, WD & SD) has no such budgetary provision for arrangement of water. For this, they have to depend on PHE Department to take up the installation of tube-well (@Rs. 66,069 each). There are instances where new buildings for ICDS have been constructed without any provision of drinking water. Even tube wells adjacent to centres are damaged, DCW, WD & SD cannot take any measure.





TABLE 9: PATTERN OF THE EXISTING ICDS PROJECTS AND THE ADDITIONAL ICDS PROJECTS IN MADARIHAT & KALCHINI<sup>i</sup>

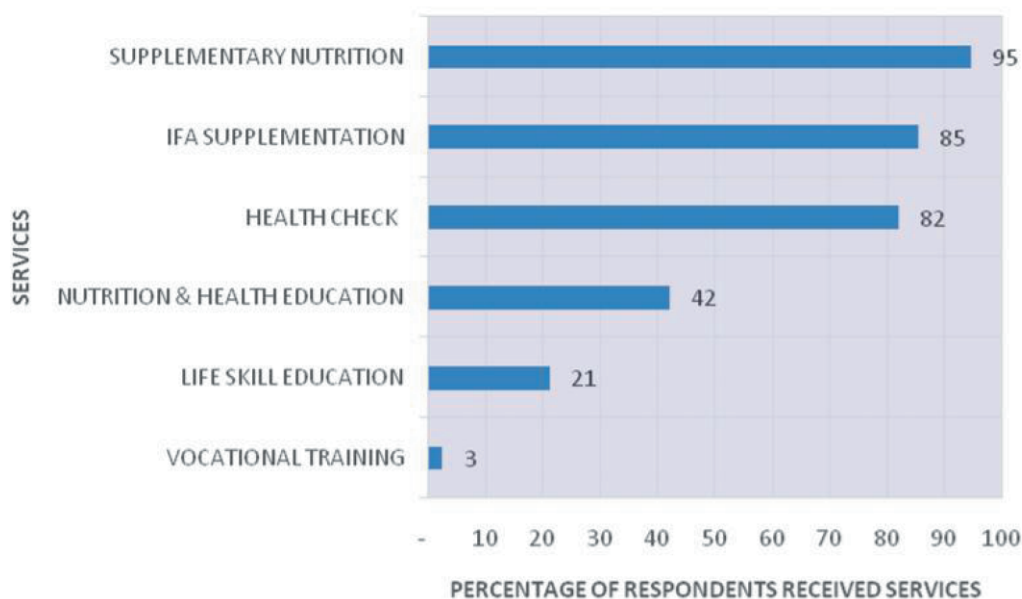
STATUS OF ICDS IN KALCHINI & MADARIHAT									
Block		Total population	No. of GPs	No. of Anganwadi Centres		CDPO		Supervisor	
Madarihat		2,02,026	10	565		1		23	
Kalchini		2,98,458	11	776		1		37	
MADARIHAT ICDS PROJECT					MADARIHAT ADDITIONAL ICDS PROJECT				
	Name of the GP/Municipality	Total population	No. of AWCs allotted	Project HQ.		Name of the GP/Municipality	Total population	No. of AWCs allotted	Project HQ.
1	Totopara Ballalguri	4917	22	Jateswar	6	Birapara-I	28140	74	Birpara
2	Hantapata	18889	55		7	Birpara 2	13330	49	
3	Madarihat	21419	64		8	Sishujhumra	27888	84	
4	Khayebari	19074	61		9	Bandapani	11092	39	
5	Rangalibazna	22996	62		10	Lankapara	17696	55	
	Sub-total	87295	264			Sub-total	98146	301	
KALCHINI ICDS PROJECT					KALCHINI-I ADDITIONAL ICDS PROJECT				
1	Kalchini	28479	99	Kalchini	5	Jaigaon-I	21292	54	Jaigaon
2	Chuapara	25503	86		6	Jaigaon-II	32113	51	
3	Garopara	29071	90		7	Dalsingpara	16017	42	
4	Rajabhat Khawa	11456	54			Sub-total	69422	147	
	Sub-total	94509	94329			KALCHINI-II ADDITIONAL ICDS PROJECT			
					8	Malangi	33373	92	Hamiltonganj
					9	Satali	18428	77	
					10	Mendabari	12619	55	
					11	Latabari	23969	76	
						Sub-total	98389	300	

<sup>i</sup> Source: G.O. No. 462(2) -SW dated 2.2.2012

It is reported that the general presence of children in centres have increased in last few years primarily due to closure and sickness of the tea gardens. Some respondents pointed out that parents living in far away labour lines from the ICDS centre are less interested to send their babies there. There is need to open more centres in these two blocks. They also said that most of the AWWs concentrate only on the task of providing supplementary food (*khichdi*) to the children with little attempt to give them basic lessons, but reluctant on other services like nutrition & health education, immunization, health check-up and referral services.

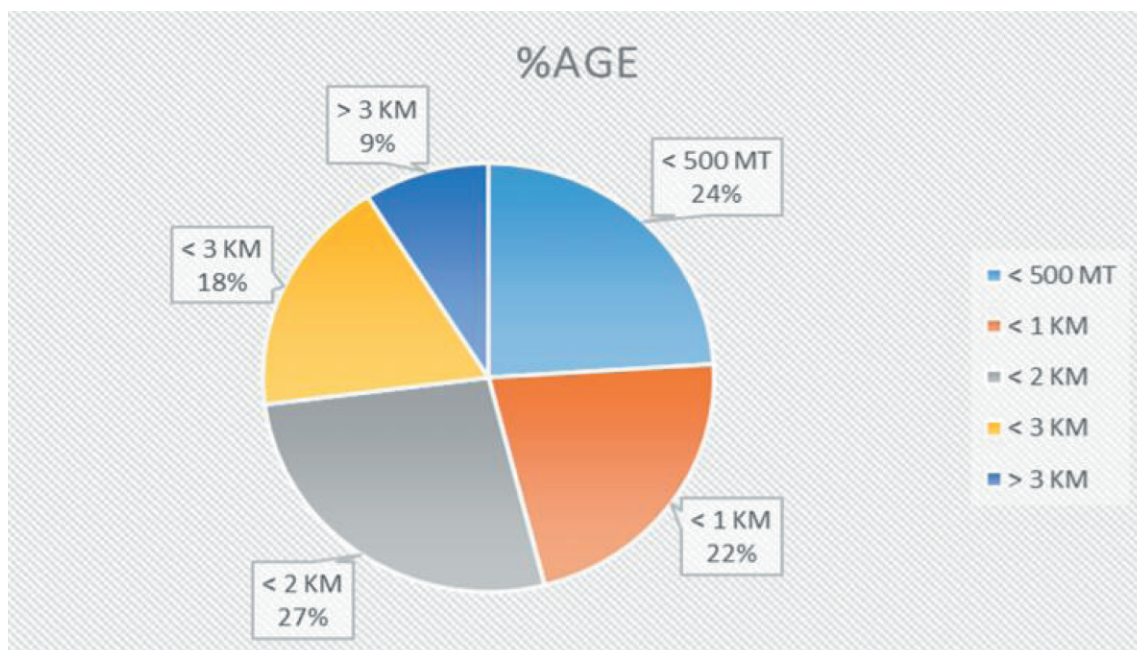
TABLE 10: ICDS SERVICES RECEIVED IN ICDS CENTRES IN THE STUDY AREA

	Supplementary nutrition	IFA supplementation	Health check up	Nutrition and health education	Life skill education	Vocational training
Yes	1547	1048	457	167	37	0
No	2180	2679	3270	3560	3690	3727
<b>Total</b>	<b>3727</b>	<b>3727</b>	<b>3727</b>	<b>3727</b>	<b>3727</b>	<b>3727</b>



GRAPH 3: ICDS SERVICES RECEIVED IN ICDS CENTRES IN THE STUDY AREA

Although the number of AWCs has increased considerably with additional projects in Madarihat and Kalchini blocks in recent years, the requirement is much more than the present ones. Distance of the centre from the households is an important factor for not sending children to the centres. In the tea estates, habitations have historically been developed and divided into several lines. The lines are not always closely situated. Therefore, due to distance, parents of the children of faraway lines from the ICDS centre lacks interest to send their children to the centre.



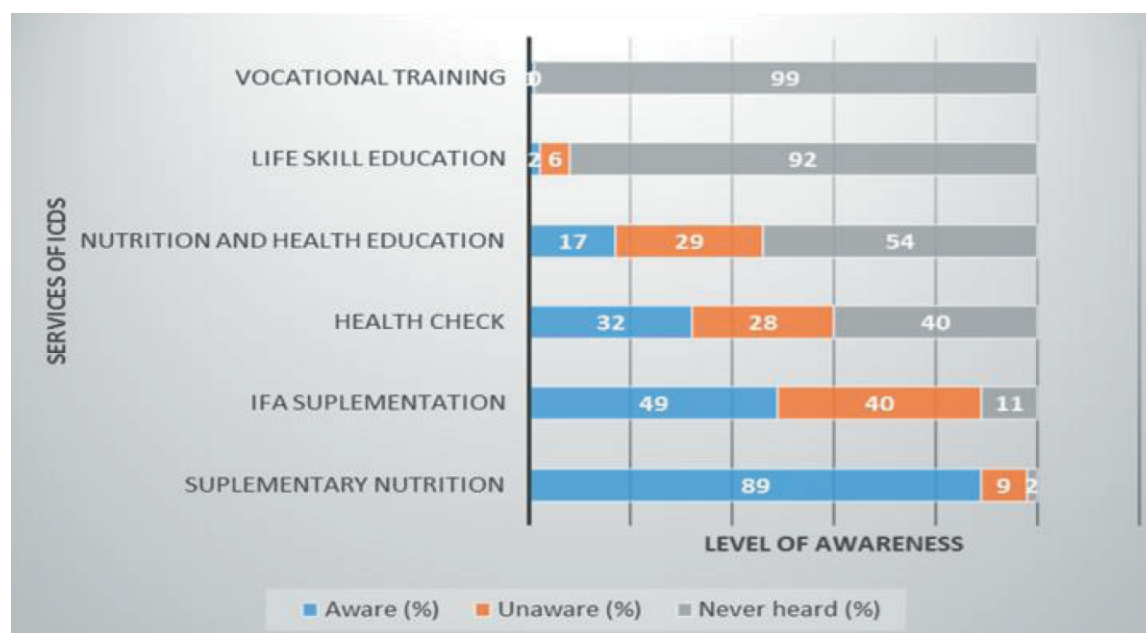
GRAPH 4: DISTANCE OF ICDS CENTRES FROM HOUSEHOLDS OF THE RESPONDENTS

Timing of the centres is also not congenial to the working mothers. It is found on interview with the AWWs of 6 centres that most of the children in their centres are from nearby labour lines. It is also alleged by some working mothers that AWC runs for only 3 to 4 hours a day whereas they used to get crèche facility all through the working hours.

The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act 2009 guarantees the right to free and compulsory education for 6-14 years old children (Article 21A; 86<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment). Although Article 45 of the Constitution urges states to provide ECCE for all children until they complete the age of six years, ECCE is not recognized as a compulsory provision by RTE. The 12th Five Year Plan acknowledges the importance of ECCE and improving school preparedness. The Government of India approved the National Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Policy in 2013. Under the restructured Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) scheme, an Anganwadi Centre(AWC) is to be repositioned as a “vibrant ECD centre” to become the first village output for health, nutrition and early learning with adequate infrastructure and human resources for ensuring care to early childhood care and development. As per data provided by the Government of India only 31.02% children in AWC get pre-school education (PSE). While interviewing AWWs as well as in FGDs it is observed that AWWs as well as the stake holders are not at all aware of the above.

**TABLE 11: LEVEL OF AWARENESS OF THE SERVICES OF ICDS CENTRE IN THE STUDY AREA**

<b>Services</b>	<b>Aware (%)</b>	<b>Unaware (%)</b>	<b>Never heard (%)</b>
<i>Supplementary nutrition</i>	89	9	2
<i>IFA supplementation</i>	49	40	11
<i>Health check-up</i>	32	28	40
<i>Nutrition and health education</i>	17	29	54
<i>Life skill education</i>	2	6	92
<i>Vocational training</i>	1	0	99



**GRAPH 5: LEVEL OF AWARENESS OF THE SERVICES OF ICDS CENTRE IN THE STUDY AREA**

## XIV. STATUS OF EDUCATION

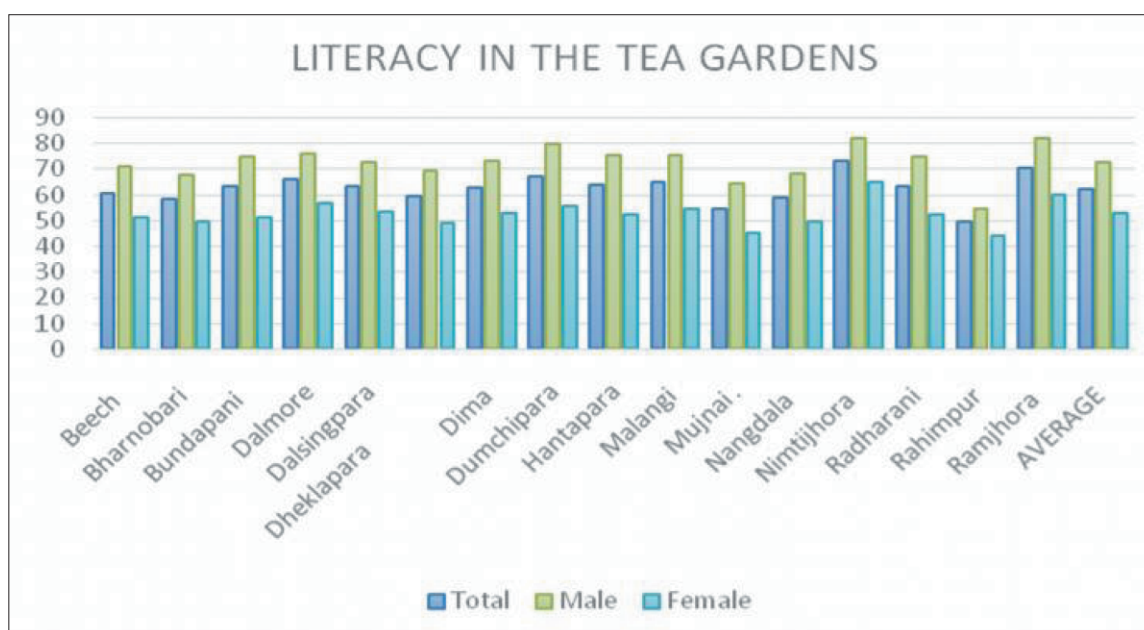
The two blocks, namely, Madarihat & Kalchini are in the map of “educationally backward block” (EBB) of the country. The situation is worse in the gardens under study. Continuing neglect of the garden owners and the government created such an atmosphere where education after primary level remains a distant dream. This will be evident if we have look into the **level of literacy** of the area—



A VIEW OF DHEKLAPARA TEA GARDEN PRIMARY SCHOOL

TABLE 12: PERCENTAGE OF LITERACY IN T.E. UNDER THE AREA OF STUDY				
	<i>Tea Estate</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
1	Beech	60.72	71	51.06
2	Bharnobari	58.5	67.8	49.72
3	Bundapani	63.24	74.79	51.33
4	Chinchula	NA	NA	NA
5	Dalmore	66.19	76.15	56.43
6	Dalsingpara	63.01	72.68	53.31
7	Dheklapara	59.24	69.12	49.29
8	Dima	62.68	73.09	52.75
9	Dumchipara	67.16	79.51	55.81
10	Hantapara	63.75	75.33	52.49
12	Malangi	73.22	82.11	64.8
13	Mujnai .	54.74	64.14	44.98
14	Nangdala	58.71	68.02	49.51
15	Nimtijhora	73.22	82.11	648
16	Radharani	63.3	74.55	52.48
17	Rahimpur	49.37	54.56	44.16
18	Raimatang	NA	NA	NA
19	Ramjhora	70.53	81.68	59.95
20	Shinghanian	NA	NA	NA
21	Subhasini	NA	NA	NA
	<b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>61.68</b>	<b>71.51</b>	<b>52.08</b>





GRAPH 6: LITERACY IN THE TEA GARDENS UNDER STUDY

Literacy Rate of the erstwhile undivided Jalpaiguri district itself was 73.3, lower than the State average of 76.3 as per Census, 2011. The rate further lowers in Madarihat & Kalchini blocks and it is again poorer in the gardens under study. Female literacy rate is abysmally low. While surveying, it is observed that considerable number of parents are illiterate, especially among the Adivasis. Thus children of good number of families are **first generation learners**. Even if parents are literate, the level is too low to provide their children educational support in home. Nepalese, on the contrary, are slightly better placed.

