The Dooars Region has a long history of tea plantation. Tea seeds were first sowed in 1835 in an experimental nursery at Labong farm from Darjeeling Hills. In 1874 the first tea garden in Dooars came up. Dooars produces about 17 per cent of the total tea production of North India. More than 11 per cent of the net sown area of the Dooars Region is permanently occupied by tea plantation. According to the Assam Directory, 2002-03, it has as many as 89 big tea estates and numerous small tea estates which provide raw materials to more than 150 registered tea processing industries of the district.

The impact of tea plantation investment on the local economy of the Dooars is apparently positive. A structural change has taken place in the Dooars economy. Dooars economy was a typical natural economy before the plantation era. This natural economy has been converted into monetary economy through this structural change. One of the principal effects is the commercialization of local agriculture. Roads and communication system have owed its development to plantation. A network of feeder roads joining the tea estates with the nearby railway stations has also been constructed which provides the base of present network of Jalpaiguri district. Financial institutions have been set up to mobilize the local savings. Through these financial institutions idle
money balances were channelised into the Dooars economy for productive expenditures. These are some of the infra-structural changes that were brought in the Dooars economy by means of plantation investment.

The study of levels of socio-economic development in Dooars Region indicates that the northern blocks of the district i.e. Rajganj, Kumargram, Alipurduar-I, Alipurduar-II, Falakata and Mainaguri have more educated and literate persons than the southern blocks i.e. Mal, Matiali, Nagrakata and Kalchini.

However, agriculture, industrial and health care development indicates that there are only few pockets where development has taken place. Blocks like Rajganj, Alipurduar-I Alipurduar-II, Falakata Jalpaiguri, Mainaguri and Kumargram are agriculturally and industrially advanced in comparison to other blocks of the district. Mal, Matiali, Nagrakata, Madarihat and Jalpaiguri blocks are more advance in health care development.

The composite picture of social-economic development indicates the blocks having high level of educational attainment, better industrial and agricultural development which comes under high level of socio-economic development. The blocks Alipurduar-I, Alipurduar-II, Mainaguri and Jalpaiguri have high level of socio-economic
development while blocks like Matiali, Madarihat, Kumargram, Falakata and Dhupguri shows medium level of socio-economic development.

The analysis of socio-economic profile of the sampled households of the Dooars Region indicates a mixed picture of socio-economic condition of the sampled households of the Dooars Region.

A comparative analysis of households size and age structure of garden, village and town areas reveal the fact that big family’s size is more common in village and garden areas than the town area. It may be due to the culture of joint family in villages of India and nuclear family culture in the urban localities. Moreover, the percentage of workforce is more in town area as compared to village and garden areas. But the population below 6 years and in the age group 6-14 years are low in town area as compared to garden and village which shows the fact that birth rate in town area is lower as compared to garden and village areas. This is due to awareness in town area and ignorance in garden and village areas. It is also clear from the table 5.1A, 5.1B and 5.1C that the life expectancy in town area is much higher than the garden and village areas. It is mainly due to the better availability of transportation and communication facilities, better health care and medical facilities and other infrastructural facilities in town areas as
compared to garden and village areas as discussed in the previous chapter.

The overall literacy pattern of garden, village and town areas depicts the fact that overall literacy rate is lowest in garden, moderate in village and high in town areas due to the better availability of schooling facilities and mass awareness in town areas. Another important trend, which emerges from the analysis, shows that, as the size of family increases there is a decline in overall literacy as well as a sharp decline in female literacy. Therefore, it may be concluded that female literacy is negatively correlated with the size of family. There is an urgent need to concentrate on female literacy to check the size of family in the study area.

A comparative assessment of the level of educational attainment in garden, village and town area shows that the percentage of primary literates is higher in the garden and village area while percentage of graduates and above is much higher in the town area. Therefore, it may be concluded that garden and village areas having exists to primary education but higher education either not available with in the walking distance or certain social, cultural and economic factors leading for low level of higher education. It has been observed in all three-study areas (garden, village and town) that
as the size of family increases the level of educational attainment is at the graduate and above graduate level decreases. Therefore, a concerted effort is needed to check the family size to attain high level of overall socio-economic development.

A comparative analysis of housing condition in the garden, village and town areas shows that the semi-pucca and kuchha housing condition is more visible in the garden and village areas while their urban counterpart lives in pucca houses. Similarly, the urban sampled households switched to LPG for cooking while it has restricted accessibility in the village and garden areas.

