

Dynamics of Internal Migration of Tea Workers: Problem and Potentials to Generate Employment



Study Commissioned by:
**ILO WEEH Project in association with
Bangladesh Tea Association (BTA)**

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

BBS	Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
BCSU	Bangladesh Cha Sramik Union
BTA	Bangladesh Tea Association
BTRI	Bangladesh Tea Research Institute
CBSG	Capacity Building Service Group
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
ILO	International Labour Organisation
NGO	Non Government Organization
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
WEEH	Women Empowerment through Employment and Health

Acknowledgement

This study report is the result of a co-operative and mutually supportive exercise between the study team and a number of stakeholders associated with tea industries in Bangladesh

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Finally, while acknowledging the valuable inputs of all the above, the study team stands by the data, analysis and conclusions reached from the findings of the study and believes them to be a sound response to the information available. However, the study team also recognizes that the findings, analysis, and conclusion including any errors and omissions contained within this report are of its own.

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Executive Summary

The overall Women Empowerment through Employment and Health (WEEH) project of ILO has a main objective to empower poor women in Bangladesh through increasing their access to decent employment, incomes and viable health insurance systems. WEEH contributes to poverty reduction and economic development by implementing activities in both the formal and informal economy in the country through two sub-projects, namely:

- Micro-Health Insurance for Rural Women in Bangladesh (MHIB)
- Women Empowerment through Decent Employment (WEDE)

The WEDE sub project has established partnership with Bangladesh Tea Association (BTA) by signing MoU in October 2003. On the basis of the areas of future activities identified in the MoU, a Seminar on “Social Dimensions in the Tea Plantations in South Asia” was held in relation to current and future trends of the tea sector Social Dialogue, ILO conventions, Gender Equality, Decent Work and overall productivity issues.

Objective and scope of the study

In pursuance of the recommendations of the seminar on Social Dimension in Tea Plantations in South Asia held in 1-2 July 2004, Dhaka and subsequent discussions with Bangladesh Tea Association (BTA), WEEH project of International Labour Organization has commissioned the study on “ Labour Internal migration from Surplus to Deficit Estates”. The main purposes of the study are to find out the reasons associated with reluctance of the worker in movement/internal migration, identify solutions to the current problem of imbalances in supply and demand of labour in different plantations, and to help improve employment situation of the tea sector.

Methodology and Implementation

This is an explorative study and first of its kind. CBSG adopted a combination of social and qualitative research methodology to optimise the data validity and presentation. Specifically, the research team was depended on the following techniques:

- Document review and collection and analysis of information from secondary sources
- Workshop with multi-stakeholders
- Key informants interview (BTA members, Garden staff and management BCSU leaders, PDU, BTRI, NGOs and ILO)
- Focus Group Discussions with male and female workers using PRA methodologies, and
- Case studies

The study team employed a combination of multistage and purposive random sampling so that its represents diversity in terms of issues, population, seasonal variations and geographical proximity. The study team primarily selected 14 gardens ensuring representation of local, foreign company, geographic region (valley) and most importantly the internal migration prone (deficit and surplus gardens) areas.

Tea Sector Analysis

Tea occupies an important place in the national economy of Bangladesh. Tea industry in Bangladesh dates back to mid 19th century when the first tea garden started **commercial**

operation at Malnicherra in Sylhet. Private tea cultivation had been started in Chittagong area even before that period. About four lakh people including one lakh ten thousand permanent workers live on Bangladesh tea industry. Tea cultivation in Bangladesh is mostly spread over the hilly zones on the eastern part of the country. Four districts namely Maulavibazar, Habigonj, Sylhet and Chittagong are producing more than 50 million kilogram of tea annually from about 50,000 hectares of land. It is worthwhile to mention that total grant area for tea cultivation is about 113,349 hectare of land. Out of which only 46% (51,825 hectare) has so far been brought under tea cultivation. Tea cultivation has also been started in hilly areas of Panchagarh district through private initiatives. Of the total gardens, 77% gardens are surplus in workers population, 22 % are deficit and 1% are balanced garden. Tea gardens are categorised according to their production capacity. 63% gardens belong to “A” Category, 16% are of “B” category and rests are C or under category gardens.

Characteristics of Tea worker in the Studied tea/states

Tea industry is predominantly labour intensive, non-traditional and agricultural based. Therefore, tea worker has an important bearing over the industry. Tea Workers in Bangladesh originally brought in from different parts of India particularly from Assam, Bihar, Orissa, Tamil Nadu, Hyderabad states during late 19th and early 20th century. Primarily they belong to Hindu community. They follow traditional customs of their respective Gotras (sub-caste) and are very different from local Bengali Hindus. They tend to live together based on Gotra. The study team has come across tea workers from Tanti, Deshwali, Karmaker, Bagdi, Munda. Orang etc at 12 intensively studied gardens. Honesty and simplicity is very much inherent in their lifestyle. They tend to be complacent with their present status and rarely stretch their effort to achieve something.

Demographic character:

The study team gathered secondary data from 141 tea estates through BTA & BCSU while primary data have been collected from 14 intensively studied gardens. These gardens are spread over 7 valleys and represents gardens of sterling, nationalized and private owners. Among the 14 intensively gardens, the average family size is found at 5.18, which is lower than national statistics (5.60). Dependency ration per permanent worker is calculated at 4.02. It is estimated that 15 % of total workers population are adolescent while 9% are children (under 10 years).

Population growth is a major factor for worker surplus in the tea estates. The study made an attempt to observe population growth in the gardens based on secondary data. In the surplus gardens population growth 2003-4 is found 15.19 per 1000, which is higher than the deficit gardens (12.78 per 1000). The overall estimate of population growth from 14 intensively studied gardens is calculated at 14.70 per 1000 which is close to national statistics (15 per thousand, BBS 2002).

Employment

The study made an attempt to review the employment situation of the sector. Data collected from 141 gardens using both primary and secondary sources revealed that the tea sector have 84,987 permanent workers and 29, 849 temporary worker. It is estimated that out of total population 25% are permanent worker while 9% are temporary worker. Altogether 34% of workers population are either permanently or temporarily employed in the gardens.

The study team looked at the expansion of plantation area of the gardens. It is observed that more area of expansion took place in deficit gardens (6.87 hectare per garden) than surplus gardens (6.12 hectare per garden). Therefore more employment opportunity has been created in the deficit gardens over the last few years.

During the course of study, the team observed the benefit package offered to the workers by the management. It is observed that almost all gardens generally comply with the BTA-BCSU charter.

Deficit and Surplus

Definitions

A garden can be marked as deficit or surplus based on certain criteria. Average labour requirement per unit of land works as the benchmark for this purpose. There is no such industry standard that is agreed by all the concerned parties. As per PDU of BTB statistics 2004, average registered worker per hectare of land is 1.73. But it varies; some gardens employ even 2 workers for the same amount of plantation area. These variations have implications on the determination of the surplus or labour deficit garden.

Population related data reveals that in the surplus garden 25% of the population work as permanent worker and only 8% work as temporary. Thus 33% of the population work in the tea garden. In the deficit garden 25% of the population work as permanent while 14% work as temporary worker making 39% of population work in the tea garden. The above analysis clearly shows that deficit garden have made efforts to bring in more people in the garden work. But this strategy does not yet fulfil their worker requirement. They need more workers from other sources such as from surplus garden.

Reasons for Surplus

Tea sector has gone through an evolutionary process. The scale of operation and the functioning of the garden has been also part of the evolution. Tea workers always have been an important element in the development of tea industry in Bangladesh. The internal dynamics of the tea sector vis-à-vis other socio-economic conditions have strongly been influencing the tea sector particularly in the context of tea worker employment. Surplus and deficit of workers in tea garden are the result of various factors resulting from internal and external influences. They are:

- Cultural heritage and social bondage
- Population Growth
- Seasonal Variation
- Technological Development
- Satisfactory wage for temporary worker

Reasons for Deficit

There are some garden began with deficit worker. As the garden grows, the worker deficit did not cover with new worker. Some other garden becomes worker deficit overtime for various factors. Following are the factors contributing to worker deficit.

- Fast expanding and re-plantation
- Garden location is an important factor.

- Higher wage in outside garden work
- Low prospect for permanent work
- High level of absenteeism

Above are the general causes of worker deficit in the tea sector. But different groups view the causes differently. One can find some agreement as well as disagreement in the causes of worker deficit.

Supplementary employment and income

Tea garden also provides supplementary employment opportunities for garden worker. Rubber plantation is expanding in the tea estate. Other types of plantation such as pineapple, lemon is also getting momentum in some tea estates. This diversity is believed to create some additional employment opportunity within the tea garden.