PLA stipulates that in every plantation where the children of the workers between the ages of six and twelve exceed the number twenty-five, the employer is under obligation to provide educational facilities as may be specified by the State Government [Section 14 of PLA, 1951]. The garden management is duty bound to set up schools upto upper primary level and to provide transport facility to the children of the workers of the garden to access school upto secondary level. Of the gardens under study, Ramjhora and Mujnai tea estates have no schools run by the garden management. Beech, Bharnobari, Bundapani, Dalsingpara, Dheklapara, Nangdala, Rahimpur, Raimatang, Ramjhora & Subhasini tea estates have no provision for transport of the children to schools. Sometimes, the ambulance is used for transporting to students. Rarely, proper school bus is provided.



TABLE 13: PROVISION OF SCHOOLS & TRANSPORT FACILITY OF THE STUDENT IN THE GARDEN UNDER STUDY <sup>i</sup>		
<i>Tea Estate</i>	<i>Provision for school exists?</i>	<i>Vehicle provided for school-going children?</i>
Beech	Yes	no
Bharnobari	Yes	no
Bundapani	Yes	no
Dalsingpara	Yes	no
Dheklapara	Yes	no
Dima	Yes	yes
Dumchipara	Yes	yes
Hantapara	Yes	yes
Mujnai	No	yes
Nangdala	Yes	no
Nimtijhora	Yes	yes
Radharani	Yes	yes
Rahimpur	Yes	no
Raimatang	Yes	no
Ramjhora	No	no
Shinghanian	Yes	no
Subhasini	Yes	yes

<sup>i</sup> Source: Synopsis on Survey of Tea Gardens conducted by Regional Labour Offices under the jurisdiction of Joint Labour Commissioner, North Bengal Zone [survey was conducted in the fourth quarter of 2012]

That the scope of education after primary level is far below the standard is evident from the following table. There are only a **few higher secondary schools** to cater the need. During survey we came across 3 girls who are at present studying in class 10 at **Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas** (KGBV) which are residential formal schools till class 12 run by the government for scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, other backward classes and minorities having provisions for daily food, stipend @ Rs. 100 per head per month, educational stationeries, medical care system etc. But local people, particularly the tribal, are not much aware of this.

TABLE 14: POSITION OF SCHOOLS IN MADARIHAT & KALCHINI BLOCKS		
<i>BLOCK</i>	<i>MADARIHAT</i>	<i>KALCHINI</i>
PRIMARY	45	69
UPPER PRIMARY	7	3
UPPER PRIMARY WITH SECONDARY/HIGHER SECONDARY	7	13
TOTAL	59	85

As tea gardens are located in remote places and have poor public communication, the location of the school is a crucial factor. Tea companies have almost shed their responsibility to provide transport for education. Even if it is provided, pupils are transported in trailers used to carry tea leaves rather than in proper buses. Students use cycle and sometimes, they have go by riding on the roof and even sitting on the window glass of local Tata Sumo car used for carrying passengers. Girls too have no different option. As the students pay less, they cannot sit inside. Moreover, road condition is worse even in fair weather. Almost every respondent complained about the means of



*CYCLING – A MODE OF TRANSPORT OF SCHOOL GOING CHILDREN*



*STUDENTS GOING TO SCHOOLS BY RIDING ON THE ROOF OF VEHICLE*

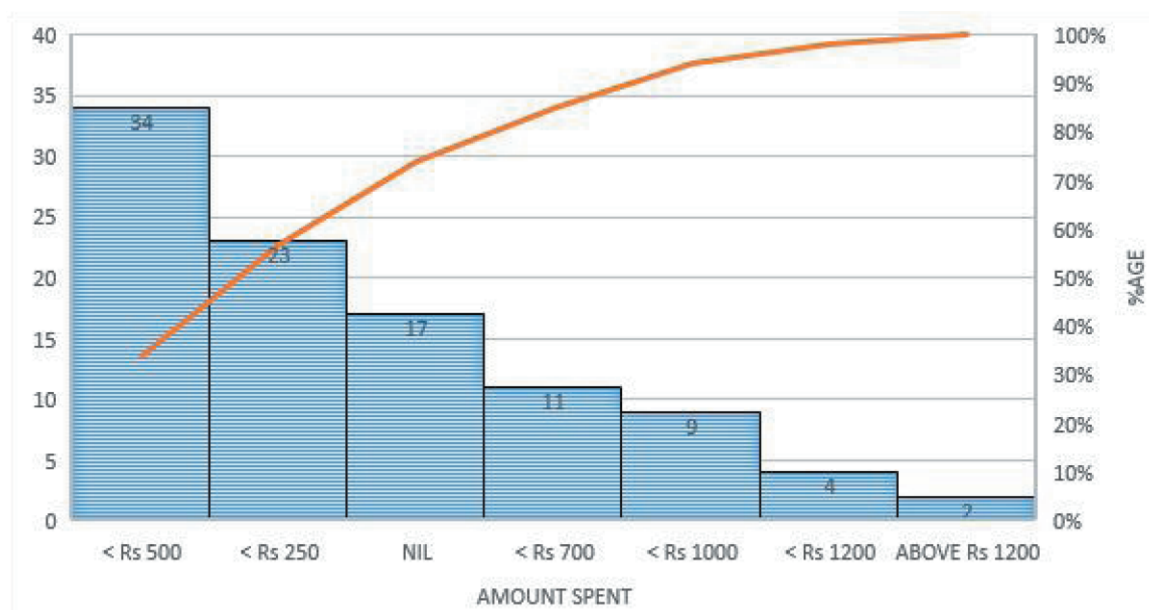


transport. As the Hantapara tea estate has not been functioning for long, bushes have grown in the rural roads connecting labour lines to nearby school. It was said by girls of tea estate that few days before we have started this survey there was an unreported rape near Hantapara tea estate. Being afraid, girls were not using those lonely roads and stopped going schools. During rainy season, absenteeism increases abruptly mainly due to transport difficulty. There are cases where due to lack of transport and sizeable cost of private transport, parents stopped sending children to schools. "I cannot send my children to school as it is too costly for us now," said a former plantation worker of Dheklapara Tea Estate who now breaks stones in the riverbed along with her two young sons. "Earlier, when the tea garden was running, our kids would board the company truck and go to school. But now you have to pay 20 rupees to and fro for the same. How can people who earn 80/90 rupees a day afford to spend 20 rupees on sending one single kid to school?"

The tea gardens workers comprise primarily of Adivasis & Nepalese. Although there are few Nepali medium Primary schools, the medium of instruction in most of the schools is either Bengali or Hindi. Adivasis have no choice to study in their mother language. In West Bengal there are efforts to develop Alchiki scripts for the Santhals in particular but the government is silent about the languages spoken by the other tribal groups. Now in many blocks of Dooars the tribal groups have forgotten their mother tongues and have picked up Sadri. Thus, the Mundas can no longer speak Mundari nor the Oraons speak Kurukh in the tea gardens of Dooars. In a span of three or four generations the tribes had to make this cultural adaptation in their new ethnically heterogeneous social set up. As a consequence, when it comes to education their children have to study in Bengali, Hindi or Nepali medium whatever choice is available in the garden school. Denied of their primary education in their mother tongue they mostly select Hindi or Bengali medium schools to be able to communicate. This apart, insufficiency of Hindi medium schools, particularly above primary level, in these two blocks are also a deterrent to education.

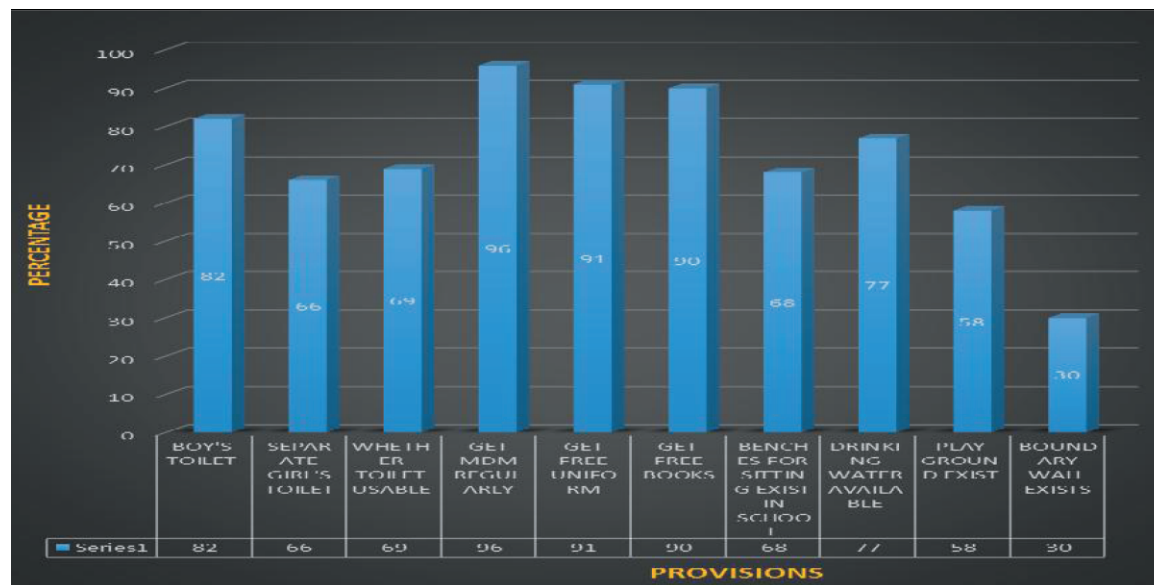
In course of survey and interviews, it has been complained that in many cases of admission in government sponsored schools, in spite of having right to free education, money ranging from Rs 250 to 1700 has been collected in the name of development fee and other charges with or without issuing any receipt, thereof. Several protests by the guardians, parents or local NGOs failed to reach any durable solution





GRAPH 7: AMOUNT SPENT AT THE TIME OF ADMISSION

**Free books and uniforms** are reported to be distributed by almost all schools. But a good number of schools, both primary and upper primary, have **less number of teachers than the sanctioned strength** or requirement (low PTR). We have visited one such upper primary school at Dheklapara where there is only one teacher for the entire school who teaches three classes— V, VI & VII at a time.



GRAPH 8: STATUS OF PROVISIONS IN SCHOOLS IN THE AREA OF STUDY





*DIFFERENT SCENES OF MID DAY MEAL IN A SCHOOL IN MADARIHAT*

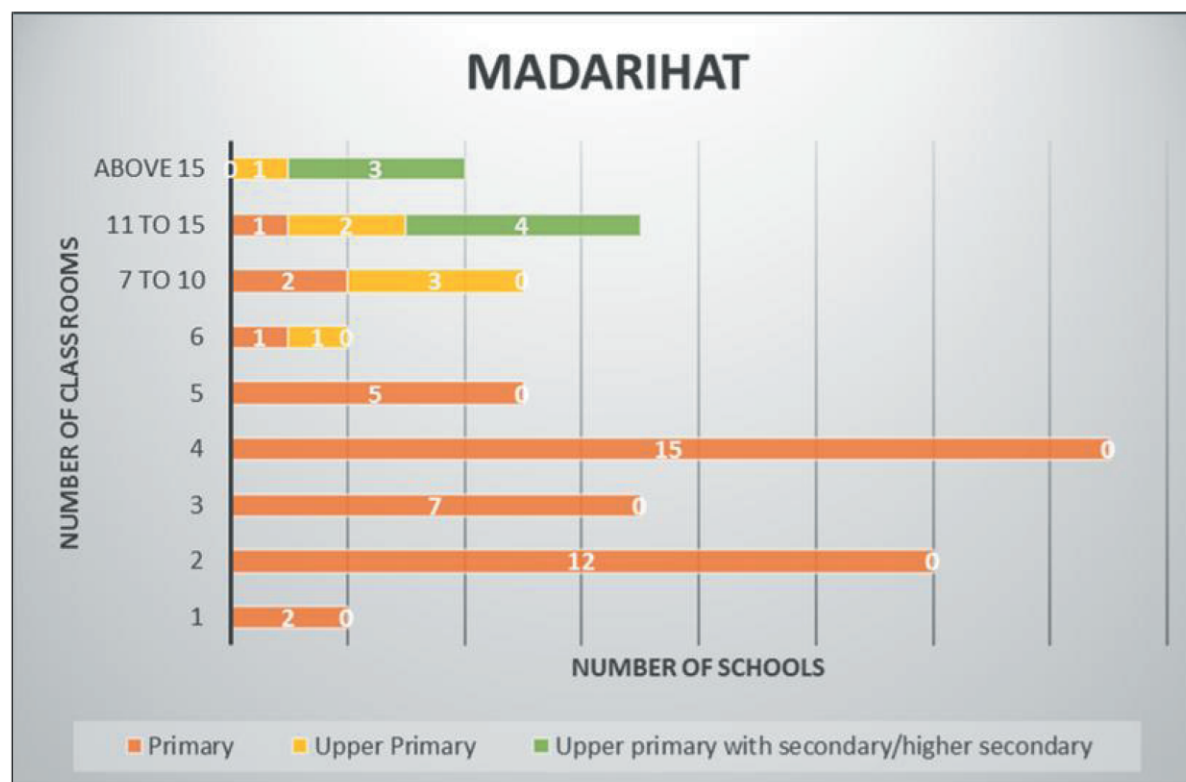
In Kalchini & Madarihat blocks, 14 primary schools have only one **room**, 29 have 2 rooms. Many schools have **no separate toilet for boys & girls**, in some cases, toilets are not usable. Most of the schools have **no boundary walls and library**. Absence of **drinking water** in the schools is another problem faced by the 23% students. 42% reported absence of playground.