Similarly, a comparative analysis of drinking water facility and sanitation of garden, village and town areas shows that most of the households in all household category in garden and village use public tube-well while some of them also take water from ponds and rivers. However, most of the households in the town areas have their own hand pump.

In all household categories 15 to 25 per cent, households have their own toilets while remaining prefer open defecation as far as in garden and village areas. In the village area percentage of households having toilet facilities are more than the garden area. In town area,
85-90 per cent households in all categories are having their own toilet facility while remaining 10 per cent practices open defecation.

The occupational structure of all categories (garden, village and town) indicates that the households living in the garden and village areas are highly dependent on either labouring in the garden or at agricultural labouring. In contrary to this, the households living in the town area more engaged in service sector than labouring.

A comparative analysis of level of income of all the groups indicates that more than 50 per cent households of all category in the garden and village have below the Rs. 2000 monthly income while in the town area less than 25 percent comes under this income group.

The analysis of land ownership and accessibility to banking facilities indicates that only fewer per cent of sampled households have their own land in the garden area while more than 35 per cent sampled households of village area of all category have their own cultivated land. Few sampled households of town area have also kept their connection with village and thus hold cultivated land.

The analysis of saving in commercial and non-commercial banks indicates that the sampled households of garden area having family size under five have some saving in banks while the sampled households having more than five persons did not able to save their
earning. In contrary to this more than 25 per cent sampled households irrespective of family size in village area save some income for future. In the same way more than 70 per cent sampled households of town area save their earning for future.

In a nutshell, it may be stated that it is the income level which determine the level of socio-economic development of any region. Level of income facilitates the accessibility to all other welfare measures i.e. health care facilities, educational facilities, housing, electricity, communication etc.

The size of household family size also determine the level of socio-economic condition of the people as we have already mentioned earlier that even in the garden area where earning is less in comparison to village and town area, the households having family size under five able to save some amount of their daily meager earning.

Though the sampled households of urban localities, irrespective of income level, enjoying some of the facilities like education, health care and electricity, there is mark difference in garden and villages sampled households as far as socio-economic condition is concerned due to large income gap.

Most of the opposite correlation between variables of tea plantation and socio-economic development of sampled households in
garden and village areas indicates that the poor villagers and those living around garden areas are only manage to earn their livelihood through labouring. The condition of tea plantation labourers is pathetic as compared to the labourers of other sectors i.e. agricultural and non agricultural.

On the other hand, the positive correlation between the variables of tea plantation and socio-economic development of urban areas sampled households indicates that urban areas have other opportunities to get better livelihood than the tea plantation. In the previous chapter, we have already come to know that sampled urban households have lesser association with tea plantation than the garden and village areas. Moreover, the sampled household of urban localities engaged in labouring in tea plantation has much better socio-economic condition than their garden and rural counter part.

SUGGESTIONS

On the basis of analysis and association of data which the study has done so far, the researcher has raised and pointed out the following critical point which may be taken as suggestion for improving the socio-economic condition of the workers of tea plantation.

- There is high job insecurity in tea plantation because most of the employment in tea plantation is seasonal. Though most of the
seasonal labourers are migrant but local workers of tea plantation have to face problem of job insecurity particularly female labourers who pluck the tea leaves from the garden.

There must be some job security and provision of daily earning for them as we have already learnt that only a few sampled households of garden area save there income for future.

- Formation and effective functioning of Self Help Group (SHG) among the workers of tea plantation will certainly benefit them particularly at the time of uncertainty.

- Micro-credit system as launched and has been successfully running in neighbouring Bangladesh by Nobel Laureate Prof. Yunus must be introduced in the tea plantation areas which may be helpful for the labourers during the off season of the tea gardens.

  The micro credit system will be particularly beneficial in the closed and seek (reopen tea gardens) tea gardens. Moreover, it may be started by the owner of tea garden itself under the government regulation.

- Updated data at regular interval will help the researcher as well as the planner since it will give quality research.
• Research and Development in tea plantation is lacking in North
  Bengal region therefore, more vibrant research centre should be
  open.

• Provision of vocational training for the tea labourers and their
  children must be given by the owners of tea garden with the help
  of concerned government.

• The field survey revealed that only two or three garden areas
  have primary education facilities, so there is urgent need to
  provide them schooling facilities at walk able distance.

• The primary survey also shows that the sampled household of
  garden area have no accessibilities of health care facilities, thus
  immediate needs to provide the health care facilities by initially
  can be taken up by the garden owners.