With the natural growth of population and the diminishing scope of employment opportunity in the tea sector, alternative employment is the eventual solution to the challenge of employing tea estate population.

Balancing Tea Sector Employment

The supply and demand gap within the tea sector is growing steadily over the years. Now it has reached to a point that it becomes an important issue for the overall success of the tea sector. There has been isolated efforts adopted to address the worker imbalance situation.

Following strategies so far tried to resolve worker shortage.

- Incentive for extra work
- Contracting out
- Short term employment (from other tea garden)
- Permanent Settlement

Success achieved

The study has identified some key issues that have contributed to the successful internal migration strategy. These mainly include:

The management have planned and implemented the internal migration within the gardens under their own management. Tea workers are convinced with the help of existing workers

- Good opportunities for temporary workers to become permanent worker
- Good housing facilities
- Scope to cultivate paddy at plain land within the garden premise

The following major issues are identified as reason for failure for internal migration:

- Migrant's expectations were not met in the new garden with regard to housing, sanitation facilities and above all permanent employment
- The arrangement were done on ad-hoc basis without proper supervision, guidance and follow-up from concerned authorities

- New migrants are rehabilitated in isolated location of the garden. Thus they felt marginalized within the worker community
- Additional income opportunity such as livestock, firewood selling etc was greatly reduced in the new garden.
- Didn't find people with similar cast in the new garden
- Suggestive solution for surplus and deficit tea worker

The study team has discussed extensively with various groups related to the tea sector employment in particular the tea garden management, local level leadership (Panchayet) and the tea worker. All of them acknowledged the problem of worker surplus/ deficit and consider it as big constraint for tea sector development particularly in terms of growth and productivity. Tea garden management have a holistic perspective to solve this growing problem.

The study team concluded that the solutions can be implemented both in a mutually inclusive as well as exclusive approach. In a mutually exclusive approach, the strategy will include the following:

- Exchange of workers between surplus and deficit garden
- Extension of tea area to absorb surplus worker
- Alternative employment for the workers in the surplus garden

Internal migration will deal with the immediate to the medium term problem in tea sector. It is the alternative employment that needs to be in-place to resolve the eventual problem of worker surplus in the tea sector. Mainstreaming the tea sector population in the national economy through education, socialisation and life skill development will still remain as a major challenge. This needs to be attempted with a long-term perspective. But to address the immediate needs, some feasible alternative employment options have great prospects to deal with the surplus worker situation. These includes:

- Homestead gardening particularly in winter season
- Tailoring
- Cane work
- Monipuri dress material
- Rubber plantation (already initiated by few gardens)
- And other activities suitable for the tea worker

Internal migration - the challenges

Internal migration seems to be an appropriate strategy in the short and medium term to streamline employment imbalance in the tea sector. The study team have made concerted attempts to understand the challenges and found that those issue are rooted very much in the social, cultural as well as economic preference and interests. These are

Social bondage

The kinship and social bondage often within the cast system provides the main social security and convince of living together among the tea worker. They value this much more than mainland Bengalis.

Asset and entitlements

Tea workers have over the years developed some immovable asset base in various forms. Most often, they have made personal investment in the company provided house to make it more convenient for living. Emotionally they also feel the ownership of the company house. Some workers also bought land. But this is not universal like social bondage.

Job Security

By and large tea workers have a sense of job security even when they are not permanent in their existing garden. Worker is also convinced that in future their child will get job in the garden. The sense of job security has a premium value in their employment context.

Marginalisation

Workers migrating to a new garden face some challenges including social re-integration. They are often marginalized and restricted in the new garden. In some cases, migrant workers become a separate class as they live quite separately in the garden.

Tangible benefits and Facilities

Workers intending to migrate have an opportunity cost. In other words they face loss of income and benefits. These include both financial and non-financial benefits. New employment needs to be rewarding for the worker such that the new employment provides higher income and or facilities that not only offset the loss but also brings gains in real terms. In other words, the benefit package (financial and non-financial) needs to be acceptable, attractive and motivating.

Study team has revealed that the worker does not expect higher wages from the new garden, as it is quite similar across the sector. But extent and quality of benefits vary from garden to garden. The important motivating factors include:

- Permanent job
- Good housing facilities
- Water, Sanitation and Electricity
- Farming opportunity
- Medical facilities etc.

Apart from the above there are some other socio-economic constraints that inhibit workers from migrating to other gardens. These include:

- Good opportunity for supplementary income even in a surplus condition
- High level of confidence with the garden management
- Scope to work outside garden for cash wage
- Garden location is convenient such as close to town
- Opportunity to work adjacent garden as temporary work on daily wage basis
- Lack of security to get a permanent job in other gardens
- Absence of sufficient facilities in other garden

Internal migration - Need for Investment

Internal migration that is happening to date geared mostly through informal mechanism. This mechanism will not resolve the current imbalance in a foreseeable future. Therefore internal migration has to happen to a level that will bring employment balance in the tea sector. It requires a planned effort. Migration cannot be forced rather it needs to be facilitated.

External Assistance

Worker internal migration will improve the performance of tea sector and thus will contribute to the national economy. Government might play a role to facilitate the internal migration plan. Internal migration issue should be included in the tea sector program of the government. This will bring in government resources to implement the plan. Apart from the government, international development agencies and donor organisations might play a role in the implementation of a well-targeted internal migration plan.

A suggestive Frame work for Internal migration

The study team have come to a conclusion that internal migration issue is strategic in nature and requires integrated and long-term program to have sustainable impact in the tea sector. As it is an integrated program, all stakeholders have a role to play to successfully implement the internal migration program. Following gives a detail description of the internal migration framework with the role of particular stakeholders.

Sector wide assessment

Information base regarding surplus and deficit is not very strong. It is important to have a very authentic database of worker situation in the tea sector. BTA should take initiative to develop the garden specific database that will provide detail information regarding surplus and deficit garden as well as exact details of surplus/deficit worker. This database will help to develop a internal migration strategy.

Identification and Mobilization

Each of the surplus gardens will need to identify people who can be relocated into new garden. Identification of the transferee (person who will be relocated/internally internally migrated) is a real challenge. Families with relatively disadvantaged position in the garden may opt for relocation. Therefore this group needs to be targeted for internal migration program. Identification needs to be done carefully by the garden management in collaboration with local BCSU representatives, one already migrantd, Gotra Head and Panchayet members. Once identified, these workers need to be mobilised for relocation in another garden. At this stage, motivational sessions, counselling will be required for sometime to boost their confidence and equip them with some social skills to match with the new situation. Local level leaders and female motivator can lead the motivation process.

Negotiation and agreement

There needs to be a BTA sponsored negotiation between the surplus and deficit garden management as to how these people will be settled in the new garden. Employment conditions also have to be finalised before the internal migration takes place. BCSU will need to be consulted at this stage. The negotiation should include employment condition; settle plan as well as social security measure. The negotiation agreement needs to be formalised through BTA approval.

Implementation of Settlement plan

It is the responsibility of the deficit garden to implement settlement plan as agreed. Settlement plan will include employment, housing and other benefits within the framework of negotiated agreement. The settlement plan can be financed through garden management, BTA and external assistance. BTA needs to monitor the settlement plan implementation. BSCU also needs to monitor the process and look at the interest of the migrant worker.

Mainstreaming of the migrant worker

Last but not the least important issue would be to mainstream migrant into the new garden. It is important that the new migrant feel them as part of the garden. The garden management can plan some kind of motivation session for the new migrant. Gotra heads with one already migrantd, Panchayet leaders and social motivators can be employed to run such motivation program. Besides, one Sarder can be employed from the migrants to boost up their presence and ownership in the new garden.

Coordination, monitoring and follow up

The internal migration strategy is designed with an integrated approach. As such high level of coordination, monitoring and follow up would be required to successfully implement it. BTA will need to play the central role in it. In other words, BTA will need to steer the whole process centrally. Their members will have specific role within the broad framework of the internal migration plan. On the other hand, BTA will have to gain support from BCSU to implement the program. BCSU can also do monitoring on its own and share that with BTA.

Resource Mobilization

The implementation of the plan will require significant amount of resources. It may go beyond the capacity of the deficit garden. Some resource in the form of soft loan or outright grant will be required to facilitate the implementation. BTA should consult with the institutions of the Government of Bangladesh such as PDO or donor organisations to raise this resource. ILO can provide necessary technical assistance to develop a database of workers surplus and deficit gardens.