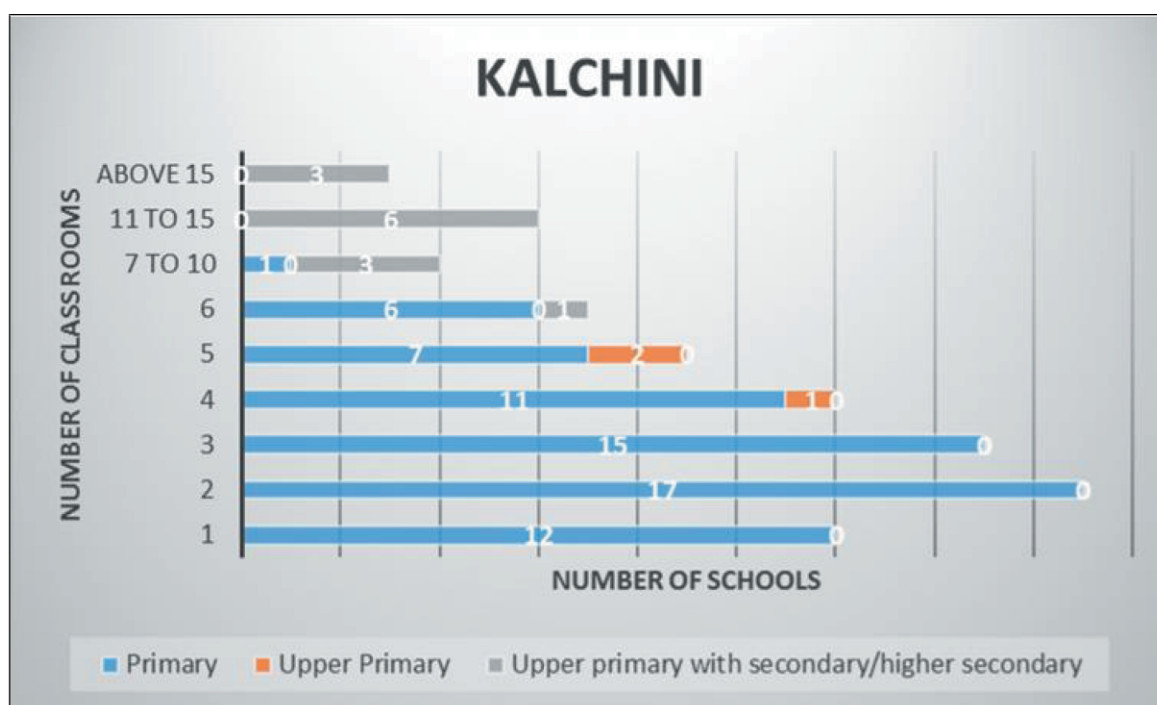


TABLE 15: NUMBER OF CLASS ROOM IN SCHOOLS OF MADARIHAT & KALCHINI <sup>i</sup>									
No of Class Room	MARARIHAT				KALCHINI				Total
	Primary	Upper Primary	Upper primary with secondary/higher secondary	Sub-Total of Maadarihath	Primary	Upper Primary	Upper primary with secondary/higher secondary	Sub-Total of Kalchini	
1	2	0	0	2	12	0	0	12	14
2	12	0	0	12	17	0	0	17	29
3	7	0	0	7	15	0	0	15	22
4	15	0	0	15	11	1	0	12	27
5	5	0	0	5	7	2	0	9	14
6	1	1	0	2	6	0	1	7	9
7-10	2	3	0	5	1	0	3	4	9
11-15	1	2	4	7	0	0	6	6	13
above 15	0	1	3	4	0	0	3	3	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>144</b>

<sup>i</sup> Source: compiled from data available in [ssa.nic.in/infraprovisiondoc/govt-schools...](http://ssa.nic.in/infraprovisiondoc/govt-schools...)



GRAPH 9: NUMBER OF CLASS ROOMS IN SCHOOLS OF MADARIHAT



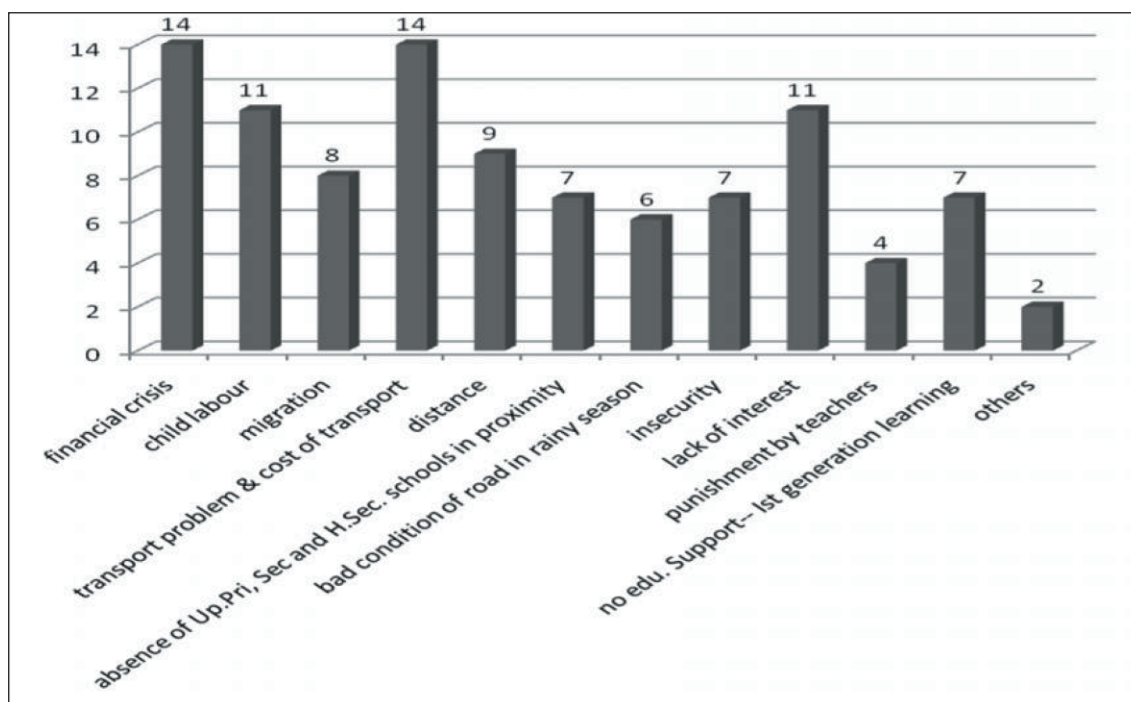
GRAPH 10: NUMBER OF CLASS ROOMS IN SCHOOLS OF KALCHINI

It is reported that the present situation of **Midday Meal (MDM)** is far better than before; almost it is provided in all government aided schools in Kalchini & Madarihat. In fact, MDM is treated as a source of sustenance of the children of the families of the closed and sick tea gardens. Of late, government has taken measures to maintain steady supply of ration to the schools. Survey, FGD with students and visit at the time of MDM, the following facts have been observed—

- Several schools have no facility of drinking water inside or adjacent to the school [Dhumchipara T.G Primary School, Madarihat]
- Roof of the kitchen-cum-store of some schools became damaged and was not fit for use in the rainy season [L W C Primary School 1 Madarihat]
- Broken or damaged utensils of the schools/ central kitchen have not been replaced [Purba Khairbari B.F.P 1 Madarihat]
- Most of the schools have no separate dining room or provision for serving & eating MDM to the student
- Some schools do not have even verandah where students can have MDM
- Children were mostly not found to wash hands before taking MDM
- No school in the under study provided *thali* (plate) for eating MDM, they have to bring it and water bottle
- Very few students have been found to wash *thali* before eating
- Some schools reported problem in storage of ration when supply is more than the capacity.
- Many students complained that either dal or vegetable is served with rice, not the both.
- No display of necessary information of MDM (allocation of rice, allocation of conversion cost, menu and number of children present) was seen in the area under study.

In this study, we have taken into account of the **participation of community in education** in the area. Being placed in remote areas and educationally backward, the illiterate or lowly literate parents and guardians are found to be completely unaware of the RTE, PSE, VEC, SMC etc. All the respondents answered negatively. It is reported that there is no functional VEC in Madarihahat and Kalchini and no SMCs have been formed. No child register is maintained anywhere. Local Panchayet Members or *Pradhan/Upa-Pradhan* are concerned only about availability of MDM. The trade union leaders when interviewed failed to mention any activity in this regard. Even the NGOs working in these areas have no visible stake in the matter of participation of community in education.

Although, introduction of MDM in almost all the government aided schools has acted as an catalyst to regular attendance of students in school, there are reports of **absenteeism** in the area under study. On average 23% of the respondents do not attend school regularly and seasonally. This is primarily due to acute financial crisis of the families of sick & closed tea gardens, child labour, migration to distant places for providing financial support to the family, transport problem & cost of transport, distance, absence of upper primary, secondary and higher secondary schools in proximity, bad condition of road in rainy season, insecurity (particularly of the girl children), lack of interest in education, punishment by the teachers, no educational support from parents of first generation learning families etc.



GRAPH 11: CAUSES OF ABSENTEEISM IN SCHOOL IN THE STUDY AREA

Rather, interestingly craze for sending children to private schools, mainly English medium, even in these two educationally backward blocks, is on rise. Comparatively well off, businessmen, politicians and government servants of the locality are more inclined to private institutions. This trend is more in families of Nepalese origin. The number of private school is also growing. There are as much as 58 private schools in the 2 blocks, mostly having English (39 out 58) as medium of instruction.

TABLE 16: % age of Children (age: 6-14) enrolled in private school <sup>xvii</sup>				
2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
10.65	10.89	12.46	12.07	14.1

<sup>i</sup> Source: Annual Status of Education Report (Rural) 2014

It is remarkable to note that while on the one hand MDM has worked as a motivation to children in the tea estates to attend school, those in slightly better off condition prefer private paid missionary schools for education without MDM than the free schools with MDM. This confirms the want of connect of the children and their parents with the government school teachers. The missionary schools have considerable number of Adivasi teachers who speak *sadri* and provide an inspiration what the Bengali or Hindi speaking middle class government primary school teacher cannot.

## XV. DROP OUT - A REGULAR PHENOMENON

Krishna Lohar, a father of four and a worker at the virtually closed Hantapara Tea Estate, does not know what to do about his children's education. On one hand, there is almost no work at the estate and consequently no wages. On the other, local schools have increased their annual fees. "My two elder children stopped going to school last year," says Lohar. "The younger ones have been promoted to Class V this time, but I don't think I will be able to pay the fees to let them continue with their education."

Students from closed, sick and abandoned tea gardens of Dooars are increasingly dropping out of schools and colleges because they cannot meet the expenses. They are joining the workforce to bring some food to the table. Even, they are migrating to distant places (discussed in detail later) to earn money for the family. There are many reports of trafficking of dropped out students – both boys and girls.

In this survey, 333 cases of dropout have been detected of which 230 cases belong to ST category and 50 to SC category. Drop-out girls are found to be much more (71%) than the boys. 57% of the dropouts have monthly family income ranges from Rs 2000 to Rs 3000 and incidence of dropping out is more in upper primary level of education.

TABLE 17: STATUS OF DROP OUT IN THE AREA OF STUDY														
TEA ESTATE	SEX			FAMILY IN COME						CLASS OF DROPPING OUT				
	Total	M	F	< 1000	1000-2000	2000-3000	3000-5000	> 5000	Not specified	I-IV	V-VIII	IX-X	XI-XII	Not specified
BEECH	15	6	9	0	1	3	7	4	0	6	5	3	0	0
BHARNOBARI	4	0	4	0	0	1	0	3	0	0	4	0	0	0
BUNDAPANI	52	9	43	0	52	0	0	0	0	11	22	0	0	19
CHINCHULA	5	0	5	0	0	5	0	0	0	1	3	1	0	0
DALMORE	57	7	50	0	0	50	6	1	0	23	32	2	0	0
DALSINGPARA	6	3	3	0	0	2	1	3	0	1	3	1	1	0
DHEKLAPARA	6	1	5	0	1	3	1	1	0	0	2	0	0	5
DHUMCHIPARA	17	10	7	2	2	6	6	1	0	6	10	0	0	1
DIMA	24	13	11	0	0	13	4	7	0	7	15	0	0	2
HANTAPARA	13	2	11	1	2	6	4	0	0	2	5	0	0	6
MALANGI	13	10	3	0	0	8	1	4	0	2	6	1	0	4
MUJNAI	51	10	41	0	0	44	7	0	0	28	21	0	0	2
NANGDALA	6	4	2	0	1	4	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	3
RADHARANI	10	6	4	0	0	5	0	5	0	5	5	0	0	0
RAHIMPUR	6	1	5	0	0	1	2	3	0	0	6	0	0	0
RAIMATANG	10	2	8	0	1	9	0	0	0	8	2	0	0	0
RAMJHORA	7	5	2	0	1	5	1	0	0	0	3	0	0	4
SINGHANIA	7	2	5	0	1	5	1	0	0	0	4	2	0	1
SUBHASINI	24	5	19		0	19	3	2	0	10	12	1	0	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>333</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>237</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>189</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>48</b>

Drop out cases are rampant in the closed and stressed tea gardens for last several years. Causes & effect of drop-out as revealed from survey, FGD & interviews with the stake holders are summarized as -

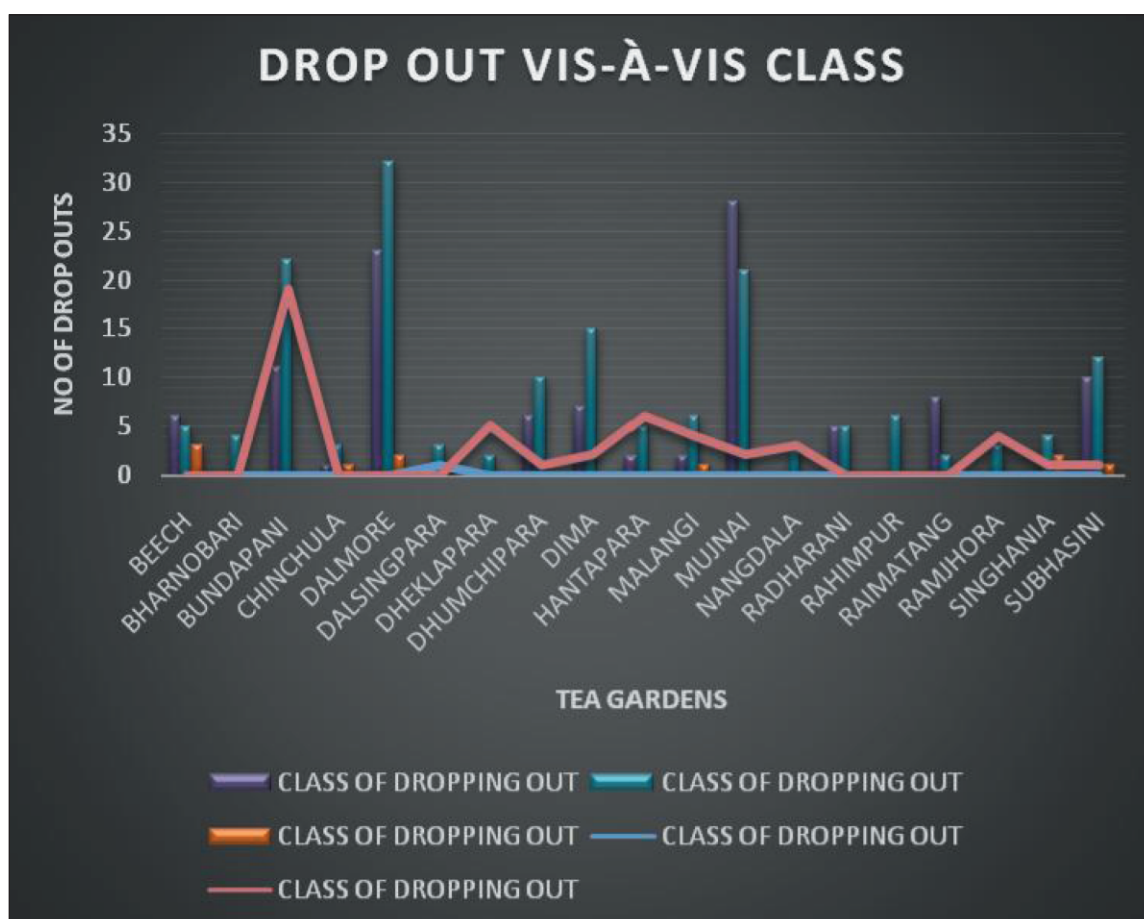
- Despite being associated with an industry that commands a significant share in the world teamarket, a huge population of tea garden workers still lives below the poverty line and are secluded from mainstream development.
- The culture of exclusion is also rooted in the history of seclusion of the tea garden communities from larger social fabric of the state.
- Extremely low family income due to non-availability of alternate job at the time closure & sickness of the gardens has been cited as the major reason for drop out
- Due to low or no income, children have to attempt to earn for the family.
- Majority of drop out occurs after primary level of education. Non availability of upper primary and secondary level schools in proximity to residence promotes drop out.



