

APPENDIX: METHODOLOGY NOTE

To underpin this investigation into living conditions on Assam tea estates, Oxfam commissioned two independent pieces of research, which included qualitative and quantitative methods.

The research included:

- interviews with 510 workers from across 50 tea estates
- mapping of the distribution of the end consumer price along tea value chains

Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), Guwahati Campus Research strand: Decent work for tea plantation workers in Assam

Objectives

The study aimed to explore the current work structure, living and working conditions of plantation workers in Assam, including contractual, temporary and permanent workers on tea estates and those working on small tea plantations.

Research questions and approach

A total of 50 tea estates were selected, located across nine major tea-producing districts of Assam, taking into account the following four criteria: status of the company, whether it is a member of an association, the presence of a trade union, and the size of the area under cultivation. Ten respondents from each tea estate were selected, including a mix of monthly salaried and daily wage workers, permanent and temporary workers, and males and females.

The analysis is based on narratives from different stakeholders and statistical inference. A comparison has been made across four broad types of plantations – public limited companies, proprietorships, partnerships, and government estates. This is mainly because of the variation in basic entitlements, wage structure, non-cash benefits, schools, hospitals, work conditions, infrastructure, etc. across these categories of plantations. Wage gap calculations are based on consumption (taking family members into account) and the actual wage that they receive (including both cash and non-cash benefits).

Challenges and data limitations

There were several challenges in accessing tea estates while conducting fieldwork during the initial phase of the study. Approaching the management of the estates was often

unsuccessful and the researchers therefore required the help of local grassroots organizations, trade unions and student unions. Of the 72 tea estates approached, 50 were successfully accessed.

In some of the tea estates, official permission was given to carry out the study, although in one of the estates in Sonitpur district it was clear that the responses were staged and workers were not discussing the issues freely. These responses were therefore not included in the research analysis.

The full research report is available [here](#).

Bureau for the Appraisal of Social Impacts for Citizen Information (BASIC)

Research strand: Distribution of the end consumer price in Assam tea value chains

Objectives

This study focused on the pricing of Assam tea and the distribution of the end consumer price down the supply chain, building on Oxfam India's engagement on the systemic issues. The research focused on mapping the distribution for tea plantations (large and smallholder), as well as providing contextual background on issues within the workforce and wider industry, etc. and how value is added with a change in form/place/time/utility of tea produced in the tea plantations of Assam.

Research questions and approach

The central research question was: 'How has the distribution of the end consumer price along tea value chains changed over the last 10–20 years, and why?' The research focused on: consumer prices; the proportion of the value captured by intermediaries and/or retailers; the proportion of the end consumer price reaching producers/workers; the costs of production; and the costs of living for producers and workers in tea value chains. The research then asked what increase/redistribution of the end consumer price would be needed to enable workers and small-scale farmers to receive a living wage.

The study focused on tea value chains in the domestic market of India (Assam) and the export markets of Germany, the UK, France, the Netherlands and the USA.

The analysis of value chains is both quantitative and qualitative, based on the conceptual frameworks of global value chains and global production networks.

Challenges and data limitations

The main challenge was to collect detailed and credible data along the full value chains, from producers up to retailers. Indeed, prices, costs and margins fluctuate and are the most confidential information in business, which makes it very difficult to access such information and to counter-verify from the outside. To address this issue, BASIC's approach was to collect and analyse quantitative data from public and private databases (including UN

Comtrade, the World Bank, research institutes, and ministries in producing countries), combine this with the qualitative analysis emerging from the literature, and then cross-check and enrich this information/analysis through interviews with at least one or two experts from the tea sector in each country.

The full report is available [here](#).

The full research report commissioned by Oxfam Germany is available [here](#).