Internal migration of tea worker will be a complex and long term process. But it is also a necessity not only for the tea sector but also for the workers well being as well. There is a requirement to create awareness and sensitivity among the management, workers and other stakeholders to begin the process. Internal migration requires well coordinated measure.

Section-I: Study Background and Methodology

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 THE STUDY BACKGROUND

The overall Women Empowerment through Employment and Health (WEEH) project of ILO has a main objective to empower poor women in Bangladesh through increasing their access to decent employment, incomes and viable health insurance systems. WEEH contributes to poverty reduction and economic development by implementing activities in both the formal and informal economy in the country through two sub-projects, namely:

- Micro-Health Insurance for Rural Women in Bangladesh (MHIB)
- Women Empowerment through Decent Employment (WEDE)

The Private Sector Initiative (PSI), one of the two components under WEDE (hereby called the Project), is operating in the formal and private economy. It focuses on promotion of a policy environment conducive to women's fundamental rights to decent work, improved living conditions, increased incomes and elimination of gender discrimination. Based on studies, workshops and meetings/seminars during 2002 and 2003, involving all stakeholders in the tea sector, partnership has been established with the ILO constituents and NGOs, which enables the project to support activities in Twenty-four tea plantations. The partner organizations are the Bangladesh Cha Sramik Union (BCSU), the Bangladesh Tea Association (BTA), formerly known as Bangladeshiyo Cha Sangshad (BCS), and two NGOs (Heed Bangladesh and Marie Stopes Bangladesh) based in the Moulvibazar district. The partnership with the government is formalized through the MoU between the ILO and the Ministry of Labour and Employment (MoLE).

The WEDE sub project has established partnership with Bangladesh Tea Association (BTA) by signing MoU in October 2003. On the basis of the areas of future activities identified in the MoU, a Seminar on "Social Dimensions in the Tea Plantations in South Asia" was held in relation to current and future trends of the tea sector Social Dialogue, ILO conventions, Gender Equality, Decent Work and overall productivity issues. Gender concerns/issues was an integral concern throughout the seminar. Again, along with specific legal framework and labour laws governing the situation in the tea sector, the issues/problems like labour internal migration and Occupation Health and Safety (OHS), Productivity, were also addressed. It is important that the concerned stakeholders follow-up the issues of concern raised at the seminar, principally, labour internal migration, OHS and productivity, since these will sharply influence the future of the entire tea sector. All these issues demand in-depth investigations to strengthen the basis for dialogue between the workers and the tea estates owners on the one hand, and, on the other, to undertake measures for overall improvement in creating additional employment and promoting decent employment as a whole. A study on "Labour Internal migration from Surplus to Deficit Estates/Areas" is planned to be carried out in order to pave the way for employers and workers to address the matter jointly by BTA and ILO in a substantive way in 2005. The other objectives of the study are to help solve the problems (social stigma etc.) associated with internal migration, and improve and balance employment situation in the tea sector.

The British Raj about 150 years ago brought almost all the ancestors/relatives of the present tea estate workers from different states of India and settled them with work in the

tea estates in Bangladesh. And, since then, they have been residing inside the estates in cluster or groups, without having any exposure to other estates of distant places, let alone to the mainstream world. In some estates the workers are surplus, whereas in some estates more workers are required than the total number of labour working inside the estates.

Labour is considered as an important input in tea plantation. Labour cost account for about 37% of the total cost of production (Saha 2001). Modernization in the tea sector is yet to reduce labour dependency. The crop yields have a direct bearing on labour efficiency and adequacy.

The tea estate workers do not like to move or internally migrate from one estate to another for various reasons. While the owners generally claim to have failed in moving the workers (or failed to convince), from surplus to deficit estate, the workers union is of the opinion that the initiatives by the owners are ad hoc in nature. No systematic exchange of views or information with the concerned parties has taken place. It is generally believed that internal migration of workers could, to some extent, solve the problem of employment and enhance production/productivity of some gardens and increase of the income of the workers while balancing labour force in other garden.

2.2 DEFINITIONS

A garden can be marked as deficit or surplus based on certain criteria. Average labour requirement per unit of land works as the benchmark for this purpose. There is no such industry standard that is agreed by all the concerned parties. For example some garden use acreage while other use hector to determine the land unit. As per PDU of BTB statistics 2004, average registered worker per hectare of land is 1.73. But it varies; some gardens employ even 2 workers for the same amount of plantation area. These variations have implications on the determination of the surplus or labour deficit garden. Besides, there are seasonal variations in terms of labour requirement. More labour is required in the plucking season that lasts from May – October. Typically, most of the gardens employ all available workers including permanent and temporary during the plucking season. On the other hand labour requirement reduces as the production fall in the remaining period of the year (November-April). In the worst case, a garden can only employ the permanent 7workers. This is an overall industry picture. However, the employment situation varies widely between the gardens.

Seasonality in tea sector and the labour requirement per hector are important issues in the context of labour situation in tea garden. But there is a general agreement among all the stakeholders that the tea sector is experiencing an imbalance in employment of workers i.e. a large number of tea gardens are either having excess workers or fall short of workers. This study has collected data from 141 gardens regarding worker employment situation. The data shows that about 77% gardens have surplus workers while 27% garden have shortage of workers. Only 1 % gardens have the required workers. One can conclude from the above statistics that the tea sector as a whole have surplus workers.

2.3 OBJECTIVE AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

In pursuance of the recommendations of the seminar on Social Dimension in Tea Plantations in South Asia held in 1-2 July 2004, Dhaka and subsequent discussions with Bangladesh Tea Association (BTA), WEEH project of International Labour Organization has commissioned the study on “ Labour Internal migration from Surplus to Deficit

Estates”. The main purposes of the study are to find out the reasons associated with reluctance of the worker in movement/internal migration, identify solutions to the current problem of imbalances in supply and demand of labour in different plantations, and to help improve employment situation of the tea sector. However, the specific objectives are stated below:

- Review the overall employment situations of the tea sector in the country with especial reference to the 24 WEEH supported estates
- Indicate the estates/areas with surplus and deficit workers (with seasonality and duration/timing of shortage and abundance), if possible, future trends of labour supply with reference to distance of one estate to another (mapping)
- Find out reasons from the workers for reluctance of movement/internal migration from different categories of stakeholders and consolidate the opinions/views.
- Identify the actual measures initiated and reasons for failure/success by any category of stakeholder (for example, host of demands/obstacles made/mentioned by the workers vis-à-vis incentives offered by the management, and negotiated offers by the BCSU).
- Identify solutions in close consultation with those workers particularly including those who are unemployed and underemployed (the workers side) and estate managers and owners (management side), while taking into consideration the business needs of the tea estates in terms of future perspective
- Sound out potential employment and income opportunities, including those supplementary economic opportunities for those who cannot be absorbed by the tea estates, particularly in the immediate terms without jeopardy the core business of the gardens.
- Organize and hold a series of workshops and a National Tripartite Workshop to share the findings and contribute as technical resource persons.
- Prepare a consolidated technical report including suggestions and recommendations supported by a tentative action plan to improve the situation, integrating the comments of the BTA and ILO (both the WEEH project and technical units concerned).



Consultant is discussing with BTA Chairman

2.4 METHODOLOGY AND IMPLEMENTATION

This is an explorative study and first of its kind. CBSG adopted a combination of social and qualitative research methodology to optimise the data validity and presentation. This was done in congruence with the methodologies laid out in the Terms of Reference (ToR) of the assignment. Thus it has drawn upon the qualitative and quantitative (limited to secondary data source) approach, which allowed an in-depth analysis of the tea workers internal migration situation of the tea estate. Specifically, the research team was depended on the following techniques:

- Document review and collection of information from secondary source
- Workshop with multi-stakeholders
- Key informants interview
- Focus Group Discussion using PRA methodologies

2.4.1 Sampling

The population of the study covered about 158 tea gardens. However, the study team employed a combination of multistage and purposive random sampling so that it represents diversity in terms of issues, population, seasonal variations and geographical proximity. Tea estates are grouped into valleys. Therefore, an attempt was made to cover all the valleys in the sample. The study team primarily selected 11 gardens ensuring representation of local, foreign company, geographic region (valley) and most importantly the internal migration prone (deficit and surplus gardens) areas. The study team collected secondary information with the assistance of WEEH, BTA and BCSU to determine the sampling frame. The following gardens were selected using a combination of purposive and random sampling methodology.