- As the gardens are mostly located in remote areas and have poor public transport system, lack of communication to schools is one of prime reasons of drop out in Madarihat & Kalchini blocks.
- Disregarding the provisions of the PLA, managements of the closed and sick tea estates almost stopped providing transport facility to the children of the workers.
- Medium of instruction in the schools in the area, as discussed earlier, adversely affected education. Adivasis are completely deprived of getting primary education in their mother tongue while the Nepalese also have limited scope.
- A large section of the parents and guardians, Adivasis in particular, being illiterate, fail to render support to the first generation learners of the family. In this regard, Nepalese are better placed.
- Fear due to incidence of rape near bushy road connecting virtually closed Hantapara tea garden.
- Pressure to earn money.
- Children are affected by poor health conditions, which can be largely attributed to inadequate water and sanitation facilities, lack of awareness about health care practices and poor nutritional gain. Hence, incidences of under nutrition and infectious diseases are widely prevalent. The children are underweight and adolescent girls are reported anemic.
- Lack of teaching learning material at school, Role of school teacher.
- Limited access to the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) services and the children limited to access pre-primary education in ICDS centres.
- Most of the schools do not conform to the pupil-teacher ratio (higher than the prescribed ratio as per the RTE Act, which is 30:1).
- A complete absence of vocational training institutes for skill development and thus alternate employment opportunities have perpetuated high levels of out-migration.



TABLE 18: CAUSES OF DROPOUT & CASTE WISE DISTRIBUTION			
CAUSE	Number of children dropped out	CASTE OF THE DROP OUTS	
Child labour & job	3	GENERAL CASTE	30
Early marriage	3	OBC	23
Financial problem	224	SCHEDULED CASTE	50
Migration	8	SCHEDULED TRIBE	230
Missing	12	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>333</b>
No family support	11		
Lack of interest	44		
Trafficked	16		
Trafficked survivor	1		
Does not specify	11		
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>333</b>		



GRAPH 12: DROP OUT VIS-À-VIS CLASS

## XVI. STATUS OF NUTRITION

Workers of the Tea estates were never a happy with low wages, poor quality rations and inadequate medical facilities provided by the management. But with the sickening and closure of gardens things have turned worse. Now death and disease have become a part of daily life in the 'Coolie' lines.

Although, we could not conduct BMI survey of the respondents in this study, several studies clearly indicated that BMI is significantly below the normal across the ages and tagged labels as “starving communities” or at “critical risk of mortality from starvation”. This condition has been continuing since the beginning of this century.

Most of the gardens in these two blocks have stopped providing subsidized rations to the workers. Of late, PDS system in these areas has been rejuvenated to an extent. Garden workers are distributed rations [rice, wheat or *atta* (powdered wheat)] through SHGs at Rs 2 per kg/week. MDM has been introduced in almost all the government aided schools. New ICDS centres have been established under the additional projects in Madarihat and Kalchini blocks.

But the crisis still persists with the fact the workers being deprived minimum wages have little money to spend for ingredients other than rice and *atta*. Therefore, the subsidized rations are critical to workers who have not received wages in months and are prized for its barter value. Most families sell a portion of the food to outside traders, who arrive on the day rations are distributed, to buy groceries like salt, turmeric, oil and potatoes.

In this survey we had questionnaire on daily general food habit of the respondents, number of times food taken daily and expenditure on food with respect to total expenditure. 89% respondents reported that they took food thrice a day, 10 % twice a day and 1% only once a day. Rice and/ or roti and tea flower is mostly taken. Food taken by most of the respondents lacks protein content. Only a handful can have mutton/chicken once a week. They cannot afford potatoes and other vegetables and pulses are a luxury to them. At times, they go to the forest to pluck shrubs and bamboo shoots. But it had also become **impossible due to fear of attacks by elephants in the forest**. Regular meal of many families comprises of “two chapattis dipped in black salted tea” – they cannot even put sugar into the tea.

Absenteeism in schools has largely reduced in these blocks due to introduction of MDM. Same is the case for ICDS.

As there is almost no consumption of fruit, milk, eggs, soya bean, fish or meat resulting in a highly unbalanced diet, extremely low in nutritional value. "Prolonged food inadequacy has caused malnutrition, frail health and abnormal reduction of body weight. A considerable number of people are suffering from lack of appetite, vomiting, swelling, nausea, jaundice, muscle weakening, kwashiorkor, vitamin deficiency, anemia, diarrhea, rashes and other diseases," said Sasanka Dev, a rights activist who visited Dumchipara tea estate in Alipurduar recently.



TABLE 19: COMPOSITION OF BREAKFAST/LUNCH/DINNER IN THE STUDY AREA	
<b><i>Composition of breakfast/lunch/dinner</i></b>	<b><i>%age</i></b>
Only rice	5
Rice /chapatti & <i>chai</i>	17
Rice /roti & dal	16
Rice /roti & vegetable	6
Rice, dal & vegetable	5
Rice, roti & chicken (once in a week)	1.4
Rice, roti & mutton (once in a week)	0.07
Rice/roti & bamboo shoot/mushroom (if available)	5
Rice/roti and tea flower	33
Children take MDM	4
Children take <i>khidri</i> from AWCs	3
Share cooked food from 'Sahay' scheme	2
Others	2.53
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

## XVII. STATUS OF HEALTH

The healthcare delivery system in the area under study has been characterized by 'six-tier network' –

- Dispensary/ hospital/ group hospital of tea garden,
- Village level Primary Health Centres and Sub-Centres (PHC and Scs),
- Block Level Primary Health Centres (BPHC),
- Sub-Divisional Hospitals / District Hospitals (SDH / DH) and State General Hospitals (SGH),
- Unqualified Rural Medical Practitioner (RMP) are sublime with healthcare practice without any professional qualification, &
- Not-for-profit organizations providing preventive and curative services through different programmes and facilities.

PLA stipulates that, the State government constitute a Medical Advisory Board for matters concerning medical facilities for workers and their families in the tea gardens. If they are not

provided the Chief Inspector may cause them to be provided and maintained and recover the cost from the employer. There may be two types of hospitals namely Garden Hospitals and Group Hospitals. The former is to have simple inpatient and outpatient wards for infectious cases, midwifery, simple prenatal and postnatal care of infants and children and periodical inspection of workers. In each Garden Hospital a qualified medical practitioner, a midwife and a pharmacist are to be appointed for every 300 workers or part thereof. There has to be a health assistant for every 2,100 workers. Their services should be readily available to the workers at all hours. The hospital should have a sound permanent structure and each bed in it is to be allowed at least 60 sq. ft of floor space. If a single garden finds it not feasible then a group of gardens may come together and establish a Group Hospital in a central place. A group hospital is to have a minimum of 100 beds and at least 3 beds for 700 workers, each of them with 80 sq. ft of floor space. The Group Hospital is to deal efficiently with all cases and admit workers on the recommendation of a Garden hospital. Let us have a quick look into the health services available in the gardens under study—

- Mujnai, Ramjhora & Rahimpur tea estates have no hospital at all.
- Due to closure, no facilities available in Dheklapara TE. Interestingly, the erstwhile hospital building is being used by a private kinder garden school, a NGO providing medical assistance to the locals and as a kitchen for 'SAHAL' scheme run by self-help groups (SHG).
- In Bundapani, another closed garden, the hospital is being temporarily used as a sub-centre by the health department.
- Six hospitals in the Study area have no dispensary.
- Half of the gardens in the Study area have no bed for maternity.
- Separate O.T. exists in 4 gardens in the Study area.
- 7 out of 17 gardens (whose data is available) have no ambulance. In many cases, ambulance is also used for transporting students to schools. The ambulance in Bundapani TE has been found to be in ruined condition. In case of emergency, garden workers have either to hire private vehicles at higher rate to take patient to Birpara State General Hospital or keep him or her untreated at home.
- 5 out of 17 gardens (whose data is available) have no doctors of any kind. Only 4 doctors have MBBS degree, others are RMP having degree in alternative medicines.
- 8 out of 17 gardens (whose data is available) have no nurse.
- Approved medicine list is not available in 11 out of 17 gardens (whose data is available)

The detail picture is depicted in the 2 tables below:

Tea Estate	Hospital	Dispensary	Separate Maternity Ward	Beds in male ward	Beds in female ward	Beds in isolation ward	Beds in maternity ward	Separate O.T. exists?	Ambulance
Beech	1	0	Central hospital Malangi						yes
Bharnobari	1	1	Central hospital Malangi						yes
Bundapani	1	1	yes	12	12	1	1	no	yes
Dalsingpara	1	1	yes	12	14	0	0	no	no
Dima	1	2	yes	10	10	10	8	no	yes
Dumchipara	1	1	Yes	12	12	0	0	no	yes
Hantapara	1	1	Yes	10	10	3	0	yes	yes
Mujnai	0	0	No	0	0	0	0	no	no
Nangdala	1	1	Yes	12	12	1	1	yes	yes
Nimtijhora	1	1	Yes	10	10	2	0	no	yes
Radharani	1	0	Yes	4	4	2	2	no	no
Rahimpur	0	1	No	2	0	0	0	no	no
Raimatang	1	1	No	0	0	0	0	no	yes
Ramjhora	0	0	No	0	0	0	0	no	no
Shinghanian	1	0	Yes	2	2	0	0	no	yes
Subhasini	1	0	Yes	8	8	4	4	yes	no

<sup>i</sup> Source & note: Synopsis on Survey of Tea Gardens conducted by Regional Labour Offices under the jurisdiction of Joint Labour Commissioner, North Bengal Zone [survey was conducted in the fourth quarter of 2012]. In this survey no information is available for Chinchula, Dalmore, Dheklapara & Malangi tea estates. The facilities as shown to be available in Bundapani Tea Estate is totally unavailable at present due to closure of the garden. Dheklapara & Dalmore tea estates were closed at the time survey by the Labour Department.

Tea Estate	Doctor	Residential or visiting?	The doctor -- MBBS or other than MBBS like MBBS (AM), RMP etc?	Nurse	Midwife	Compounder	Health Assistant	Is approved medicine list available?
Beech	NO	not applicable	not applicable	0	0	1	1	Central hospital Malangi
Bharnobari	Yes	Both [2]	MBBS [Residential] & MBBS (AM) [Visiting]	1	1	1	1	Central hospital Malangi
Bundapani	Yes	Residential	RMP	0	2	1	1	yes
Dalsingpara	Yes	Residential	BCMS	0	6	0	0	no
Dima	Yes	Both [2]	MBBS (AM) [Residential] & NP [Visiting]	1	9	0	0	no
Dumchipara	Yes	Residential	MBBS	1	2	1	1	no
Hantapara	Yes	Residential	MBBS	2	1	1	1	no
Mujnai	NO	not applicable	not applicable	1	1	1	1	no
Nangdala	Yes	Residential	BAMS	2	2	1	1	yes
Nimtijhora	YES	Residential	MBBS(AM)	0	1	0	1	yes
Radharani	NO	not applicable	not applicable	0	1	0	1	yes
Rahimpur	YES	Residential	MBBS(AM)	0	1	0	1	no
Raimatang	YES	Residential	MBBS(AM)	1	3	1	0	no
Ramjhora	NO	not applicable	not applicable	0	0	0	0	no
Shinghanian	YES	Residential	MBBS(AM)	1	1	1	1	no
Subhasini	YES	Residential	MBBS	2	2	1	0	yes



The company health system has almost completely collapsed in the area under study. The responsibility of providing health facility has gradually been shaded off by the management and shifted to the public system of health which is again far from attaining minimum standard. All the three agencies— the management, the union (who are mostly vocal to wages) & the government (the chief inspector is supposed to look after) — have neglected this issue for long. A well run hospital with basic facilities is a distant dream. In most cases an untrained worker looks after them in a run-down building. Most dispensaries are ill equipped without enough medicines and with untrained staff, have inadequate drinking water, toilet and basic facilities.

It is not sufficing to say the medical facility of the Alipurduar district is 'precarious'. It is almost absent in any form in vast tract of the district. As most of the tea estates are in remote areas without regular transport facilities and with continuous ruining of the medical facility of gardens (whatever little they used to provide), plantation workers are practically deprived of proper health care system. Few months back, the district did not have any blood bank even excepting few blood storage units. Very recently, a blood bank has been set up in the Alipurduar Sub-Divisional Hospital. Before going to the exact health care system in our study area, let us have a quick look into the governmental facilities related to Madarihat & Kalchini blocks—

**TABLE 22: STATUS OF DISTRICT HOSPITAL, SUB -DIVISIONAL HOSPITAL AND STATE GENERAL HOSPITAL<sup>xxiii</sup>**

SL No	Hospital Name	Type	No. of Beds	SNCU/SNSU	CeMOC/BeMOC <sup>ii</sup>	Blood Bank/BSU
<i>Alipurduar is a newly formed district and it has no district hospital</i>						
1	Alipurduar Sub-Divisional Hospital	SDH	225	SNCU- Under Process	CeMOC	Blood Bank
2	Birpara State General Hospital	SGH	100	SNCU- Under Process	CeMOC	BSU

**TABLE 23: STATUS OF BPHC IN MADARIHAT & KALCHINI BLOCKS<sup>xxv</sup>**

Type	Facility Name	Block	No. of Beds	NBCC	SNSU	BeMOC	CeMOC	BSU
BPHC	Madarihat BPHC	Madarihat	30	Yes	Newly Identified	Yes	No	No
BPHC	Uttar Latabari BPHC	Kalchini	30	Yes	Newly Identified	Yes	No	No

**TABLE 24: STATUS OF PHC IN MADARIHAT & KALCHINI BLOCKS<sup>xxvi</sup>**

Block	PHC name	No of Bed	OPD Facility	Conduct Delivery	NBCC Facility	Upgradation	SNSU	BeMOC	24X7 PHC
Madarihat	Totopara	10	Yes	Yes	Yes	Upgradation Complete	No	Yes	Y
Madarihat	M.Rangali Bazna	10	Yes	Yes	Yes	Upgradation Complete	No	Yes	Y
Madarihat	Sishujhumra	0	Yes	No	No		No	No	N
Kalchini	Satali	0	Yes	No	No	Proposed	No	No	N
Kalchini	Jaigaon	0	Yes	No	No		No	No	N

Sub-centres play crucial role in the primary health care system in the rural areas. Sub-Centre is the most peripheral and first contact point between the primary health care system and the community. The primary focus of Sub-centre remains the Reproductive and Child Health (RCH) services. However, services in respect of important Non-Communicable Diseases have also been included. It is highly desirable that they should be fully functional and deliver quality care. But the situation in our study area is far from satisfactory. There are 48 and 37 (85 in total) sub-centres in Madarihat & Kalchini blocks respectively. Only 46 sub-centres have electricity, 28 have water facility and 35 have toilets.

TABLE 25: SUB-CENTRES IN KALCHINI & MADARIHAT BLOCKS <sup>xxvii</sup>			
<i>Block Name</i>	<i>Kalchini</i>	<i>Madarihat</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Total No. of Sub-Centre</i>	48	37	85
<i>No of GPHQ Sub-Centre</i>	11	10	21
<i>Population (Sub-Centre Total)</i>	277074	193069	470143
<i>No. of Remote Sub-Centre</i>	1	0	1
<i>Water Facility</i>	9	19	28
<i>Electricity</i>	19	27	46
<i>Toilet</i>	13	22	35

Accredited social health activist (ASHA) is a key link to public health services in villages in India. ASHAs must primarily be female residents of the village and are trained to act as health educators and promoters in their communities. Their tasks include motivating women to give birth in hospitals, bringing children to immunization clinics, encouraging family planning (e.g., surgical sterilization), treating basic illness and injury with first aid, keeping demographic records, and improving village sanitation. ASHAs are also meant to serve as a key communication mechanism between the healthcare system and rural populations. Even if we do not enquire proportion of women utilizing services of the ASHA for pregnancy-related conditions and assessing the knowledge, attitude, practices, hindrances and motivation factors among ASHAs regarding pregnancy-related conditions, the strength of ASHAs in the 2 blocks is far below the requirement as shown in the table.

TABLE 26: SANCTIONED & ACTUAL POSITION OF ASHA IN MADARIHAT & KALCHINI BLOCKS <sup>xxviii</sup>			
<i>Block</i>	<i>ASHAs sanctioned</i>	<i>ASHAs in Position</i>	<i>%age</i>
Madarihat	185	111	60
Kalchini	199	126	63.32

Studies under “Basic Health Project” have indicated that there is an unmet need in remote areas of West Bengal for emergency transportation services. To meet this need, Government of West Bengal has already set up emergency transportation services (Nischay Yan Prokolpa—cashless transportation) by providing every block in the state with an ambulance. Kalchini has yet no such vehicle empanelled. Physical accessibility is a crucial factor. Distance of the furthest sub-centre to BPHC is more than 20 Km or more than 2 hours Journey in the Kalchini Block.

TABLE 27: STATUS OF NISCHAY YAN PROKOLPA IN KALCHINI & MADARIHAT <sup>xxx</sup>		
<i>Name of the Health Facility</i>	<i>No. of Vehicle Empanelled</i>	<i>No. of Vehicle Owner Signed MOU</i>
Madarihat BPHC	1	1
Kalchini	0	0
Alipurduar SDH	1	1
Birpara SGH	3	3

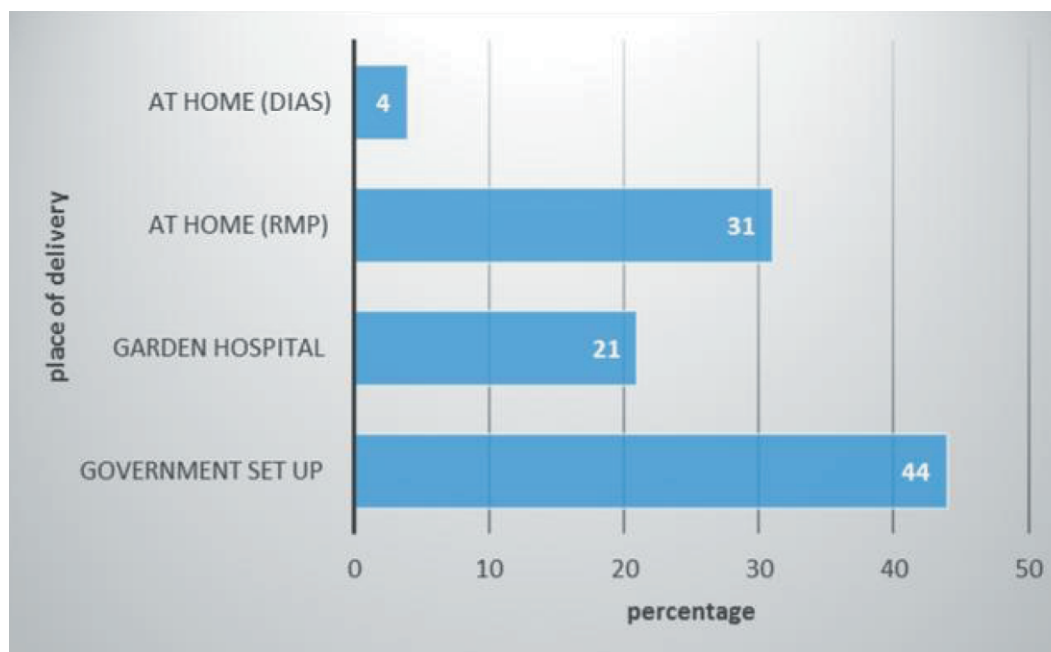
<sup>i</sup> Source: District Health & Family Welfare Samiti, Jalpaiguri, Department of Health and Family Welfare

The unqualified rural medical practitioners (RMP) of these areas are practicing modern medicine without any formal training. Majority of total outpatients visit to RMPs during their ailing periods in this region. Most of these RMPs adopt this as full time profession and majority of them have past experience of working with some qualified private practitioners. A remarkable portion of these RMPs have followed allopathic treatment and majority of them provide drugs sometimes in credit. They collect drugs from the wholesale pharmacies and medical representatives. RMPs also act as medicine vendors. People save money and time when they visit a RMP (instead of visiting a public health centre) because RMPs are available anywhere anytime. All of them are available on-call even at mid-night although they also had been operating clinics on a normal routine. Some RMPs have past experience of working with some qualified private practitioners. This experience helps them 'learn' the treatment and medicines for common diseases and develop some basic skills, such as, pushing injections, checking blood pressure, and even reading X-ray plates. Some general and critical cases are also handled by those RMPs. A section of these RMPs are found practicing surgery and their referral behaviour suggests that they normally refer patients to the private doctors and private nursing home when the cases are out of control.

Regarding maternal health, considerable number of the deliveries occurs at home, and it is a common phenomenon for the higher birth order. It has been observed that broken linkages of transportation sometimes force them to deliver birth at home or at unqualified quacks chamber. The worst conditions in terms of both the physical accessibility and service delivery spaces are found especially in case Kalchini block. In case of Madarihat block the highest health output producing unit is Birpara State General Hospitals (SGH) located at Birpara. Compared to that, PHCs are less utilized for institutional delivery. According to Indian standard the central and state health policy is to establish one BPHC per one lakh population and one Primary Health Centre (PHC) per 30 thousand populations. From the following table, the grimness of the situation in 2 blocks can easily be realized.

TABLE 28: PHC & SC VIS-À-VIS POPULATION IN MADARIHAT & KALCHINI BLOCKS				
<i>Block</i>	<i>No of PHC</i>	<i>Population per PHC</i>	<i>No of SC</i>	<i>Population per SC</i>
Madarihat	3	61,823	37	5,013
Kalchini	2	1,26,285	48	5,262

It is reported in the survey, the apart from RMPs, there are dais in the tea gardens under study who help in deliveries at home. If available, tea garden hospitals are also accessed for delivery. But with the sickening & closing of tea estates, the condition of garden hospital and service deteriorated to a large extent. In cases it has totally collapsed. Access of institutional as revealed in the survey is shown in the graph below.



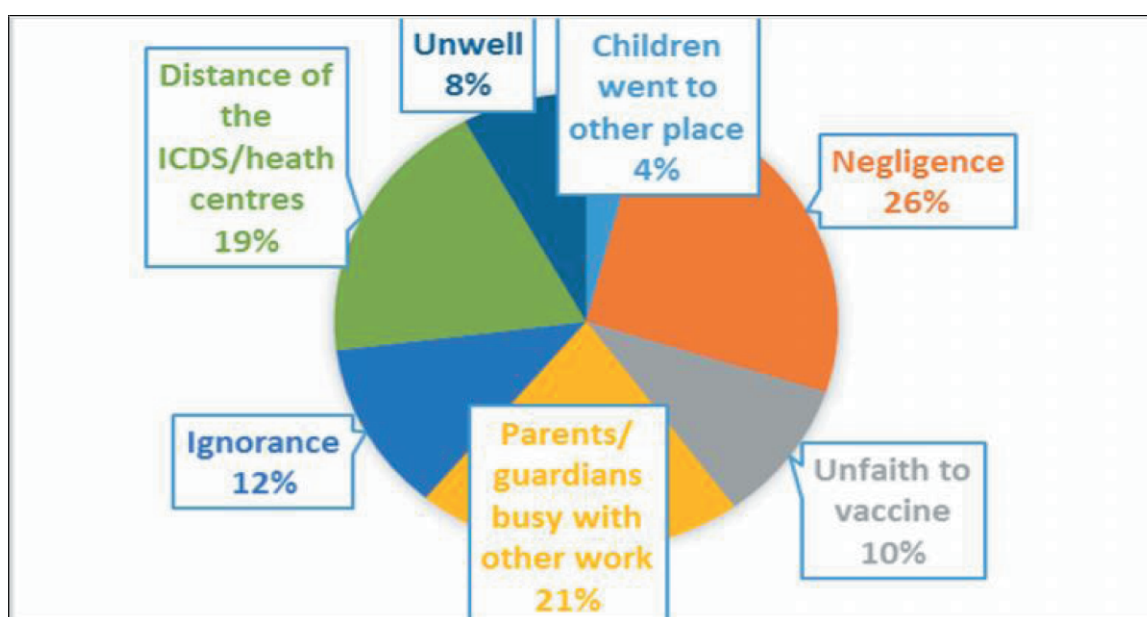
GRAPH 13: PLACE OF DELIVERY IN THE STUDY AREA

Although routine immunization has been embedded in the reproductive & child health program (RCH), it requires special mention in the context of this study. When a child receives BCG, measles, and three doses each of DPT and polio the child is considered to be fully vaccinated. Children in the area are vaccinated at the ICDS centres with the help of ASHA & ANM, health sub-centres, PHCs, BPHCs and SDH. All primary health centers provide immunizations on Wednesdays in the study area. Sub-divisional hospital provides them daily. Sometimes special immunization sessions are conducted in areas with a large uncovered child population so as to fully immunize children against certain diseases (pulse polio, Japanese Encephalitis etc.). It has been observed that the immunization is high among children of literate mother than children of illiterate mother. Same observation is also for higher income households when compared with low income ones.

TABLE 29: CHILD IMMUNIZATION IN %AGE IN THE RURAL AREAS IN THE UNDIVIDED JALPAIGURI DISTRICT (CHILDREN AGE 12-23 MONTHS)		
<i>Status</i>	<i>DLHS-3 (2012-13)</i>	<i>DLHS-3 (2007-08)</i>
Received full vaccination	80	81.3
Received BCG vaccine	95.6	98.7
Received 3 doses of DPT vaccine	95.6	90.7
Received 3 doses of polio vaccine	88.9	85.3
Received measles vaccine	86.7	92
Children (age 9-35 months) received at least one dose of vitamin A supplement in last 6 months	41.9	83.2



It has been observed that the children in the area under study have not received proper immunization as per schedule. The parents are mostly illiterate and are not serious about keeping & following the immunization card. The knowledge of the parents about immunization is very poor and the literacy of the parents is also poor. So, the parents are not serious about immunization and we found that negligence is one of the major causes for non-immunization and guardian engagement in other work is the other major cause for partial immunization. While doing survey for this study, we have come across families who have lost the immunization card of their children before completion of the schedule of vaccination. Some are simply unaware of such card. An important finding in this survey was that a portion of parents in study area do not believe the beneficial effect of vaccine indicating an immediate need to create common awareness regarding Universal Immunization Programme (UIP). These findings are sending a clear message that the child immunization needs to be more attention in poor and illiterate areas so that all the children get proper immunization in the prescribed date. The awareness programme may be implemented at such rural belts by government and non-government sectors so that parents may change their attitude and practice for better immunization for their children.



GRAPH 14: REASONS FOR NON-IMMUNIZATION AND DROPOUTS



CERTIFICATE OF A QUACK DOCTOR



NGO RUN MEDICAL CAMP



NGO RUN MEDICAL CAMP



QUEUE FOR IMMUNIZATION

## DIVISION – III

### XVIII. TRAFFICKING, MISSING & MIGRATION

#### SABITRI NARRATES.....

*“Bola tha padayega”* (told that they will educate).

When she was nine years only, parents got mesmerized by the idea *“Padayega our thoda thoda kam karwayega”* (ensure education and help in domestic work) and let go off their little ones, one after another with the assurance by the middleman.

Chaibasa line of Bundopani Tea Estate to Girjing, Sikkim, enroute Siliguri, Sabitri Munda cried all her way. They loaded her with household work from the very second day. *“Mai boli mujhe padna hai”* (I said I would study), but aunty, a retired teacher and her employer, *“sirf jagda karti thi”* (only scolded). Every day she went through loud and never ending sessions of 'gali' (used abusive words).

Days accumulated to years, but she received no payment. She pleaded repeated to 'dada' and 'didi' (son and daughter of aunty, both teachers) to let her talk to her parents. *“Ghar ka number tha uncle ke pass, who delete kor diya”* (Uncle had my home contact number, but he deleted it), her eyes turn watery.

Her bare escapade way when she went out to arrange fodder (cut grass) for the cattle (cows) where she would sometimes contact her sister (also a victim of trafficking) via friend's phone, missed calls and call backs.

*“Mai kitna roti thi”* (how much I wept)— it goes without saying her nine year toilsome existence far from home gave no more than two-three meals a day, a set of new clothes in two years and alone trip to Gangtok, and may be some TV watching. *“Kaam achcha hone se bhi danti thi”* (scolded even if I performed well) and sometimes got canned too.

There is an important twist in this episode. She waited to get chance to study and to be paid for her work till her brother and brother-in-law could rescue after long hot argumentation (*“bahut jhagda ke baad”*) her from the bone cracking job. Nine years of service fetched her 'gold' necklace worth Rs 35,000. While describing the saga of her exile, Sabitri showed the necklace – carefully wrapped in layers and a bill purportedly issued by a shop at Gayjing Bazaar, Sikkim. There is no sign of hallmark and she never verified whether it is made of gold or not— all that her employer had given to her.

Nine years and not a single alphabet taught, today Sabitri sits illiterate, confused and opting to get wedded off to another 'nobody'.

## PLENTY OF MISSING & TRAFFICKING BUT ONLY FEW CASES ARE REGISTERED

Every year hundreds of tribal children go missing from the poverty laden tea gardens of Kalchini & Madarihat or Dooars at large. Only a few cases are reported to the police. CID data for West Bengal shows only 124 women went missing from Jalpaiguri district in 2010. But the report of a joint study by UNICEF, Save the Children and Burdwan University estimates 3500 minors (including boys) were trafficked from 12 gardens of the Dooars in 2010. We recorded 40 cases of missing less than 20 years of age from both the sexes in 10 gardens in Madarihat & Kalchini blocks out of which 22 persons belong to ST, 16 to SC and 2 from general caste.

In a recent survey in 2016, ActionAid has identified 36 missing children from 10 sick and closed tea gardens of Alipurduar district. The survey further found 16 trafficked survivors in 5 stressed tea gardens, living in extreme vulnerable condition without any rehabilitative support measures.

As far as clues & information gathered, they went to Sikkim, Delhi, Chandigarh, Kerala, Nepal & Kashmir. There is no clue at all for 15 persons. There are more cases in closed sick and abandoned gardens for obvious reasons of unemployment, underemployment. Excepting 1 case in Nangdala TE, almost all the missing persons under 20 years of age are drop outs. Family income of missing persons ranges mostly between Rs 1000 to Rs 3000 per month, few have less than Rs 1000. Few others whose family income is above Rs 5000 per month are having large families and therefore, per capita income is poor.



### VISITING CARDS OF "PLACEMENT AGENCIES"

TABLE 30: MISSING CASES BELOW 20 YEARS OF AGE IN THE TEA GARDENS UNDER THE STUDY																
TEA GARDENS	SEX			AGE [IN YEAR]				FAMILY INCOME					DROP OUT			
	TOTAL	M	F	UP TO 10	Nov-14	15-18	19-20	< 1000	1000-2000	2000-3000	3000-5000	> 5000	NOT SPECIFIED	YES	NO	NOT SPECIFIED
BUNDAPANI	7	2	5	2	2	3	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	7	0	0
DALMORE	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
DALSINGPARA	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0
DHUMCHIPARA	5	0	5	0	0	1	2	4	0	0	0	0	1	4	0	1
DIMA	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
HANTAPARA	13	1	12	2	2	8	1	2	2	6	1	0	2	12	0	1
KALCHINI	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0
MALANGI	5	4	1	1	0	4	0	0	0	3	0	2	0	5	0	0
NANGDALA	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0
RAMJHORA	5	2	3	0	2	3	0	0	1	3	0	0	1	4	0	1
TOTAL	40	12	28	5	7	22	4	6	10	14	3	3	4	35	1	4

TABLE 31: MISSING CASES BY AREA	
CHANDIGAR	2
DELHI	7
KASHMIR	2
KERALA	2
NEPAL	3
SIKKIM	9
NO CLUE	15
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>40</b>

TABLE 32: MISSING CASES BY CASTE	
General	2
Scheduled Caste	16
Scheduled Tribe	22
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>40</b>



The prime targets are SC & ST communities of the tea gardens, uneducated adolescents and school drop-outs, parent-/guardian-less children and hugely poverty ridden family, poor family with more number of children. Most of the parents being illiterate and uninformed fall in the grip of agents easily who delude them by either offering advance or alcohol. Later, when a child stops maintaining contact or sending money is suddenly stopped and goes 'missing', the agents, if available, make different kinds of stories to again fool them. Often, it is also argued that he/she does not want to come back and therefore not calling. As social life among the adivasis being highly traditional and close, the parents also try to keep secret the stories of particularly their daughter's exploitation by the traffickers when they return.

### ***TRAFFICKING NETWORKS, PLACEMENT AGENCIES & AGENTS***

Sick & closed gardens trigger exodus of the wretched young and able members of the family who regularly faces hardship to arrange square meal a day, observe dying condition of the family members and the neighbours. This creates the hunting ground of the agents. Two well identified interstate and cross border trafficking networks transit into North Bengal at Coochbehar and Siliguri. These two hubs are interlinked by the Tufanganj-Coochbehar corridor (for trafficked victims from North-Eastern states) and Naxalbari-Siliguri corridor (cross-border cases, particularly from Bangladesh). The network between Coochbehar and Siliguri has also developed connections to the Dooars tea garden wherefrom tribal as well as Nepali (fewer in number) women & children are being increasingly trafficked. For the Madarihat-Kalchini area, the conduit operates through Alipurduar. All these points are interlinked by the National Highways and the role of the truckers is evident. The route depends on the destination of the recruit. If it is North India, then they go via railway stations like Hasimara, New Mal Junction, New Jalpaiguri and board a Delhi bound train. Recruits for Bhutan and Sikkim are taken by car. For all other places, trains are available at New Jalpaiguri station.

Annual report of National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB), 2013 identified West Bengal with the highest number of cases of human trafficking in the year 2012-13. According to the report, Bengal shares at least 40 per cent of the total cases of procurement of minor girls in the country while the state has at least 69 per cent of the total cases of selling girls for prostitution. Police reports state 316 minor girls were missing in 2014 from the Terai-Dooars region, of which 280 have been rescued. In 2013, the number of missing minor girls was pegged at 381.

Child trafficking from tea gardens takes place under the guise of providing jobs in distant locations. Interestingly, traditional modes such as child marriages, fake marriages, abductions, or kidnappings are now hardly used to traffic female children. This is because the adivasis of the tea gardens do not marry their daughters early, and marriage, to a large extent, depends on the choices of adult men and women. This is in sharp contrast to other West Bengal districts such as Malda, where child marriage is the principal mode of trafficking.

Trafficking rackets run almost with impunity in the closed and sick tea gardens of Madarihat and Kalchini. It is a lucrative profession for the 'agents' in North Bengal. In Madarihat and Kalchini agents are mostly of Nepali (both male & female) origin along with few Adivasis. These 'placement agents' provide cash incentives to their sub-agents for providing information and link depending on the quality of the recruit and on the jobs (domestic work, prostitution or in a shop/factory/restaurant). During survey & FGDs, we came to know that outsiders, particularly from Delhi, come and stay for months in the gardens and the local agents keep regular contact with the so called "placement agencies". The agent gives visiting cards of the placement agencies with contact numbers (in most cases, these numbers have been found to be fake & non-existing) to the parents/guardians at the time of taking away the new catch. These placement agencies are not registered. Neither the family nor the agent ever informs the police or the local authority at the time of transit.

Agents /sub-agents settle deals with the parents/guardian by paying advance. They take care of tickets and journey of the new recruits from garden to the railway station by car/bus. New recruits are taken to the nearest bus or railway station by the local agent/ sub-agent and are handed over to a new agent who take them to a destination point and they are again handed over to a new person for either 'placement' or re-distribution.

Trafficking of children from the tea estates of Dooars mostly takes place through the well organized placement agency rackets in Delhi. These placement agencies supply tribal children to the homes of National Capital Region consisting of Delhi, Faridabad, Gurgaon and Noida. These agencies mostly target the children of age group 11-16 who remain tight lipped even after exploitation. The trafficked victims are kept in congested rooms, fed barely enough for survival till they are placed somewhere. The luckier one lands in a '*kothi*' as a domestic help. The others are sold in marriage or to a brothel where they suffer never-ending abuse in all forms. These victims of trafficking have to go through series of exploitation starting from the source-traffickers, placement agents and employers. These agencies take advantage of legal loophole to traffic mostly innocent girls in the name of providing employment but instead are put into extreme conditions of forced labour. 12-14 hours of work every day is a routine practice for these girls. Many of those rescued also report physical and sexual abuse. Several cases of sexual slavery have also been reported from the victims rescued in Delhi.

### **OUTCOME OF INTERVIEWS & FGD**

Intimate interviews and small sized focus group discussion with trafficked survivors and families of trafficked /missing persons revealed the following—

- Closed & sick tea gardens of the two blocks under our study are hot bed of trafficking.
- Poverty, unemployment, lack of awareness, promise of better job/comfortable life elsewhere, broken family, poor wage, large family, illiteracy, false promise, drop out, earn more money, greedy parents, peer group influence, domestic violence, no action/protest, lack of facilities, alcoholism etc. are causes of trafficking in the area.
- Child trafficking takes place in the disguise of job placement to distant locations. It is done mainly through 'placement agents' who come from outside and maintain a well-built network with local agents. Apart from men, women also work as agent.
- Local agents are mostly Nepali with few Adivasis. Nepali inhabitants are on an average are socially and politically better placed.
- For being influential, almost no protest is made by affected families against these agents. Very few complaints are lodged in the police station. Even if it is lodged, it is done much after the real time of trafficking causing loss of vital clues and cases are weakly lodged as "missing diary", not under ITPA.
- Early drop out and distance of high school with poor communication is a factor. These drop-outs are also temporarily employed in the garden during peak season at cheap rate. This premature monetary incentive creates moral ground to leave education.

- The mode of trafficking is mainly by way of alluring good job, better life in 'shohor'(city) and prospect to earn enough to send money to poor family. Traditional modes like child marriage, fake marriage, abduction or kidnapping are hardly used to traffic a girl. This is because, adivasis of tea gardens do not marry their daughters early, and marriage, to a large extent, depends on the choices of adult boys and girls.
- Governmental support to closed, sick or abandoned gardens, if available, is restricted to ration at considerably subsidized price, provisioning of drinking water & health care and providing Rs 1500 per month to few workers under 'fauli'(FAWLOI) scheme. Sometimes garden workers have sale portion of ration received at subsidized rate in the market or otherwise to have some cash to meet other expenses. "How long can we survive on government's mercy? We need many more things to survive than just rice," said a girl present in the FGD. She also told that some girls of tea gardens go to dhabas (eateries on highway) on National Highway 31 and their customers are mostly truck drivers, some nights they earn 500 rupees. Pimps take a portion but the rest is all theirs. Who would have given them this money? At least their family can have food every day, they have good clothes to wear and even have some money to spare."
- In cases poverty is so acute that the parents have no other way to get rid of members of the unit. Mother of a trafficked girl said that in spite of being a mother and obviously missing her daughter but she would not go to the police. With her income of Rs 60 per day how would she feed another mouth if she came back home? May sound heartless but is there any other option?
- As long as the boy or the girl sends money to home, parents disclose the facts. It surfaces when it stops. In no cases, parents/guardians check the authenticity & whereabouts of the placement agency or inform the local authority.
- Even those who returned 'safely' from places of work by earning some money falter to divulge their complete experience! As a result, those recruited anew are not exposed to the dangers of work outside.
- Even when local agents are questioned on incidence of having no linkage or connection with the trafficked ones, they shed off their responsibility.

### ***TRAFFICKED SURVIVORS***

During the survey our team detected 16 trafficked survivors who have mostly been rescued by different NGOs. Age ranges from 8 to 18 years. All of them are drop out. Of them, 5 girls were readmitted with the help of GNESEP, a NGO working in the area. One of them discontinued due to lack of interest and surprisingly, another one has been re-trafficked. It has been felt in course of interview that there is chance of re-trafficking in some other cases too. Lack of any system of proper rehabilitation of trafficked survivor poses a serious problem.

TABLE 33: STATUS OF TRAFFICKED SURVIVORS IN THE AREA UNDER STUDY

Name*	Sex	Tea garden	Age (Yrs)	Caste	No. of family member	Monthly family Income	School Class	Drop Out (YES/NO)	Drop out year	Trafficked by	Rescued by	Wherefrom rescued
1	M	Bundapani	8	ST	6	1001 - 2000	NO	YES	2011	relative	NGO	NA
2	F	Bundapani	17	ST	5	1001 - 2000	7	Drop-out, readmitted	2014	middle man	NGO	Sikkim
3	F	Bundapani	13	ST	4	1001 - 2000	4	YES	2013	middle man	NGO	Dhupguri
4	F	Bundapani	17	ST	4	1001 - 2000	4	YES	2013	middle man	NGO	Dhupguri
5	F	Bundapani	16	ST	4	1001 - 2000	NO	YES	Never gone to school	middle man	NGO	Delhi
6	F	Bundapani	18	ST	6	1001 - 2000	NO	YES	Never gone to school	middle man	NGO	Sikkim
7	F	Bundapani	16	ST	6	1001 - 2000	NO	YES	Never gone to school	middle man	NGO	Sikkim
8	F	Dekhlapara	15	sc	5	1001 - 2000	NO	YES	2012	middle man	NGO	Kolkata
9	F	Dekhlapara	12	sc	4	2001 - 3000	NO	YES	2012	middle man	NGO	Kolkata
10	F	Dekhlapara	14	SC	4	2001 - 3000	5	Drop-out, readmitted	2015	middle man	NGO	Kolkata
11	F	Dalmore	18	ST	6	3001 - 4000	10	no	2015	middle man	NGO	Delhi
12	F	Dalmore	15	ST	6	2001 - 3000	5	Drop-out, readmitted but Not continuing	2013	middle man	NGO	Delhi
13	F	Dalmore	15	SC	4	2001 - 3000	5	Drop-out, readmitted	2013	middle man	NGO	Delhi
14	F	Bharnobari	13	ST	4	2001 - 3000	6	Drop-out, readmitted but trafficked again	2014	middle man	NGO	Sikkim
15	F	Singhanian	18	ST	5	1001 - 2000	10	YES	2015	middle man	NGO	Udlabari
16	F	Singhanian	18	ST	6	2001 - 3000	9	YES	2014	middle man	NGO	Udlabari

\*Instead of names, number are used for keeping identities undisclosed

### MIGRATION IN SEARCH OF LIVELIHOOD – NOW THE ROUTE IS REVERSE & DIVERSIFIED

Ramai Munda lives at the Chaibasa line of the closed Bundapani tea estate. He has 3 sons and 2 daughters— all but one migrated from Bundapani where Ramai lives through 4 generations. He lost his wife few years back. He has no regular job now; sometimes he goes to the nearby riverbed to break stones and earns 60-70 rupees a day. Yes, he entitled to get Rs 1500 per month from FAWLOI scheme.

Frustrated Ramai drinks day and night. He is forty-five now.

Eldest daughter, Sushila, aged 17, migrated to Darjeeling in search of a job. Returned home once, handed over 5000 rupees and went back without delay. Ramai does not know what kind of job she does, he says — “gharka kam hoga”(may be household job). People (read agents) come from Sikkim, Darjeeling and other place to these dying gardens, allure “achcha kam-dandha”(good jobs) and children like Sushila goes out .....



Sanjib, next to Sushil and aged 15 years, migrated to Sikkim for work. He neither came back nor sent any money. Nobody knows what is happening to him. In cases, employer provides food only.

Rahul, the younger brother, 12 years of age and Anuska, younger sister, only 7 years old followed his elder brother and went to Sikkim, did not return thereafter. No money received. Ramai waits.

Of the 5 sons and daughters, lone 4 years old Sujon Munda is in the home. Ramai's elder brother takes care of this little one. Will Sujon also migrate? Will he be lucky enough to live with his elder ones?

We have no answer. Like an onlooker we came across stories after stories of migration in labour lines of Bundapani, Dheklapara, Dumchipara, Hantapara, Kalchini, Ramjhora, Raimatang and others. No official record is available. We have documented houses in labour lines of Bundapani and Dheklapara in dilapidated condition wherefrom the entire families have migrated. This huge exodus reminds us the nineteenth century days when thousands of tribal people had to migrate from their ancestral land at Chotonagpur and Santhal Pargana to Terai and Dooars tea plantations through 'Sardars' and 'Arkathis'. Due to ruthless destruction of tribal agrarian system, alienation from land, famine and floods compelled them to migrate for hundreds of kilometer to an unknown secluded terrain. They stayed, accepted and adapted in these enclaves for generations being completely delinked with the ancestral land. Now, these tea gardens fail to provide the basic sustenance even. So, migrate again – now the route is reverse & diversified.

Although, our study is restricted to migration under the age 20 years, we have recorded more than 200 cases of migration above 20 years of age. The narrative of Arsha Tamag of Raimatang tea estate portrays the condition how the children are affected when both the parents have migrated.

Arsha studies in class eleven in Nepali High School at Dima. Subjects are English, Nepali, History, Political Science and Philosophy. Her family is composed of 4 members, parents, 10 years old sister and she— a small happy family. Father was a permanent worker of the garden, mother maintained the household chores. Mother used to tighten Arsha's long hair at the time of going to school and also get her sister readied for school.

But the closure of the garden brought dark shadow on their simple happy going. Finding no other alternative, both the parents migrated to Kashmir, work in 'xerox' (photocopying) shop, and send 3000 rupees every month. Arsha has to spend very carefully— has to pay electricity bill, tuition fees, and meet expenses for food. She has to be vigilant to her inattentive sister. Sometimes she has to scold. She becomes afraid when it rains heavily— "*dar lagta hay*" (getting afraid).

They live in a single room without any bathroom and toilet. They had to go outside home in the garden. They fear to go in the night. Arsha gets tensed during sickness. Neighbours help.

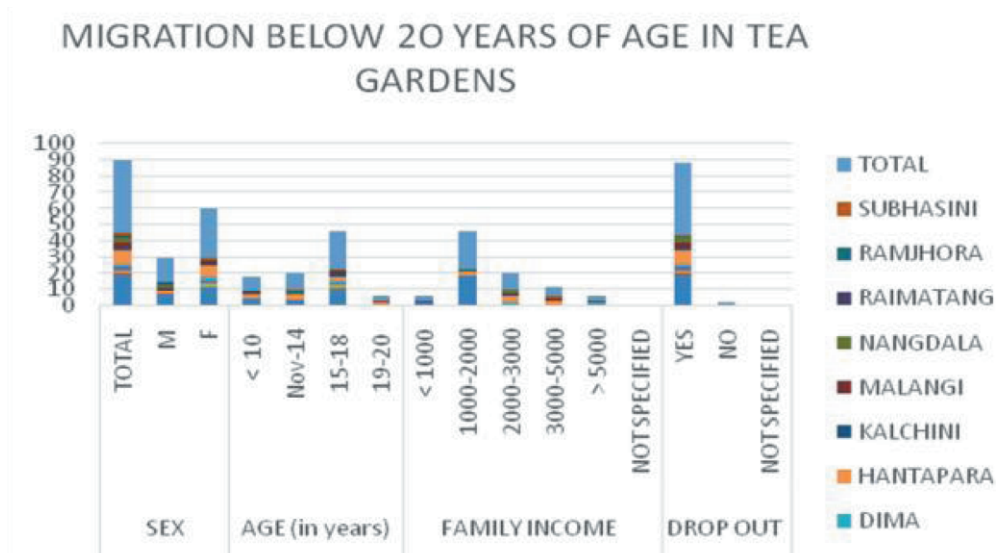
She waits for the puja when she is expecting her parents back in home at least for few days. With father she will again go to see fair at Hamiltonganj during *Kalipuja* and will again buy bangles.

One direct outcome of acute economic adversity, social exclusion, the lack of substitute employment opportunities, absence of life-supporting amenities, and geographical seclusion is the large-scale exodus of teenagers to faraway destinations, often with the knowledge and support of their parents. Such migration is neither illegal nor is resulting in trafficking in all cases. The number and proportion by which migration is happening in the tea gardens of Dooars is alarmingly high. The district of Alipurduar has only one government aided ITI (Industrial training Institute). It has neither any private ITI nor any Vocational Training Centres (VTCs) or Operational Centres (OCs).

The process of migration in the area seems to be high among the youths who have been

migrating to different urban centres of the country. The pull factor has been very high in the study area, and a chain of migrants have gone after them to different urban centres working as daily wage labourers, housemaids, waiter in hotels, cooks etc to support their family income. The remittance send by the migrants to their houses are either on monthly basis or they bring all together when they visit their home once or twice a year. Some of the migrants have been misguided by their owners with respect to monthly income, which seems to be a growing concern among the migrants.

The migrants are either the non workers whose female kin have garden jobs or if they are workers they transfer their job to the woman in the family or even a younger male relative. In some cases, some continue to hold on to the job in the plantation while going away for a few months to earn extra money and join work in the garden after coming back.



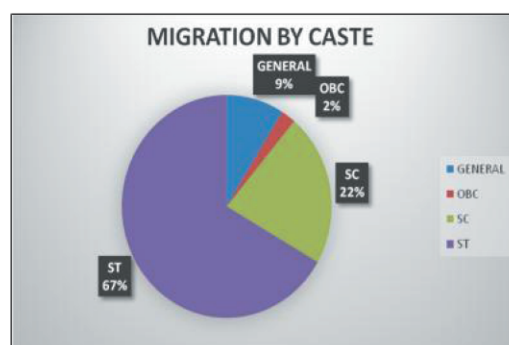
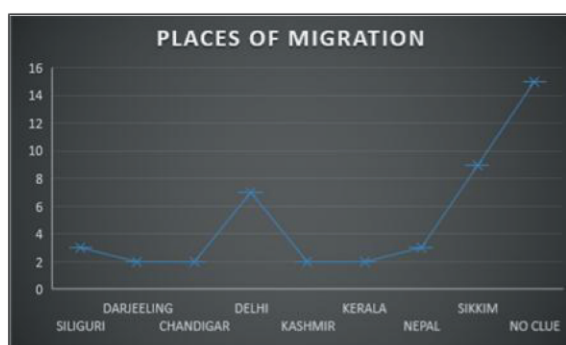
GRAPH 15: MIGRATION BELOW 20 YEARS OF AGE IN TEA GARDENS UNDER STUDY

TABLE 34: STATUS OF MIGRATION BELOW 20 YEARS IN THE AREA UNDER STUDY																
TEA ESTATE	SEX			AGE (in years)				FAMILY INCOME					NOT SPECIFIED	DROP OUT		
	TOTAL	M	F	< 10	11-14	15-18	19-20	< 1000	1000-2000	2000-3000	3000-5000	> 5000		YES	NO	NOT SPECIFIED
BUNDAPANI	19	7	12	5	4	10	0	0	19	0	0	0	0	19	0	0
DALSINGPARA	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1		1	0	0
DHEKLAPARA	2	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	2	0	0
DHUMCHIPARA	2	0	2	0	0	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
DIMA	2	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	2	0	0
HANTAPARA	8	1	7	2	3	2	1	0	2	4	2	0	0	8	0	0
KALCHINI	2	1	1	0	0	2	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	0
MALANGI	3	1	2	0	0	2	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	3	0	0
NANGDALA	3	2	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	3	0	0
RAIMATANG	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0
RAMJHORA	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
SUBHASINI	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>

TABLE 35: MIGRATION BELOW 20 YEARS CASES BY AREA & BY CASTE

PLACE OF MIGRATION	NUMBER
SILIGURI	3
DARJEELING	2
CHANDIGAR	2
DELHI	7
KASHMIR	2
KERALA	2
NEPAL	3
SIKKIM	9
NO CLUE	15
TOTAL	45

GENERAL	4
OBC	1
SC	10
ST	30
TOTAL	45



GRAPH 16: MIGRATION BELOW 20 YEARS CASES BY AREA & BY CASTE

Survey, Interviews and FGDs revealed the following—

- Migration is more in the gardens closed for long time and closed earlier, reopened but sick gardens.
- There are very few alternative source of income- stone grinding in the nearby beds, irregular daily labour in road construction & in other works, few job in transport business as helper, 'lakri'(wood) business etc. Job as daily labour is not regularly available. Stone grinding and cutting lakri from jungle fetch only 60 to 80 rupees a day.
- Adult as well as teenagers are migrating to faraway places like Kerala, Chandigarh, Kashmir, Delhi etc.
- Some families have no connection with the migrant family members. They don't send money or make a call. Family members are doubtful whether they are 'missing'.
- On average, elder migrant above 20 years of age send 2500 rupees to home through bank or acquaintances. For migrant under 20 years this is 1100 rupees and in a number of cases they cannot send any amount, they serve there for getting food only.
- In cases, members of the same family migrated to different geographic location and have no connection with each other. This is even true for entire family. This has also prompted trafficking.

- There is a recent trend, particularly among the elders, to migrate to Kerala & Bangalore. It is reported that a migrant can earn 500 rupees a day as daily labour there and jobs are abundant. Interestingly, these plantation workers do not find jobs in tea plantations of Kerala. Few have migrated to Dubai even through placement agencies.
- There is no prevailing system of recording migration by the local authority and also no health checkup of the migrant while returning home.
- In course survey we met a number of young persons who readying themselves for migration.
- Job availability from MNREGA varies widely across the Gram Panchayats (GP) such as there was about 60 man days' job provided in Birpara-II GP while in Nangdala it is as low as 14 in last year. Even payment is irregular.
- On an average Rs 40 a day is paid to the workers in the gardens run by OMC (Operation Management Committee).
- FAWLOI (Rs 1500 per month) is available for permanent workers only and upto the age of 60.
- Migration of entire family occurs mainly in gardens closed and sick for long.
- In case of running but distressed gardens, workers migrate for 1-3 months, earn extra money and come back. One reason for this is that absence from work in the garden more 3 months at a stretch may lead deprival of his entitlements including housing.

## XIX. CHILD MARRIAGE

Although 10 cases of child marriages have been reported during the survey (shown in the table), the prevalence of child marriage is not as much as other issues like drop out, migration, trafficking, child labour etc. Barring a very few exception, almost all the respondent households are found to be aware about the legal age of marriage. As per survey, the average "suitable age of marriage" for boys and girls are 25 and 21 years respectively. This finding was supported in the community level group discussions and interactions with children. This may be because the adivasis of the tea gardens do not marry their daughters early, and marriage, to a large extent, depends on the choices of adult men and women. This is in sharp contrast to other districts of the state. It may be mentioned in this context that NGOs (like, GNESEP) arrange regular campaign against child marriage in these localities.

TABLE 36: CASES OF CHILD/ EARLY MARRIAGE IN THE STUDY AREA				
<i>Sl.no.</i>	<i>Sex</i>	<i>Garden</i>	<i>Present age</i>	<i>Marriage age</i>
1	F	Subhasini	15	14
2	M	Dima	18	17
3	F	Dima	17	17
4	F	Dima	23	16
5	F	Dheklapara	20	14
6	F	Dheklapara	17	15
7	F	Dheklapara	20	17
8	F	Hantapara	16	13
9	F	Hantapara	16	Not specified
10	M	Singhania	18	16



The nationwide District Level Household and Facility Survey (DLHS-4), conducted during 2012-13, shows the mean age of marriage for girls and boys and percentage of currently married women married below age 18 years and 21 years (marriages that occurred during the reference period) shows that a better picture when compared with the state average.

TABLE 37: DISTRICT LEVEL HOUSEHOLD AND FACILITY SURVEY (DLHS-4)				
<i>District</i>	<i>Marriage - Mean age at marriage for girls</i>	<i>Marriage - Mean age at marriage for boys</i>	<i>Marriage - Percentage of currently married women married below age 18 years</i>	<i>Marriage - Percentage of currently married men married below age 21 years</i>
Jalpaiguri (undivided)	21.4	26.8	16.9	8.8
West Bengal	19.2	25.4	31.6	15.8

## XX. CHILD LABOUR

The lack of material security in Madarihat and Kalchini blocks has created monetary need that pushes children into child labour, and this has forsaken their right to education. In the preceding sections, we have discussed at length the magnitude and pattern of out migration, both safe and unsafe, of children. That apart, a considerable number of children have discontinued education and taking significant part in earning of these distressed families. Two kinds of work are done by children –

1. Inside the plantation –
  - (a) In plantation work;
  - (b) In other work; and
2. Outside the plantation for wage.

In spite of the recent amendment to the PLA (The Plantation Labour (Amendment) Act 2010) that prohibits child labour in plantations (Section 24), the incidence of child labour in the tea plantations of Dooars is high. They either assist parent (usually mother) in fulfilling the productivity quota during the lean season to avoid probable wage deductions or assist parents with household chores and childcare (primarily performed by girl children) or both. This leads to seasonal or pronounced drop out from schools. FGDs indicate that the child labour inside the plantation largely belongs to the age above 10 years. Some children collect drinking water from distant sources for slightly better off households against paltry sum. One can easily find children collecting, crushing and sieving stones in the adjoining dry river beds of Madarihat and Kalchini and a daylong hard toil of these tender hands brings on an average 40-60 rupees per child. Besides, children are engaged in collecting woods from forest, in garages, shops and restaurants, as helper to mason etc.

**No incidence of enforcement of law for protection of child labour by local authority or by the community has been reported. There is no National Child Labour Project (NCLP) in the area under study.**

## XXI. PROTECTION MECHANISMS FOR VULNERABLE CHILDREN

Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS), launched by the Ministry of Women and Child Development in 2009, focuses its activities on children in need of care and protection and children in conflict as defined under the Juvenile Justice Act. It provides preventive, statutory and care and rehabilitation services to any other vulnerable child including children of potentially vulnerable families and families at risk, families living in extreme poverty, scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other backward classes, minorities, trafficked or sexually exploited children and working children. Under the ICPS, provision has been made for formation of Child Protection Committees at various levels.

But the child protection mechanism is almost completely absent in Madarihat & Kalchini blocks and even in the entire Alipurduar district. There is no CWC at any level in the district. One may argue that the district has been formed only in 2014, on 25th June dividing Jalpaiguri district and for that reasons necessary set up could not be developed. Erstwhile undivided Jalpaiguri district itself was backward in many respects; whatever child protection mechanism it had was centered in Jalpaiguri town and adjacent areas, other parts including the Alipurduar Sub-division (this sub-division has become Alipurduar district) were totally neglected. This is evident from the following table.

TABLE 38: SITUATION OF CHILD REALTED COMMITTEE, BOARD, CHILDLINE & HOMES IN UNDIVIDED JALPAIGURI DISTRICT	
<i>Unit</i>	<i>Address</i>
Child Welfare Committee	Korak Home, Race Course para, Jalpaiguri
Juvenile Justice Board	Korak Home, Race Course para, Jalpaiguri
Childline 1098	Department of Economics, Ananda Chandra College P.O. District - Jalpaiguri-735101(Nodal Organization)
	Jalpaiguri Welfare Organisation, P.O. & District Jalpaiguri, Pin – 735101(Collaborative Organization)
Homes under J.J. Act 2000	Korak, Observation & Juvenile Home, Race Course, Jalpaiguri [Government run]
	Khagrabari Rural Energy Development Association, Kamakhyaguri, Jalpaiguri [NGO run]
	Anubhab Home, Jalpaiguri Mahila Kalyan Sangha, New Town, Jalpaiguri [NGO run]
	Nijoloy - Women's Interlink Foundation, WIF - Jalpaiguri Unit, Beguntari, P.O. & Dist: Jalpaiguri, PIN – 735101[NGO run]

Thus, there was practically no child protection mechanism in Madarihat & Kalchini blocks either in the erstwhile undivided Jalpaiguri or in the newly formed Alipurduar district. Few NGOs have some activities in child protection but that is far from the requirement. Of late it is heard that Government of West Bengal will advertise in 2016 to appoint Child Welfare Committee & Juvenile Justice Board in the district. There is no appointment of officers as Special Police Officers (SPO) u/s 13 of the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956 in the police stations of Madarihat and Kalchini. Also there is no Anti Human Trafficking Units (AHTU) or Special Juvenile Police Units (SJPU) in any police station of the two blocks. No District Child Protection Units (DCPU) under ICPS has yet been set up.