Focus Group Discussion with BCSU leaders

Matrix -1: List of sample garden visited

SL	Name of Garden/Tea estate	Name of valley	Ownership	Garden Category	S=surplus D=deficit	Visit date
1	Balisera (Kalighat)	Balisera	M/s.James Finley Ltd.	A	S	25.11.04
2	Dinarpur	Balisera	Kedarpur Tea Co.Ltd.	C	D	24.11.04
3	Dauracherra	Balisera	Tea-Board	A	S	26.11.04
4	Lalchand	Luskerpore	Deundi Tea Co.Ltd	A	S	29.11.04
5	Zareen	Balisera	M M Ispahani Ltd.	A	D	27.11.04
6	Patrakhola	Monu-Doloi	NTC	A	S	25.11.04
7	Dilkusha	Juri	Hamdard Tea Co.Ltd.	B	D	30.11.04
82	Khan	North Sylhet	M. Ahmed Tea & LC	A	S	28.11.04
9	Habibnagar	North Sylhet	M. Ahmed Tea & LC	A	D	27.11.04
10	Neptune	Chittagon g	M.M Ispahani Ltd.	A	D	06.12.04
11	Baramasia	Chittagon g	T.K.OIL	C	D	07.12.04
Additional garden visited beyond sampling list						
12	Mertinga	Balishera	Deundi Tea Co. Ltd	A	S	20.12.04
13	Phulbari	Balishera	Phulbai Tea Estates Ltd.	A	S	20.12.04
14	Hossainabad	Balishera	Hossainabad Tea Co. Ltd.	A	S	15.11.04

Note: Secondary information received from BTA and BCSU is the basis for identifying deficit and surplus status of sample gardens.

2.4.2 Review of documents:

The study team reviewed all available documents supplied by WEEH project. In addition it collected documents, papers from different secondary sources like BTRI, PDU etc. A list of documents consulted is annexed.

2.4.3 Key Informants Interview

In consultation with WEEH and BTA, CBSG developed a list of key informants appropriate for the study. Simultaneously, it developed a list of key questions that was asked to the informants. The key researchers were involved in conducting these interviews.

2.4.4 Stakeholders consulted and/or interviewed

Tea Workers, Tea Board, BTRI, BTA, Sterling Tea Companies, Private owners, NGOs associated with tea workers, BCSU, Staff union, Garden Management, and ILO

2.4.5 Conduction of FGDs

CBSG used FGD as a key method for information collection. It has conducted a total of 40 FGDs at different level. It used PRA techniques to gather information within the framework of FGD. Conducted FGDs in terms of number is presented below:

- 12 with male workers
- 12 with female workers
- 12 with key stake-holders
- 4 with Panchayet

The whole research team was involved in conducting FGDs. Alongside, CBSG took assistance of local investigators to gather qualitative information.

2.4.6 Case Studies:

CBSG prepared few in-depth case studies in support of the FGD findings. It used appreciative inquiry (AI) approach to prepare the cases. The studies are put as anecdotal in the report.

2.5 LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The study was conducted on 14 gardens out of 158 functioning garden under BTA membership. This sample is relatively low to represent fully the diversity and characteristics of tea garden in Bangladesh. However, the research team has selected 14 garden based on the common accepted features of tea garden. Another difficulty was that the discussion with the tea workers was not as depth as the research tea would ideally like. Tea workers were in hurry to finish off the discussion to go back to work to accomplish their assigned target. This research primarily relied on secondary data source. The research team have very little time and opportunity to validate these data.



Focus Group Discussions with Female Tea Worker

Section - II: An Overview of Tea industries in Bangladesh

3 TEA SECTOR ANALYSIS

Tea occupies an important place in the national economy of Bangladesh. Tea industry in Bangladesh dates back to mid 19th century when the first tea garden started **commercial** operation at Malnicherra in Sylhet. Private tea cultivation had been started in Chittagong area even before that period. About four lakh people including one lakh ten thousand permanent workers live on Bangladesh tea industry. Tea cultivation in Bangladesh is mostly spread over the hilly zones on the eastern part of the country. Four districts namely Maulavibazar, Habigonj, Sylhet and Chittagong are producing more than 50 million kilogram of tea annually from about 50,000 hectares of land. It is worthwhile to mention that total grant area for tea cultivation is about 113,349 hectare of land. Out of which only 46% (51,825 hectare) has so far been brought under tea cultivation. Tea cultivation has also been started in hilly areas of Panchagarh district through private initiatives. There are already 6 tea estates registered with BTB. About 375 hectares of land is under tea cultivation in Panchagarh area. About 97% of annual production is contributed by greater Sylhet district. It is also noted that five sterling companies are producing 50% of total production from 40 % of plantation area. Average per hectare yield is about 1247 kg (PDU Statistics-2004). It still very low compared to other tea growing countries like Sri Lanka (1453 kg/ha, Kenya (2068 kg/ha) and India (1841 kg/ha). Statistics of 2002, source BTB strategic plan document. Bangladesh tea industry plays a vital role in the national economy through export balancing and employment generation. It produces 2% of world production and 3% of the world export. It provides direct employment to about .11 million ethnic minority people. The civic needs and amenities of the permanent workers and about .4 million dependents are being provided by the industry free of cost. Another about .6 million people also depend on tea industry in its export, packaging, brooking. Local trade, supporting factories and workshops etc.

Tea gardens are clustered in certain areas. Geographically those clustered are called Valley. There are seven such valleys geographically representing tea garden areas of greater Sylhet and Chittagong districts. Tea gardens are again categorised according to their production capacity as follows:

- Garden produces an average of 180,000 kgs or more per annum are called “A” grade garden.
- Annual production capacity between 108000-179,999 kgs is called “B” grade gardens
- Annual production capacity between 27000-107999 kgs is called “C” grade gardens.
- Annual production capacity under 27000 kgs is called “U/C” (under category) gardens

Below is the classification of gardens according to grade, worker surplus, worker deficit, and worker balanced gardens.

Matrix -2: Garden by category and worker surplus-deficit

Category of Garden	Worker Surplus	Worker Deficit	Worker Balanced	Total
A	79	11		90
B	15	7	1	23
C	7	7	1	15
U/C	8	5		13
Total	109	33	2	141

Wages and benefits of the workers are determined according to the category of garden they work for. However, the variation is very nominal.

Tea is an important commodity both in national and international trade. It is one of the major cash crops and important export item. It is contributing about 0.81 percent of GDP. The industry and revenue trades are promising. This sector provides employment for about 0.15 million people, which is nearly 3.3% of the total industry employment in the country.



Focus Group Discussion with male tea workers

Tea in Bangladesh is a major agro based, labour intensive and export-oriented industry. It is a combination of agricultural farming and factory based processing. The population of Bangladesh Tea industry is more than 0.4 million including about 0.11 million are employed either permanently or temporarily. Women constitute approximately half of the total labour force in the tea sector. There is no gender discrimination in terms of benefits and wages. The workforce is unionised under a single trade union organisation called Bangladesh Cha Sramik Union (BCSU). Government of Bangladesh has a separate tea plantation ordinance to govern the tea sector.

Very recently, tea cultivation has been initiated in the hilly areas of Panchagarh district particularly in Tentulia Upazila by some private entrepreneurs. But this initiative is still in embryonic stage. They are to be enrolled as BTA member. As per a recently published BTB document (Strategic Planning 2004-23), there are about 161 tea estates / gardens in Bangladesh including the tea estates in Panchagarh area. These tea estates are managed by five different groups of management. They are Sterling companies (27), National tea companies (13), Bangladesh Tea Board (3), Bangladeshi Private limited companies (57), and Bangladeshi Proprietary (61).



Meeting garden manager and staff

4 CHARACTERISTICS OF TEA WORKER IN THE STUDIED TEA/STATES

Tea industry is predominantly labour intensive, non-traditional and agricultural based. Therefore, tea worker has an important bearing over the industry. Tea Workers in Bangladesh originally brought in from different parts of India particularly from Assam, Bihar, Orissa, Tamil Nadu, Hyderabad states during late 19th and early 20th century. Primarily they belong to Hindu community. They follow traditional customs of their respective Gotras (sub-caste) and are very different from local Bengali Hindus. They tend to live together based on Gotra. The study team has come across tea workers from Tanti, Deshwali, Karmaker, Bagdi, Munda, Orang etc at 12 intensively studied gardens. Even after more than one hundred years, this community still keep themselves away from the local Bangali people. Honesty and simplicity is very much inherent in their lifestyle. They tend to be complacent with their present status and rarely stretch their effort to achieve something.