## DIVISION – IV

### XXII. RECOMMENDATIONS

The principal cause of the vulnerable situation of the children in the tea estates of Dooars is low wage of the workers, absence of fringe benefits and closure or sickness of the gardens. Therefore, proper wages and benefits are the natural demands. Giving due respect to this, it has been observed from the foregoing discourse that there are other issues and requirements which are relevant and neglected so long.

This study clearly showed that the management of the tea gardens, particularly in the study area, have been gradually and constantly shedding off the responsibility of providing education, health, drinking water, food and other facilities as stipulated in the PLA, 1951 and passing the 'burden' to the government agencies and at the same time they are paying low wages to the workers. Actually, the government is subsidizing the tea estates in other way. In the light of the above, several general recommendations are put forward—

#### PART A – GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

1. It is suggested that the recently formed Minimum Wage Committee should provide its recommendations to initiate appropriate wage in the tea gardens. Adequate representations of workers groups should be there in the formulation of Minimum wage.
2. Arrangement for giving clear title of the house/ land to the workers where they are living. This will pave way to access IAY, bank loans etc.
3. Unused dispensaries or hospitals of the closed or abandoned tea estates may be used officially as primary health centre, ICDS centres, immunization centre or by ASHA workers.
4. Health services in the tea gardens are to be regularized. There must be emergency health care services with referral system in closed and sick tea gardens. Health care support also needs to be provided to the adolescents.
5. The gaps of MGNREGA need to be addressed. There must be immediate actions to address delay in payments.
6. As transport is a big crisis, roads within the gardens may be constructed under MGNREGA scheme.
7. Uses of sanitary napkins and sense of menstrual hygiene is highly poor as revealed from interviews & FGDs. Project of manufacturing low cost sanitary napkins may be undertaken with the help of NGOs which will also generate employment & enterprise.
8. As the nutritional level is extremely low, serious attempts are needed to introduce “kitchen garden” to every household and one or two “community kitchen garden” in each line of habitation initially under MGNREGA scheme (if allowable). These community kitchen gardens will supply vegetables to local schools for MDM, ICDS centres and SAHAY scheme.
9. The recent change in the menu and allocation of the mid day meal scheme for children which includes milk and banana and less of carbohydrate may be introduced to improve the situation to some extent.
10. As the non-workers are increasing in the tea estates under study area, there is urgent need to develop alternative livelihood other than working in the tea gardens. Identification of alternative employment opportunities (which currently are limited to tourism) is necessary.
11. In the Central Budget for 2016-17, vermin-compost is included in MGNREGA schemes. This may be introduced here and supplied to the tea gardens. Along with mushroom culture can be initiated as a byproduct.
12. Linkage with Ministry of Rural Development, Agriculture for livelihood promotion, SHG formation, entrepreneurship development with locally available skill and trades are recommended. Apart from the schemes and initiatives as mentioned over here, inclusion of local people under Annapurana or Antyodaya Yojna to be implemented. Before that, government needs to set up PDS outlet within tea gardens.

13. Availability & supply of drinking water is a major perennial problem. Attempts are to be taken to bring fund from RIDF to supply drinking water. PHE coverage should also be extended.
14. In the Bundapani tea estate, the water pipe lines passing through the forest area are regularly being damaged by elephants. Local Panchayet may adopt a scheme of maintenance.
15. Six tea estates in the area under study and the local inhabitants are severely affected by dolomite dust of hugely loaded trucks carrying dolomites from Bhutan to Dalgaon or to Durgapur Steel Plant. Low capacity roads are unable to bear the burden, easily damaged and generate dust too. Water is not sprayed regularly, trucks remain uncovered and people cannot agitate much being afraid of the local mafias who control the trade. This is a very serious issue and needs to be addressed immediately.
16. Formation of co-operatives by the workers in case of tea gardens closed for long time and where there are no or little disputes regarding lease holding of the land of the garden (as in the case of Bundapani tea estate) may be attempted with all care and caution. MNREGA may be applied with proper amendment to make garden reusable.

*In view of the distress situation of tea garden workers in North Bengal, Mr. Harsh Mander, Special Commissioner of the Supreme Court, gave some recommendations to the Chief Secretary, Government of West Bengal on 1<sup>st</sup> February, 2016 for the improvement of food distress situation of tea plantation workers.*

- a. Plantation Labour Act Amendments:** In view of people's interest, it becomes important to ensure that State Government needs to provide basic public goods, such as food, education, drinking water, health and housing, instead of the plantation management which makes workers very dependent and vulnerable. In order to accomplish this, in certain cases the Plantation Labour Act would need suitable amendments. However that does not mean to absolve the tea garden management of the financial responsibilities for these public goods.
- b. A Joint review Committee** comprised of officials from State Government and Supreme Court Commissioners is proposed.
- c. Food security:** It is suggested to give responsibility to capable Self Help Groups (SHGs) to manage the ration shops.
- d. MGNREGA:** It is suggested to provide enough work in order to ensure 150 person days of work to all job card holders and old arrears need to be cleared.
- e. Pensions:** All person above 60 years, all single women and all persons with disability in the AAY list should automatically and suo motu be covered with pensions under NSAP without having to make specific applications.
- f. ICDS:** It is recommended to start at least one ICDS centre with proper building per 40 children population in every stressed garden within two months and in all gardens within 6 months.
- g. School Drop-outs:** Initiatives need to be taken to survey the drop out children and send them back to school. It is suggested to provide adequate transportation facilities to reduce the drop rate of children from the tea gardens. Information related to children undergoing unsafe migration need to be shared with Child Welfare Committee to take necessary action for rescue and repatriation. Criminal action should be initiated to rescue and rehabilitate the adolescent trafficked girls.
- h. Electricity:** Electric connections need to be restored in all gardens by the State Government.
- i. Drinking water:** Initiative needs to be taken to fully restore the drinking supply in all stressed gardens.
- j. Sahay:** Both the allocation and the coverage in Sahay needs to be expanded for all the vulnerable population in the stressed gardens.
- k. Health centres:** Tea garden management should be requested to allow the running of the PHCs in the centrally located dispensaries. In closed gardens this may be done by the administrative order.



## **PART B – CHILD SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. To arrest drop out & create interest among the students, particularly in the primary level, introduction of 'Sadri' as the medium of instruction in Adivasi inhabited areas is recommended. It is also recommended to increase number of schools having Nepali medium.
2. More teachers are to be appointed from the tribal communities so that they can easily connect the child and family.
3. Provisioning of free or low fare regular safe transport to schools for the students for all seasons.
4. Regular monitoring of undue levy of exorbitant admission and other fees at the time of getting admission in the schools. This has been complained by many respondents. State Education Department needs to monitor for proper implementation of RTE through District Education Authority.
5. PTR in a number of schools is far above the prescribed limit. Attention is to be drawn in this respect. Immediate actions need to be taken to recruit teachers in the schools close to the tea gardens. Children often reported lack of interest in schools due to no educational environment because of absence of teachers.
6. There is need to initiate the community level informal education for the children for the out of school children and drop out children. It would also enhance awareness on the importance of education.
7. Special classes for the weaker children need to be initiated in schools.
8. MDM may be introduced in the holidays and vacations. Schools should supply plates to the students for MDM and must have provision for washing the plates and other utensils. Every school should have drinking water facility.
9. Many a school lack essential infrastructures including rooms, toilets, drinking water, play ground, boundary wall etc. This should be looked into.
10. School Management Committees (SMC), conspicuously totally absent in the area under study, are to be formed and operative urgently.
11. Steps are to taken to increase Community participation in education.
12. Although new centres have been set up, the number AWCs are still inadequate with the population and demand. Centres should be set up close to the habitations.
13. AWCs may be set up in the non-functioning fixed crèches of the tea gardens.
14. There should be coordination among the AWW, ASHA worker and ANM of the PHC regarding immunization of the children and expecting mothers. A village level committee may be set up for this purpose. Formation of Mahila Arogya Samity (MAS) with rural women can be initiated in accordance with NHRM.
15. Information, education and communication (IEC) activities should be revitalized at these belts to increase the awareness and to improve their practices and attitudes for the full implementation of Universal Immunization Programme (UIP).
16. Supervision of ongoing UIP, reorientation of health services may be considered as key components. Side by side sustain routine immunization coverage should be followed in order to touch the untouched.
17. Mobilization of children through frontline workers including ASHA [@ Rs.150/session as per government norms].
18. Fund for hiring of ANM/GNM for conducting session in un-served and underserved areas in both rural and urban areas [@Rs.450/session] as per government norms is to be utilized.
19. Vitamin A enriched candy [as given in Howrah and Dakshin Dinajpur Districts] is to be introduced in the AWCs in these areas.
20. Premix (micronutrients like Iron, Vitamin A & Iodine) is to be used in Khichri under SNP programme of ICDS in these areas.
21. SABLA is to be introduced in these areas effectively to cater adolescent girls who are out of school.

22. Introduction of WASH programme following UNICEF's guidelines in the communities with the help of local NGOs for environmental and behavioral changes. This is important because there are cases of open defecation, lack sanitation and hygiene.
23. A District Missing Persons Unit (DMPU) with a web based computer programme and broadband connection for uploading the information on missing person has to be set up in the district. The information can be uploaded in track child portal as this integration will help in identification of the missing children.
24. Extra efforts to be taken to form and put into operation the child protection committees at various levels – whereby children can be sensitized their rights and entitlements. Activation of the village level child protection committees and empower them to act as effective referral bodies to respond to child protection related issues have to be taken up in war footing.
25. Anti-Human Trafficking Units (AHTU) is to be formed immediately at the district level in the newly formed Alipurduar district. Formation of District Child Protection Unit is essential to cover all the children living under vulnerable conditions.
26. DCPU, SSB, Police and AHTU all need to collectively work to prioritize to prevent and act on cases of missing and trafficking of children from tea gardens.
27. District administration should formulate mission programs to stop trafficking in the tea gardens.
28. Setting up of Neighbourhood Watch Groups in the vulnerable labour lines.
29. Regular campaign against trafficking involving Self -Help Groups, NGOs, school teachers, AWW, AWH, ASHA workers, Panchayat members etc.
30. Effective implementation of ICPS and formation of VLCPC/ BLCPC, child cabinets in schools etc.
31. Sensitization by posters and campaign against fake and illegal placement agencies of New Delhi and other cities that in guise of providing job traffic the children. There must be control and monitoring of the Placement agencies related to their authenticity and work.
32. Campaign and advocacy to sensitize law enforcement officers, appointment of full time 'special police officers', spotting traffickers and their agents/sub-agents and strict vigilance.
33. Generate awareness among parents using different tools like posters, leaflets, street drama and documentary films.
34. Protection and rehabilitation of rescued victims.. Special schemes (employment & education oriented) for rehabilitation of the trafficked survivors should immediately taken.
35. Mapping of NGOs and forming a network for bridging the gap of service delivery.

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## XXIII. REFERENCES & NOTES

Note: In case of migration few respondents below 20 years have been considered.

The **Dooars** or **Duars** are the floodplains and foothills of the eastern Himalayas in North-East India around Bhutan. Duar means 'door' in Assamese, Bengali, Nepali, Maithili, Bhojpuri, Magahi and Telugu languages, and the region forms the gateway to Bhutan from India.

The **Terai** is a plain landscape south of the outer foothills of the Himalaya, the Siwalik Hills, and north of the Indo-Gangetic Plain of the Ganges, Brahmaputra and their tributaries. The Terai is part the Terai-Dooar savanna and grass lands ecoregion. Corresponding parts in West Bengal, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Assam east to the Brahmaputra River are called 'Dooars'.

The Oraons, Mundas, Kharia, Mahali, Lohara and Chik Baraik are the tribals from these areas.

Alipurduar district was formed in the year 2014, on 25th June. It consists of Alipurduar municipality, Falakata municipality and six community development blocks, namely, Madarihat-Birpara, Alipurduar-I, Falakata, Kalchini and Kumargram. The six blocks contain 66 gram panchayats and nine census towns. The district has its headquarters at Alipurduar.

Source: Synopsis on Survey of Tea Gardens conducted by Regional Labour Offices under the jurisdiction of Joint Labour Commissioner, North Bengal Zone [survey was conducted in the fourth quarter of 2012]

Source: compilation of field information, status report on relief measures in closed tea gardens as on 31.9.2007 by the Office of the District Magistrate, Jalpaiguri.

Note: G-NESEP (Godhulibazar North East Society for Empowerment of the people), Head Office: Godhulibazar, post-Dinhata, Dist- Coochbehar, Pin- 736135; The organization has its branch at Madarihat, Alipurduar and it has taken some initiatives for immediate relief and a process of conveying local authority to regularize rationing system, immediate door step medical service and for starting up of SAHAY prakalpa with assistance from AAI. E-mail: gnesep@gmail.com

Note: During survey, no female foeticide has been reported. This may be due to demand of female works in the tea garden and culture of the tribal populations.

Note: The details of amounts collected in the name of Fringe Benefits per day per person –

- Housing-Rs 5.80
- Medical Rs.3.25
- Holiday & Welfare Rs.3.00
- Ration Rs.14.00
- Bonus Rs10.00
- Provident Fund – majority don't know exactly amount of deduction
- Maternity Benefit Rs.1.25
- Tea Rs.1.90
- Firewood Rs.3.70

Source & note: Synopsis on Survey of Tea Gardens conducted by Regional Labour Offices under the jurisdiction of Joint Labour Commissioner, North Bengal Zone [survey was conducted in the fourth quarter of 2012]. In this survey no information is available for Chinchula, Dalmore, Dheklapara & Malangi tea estates. The facilities as shown to be available in Bundapani Tea Estate is totally unavailable at present due to closure of the garden. Dheklapara & Dalmore tea estates were closed at the time survey by the Labour Department.

Source: G.O. No. 462(2) -SW dated 2.2.2012

Source & Note: The Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) is implementing various schemes in Educationally Backward Blocks (EBBs) such as Model Schools, construction of Girls hostel, Kastruba Gandhi Balika Vidyalay (KGBVs) etc. EBBs blocks have been identified educational backward blocks (EBBs) on the basis of twin criteria of Female Literacy Rate being below the national average of 46.13% and Gender Gap in Literacy being above the national average of 21.59%.

Source: Synopsis on Survey of Tea Gardens conducted by Regional Labour Offices under the jurisdiction of Joint Labour Commissioner, North Bengal Zone [survey was conducted in the fourth quarter of 2012]

**Sadri**, also known as **Nagpuri**, is an Eastern [Indo-Aryan language](#) spoken in the [Indian](#) states of [Bihar](#), [Jharkhand](#), [Orissa](#) and the north of [West Bengal](#), and in [Bangladesh](#). In January 2014, the national curriculum and textbook board started printing books in Sadri.

Source: compiled from data available in [ssa.nic.in/infraprovisiondoc/govt-schools...](http://ssa.nic.in/infraprovisiondoc/govt-schools...)

Source: Annual Status of Education Report (Rural) 2014

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