4.1 DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTER:

The study team gathered secondary data from 141 tea estates through BTA & BCSU while primary data have been collected from 14 intensively studied gardens. These gardens are spread over 7 valleys and represents gardens of sterling, nationalized and private owners. Among the 14 intensively gardens, the average family size is found at 5.18, which is lower than national statistics (5.60). Dependency ration per permanent worker is calculated at 4.02. It is estimated that 15 % of total workers population are adolescent while 9% are children (under 10 years).

Population growth is a major factor for worker surplus in the tea estates. The study made an attempt to observe population growth in the gardens based on secondary data. In the surplus gardens population growth 2003-4 is found 15.19 per 1000, which is higher than the deficit gardens (12.78 per 1000). The overall estimate of population growth from 14 intensively studied gardens is calculated at 14.70 per 1000 which is close to national statistics (15 per thousand, BBS 2002).

The overall Male/female ratio of the workers population has been estimated at 104 female per hundred male. Among the permanent worker and in the surplus gardens male female ratio is 100:100 while in the deficit gardens 107 female per 100 male.

4.2 EMPLOYMENT ANALYSIS

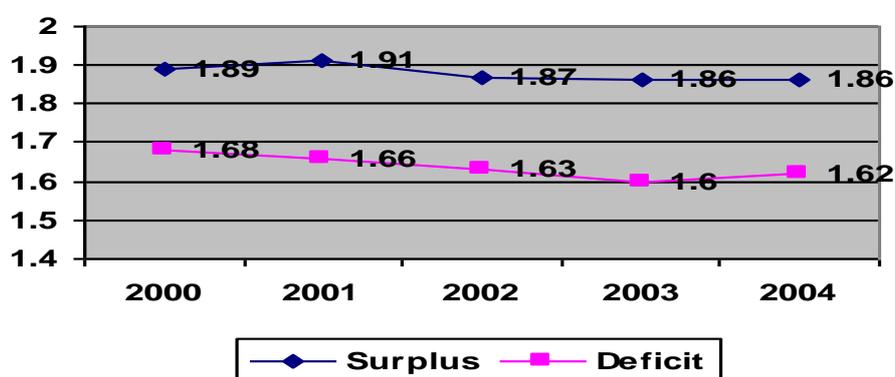
The study made an attempt to review the employment situation of the sector. Data collected from 141 gardens using both primary and secondary sources revealed that the tea sector have 84,987 permanent workers and 29, 849 temporary worker. It is estimated that out of total population 25% are permanent worker while 9% are temporary worker. Altogether 34% of workers population are either permanently or temporarily employed in the gardens. The study team also looked at the permanent and temporary workers proportion by surplus and deficit gardens and presented below:

Matrix -3: Percent of Permanent and Temporary Worker by garden Type with reference total population

Garden Category	Permanent worker against population	Temporary worker against population	Total Employed against population
Surplus	25 %	8%	33%
Deficit	25%	14%	39%
Balanced	27%	11%	38%

While analysing the above matrix it is revealed that deficit gardens employ comparatively more temporary worker than surplus or balanced gardens. The study team also looked at the ratio of permanent worker in terms of plantation area. Year-wise data from year 2000 has been collected from 14 intensively studied gardens. It is evident that surplus gardens employ more permanent worker per hectare than the deficit garden.

Figure-1: Chart shows the per hectare worker by surplus and deficit garden



The study team looked at the expansion of plantation area of the gardens. It is observed that more area of expansion took place in deficit gardens (6.87 hectare per garden) than surplus gardens (6.12 hectare per garden). Therefore more employment opportunity has been created in the deficit gardens over the last few years.

The study team also examined the source of income of the tea worker. It is estimated from 14 intensively studied gardens that 86% of the annual income of surplus garden workers come from direct employment while in the deficit garden it is 87%. The rest of the annual income comes from other sources namely selling of homestead produced vegetables, poultry/cow milk, selling of fire wood, daily labour in the adjacent garden or nearby village, rickshaw pulling etc.

During the course of study, the team observed the benefit package offered to the workers by the management. It is observed that almost all gardens generally comply with the BTA-BCSU charter.

It is necessary to urgently develop education level of the workers' children for a sustained socio-economic development in the tea plantation.

Wahidul Hoque, Chairman, BTA

Section III: Analysis of Findings

5 DEFICIT AND SURPLUS GARDEN

5.1 GARDEN POPULATION AND EMPLOYMENT

Tea sector has certain distinctive characteristics that made it significantly different from other business enterprises particularly with the employment of workers. Historically tea workers live within the garden premise and employment in tea sector almost becomes a ritual for the population living within the garden. There is a common perception that exists among the worker that all adult male and female members of the family should get employment in the garden. With few exceptions, almost all able population are either working in the tea garden as permanent or temporary worker or waiting to find a job in the garden. Overwhelming dependence on the tea employment is also an important issue.

Population related data reveals that in the surplus garden 25% of the population work as permanent worker and only 8% work as temporary. Thus 33% of the population work in the tea garden. In the deficit garden 25% of the population work as permanent while 14% work as temporary worker making 39% of population work in the tea garden. The above analysis clearly shows that deficit garden have made efforts to bring in more people in the garden work. But this strategy does not yet fulfil their worker requirement. They need more workers from other sources such as from surplus garden.

Another important element revealed in the study that garden with high percentage of permanent worker becomes surplus and vice versa. Employment in the surplus garden consists of 75% as permanent and 25% as temporary. On the contrary, only 64% workers are permanent in the deficit gardens. Following table gives more details.

Matrix-4: Proportion of Permanent and Temporary Worker by garden type

Garden Type	Permanent Worker	Temporary Worker
Surplus	75%	25%
Balanced	71%	29%
Deficit	64%	36%

There should be an industry standard in the tea sector with regard to land labour ratio. All stakeholders need to agree in setting this standard.

- RP Boonerjee, President BCSU

5.2 REASONS FOR SURPLUS

Tea sector has gone through an evolutionary process. The scale of operation and the functioning of the garden has been also part of the evolution. Tea workers always have been an important element in the development of tea industry in Bangladesh. However, in recent years the sector is reaching to maturity. The potential for growth is slowly receding particularly in the traditionally established garden, which is often called as “sterling” company. The internal dynamics of the tea sector vis-à-vis other socio-economic conditions have strongly been influencing the tea sector particularly in the context of tea worker employment. Surplus and deficit of workers in tea garden are the result of various factors resulting from internal and external influences.

The study team have collected viewpoints of various groups and stakeholders on the issue of worker surplus and deficit in the tea sector. In most issues they agree to the causes of labour imbalance. Following gives vivid descriptions of the causes for situation of worker surplus in the tea gardens.

5.2.1 Cultural heritage and social bondage

Tea worker have strong family and social bondage influenced by the caste system (gatro). People with similar caste tend to live together. Economic considerations are often discounted for social and religious reason. So they are reluctant to move to new place even where opportunity exists.

5.2.2 Population Growth

There is a natural growth of population within the families. Tea gardens have absorbed the growing population for long as the plantation continues in new areas. But the plantation area becomes stable in many gardens reducing the need for new workers. Thus stable plantation area coupled with growing population is causing surplus in tea garden employment.

5.2.3 Seasonal Variation

Seasonal variations in tea garden also causes worker surplus particularly in the lean session when the demand for worker goes down.

5.2.4 Technological Development

Many tea gardens have adopted modern technology particularly in the factory. New technology has greatly reduced the need for worker at the factory and made many workers redundant in the factory but have been employed elsewhere in the garden.

5.2.5 Satisfactory wage for temporary worker

Some garden provides reasonably good wages during the peak season. Worker remains satisfied with the wages even when they don't find regular work at the garden. They are actually surplus worker but stay at the garden for the hope of employment for certain period.

The following matrix gives an elaborated view of the reason of surplus as perceived by various stakeholders

Matrix-5: Perceived reason for Surplus

Workers perspective	Panchayat perspective	Management perspective
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Population growth ▪ Lack of scope for working in other garden ▪ Housing facilities for non-workers ▪ Alternative money making opportunities for casual workers ▪ Surplus workers is observed only in lean season due to applying modern technology ▪ Internal migration in of relatives (son-in-law, uncle) etc. ▪ Reported satisfactory wages for casual workers ▪ Working opportunity for in and outside the garden. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Traditional custom of staying generation-wise in a same garden ▪ Unemployment problem ▪ Surplus workers is observed only in lean season due to applying modern technology ▪ Population growth ▪ Satisfactory wages for casual workers ▪ Working opportunity for in and outside the garden. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Population Growth ▪ Plantation area saturated ▪ Housing and other facilities for non-workers ▪ Factory modification and application of modern technology in the field ▪ Seasonal case: in lean season surplus worker is seen while in plucking season it turns into deficit. ▪ Unemployed (non worker) family member.

5.3 REASONS FOR DEFICIT

There are some garden began with deficit worker. As the garden grows, the worker deficit did not cover with new worker. Some other garden becomes worker deficit overtime for various factors. Following gives detail description of factors contributing to worker deficit.

5.3.1 Fast expanding and re-plantation

Some tea gardens are experiencing fast growth. New areas are being brought under tea plantation. This requires addition work force. In addition, adaptation improved tea variety (re-plantation) also requires more workforce to keep pace with the plucking round. Thus the available work force becomes short of requirement.

Garden location is an important factor. Worker does not want to stay in the very remote place. For example, Bidhyabil out garden (out garden is a plantation area away from factory based main garden) is located in a very remote place. Workers are reluctant to live there. Thus the garden becomes worker deficit. One the other hand garden located close to

township provides lot of opportunities for the workers to work outside garden for higher pay. Habibnagar garden is located very close to Sylhet town. Lot of people live within the garden prefer to work outside as day labourers, Rickshaw pullers or construction workers. The garden is facing acute shortage of worker. A large number of gardens in the Sreemongol region become worker surplus because the inhabitants find very few jobs in the local labour market.

5.3.2 Higher wage in outside garden work

The study team found that the tea workers are increasingly becoming interested to work outside garden at the community level for cash wage, which is higher than the tea garden cash wage. The non-cash benefit from the tea employment is generally forgotten by the worker. Tea workers are tempted to reap short term cash benefit from the daily wage and also tend to remain absent from the garden work. High absenteeism can be attributed to the opportunity to work outside garden for cash wage. Absenteeism trends is higher where there are plenty of Keth Land (paddy land) in the garden, sickness of workers and incidence of malaria.

5.3.3 Low prospect for permanent work

Gardens with high level of temporary workers tends to have deficit worker. In the deficit garden, 36% workers are temporary as oppose to only 25% in the surplus garden. Thus one can assume that the deficit garden have low prospect for permanent job.

5.3.4 High level of absenteeism

Some gardens are quite balance in terms of worker requirement and their availability within the garden. But a large number of workers do not come to work for various reasons. Temptation to work outside garden for cash wage is a major cause for unauthorised absence.

Above are the general causes of worker deficit in the tea sector. But different groups view the causes differently. One can find some agreement as well as disagreement in the causes of worker deficit. The study team have consulted with various groups to find the reason from their own perspective. Group wise perspectives are provide in the following matrix.

Matrix-6: Perceived Reason for Deficit

Workers perspective	Panchayat perspective	Management perspective
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Remote location of the gardens ▪ Benefit package is lower than gardens of sterling companies ▪ Better jobs or payment facilities available outside the garden ▪ Casual worker gets very less job in a year than permanent workers ▪ Lack of opportunity to become permanent worker ▪ Garden workers who left at the time of liberation war and never came back ▪ Limited extension of garden area ▪ Facilities are decreasing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Garden workers left the garden at the time of liberation war and never came back ▪ Little extension of garden area ▪ Facilities decreased ▪ More wages or facilities outside the garden works 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Limited extension and re-plantation ▪ Deficit during plucking season only ▪ Cash payment in outside garden work ▪ Internal migration to other garden due to marriage ▪ Less workers were employed at the time of establishment of the garden

5.4 SUPPLEMENTARY EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME

Tea garden also provides supplementary employment opportunities for garden worker. Rubber plantation is expanding in the tea estate. Other types of plantation such as pineapple, lemon is also getting momentum in some tea estates. This diversity is believed to create some additional employment opportunity within the tea garden.

Tea estate holds huge land resources. Tea workers have access to these resources to take on various income-generating activities. These include farming both in homestead and keth land, livestock raising and fisheries. Income from selling firewood also an important element of personal income of the tea worker. These activities though limited in scope bring in additional income to the families in some gardens. It is important to note that the scope for supplementary employment and income are not universal. This is dependent on the context and nature of a particularly garden. Thus workers reliance on supplementary income does vary from garden to garden. Whatever the extent of income comes from the

supplementary sources, this has important implications on the workers. The shock of unemployment is partially absorbed by the opportunity of supplementary income.

With the natural growth of population and the diminishing scope of employment opportunity in the tea sector, alternative employment is the eventual solution to the challenge of employing tea estate population. The study report will deal with this issue more elaborately in later section.



FGD with female worker at Rajghat garden

6 BALANCING TEA SECTOR EMPLOYMENT

The supply and demand gap within the tea sector is growing steadily over the years. Now it has reached to a point that it becomes an important issue for the overall success of the tea sector. There has been isolated efforts adopted to address the worker imbalance situation. In that an overall industry wide effort with adequate institutional support and sponsorship is still lacking. This study is in a way the beginning of sector wide approach to deal with this growing issue.

Following provides a snap shot of the various strategies so far tried to resolve worker shortage.

6.1 INCENTIVE FOR EXTRA WORK

Tea sector has standard working hours typically begin at 8:00 in the morning and ends at 4:30 in the afternoon. Many tea garden managements induce the worker to work extra hours both before and after the official working hours. This strategy is adopted particularly during the peak-plucking season. Individual production is weighed separately and accordingly extra payments are made to the worker. Working in holidays by the workers is widely practised in tea gardens.

6.2 CONTRACTING OUT

Tea garden with growth potentials adopts the strategy of contracting out some of their works. They contract out development work for garden extension to third party contractors. Contractor hire locals to do the tasks such as clearing hills, make them appropriate for tea plantation etc. Here garden management instead of employing own work force employs outside labourers, as this does not need special skill. This is also a short-term strategy to deal with deficit work force.

6.3 SHORT TERM EMPLOYMENT (FROM OTHER TEA GARDEN)

This strategy is also used quite frequently by the deficit garden where surplus tea workers are available in the adjacent tea gardens. Surplus labourers are convinced through informal mechanism often by the labour Sarders to work for cash wage. Workers in groups come to the garden and go back to their residence after work.

6.4 PERMANENT SETTLEMENT

Permanent settlement is considered as most desirable option to deal with the worker deficit issue. Some garden took efforts for permanent settlement of tea workers through worker migrating from one garden to another garden. Permanent internal migration takes place both in a formal and informal way. Informally, an extent of internal migration is taking place between gardens mostly through marriage. In some cases acute unemployment has induced workers to internally migrate in another garden. The study team has looked at the permanent internal migration issues and cases with special interest and rigor.

Two types of permanent settlement were noticed. One is the permanent settlement between the gardens managed by the same company. In such case employment conditions,

fringe benefits and other entitlements i.e. housing, sanitation, medical remain almost same. Another approach is the permanent settlement between the gardens of different management. In this case employment conditions differ from moderately to significantly. The experience of permanent settlement in such cases has been mixed in the sense that the sustainability of such settlement still remains as a big challenge. Some attempts have been quite successful while a large number of such internal migration attempts end up with failures. Following section will try to give a pen picture of reason for successful as well as failure cases of permanent worker settlement i.e. worker internal migration or transfer.

6.4.1 Success achieved

The study has identified some key issues that have contributed to the successful internal migration strategy. These mainly include:

The management have planned and implemented the internal migration within the gardens under their own management

- Tea workers are convinced with the help of existing workers
- Good opportunities for temporary workers to become permanent worker
- Good housing facilities
- Scope to cultivate paddy at plain land within the garden premise

A case of internal migration:

Neptune is an “A” grade tea garden in Chittagong. It is a worker deficit garden. The garden falls short of worker in the range of 100 to 150 depending on worker requirement. The management has tried various methods to resolve the problem of worker shortage without much success. They adopted internal migration strategy to bring in new workers. About 70 workers from Ramgarh tea estate and 20 workers from Haldavally tea garden came to Neptune. But those workers did not stay long and went back to the previous garden because they did not have the opportunity to earn extra income from selling firewood & bamboo in the Neptune garden. Thus the internal migration strategy failed but the garden management continued to devise new approach to solve the worker shortage problem.

They have persuaded ethnic families to take up tea profession and have been successful to bring in 10 families. Garden management has arranged good quality housing facilities for them. Garden management also has allowed them to engage in their seasonal work such as Jomm cultivation. Now that they got a permanent job in tea garden, live with families and continue to engage in their traditional work makes them very happy.

6.4.2 *Reasons for failure*

The following major issues are identified as reason for failure for internal migration:

- Migrant's expectations were not met in the new garden with regard to housing, sanitation facilities and above all permanent employment
- The arrangement were done on ad-hoc basis without proper supervision, guidance and follow-up from concerned authorities
- New migrants are rehabilitated in isolated location of the garden. Thus they felt marginalized within the worker community
- Additional income opportunity such as livestock, firewood selling etc was greatly reduced in the new garden.
- Didn't find people with similar cast in the new garden

A Case of internal migration with difficulties:

Phulbari, a surplus tea garden situated in Manu Doloi Valley under Moulvibazar district. A large number of people remained unemployed for the better part of the year. These unemployed people started to work outside as daily labour in agriculture, construction etc. Now it becomes very difficult for the garden management to find enough workers particularly in the plucking season.

Joni is a tea worker in this garden. He can earn more money through plucking than seedling work. He even cannot earn expected money from seedling work. Instead he prefers working outside for Tk. 50-100 for a whole day. Many garden workers like him are going for outside work these days for higher wage. Phulbari a surplus garden though finds it difficult to get enough worker in the peak season.

6.5 SUGGESTIVE SOLUTION FOR SURPLUS AND DEFICIT TEA WORKER

The study team has discussed extensively with various groups related to the tea sector employment in particular the tea garden management, local level leadership (Panchayet) and the tea worker. All of them acknowledged the problem of worker surplus/ deficit and consider it as big constraint for tea sector development particularly in terms of growth and productivity. While they agree the problem as a whole, there has been different perspective as how this problem can be solved. Tea garden management have a holistic perspective to solve this growing problem. On the other hand, tea workers and Phachyet are more elaborative as to how this problem can be solved and who can play what role in it. Following table gives the perspective of all groups as they feel appropriate to solve worker deficit problem.

Matrix-7: Key Stakeholders’ suggestions to solve worker deficit problem

Workers perspective	Panchayat perspective	Management perspective
<p><u>What Management can do:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Management can provide good housing facility to attract workers ▪ Management can take joint initiative with the trade union to bring worker from other surplus garden by ensuring promises given to the worker ▪ Increase facilities for temporary workers ▪ Those who are permanent but living outside garden (basti dofa worker) should be given facilities as permanent workers ▪ Ensuring employment security for the workers ▪ Enrol all the workers coming from other garden and the temporary workers into permanent worker ▪ Allow alternative economic activities in the garden ▪ Providing overtime facility, pension scheme and replacement of retired worker <p><u>What BCSU can do:</u></p>	<p><u>What Management can do:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Management can bring workers from surplus garden ▪ Management can provide good housing facility to attract workers ▪ Should take joint initiatives with the trade union to bring worker from other surplus garden by ensuring promises given to the worker ▪ Allow alternative economic activities in garden ▪ Overtime facility, pension scheme and replacement of retired worker should be extended ▪ Enrol all the workers coming from other garden and the temporary workers into permanent worker ▪ What BCSU can do: ▪ Monitor and ensure workers rights ▪ Motivate workers of surplus gardens to internally migrate to deficit garden 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Upgrading housing facilities ▪ Bringing workers from surplus garden ▪ Increasing over time facility ▪ Involve BCSU for motivation ▪ Collect workers from tribal society, if other attempts fail

Workers perspective	Panchayat perspective	Management perspective
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ They will monitor and ensure their rights ▪ Motivate workers of other surplus garden to come to deficit garden ▪ Can talk with the owner for creating alternative sources of income ▪ <u>What Workers can do:</u> ▪ Can inform their unemployed relatives in other garden ▪ Can take alternative income sources ▪ Can encourage other workers to work in tea garden 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What workers can do: ▪ Inform their unemployed relatives in other garden ▪ Encourage/ motivate other workers to work in deficit tea garden 	

Martrix-8: Key Stakeholders' Suggestions to solve worker surplus problem

Workers perspective	Panchayat perspective	Management perspective
<p><u>What Management can do:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Owner should expand plantation area ▪ Allow other agricultural works in the garden ▪ Allow dairy and poultry firm and fisheries activities ▪ Provide transport facilities for unemployed workers to go near deficit garden for day time only ▪ Handicrafts works should be encouraged for female unemployed worker ▪ Can take initiatives for the unemployed and extra population to send to other deficit garden where good facilities are available ▪ Allow unemployed and temporary workers to work in the village ▪ What BCSU can do: ▪ Union should continuously consult with BTA to create opportunities for unemployed workers in other garden work ▪ Work for creating 	<p><u>What Management can do:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Should expand plantation area ▪ Allow other agriculture, dairy and poultry farming work in garden ▪ Encourage Handicrafts female unemployed worker ▪ Can take initiative for the unemployed and extra population to send to deficit gardens where good facilities are available ▪ What union can do: ▪ Continuously consult with owner to create opportunities for unemployed workers in other garden works ▪ Motivate temporary and unemployed workers to go to deficit gardens ▪ What Workers can do: ▪ Move to the deficit garden if the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Extend plantation area in garden ▪ Establish new garden in Chittagong, Sylhet and Panchagarh areas ▪ Co-ordinate with other tea garden who have faced these problem ▪ Undertake Family planning program to check population growth ▪ Create alternative employment opportunity for the extra workers within the garden

Workers perspective	Panchayat perspective	Management perspective
<p>alternative economic opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Motivate temporary and unemployed workers to internally migrate to deficit garden <p><u>What Workers can do:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Move to the deficit garden where good facilities are available ▪ Work wherever they get (temporary workers) employment opportunity 	<p>garden management provide enough facilities including good wages, housing, water and sanitation facilities</p>	

The synthesis of both the matrixes suggest that the solutions can be implemented both in a mutually inclusive as well as exclusive approach. In a mutually exclusive approach, the strategy will include the following:

- Exchange of workers between surplus and deficit garden
- Extension of tea area to absorb surplus worker
- Alternative employment for the workers in the surplus garden

However, a mutually inclusive approach will solve both the surplus and deficit problems with the same set of strategies. One can term it as a strategic intervention to resolve the issue of worker imbalance in the tea sector. This strategy will call for permanent settlement of surplus workers into a deficit garden through internal migration/transfer. This strategy, if selected, needs to be implemented with active participation of the owner/employer and worker union.

Internal migration will deal with the immediate to the medium term problem in tea sector. It is the alternative employment that needs to be in-place to resolve the eventual problem of worker surplus in the tea sector. Mainstreaming the tea sector population in the national economy through education, socialisation and life skill development will still remain as a major challenge. This needs to be attempted with a long-term perspective. But to address the immediate needs, some feasible alternative employment options have great prospects to deal with the surplus worker situation. These includes:

- Homestead gardening particularly in winter season
- Homestead poultry Tailoring
- Cane work
- Monipuri dress material
- Rubber plantation (already initiated by few gardens)
- And other activities suitable for the tea worker

7 INTERNAL MIGRATION - THE CHALLENGES

Internal migration seems to be an appropriate strategy in the short and medium term to streamline employment imbalance in the tea sector. It will address the problem related to surplus worker as well as deficit worker. However the implementation of internal migration would not be that easy. Unlike many other industry workers, tea worker has specific pattern of living and working. One needs to understand those factors in-depth to chart out a internal migration plan for the tea workers. The study team have made concerted attempts to understand the challenges and found that those issue are rooted very much in the social, cultural as well as economic preference and interests. These are discussed more elaborately in the following section.

7.1 SOCIAL BONDAGE

The kinship and social bondage often within the cast system provides the main social security and convince of living together among the tea worker. They value this much more than mainland Bengalis. It is not commonly accepted norms that adults will leave their parents for job. Rather they will stay with the parents and try to find a job in the tea garden or nearby. Therefore it is quite a difficult job to separate a family if not the whole caste just for an employment. Therefore from the internal migration perspective, it is important to look at the whole family rather than few individuals.

7.2 ASSET AND ENTITLEMENTS

Tea workers have over the years developed some immovable asset base in various forms. Most often, they have made personal investment in the company provided house to made it more convenient for living. Emotionally the also feel the ownership of the company house. Some workers also bought land. But this is not universal like social bondage.

7.3 JOB SECURITY

By and large tea workers have a sense of job security even when they are not permanent in their existing garden. Worker is also convinced that in future their child will get job in the garden. The sense of job security has a premium value in their employment context. Most of the workers have little knowledge about the situation of other garden. They got information from other workers through stories. In fact workers are quite ignorant about the prospects and constrains in other tea garden. Therefore migrating to another garden seems to be a risky venture for them.

7.4 MARGINALISATION

Workers migrating to a new garden face some challenges including social re-integration. They are often marginalized and restricted in the new garden. In some cases, migrant workers become a separate class as they live quite separately in the garden. They become subject to different behaviour from other working class. Thus worker might face the loss of social security in the new context.

7.5 TANGIBLE BENEFITS AND FACILITIES

Workers intend to migrant have an opportunity cost. In other words they face loss of income and benefits. These include both financial and non-financial benefits. New employment needs to be rewarding for the worker such that the new employment provides higher income and or facilities that not only off set the loss but also brings gains in real terms. In other words, the benefit package (financial and non-financial) needs to be acceptable, attractive and motivating.

Study team has revealed that the worker does not expect higher wages from the new garden, as it is quite similar across the sector. But extent and quality of benefits vary from garden to garden. Thus the benefit package becomes the prime motivating factors for internal migration. The important motivating factors includes:

- Permanent job
- Good housing facilities
- Water, Sanitation and Electricity
- Farming opportunity
- Medical facilities etc.

Apart from the above there are some other socio-economic constraints that inhibits workers from migrating to other gardens. These includes:

- Good opportunity for supplementary income even in a surplus condition
- High level of confident with the garden management
- Scope to work outside garden for cash wage
- Garden location is convenient such as close to town
- Opportunity to work adjacent garden as temporary work on daily wage basis
- Lack of security to get a permanent job in other gardens
- Absent of sufficient facilities in other garden

Section IV: Internal migration – Intervention Strategies

8 INTERNAL MIGRATION - NEED FOR INVESTMENT

Internal migration that is happening to date geared mostly through informal mechanism. This mechanism will not resolve the current imbalance in a foreseeable future. Therefore internal migration has to happen to a level that will bring employment balance in the tea sector. It requires a planned effort. Migration cannot be forced rather it needs to be facilitated. The planning has to be done both at the sectoral level as well as individual garden level. The plan needs to address the issues and challenges relating to internal migration as mentioned above. Substantial amount of investment will be needed to implement the plan though the actual investment amount have not been calculated within this study. Now the challenge is how the investment money will come. One can argue that the investment should come from the tea sector. But the question remains would the tea sector be able to finance this program? One needs to look at the financial health of the tea sector.

8.1 FINANCIAL HEALTH OF TEA SECTOR

Tea sector as a whole contributes substantially to the national economy both in terms of employment and foreign exchange earning. But the sector itself does not flourish as much due to low profitability. The study team did not have the financial data to assess its financial health. But low profit margin couples with lack of future prospect might inhibit the investors to make further investment in the tea sector. (Export earning in 2003 calendar year 915.07 million taka, source PDU/BTB-2004)

8.2 EXTERNAL ASSISTANCE

A vibrant tea sector is required for the national economy. Worker internal migration will improve the performance of tea sector and thus will contribute to the national economy. Government might play a role to facilitate the internal migration plan. Internal migration issue should be included in the tea sector program of the government. This will bring in government resources to implement the plan. Apart from the government, international development agencies and donor organisations might play a role in the implementation of a well-targeted internal migration plan.



Meeting with Panchayet Leader

9 A SUGGESTIVE FRAME WORK FOR INTERNAL MIGRATION

The study team have come to a conclusion that internal migration issue is strategic in nature and requires integrated and long-term program to have sustainable impact in the tea sector. Implementation of few isolated approach or strategies might not produce the desired result to balance tea sector employment. Rather than putting few recommendations, the study team has developed a packaged program to facilitate the inter-garden internal migration. As it is an integrated program, all stakeholders have a role to play to successfully implement the internal migration program. Following gives a detail description of the internal migration framework with the role of particular stakeholders.

9.1 SECTOR WIDE ASSESSMENT

Information base regarding surplus and deficit is not very strong. It is important to have a very authentic database of worker situation in the tea sector. BTA should take initiative to develop the garden specific database that will provide detail information regarding surplus and deficit garden as well as exact details of surplus/deficit worker. This database will help to develop a internal migration strategy. ILO may provide technical assistance in developing the database. Internal migration within the same garden management should be preferred, as this will require less complicated negotiation process to relocate the worker. Migrating to a different garden will entail lot more persuasion and negotiation.

9.2 IDENTIFICATION AND MOBILIZATION

Each of the surplus gardens will need to identify people who can be relocated into new garden. Identification of the transferee (person who will be relocated/internally internally migrated) is a real challenge. Families with relatively disadvantaged position in the garden may opt for relocation. Therefore this group needs to be targeted for internal migration program. Identification needs to be done carefully by the garden management in collaboration with local BCSU representatives, one already migrantd, Gotra Head and Panchayet members. Once identified, these workers need to be mobilised for relocation in another garden. At this stage, motivational sessions, counselling will be required for sometime to boost their confidence and equip them with some social skills to match with the new situation. Local level leaders and female motivator can lead the motivation process.

9.3 NEGOTIATION AND AGREEMENT

There needs to be a BTA sponsored negotiation between the surplus and deficit garden management as to how these people will be settled in the new garden. Employment conditions also have to be finalised before the internal migration takes place. BCSU will need to be consulted at this stage. The negotiation should include employment condition; settle plan as well as social security measure. For internal migration to be sustainable, the negotiation should reflect the expectations of migrant. The negotiation agreement needs to be formalised through BTA approval.

9.4 IMPLEMENTATION OF SETTLEMENT PLAN

It is the responsibility of the deficit garden to implement settlement plan as agreed. Settlement plan will include employment, housing and other benefits within the framework of negotiated agreement. The settlement plan can be financed through garden management, BTA and external assistance. BTA needs to monitor the settlement plan implementation. BSCU may also monitor the process and look at the interest of the migrant worker.

9.5 MAINSTREAMING OF THE MIGRANT WORKER

Last but not the least important issue would be to mainstream migrant into the new garden. It is important that the new migrant feel them as part of the garden. The garden management can plan some kind of motivation session for the new migrant. Gotra heads with one already migrantd, Panchayet leaders and social motivators can be employed to run such motivation program. Besides, one Sarder can be employed from the migrants to boost up their presence and ownership in the new garden.

9.6 COORDINATION, MONITORING AND FOLLOW UP

The internal migration strategy is designed with an integrated approach. As such high level of coordination, monitoring and follow up would be required to successfully implement it. BTA will need to play the central role in it. In other words, BTA will need to steer the whole process centrally. Their members will have specific role within the broad framework of the internal migration plan. On the other hand, BTA will have to gain support from BCSU to implement the program. BCSU can also do monitoring on its own and share that with BTA.

9.7 RESOURCE MOBILIZATION

The implementation of the plan will require significant amount of resources. It may go beyond the capacity of the deficit garden. Some resource in the form of soft loan or outright grant will be required to facilitate the implementation. BTA should consult with the institutions of the Government of Bangladesh such as PDO or donor organisations to raise this resource. ILO can provide necessary technical assistance to BTA to raise the resource.



Consultant discussing with the Former BTA Chairman

For the future development of the industry internal migration of workers from gardens with surplus population to gardens deficit in workers has become imperative.

- Laila Rahman Kabir, Former Chairman, BTA

Following page provides the internal migration model as suggested by the study team.

10 CONCLUSION

Internal migration of tea worker will be a complex and long term process. But it is also a necessity not only for the tea sector but also for the workers well being as well. There is a requirement to create awareness and sensitivity among the management, workers and other stakeholders to begin the process. Internal migration requires well coordinated measure.

A short cut way to resolve the issue may not produce the desired result and in a way may create further confusion and mistrust. This might have long term implication on the tea sector. Because of the position and influence, BTA is the right organisation to initiate the process with a clear vision. BCSU also have significant influence on the tea work as they represent the worker. It is important that its support to the process remains consistent and positive.

Internal migration can only solve the short and medium term problem with regard to tea sector employment. But this will not give the ultimate solution to tea workers employment. They need to find employment beyond tea sector, as the growth of population will continue to mismatch with the growth of employment opportunity in the tea sector. Tea workers need education and other life skills to find jobs in other formal and informal sector. It is evident that they are quite acceptable to other jobs for their sincerity and hard work. But they still lack technical competency to do variety of jobs. Government support is thus very much needed to mainstream the tea work with national economic activities. NGOs can also play role particularly in education and social development.

Tea workers have high level of dependency and reliance on the sector as a whole. Their confidence in the sector needs to maintain for the sustainability of the sector. If the tea sector fails to provide a decent working environment along with competitive benefit package to the worker, the sector will run the risk of massive exodus of tea worker to other employment opportunities. Therefore, policy makers and implementers will have to find a dynamic between retaining the core worker in the sector while rehabilitating the excess worker in other sector of the economy.

Unemployed population of Tea Estates particularly educated ones require to move to other employment sector

- **M. Shah Alam**, Convenor, LH & WSC, BTA

11 ANNEXES: