

The background of the slide is a lush green tea plantation. In the foreground, several tea bushes are visible, with their leaves and buds in sharp focus. The background is a soft-focus field of tea plants. A bright sun flare is visible in the upper right quadrant. A yellow semi-circular graphic element is positioned in the center of the slide, containing the chapter title.

CHAPTER IV

Compliance to Plantations Labour Act, 1951



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4.1 Labour and Welfare Department

Audit of Labour and Welfare Department was conducted to assess the extent of implementation of the Plantations Labour Act, 1951, the Minimum Wages Act, 1948, and the rules framed thereunder, in relation to their impact on the welfare of tea-tribes.

4.2 Provisions of the Plantations Labour Act, 1951 and the Assam Plantations Labour Rules, 1956

The tea industry in Assam employs approximately 10 lakh workers. The workers and their families reside within the premises of TEs. In 1951, Parliament passed the Plantations Labour Act (PLA), which provides for the welfare of labour and regulates the conditions of workers in plantations. PLA applies to all Tea, Coffee, Rubber, Cinchona, Cocoa, Oil Palm and Cardamom plantations, which admeasures 25 acres or more and in which 30 or more persons are employed or were employed on any day of the preceding twelve months.

The main provisions of the Act pertain to (i) Health and Welfare, (ii) Hours of work and rest intervals and (iii) Annual leave with wages. The State Governments have been empowered to frame rules and take steps to improve the living conditions of plantation labour.

Accordingly, Government of Assam framed (August 1955) 'The Assam Plantations Labour Rules, 1956' (APLR) facilitating implementation of provisions of PLA and also constituted Advisory Boards³⁴ on Education, Housing and Medical with the aim to advise the Government on their respective matter for bringing improvement in the facilities for tea workers in TEs.

Audit was conducted in 40 TEs, spread across four zones³⁵ of the Labour Commissioner of Assam, to examine the extent up to which the provisions of the APLR were observed in tea plantations. In 40 TEs, 590 workers were interviewed, and their views and comments obtained on various aspects are suitably commented in the succeeding paragraphs. A brief overview of the test-checked TEs and workers interviewed are discussed below:

³⁴ The Boards comprise the Minister of the respective Departments as the Chairman of the Board, Members are officers from the concerned Departments, Labour Department and representatives from Planters and Workers Association.

³⁵ Cachar, Dibrugarh, Nagaon and Sonitpur.

4.3 Introduction about Test-Checked Tea Estates and Workers Interviewed

4.3.1 Tea Estates

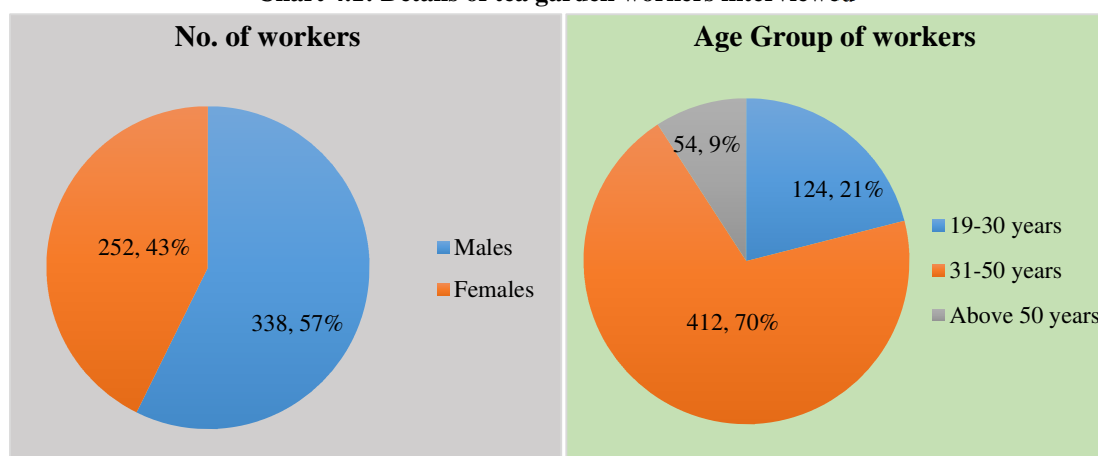
There are five different categories³⁶ of ownership in tea estates in Assam. Out of 40 TEs test-checked, two each were owned by Government of India and Government of Assam, 27 TEs were Private Limited Companies and nine TEs were Public Limited Companies. Audit of TEs having different category of ownership was carried out to ensure representation from each category.

4.3.2 Tea workers

There were four different categories of employees in the TEs test-checked. These were managerial staff, staff who were salaried employees and two categories of labourers viz., permanent, and temporary. The permanent labourers were free to work throughout the year whereas temporary workers were hired by the tea garden management during peak season or according to need. The permanent workers were on the estate rolls and they usually resided in the TEs except for a few who resided outside. The temporary workers usually resided outside the estates except some whose family members were resident permanent workers. Total permanent workers in the 40 sampled TEs were 36,063 (17,667 Male and 18,396 Female) and total population residing in TEs was 2,07,687.

Audit also conducted joint physical verification of the welfare facilities/amenities and the houses of the workers available in estates to ascertain their actual living conditions. The responses of workers, obtained in the course of interview, were cross-examined with the results of the joint physical verification. The results of cross verification showed that workers' response on available facilities (viz., housing, hospital, education, canteen, *crèche*) were consistent with the deficiencies noticed by audit during joint physical verification. The details of 590 workers of 40 TEs interviewed by Audit are given in **Chart 4.1**.

Chart 4.1: Details of tea garden workers interviewed

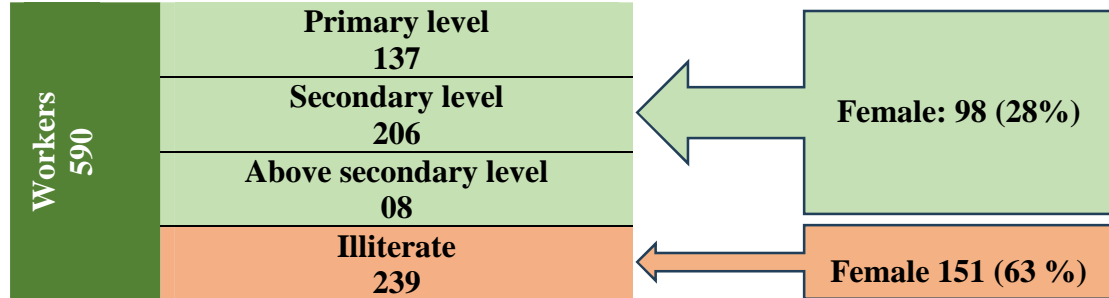


³⁶ Public Limited Company, Private Limited Company, Partnership Firm, Undertaking of Government of Assam and, Undertaking of Government of India.

4.3.3 Status of Education amongst Workers Interviewed

The low literacy level among workers showed (**Chart 4.2**) that the educational status of tea workers was not satisfactory and needs special attention.

Chart 4.2: Literacy level of tea workers interviewed



On being asked, the workers explained that they cannot afford the expenses of education on account of their meagre income and so preferred to keep their children at home to look after their siblings and for doing other household works.

4.4 Audit findings on Implementation of PLA

Audit findings relating to Health and Welfare provisions of PLA in Tea Estates of sampled districts (Cachar, Dibrugarh, Nagaon and Sonitpur) is discussed in the succeeding Sections:

Section A: Health Facilities

Section B: Education Facilities

Section C: Housing Facilities

Section D: Other Welfare Facilities

Section A: Health Facilities

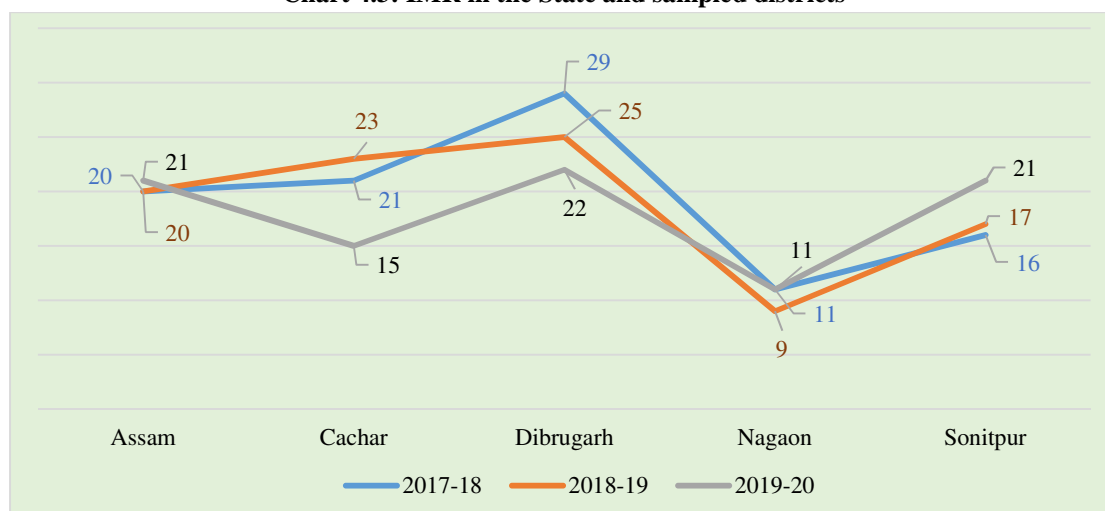
4.5 Overview of Health facilities and indicators in the sampled districts

(a) Maternal Mortality Ratio and Infant Mortality Ratio

Maternal health refers to the health of women during pregnancy, childbirth and the post-partum period, whereas prenatal health refers to health from 22 completed weeks of gestation until seven completed days after birth.

Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) is the number of women who die from any cause related to or aggravated by pregnancy or its management (excluding accidental or incidental causes) during pregnancy and childbirth or within 42 days of termination of pregnancy, irrespective of the duration and site of the pregnancy, per 1,00,000 live births. Since the number of live-births in the sampled districts were less than 1,00,000, audit was unable to comment on MMR in those districts. The rate of Infant Mortality Ratio (IMR³⁷) in Assam and the four sampled districts having majority of tea gardens is shown in **Chart 4.3**.

Chart 4.3: IMR in the State and sampled districts



As can be seen from **Chart 4.3**, IMR in the sampled districts was comparable to the State IMR during the year 2019-20.

Further, Audit assessed the availability of health infrastructure and facilities in the sampled districts as discussed in the succeeding paragraphs:

(b) Public Health facilities

Availability of health facilities in close proximity is essential for access to sound health care. The Central and State Governments have introduced various interventions for providing quality health facilities to the general population. Indian Public Health Standards (IPHS) provides normative requirement of various health facilities based on population. As per IPHS norms, there has to be a Sub Centre (SC), Primary Health Centre (PHC) and Community Health Centre (CHC) for every 5,000, 30,000, and 1.20

³⁷ Per thousand live births.

lakh population respectively. Based on the population in the sampled districts³⁸ as per Census 2011, availability of health facilities as per IPHS norms is shown in **Table 4.1**.

Table 4.1: Availability of health infrastructure in tea garden sampled districts

Health infrastructure		Cachar	Dibrugarh	Nagaon	Sonitpur	Total	
Status of availability of	SCs	Required	347	265	565	385	1,562
		Available	270	231	354	275	1,130
		Shortfall	77 (22)	34 (13)	211 (37)	110 (29)	432 (28)
	PHCs	Required	58	44	94	64	260
		Available	33	30	80	58	201
		Shortfall	25 (43)	14 (32)	14 (15)	6 (10)	59 (23)
	CHCs	Required	14	11	24	16	65
		Available	5	7	15	7	34
		Shortfall	9 (64)	4 (36)	9 (38)	9 (56)	31 (48)

Source: Health & Family welfare website.

Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage.

It can be seen from **Table 4.1**, there was shortage of SCs, PHCs and CHCs by 13 to 37 per cent, 10 to 43 per cent and 36 to 64 per cent respectively which indicates the gaps in availability of health facilities.

(c) Antenatal Care

A proper antenatal check-up provides necessary care to the mother and helps identify any complications of pregnancy such as anaemia, pre-eclampsia and hypertension, etc. As per the Maternal Health Division, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, all eligible pregnant women (PW) are required to be registered and minimum four Antenatal Care (ANC) check-up are to be conducted. All the investigations done and dates of visits have to be recorded in the Mother & Child Protection (MCP) card and the same is required to be updated in the Reproductive & Child Health (RCH) Register. Position of ANC check-up done during 2017-18 to 2019-20 is shown in **Table 4.2**.

Table 4.2: Position of Antenatal Care (ANC) done in the four sampled districts

Name of district	Year	Number of PW registered for ANC		No. of PWs received up to four or more ANC check-ups	TT2 or TT booster given to PWs	Number of PW received	
		Total	Within first trimester			IFA tablets	Calcium
Cachar	2017-18	39,489	34,635 (87.7)	33,576 (85)	37,689 (95.4)	38,422 (97.3)	1,357 (3.4)
	2018-19	40,012	35,489 (88.7)	34,282 (85.7)	37,756 (94.4)	39,841 (99.6)	26,887 (67.2)
	2019-20	40,421	35,932 (88.9)	35,492 (87.8)	39,124 (96.8)	40,197 (99.4)	39,442 (97.6)
Dibrugarh	2017-18	24,995	21,762 (87.1)	19,197 (76.8)	22,995 (92)	24,907 (99.6)	8,498 (34)
	2018-19	24,154	22,239 (92.1)	21,660 (89.7)	22,470 (93)	24,100 (99.8)	12,818 (53.1)
	2019-20	23,867	21,298 (89.2)	19,939 (83.5)	21,597 (90.5)	23,776 (99.6)	21,492 (90)
Sonitpur	2017-18	36,512	32,917 (90.2)	29,742 (81.5)	34,029 (93.2)	34,914 (95.6)	1,044 (2.9)
	2018-19	35,564	31,671 (89.1)	29,715 (83.6)	31,989 (89.9)	34,860 (98)	4,169 (11.7)
	2019-20	36,153	32,484 (89.9)	32,484 (89.9)	33,300 (92.1)	34,633 (95.8)	19,545 (54.1)
Nagaon	2017-18	67,596	53,017 (78.4)	55,156 (81.6)	62,001 (92.0)	66,963 (99.0)	6,332 (9.4)
	2018-19	68,503	56,756 (82.2)	56,606 (82.6)	57,476 (83.9)	70,676 (103.2)	28,675 (41.9)
	2019-20	69,047	52,358 (76.4)	57,141 (82.7)	61,735 (89.4)	70,366 (101.9)	67,723 (98.1)

Source: HMIS data.

Figures in parenthesis represent per cent.

³⁸ Cachar: 17,36,617; Dibrugarh: 13,26,335; Nagaon: 28,23,768; and Sonitpur: 19,24,110.

As can be seen from **Table 4.2**, during the period between 2017-18 and 2019-20:

- The total number of PWs who had received four or more ANC check-ups ranged between 77 per cent and 90 per cent in the four sampled districts.
- During audit of DH, Nagaon, it was found from the minutes of the Maternal Death Review (MDR) Committee that lack of proper ANC had been recorded as one of the several reasons for maternal deaths. In DH Nagaon, it was noticed that out of 114 deaths reviewed by the Committee, lack of ANC was one of the reasons for maternal deaths in 101 cases.
- The number of Second dose of Tetanus Toxoid Immunisation (TT2) or Booster dosages administered to pregnant women of Districts Nagaon, Sonitpur and Dibrugarh declined in 2018-19.
- Distribution of Calcium tablets have shown improvement and increased significantly from 3.4 per cent in 2017-18 to 98 per cent in 2019-20. However, test-checked health facilities of sampled tea garden districts could not provide information regarding ANC and distribution of IFA and Calcium tablets to pregnant women.

(d) Institutional deliveries

As can be seen from **Table 4.3**, the percentage of home deliveries have been steadily declining and institutional delivery is increasing which is a positive indicator.

Table 4.3: Status of home and institutional delivery in sampled district

Name District	Year	Cachar	Dibrugarh	Nagaon	Sonitpur
Number of Home deliveries	2019-20	1,227	47	4,439	2,879
	2018-19	1,341	58	4,550	2,912
	2017-18	1,881	89	5,523	3,730
Institutional deliveries (Public Institutions plus Private Institutions)	2019-20	44,137	25,266	58,407	32,780
	2018-19	41,355	24,012	55,154	31,952
	2017-18	40,672	23,502	54,703	30,969
Total reported deliveries	2019-20	45,364	25,313	62,846	35,659
	2018-19	42,696	24,070	59,704	34,864
	2017-18	42,553	23,591	60,226	34,699
Percentage of institutional deliveries to total reported deliveries	2019-20	97.3	99.8	92.9	91.9
	2018-19	96.9	99.8	92.4	91.6
	2017-18	95.6	99.6	90.8	89.3

Source: HMIS data.

A comparison of figures of total reported deliveries (**Table 4.3**) with that of number of pregnant woman registered for ANC (**Table 4.2**) showed that there was difference in the figures of pregnant women registered for ANC and total number of reported deliveries in the sampled districts and distribution of IFA tablets to PWs without registering them (Nagaon District during 2018-19 and 2019-20) which indicated improper monitoring, maintenance of records and data reliability.

The status of maternal and infant deaths in the sampled districts during 2018-19 to 2019-20 is shown in **Table 4.4**.

Table 4.4: Position of maternal and infant deaths in the sampled districts

	Total reported deliveries		Total Number of reported live births		Maternal deaths		Infant deaths	
	2018-19	2019-20	2018-19	2019-20	2018-19	2019-20	2018-19	2019-20
Assam	5,92,973	6,08,156	5,84,655	6,00,797	1,031	1,009	11,676	12,418
Cachar	42,696	45,364	41,684	44,317	154	138	967	682
Dibrugarh	24,070	25,313	23,659	24,912	67	89	601	551
Nagaon	59,704	62,846	58,678	61,959	62	66	525	703
Sonitpur	34,864	35,659	34,633	35,613	73	77	578	733

Source: HMIS data.

It can be seen from **Table 4.4** that out of the four sampled districts, in three districts, there has been an increase in maternal deaths in 2019-20 as compared to 2018-19 while infant deaths increased in Nagaon and Sonitpur districts. Child Death Review was not conducted by the DH. Hence the causes of infant death could not be analysed in audit.

4.6 Health Facilities in the Tea Gardens

The Assam Plantations Labour Rules, 1956 envisages that every employer must provide for a garden hospital. If the garden management does not maintain a garden hospital, the tea estate needs to maintain a dispensary³⁹ and has to have a lien on the beds of a neighbouring garden or another hospital to the scale of 15 beds per 1,000 workers, provided such a hospital is situated within a distance of five kms from the garden office.

Rules 36 and 37 of APLR provide specifications for garden hospital and group hospital along with the roles that they are intended to perform⁴⁰. However, none of the tea gardens had any group hospital managed/maintained by the garden management, over and above the tea garden hospital.

In the context of tea tribes, it was seen in audit that the conditions of TGHs test-checked were not satisfactory. The facilities available in the TGHs were lacking in various aspects as discussed in the following paragraphs.

(a) Availability of Tea Garden Hospitals/Dispensaries

There are a total of 800 tea gardens in Assam, out of which 414 have TGHs, 210 have dispensaries, and the remaining 176 tea estates have no healthcare facilities. This means that 386 tea gardens do not have TGHs, with 176 of them lacking any medical facilities whatsoever.

There are a total of 800 tea gardens in Assam. The data in respect of availability of healthcare facilities in the tea garden areas is shown in **Table 4.5**.

³⁹ As per Rule 36 of APLR, 1956, a dispensary should have two detention beds, adequate sitting arrangement for OPD patients, wash room and one water point.

⁴⁰ The garden hospitals are intended to be the centre of preliminary health care and primarily deal in provision of OPD services, treatment of minor IPD cases related to infection, pre-natal and post-natal care, and normal childbirth cases. The group hospitals on the other hand are envisaged to be the centre of elaborate diagnosis and treatment and are meant to deal with the cases referred from the garden hospitals.

Table 4.5: Availability of tea garden hospital/dispensary

Total no. of Tea Gardens	No. of Tea gardens having TGH	No. of tea gardens having dispensaries	No. of tea estates having no healthcare facility	Percentage of shortfall in respect of TGH	Percentage of shortfall in respect of no healthcare facility
800	414	210	176	48	22

It can be seen from table that 386 tea gardens do not have TGHs. Out of those 386 tea gardens, 210 had provision of dispensary while the remaining 176 had no provision for any sort of healthcare facility in the tea garden areas.

All the test-checked TEs (40) fulfil the criteria to maintain a TGH in the garden. However, it was observed that only 26 TEs were managing TGHs (including 12 PPP mode hospitals- supported by NHM), 10 TEs had facility of dispensaries while the remaining four did not provide any sort of medical facilities for workers. The 10 TEs having a dispensary and the four TEs having no medical facilities did not have a lien with the neighbouring hospital, despite the fact that a Government Health Facility was available within five kms of the periphery of eight TEs. Thus, 14 of the test-checked TEs lacked medical facilities as a result of which the workers of those TEs had to travel one to 15 km to visit the nearest government hospital for treatment. List of TEs and availability of hospitals therein are shown in **Appendix-4.1**.

(b) Availability of infrastructure in sampled TGHs

During the physical verification, it was found that nine out of 26 hospitals, including four under PPP mode, were in poor condition with broken ceilings, cracked walls, and unhygienic minor Operation Theatres (OTs)/wards/dressing rooms. Seven dispensaries also had deteriorating buildings.

The APLR provides that every hospital shall be a building of sound and permanent construction and will have different departments for treatment. In the course of physical verification of hospitals, it was observed that the building of nine⁴¹ (including four PPP mode hospitals) out of 26 hospitals were in bad condition with broken ceiling, cracked walls, broken doors and windows and, unhygienic conditions in the minor Operation Theatres (OTs)/wards/dressing rooms. The condition of the buildings of seven dispensaries⁴² was also found to be bad. Drinking water facility was not available in 15 (including one PPP mode hospital)⁴³ out of 26 hospitals. The provision of attached lavatory in the in-patient ward was absent in all the test-checked hospitals leading to inconvenience to patients. Kitchen facility for cooking meals for in-patients was available in 21 hospitals only. The walls of the kitchen had cobwebs and coating of coal ash.

None of the drug stores of TGHs had refrigerators for storing temperature sensitive drugs. Further, the hospitals were also lacking in availability of departments for treatment. The details of building infrastructure and availability of departments in

⁴¹ Amluckie, Burrpapahar, Doloo, Manohari, Poloi, Salonah, Sephinjjuri, Shyamguri, Tinkharia.

⁴² Bhubrighat, Kurkorie, Longai, Megha, Mohmora, Rukong, Satispur.

⁴³ Seven hospitals and eight dispensaries.

TGHs are shown in **Appendix 4.2**. The photographs below show the extent of deficient infrastructure in TGHs.



(c) **Availability of Manpower in sampled TGHs**

Out of 26 Tea Garden Hospitals, only 15 had full-time medical practitioners, while others either had visiting doctors or were managed by part-time doctors. Additionally, seven out of 12 PPP mode hospitals lacked full-time medical practitioners. Similarly, all 10 tea garden-managed dispensaries did not have adequate medical staff as per APLR guidelines. All these impacted service delivery and workers' health in both TGHs and dispensaries.

To provide the specified services in the TGHs, the APLR mandates presence of a full time qualified medical practitioner assisted by a pharmacist, ANM/GNM, midwife and health assistant. Audit observed that out of 26 TGHs, a full-time medical practitioner was available only in 15 TGHs while five hospitals had provision of a visiting medical practitioner. Six hospitals had no doctor. In 12 PPP mode hospitals test-checked, a fulltime medical practitioner was not available in seven hospitals (six had a visiting medical practitioner and there was no doctor in one hospital). Similarly, the APLR mandates presence of a visiting doctor, a pharmacist and a midwife in dispensaries. Audit scrutiny showed that in 10 tea garden managed dispensaries, provision for visiting medical practitioners was available in six dispensaries and four dispensaries were running without doctors. The visiting doctors need to visit the hospitals on a daily basis for a fixed duration, but it was observed that the doctors visited for only one to three days in a week. In the absence of doctors in 10 dispensaries, the pharmacists and nurses were prescribing the treatment. The Advisory Board on Health of Labour and Welfare Department had also time and again stressed upon the appointment of doctors in tea estates having a shortfall, but no action was taken thereon.

(d) Availability of paramedical staff in TGHs

Of the 26 hospitals, nurses were available in 21 hospitals, pharmacists in 26 and health assistants in 21 hospitals. In 10 dispensaries, midwife and pharmacists were available in seven and five dispensaries respectively.

Thus, the TGHs and the dispensaries which were available against the TGHs did not have adequate human resources as prescribed under the rules which adversely impacted the service delivery in hospitals and the health of the workers.

(e) Position of delivery, maternal and infant death in the test-checked TEs

The Government health centres did not maintain data of maternal and infant deaths separately for tea tribes. In view of this, audit could not analyse the maternal and child health of tea tribes with those of the State figures. During audit, 19 out of 26 health centres test-checked had provided data related to maternal and infant deaths in the tea garden hospitals which is shown in **Table 4.6**.

Table 4.6: Position of delivery, maternal death and infant death in 19 tea garden hospitals

Year	Total deliveries	No. of maternal deaths	No. of infant deaths	Per cent of maternal deaths	Per cent of infant deaths
2017-18	1,379	4	13	0.29	0.94
2018-19	1,462	5	21	0.34	1.44
2019-20	1,536	8	22	0.52	1.43

It can be seen from **Table 4.6** that the rate of maternal and infant deaths in 2017-18 were 0.29 *per cent* and 0.94 *per cent* respectively which had increased to 0.52 *per cent* and 1.43 *per cent* respectively during 2019-20. The higher maternal/infant deaths is linked to various issues like lack of infrastructure, human resources in healthcare system, lack of proper sanitation and safe drinking water facilities in residential areas of tea workers, high illiteracy rate and low income. These issues are vital and play an important role in health seeking behaviour of people.

(f) Response of workers on hospital facilities

Out of the 590 respondents to the audit survey, 165 (28 *per cent*) expressed their dissatisfaction over the available medical facilities in the hospitals and stated that health was the most pressing problem for them because of non-availability of full-time doctors



Interaction with the worker's during beneficiary survey, Nahorani tea estate, Sonitpur

and medicines for various illnesses. On the other hand, the doctors of two tea estates stated in writing that their life was at risk because the population of tea gardens sometimes turned aggressive claiming shortfall in treatment. Similar comments were also offered verbally by the doctors of other tea estates. This further underlines the inadequate availability of health facilities in tea

estates, and the strained doctor-patient relationship caused by the same.

Recommendation 10: Labour and Welfare Department should enforce the APLR strictly to ensure manpower and infrastructure as per Indian Public Health Standards to all TGHs by the tea garden managements.

Section B: Education Facilities

4.7 Overview of Education Facilities

Rule 52 of the APLR states that every employer shall, if the number of worker's children between the ages of six and 12 in his plantation exceeds 25, provide and maintain a primary school or schools for imparting primary education to the children, provided that an employer may not maintain a primary school if there is one under the direct management of the State Government or of any local body for imparting free education to the children of plantation workers and within a distance of one mile from the place where workers reside.

There were 429 TGM schools in 800 TEs of Assam. Out of 40 test-checked TEs, 34 TEs⁴⁴ fulfil the criteria for maintaining schools inside the gardens. Of these 34 TEs, 22 TEs maintained 51 schools in their gardens, nine TEs had provincialised schools run by the State Government and three TEs (Bokel, Mohmora and Megha of Dibrugarh district) did not provide any school facility. The availability of schools in TEs is shown in **Appendix-4.3**. All 51 schools maintained by 22 TEs were test-checked in audit. The audit findings thereagainst are discussed below.

(a) Availability of Teachers in TG Managed Schools (TGM Schools)

37 per cent of test-checked schools has adequate teachers as per RTE Act.

As per APLR, the employer shall appoint one teacher for every 40 children in the primary school. As per The Right to Education Act, 2009 (RTE Act), norms⁴⁵ for number of teachers in a school need to be maintained as per enrolment therein.

Two out of 51 test-checked schools had no teachers as well as students. Of 49 schools, only 18 (37 per cent) had adequate number of teachers as per the provisions of the RTE Act while the remaining 31 schools had shortage of teachers ranging between 17 and 67 per cent.

(b) Pupil-Teacher Ratio in TGM Schools

57 per cent of test -checked schools have a favourable Pupil-Teacher ratio.

As per RTE Act, 2009, there shall be at least two teachers for Lower Primary (LP) schools, with overall Pupil-Teacher Ratio (PTR) not being more than 40:1.

In terms of the RTE Act, PTR was favourable only in 29 of the 51 schools test-checked, while four out of 51 test-checked schools with enrolment of more than 200 students, the PTR was more than 40:1. The highest PTR of 83:1 was seen in the school of Burrapahar TE of Nagaon district. Two test-checked TGM schools⁴⁶ did not have any teaching staff.

⁴⁴ Cachar: nine TEs, Dibrugarh: 14 TEs, Nagaon: four TEs, Sonitpur: seven TEs.

⁴⁵ Norms of RTE Act: 1 to 60 students-2 teacher, 61 to 90 students -3 teachers, 91 to 120 students – four teachers, 121 to 150 students – five teachers, 151 to 200 students - five plus 1 head teacher, above 200 students - Pupil teacher ratio except head teacher shall not exceed forty.

⁴⁶ Amguri TGLPS in Moran TE and Lakribam TGLPS of Tingkhong TE.

(c) Qualification and Training of teachers

Only 8.2 per cent of teachers of test-checked schools had educational qualification as per norms. None of the teachers except one had received any training from institutes recognised by the Education Department of the State Government

As per Section 23 of the RTE Act, 2009, every school teacher shall acquire minimum academic and professional qualifications as laid down by the academic authority. The National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE), being the academic authority, had notified (August 2010) minimum qualifications for teachers of Classes 1 to 5 as possession of Senior Secondary (or its equivalent) with at least 50 per cent marks and two-year Diploma in Elementary Education. The notification also provided requirement of teacher training courses for teachers appointed before the date of the notification (23 August 2010) and for the teachers appointed on or after 03 September 2001 *i.e.*, the date on which NCTE regulations, 2001 came into force notifying minimum qualifications for teachers in schools.

The date of appointment of teachers could not be made available to audit. However, it was observed that out of 145 teachers in 51 test-checked schools, only 12 teachers⁴⁷ had educational qualifications as per 2001 and 2010 norms. Further, none of the teachers except one had received any training from institutes recognised by the Education Department of the State Government. The matter of teacher's training had been discussed several times in the meetings of the 'Advisory Board on Education', but no concrete steps had been taken in this direction by TTWD despite having the mandate to coordinate with other Departments of Government of Assam for overall development of the tea tribes.

(d) School Infrastructure

Deficiencies were noticed in provision of school infrastructure such as number of classrooms and library as per RTE Act, 2009.

The APLR (Rule 53) specifies that the school building shall be constructed in accordance with the standard plan or plans which may be laid down by the State. The *Axom Sarba Siksha Abhiyan* (ASSA) follows the provisions of the RTE Act, 2009 for maintaining the infrastructure facilities in schools. The prescribed norms and the actual status of available infrastructure facilities in 51 test-checked schools are shown in **Table 4.7**.

Table 4.7: Norms for school infrastructure and the facilities actually available in 51 schools

Infrastructure facilities as per norms	Audit findings/Remarks
Classroom: At least one classroom for every teacher and an office-cum-store-cum-Head teacher's room	39 schools were not following norms of maintaining classrooms based on the number of teachers.
Separate toilets for boys and girls	38 schools had separate toilets for boys and girls. Toilet was not available in Burrupahar TE (Nagaon district), 10 schools had common toilets. In two schools, toilets were non-

⁴⁷ Graduation/Higher Secondary and D. El.Ed.:10, Graduation/Post graduation and B. Ed: 2.

Infrastructure facilities as per norms	Audit findings/Remarks
	functional. All the toilets available in schools were without tap water connection.
Safe and adequate drinking water facility to all children	While water facility was available in 49 schools, only four had tap water facility. Water facility of any type was not available in schools of Burrayahar (Nagaon) and Tulip (Sonitpur) TEs.
Kitchen for cooking mid-day meal	Kitchens were available in 46 schools. The kitchen was in an open shed in four schools ⁴⁸ . School at Mahadeobari TE (Dibrugarh) did not have kitchen and the food was cooked in the house of the head teacher. The schools were closed since long for Covid-19. As such, aspects like cleanliness and hygiene in kitchens could not be commented upon.
Library providing newspaper, magazines and books on all subjects, including storybooks.	Library was not available in any of the test-checked TE schools.

Source: Data furnished by TEs.

Table 4.7 shows gaps in availability of infrastructure facilities in the schools of TEs across various parameters with reference to the infrastructure norms prescribed in RTE Act, 2009. Details of infrastructure facilities available in schools are shown in **Appendix-4.3**. Some photographic evidences showing the deficient infrastructure in TGM Schools are given below:



⁴⁸ One (1) school each in Greenwood and Moran TEs (Dibrugarh), two schools: Salna TE (Nagaon).

(e) Access to government upper primary and high schools

In two per cent of test checked schools, distance of nearest Government Upper Primary and Government High School was more than three kilometres contrary to the provisions of RTE Act, 2009.

As per RTE Act, 2009, an Upper Primary (UP) school has to be established within a walking distance of three km of the neighbourhood. Distance⁴⁹ of the nearest upper primary and high schools from the labour lines are given in **Table 4.8**.

Table 4.8: Distance of the nearest Government upper primary and high school from labour lines

Sl. No.	Distance Range	Distance of nearest Govt. Upper Primary school	Distance of nearest Govt. High school
1	Less than or equal to 3 Km	32	31
2	More than 3 Km	8 ⁵⁰	9 ⁵¹

Distance of the nearest government upper primary and high schools was more than three kilometers respectively in respect of eight and nine TEs out of 40 TEs test-checked.

With regard to the transportation facilities, it was observed that 14 sampled TEs⁵² were providing conveyance facilities to school going children of garden staff irrespective of the distance of the school from labour lines. Audit is of the view that the Department may persuade other Tea Garden managements to provide transport facilities to school going children residing in the TEs.

(f) Distribution of Free Textbooks and Uniforms.

During 2016-20, 84 per cent of students in test checked schools were not provided free uniforms. However, all students of Tea-Garden Managed Schools were given Free Text Books.

Rule 5 of the Assam Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Rules (ARCFER), 2011 provides that children of primary level schools shall be entitled to Free Textbooks (FTBs) and Uniforms.

Assam SSA had provided only FTBs to students of all the 429 TGM schools and did not provide uniforms to TGM schools. However, uniforms were provided to students of TGM schools in 2015-16 through SDWOs. Thereafter, the students of TGM schools were not provided with uniforms either from Assam SSA, SDWOs or the tea garden managements. Thus, during 2016-17 to 2019-20, 5,049 to 6,022 students of test-checked TGM schools and 51,032 to 57,823 students for all 429 TGM schools in State were deprived of free uniforms.

⁴⁹ The TEs are spread across a wide area. As such, the labour lines physically verified during audit were considered for calculating distances of Government upper primary and high schools therefrom.

⁵⁰ Kalinagar, Balijan (N), Dikom, Khowang, Mayajan, Rukong, Shyamaguri, and Tulip.

⁵¹ Balijan (N), Dikom, Khowang, Manohari, Mayajan, Rukong, Burrapahar, Shyamaguri and Tulip.

⁵² Nahorani, Monabari, Mijicajan, Gingia, Kellyden, Salonah, Moran, Dikom, Tingkhong, Kharjan, Khowang, Bokel, Balijan (N), Dewan.

(g) Responses of workers on education facilities



Majority of the 590 workers⁵³ surveyed stated that due to low household income, all the parents and guardians of the family were compelled to work in tea gardens and therefore, all of them left in morning for work and returned home by

evening. During their absence, their children stayed in houses uncared for and usually they had no time to look into the educational aspects of their children. They also stated that the upper primary schools were available at a considerable distance from the tea garden area so, considering safety aspects and non-availability of transportation for children they were reluctant to send their children, especially the girl child alone to the schools.

Recommendation 11: Efforts should be made to implement Right to Education Act, 2009 in all Tea Estates schools and ensure availability of requisite infrastructure and manpower.

⁵³ 353 out of 590 workers.

Section C: Housing Facilities

4.8 Overview of Housing Facilities

The audit focused on housing facilities for workers in 39 tea estates. It revealed that *pucca* houses in 11 tea estates were in dilapidated condition, posing risks to residents. Many tea estates did not meet prescribed standards for housing, and several lacked proper water supply and sanitation infrastructure.

Rule 58 of APLR states that accommodation conforming to prescribed standards are to be provided to workers. In case housing in a TE is short, in dilapidated condition, or not as per the prescribed standard, the management shall construct new houses (Eight *per cent* of total residents) every year.

During examination of records and physical verification of houses (August–November 2021), it was observed that in 39 TEs⁵⁴, there was a total of 26,357 housing accommodation against which 18,154 (69 *per cent*) were *pucca* houses (including Tin houses) and 8,203 (31 *per cent*) were *kutcha* houses (**Appendix-4.4**). None of the tea estates had constructed new houses for workers during the period covered under audit. Audit conducted physical examination of houses in all 39 TEs. Audit findings as observed are discussed below:

- i. *Pucca* houses⁵⁵ in 11 TEs (Sukanjuri, Tinkhong, Manohari, Rukong, Bokel, Kaliapani, Thanai, Satispur, Amranagar, Kurkorie and Longai) were in a dilapidated condition with cracked walls, damaged and rusted corrugated sheets of rooftops, broken windows, *kutcha* floor and damaged wall plaster. Thus, the condition of houses in 11 TEs ranged from moderate damage risk to high damage risk leading to a continuous threat of collapse/part collapse of structure which may further lead to fatal accident/loss of life for its residents. *Kutcha* houses were available in 28 TEs⁵⁶. Paradoxically, as compared to *pucca* houses, the *kutcha* houses in almost all TEs (except in Tinkong, Tulip, Amluckie and Bhubarighat) were found to be in better condition. The reason behind good condition of *kutcha* houses as stated by the workers interviewed was low maintenance cost of these houses for which workers used their own resources. The residents of *kutcha* houses, however, stated that they had to face water leakage/dripping from rooftop during the rainy season.
- ii. As per APL Rule-59, housing accommodation for workers should have three living rooms, front and back *verandah*, kitchen, latrine with attached bath and adequate provision of water supply. All approach roads need to be provided with efficient side drains. In 19 out of 39 TEs, housing accommodation was found to be as per the

⁵⁴ There were no resident workers in Budha TE (Dibrugarh).

⁵⁵ 3,465 Nos.

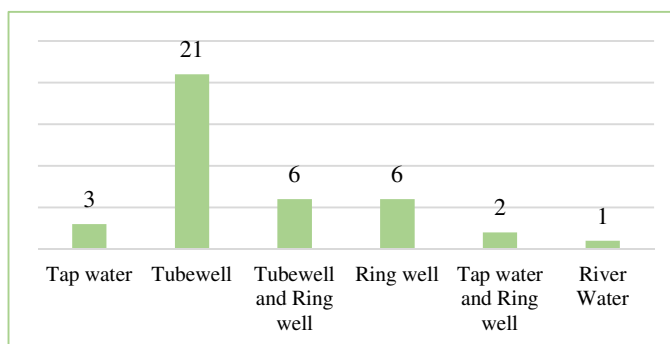
⁵⁶ Amranagar, Bhubarighat, Doloo, Kalinagar, Kurkories, Longai, Poloi, Sephenjuri, Balijan (N), Bokel, Dikom, Greenwood, Kharjan, Khawang, Manohari, Megha, Mohmora, Moran, Satispur, Thanai, Tinkong, Amluckie, Burrapahar, Sukanjuri, Mijikajan, Nahorani, Shyanaguri, Tulip.

prescribed standard. In 20 TEs⁵⁷, the houses were not as per the prescribed standard. These TEs had houses with lesser number of rooms, with back/front *verandah*, toilet facilities and kitchen either not available or not as per the prescribed standard. Toilets attached to housing accommodation were not available in four⁵⁸ out of 39 TEs and open defecation is widely practiced in those TEs. Toilets were found to be in extremely bad condition in four TEs (Tulip, Satispur, Kurkoorie, Amluckie).

- iii. Housing accommodation in Bokel, Rukong, Amranagar, Kurkoorie, Longai and Tinkhong TEs did not have separate kitchen space as required as per rules.
- iv. Drainage system in labour lines was not available in any of the test-checked TEs. The wastewater flows through the *kutch*a drains made by the residents.
- v. In all the tea estates, the approach roads to the garden factory from the main road were *pucca* but the roads connecting the labour lines to the main road were *kutch*a. In Burrpapahar TE only, the approach road from the labour line to the main road was a paver-block road which was constructed with government fund.
- vi. Drinking water facilities were available in all the test-checked tea estates, however, the sources varied widely as shown in **Chart 4.4**.

Chart 4.4: Availability of drinking water in test-checked TEs

- vii. Tap water connection was found in five⁵⁹ test-checked TEs⁶⁰ only. In Poloi TE, tap point was found in every household, but water is supplied only once in two days and that too only for an hour. During supply hour, the workers stored water for



use during days of no supply. In the remaining four TEs, tap points were installed at certain points across labour lines and residents of every household were required to fetch water from those points.

- viii. The most widely available water source in labour lines was tube well, available in 27 sampled TEs. In Sukanjuri TE, there was only one ring well for the entire population (92) of 20 households of TE and the residents had to cover more than 500 meters to fetch the water. Workers had to fetch water from distant sources and considering the terrain and *kutch*a approach path to water sources, fetching water was a tiring and arduous task.
- ix. Residents of Amranagar TE had river as the source of water for drinking and other household purposes. The residents sometimes found animal carcasses in the river;

⁵⁷ Amranagar, Bhubrihat, Dewan, Kurkoorie, Longai, Sephenjuri, Bokel, Moran, Kaliapani, Mahadeobari, Manohari, Mayajan, Rukong, Satispur, Thanai, Tinkong, Amluckie, Kellyden, Salona, Sukanjuri.

⁵⁸ Amranagar, Dewan, Rukong and Sukanjuri.

⁵⁹ 3 TEs: With Tap water & 2 TEs: With Tap and Ringwell.

⁶⁰ Dewan TE, Doloo TE, Kalinagar TE, Kurkoorie TE and Poloi TE.

however, in the absence of any alternate source, they were compelled to use the river water. The workers expressed their dissatisfaction regarding non-availability of water supply.

- x. Testing of water from the different sources available in labour lines was not carried out in 31⁶¹ out of 39 TEs. The residents were using water without any assurance regarding its quality.

(a) **Maintenance of Houses:** Rule 63 of APLR states that every employer shall, at his own expense, maintain all houses provided for accommodation of workers in a fit and safe condition and execute repairs as may be necessary from time to time. The employer shall get all the houses lime-washed at least once every year and all the doors, windows and other wooden structures varnished or painted once in three years.

- During physical verification of labour lines across the 39 TEs, it was observed that 20 TEs⁶² were not carrying annual lime wash as required.
- 24 TEs⁶³ did not carry out annual repairing and maintenance of houses across labour lines due to which houses were found to be in a damaged/dilapidated condition.

Illustrative photographs showing deficient/poor housing condition of the worker’s quarters:



⁶¹ Tinkharia TE, Tulip TE, Shyamguri TE, Nahorani TE, Mijicajan TE, Gingia TE, Salonah TE, Burrapahar TE, Sukanjuri TE, Amluckie TE, Budha TE, Greenwood TE, Khawang TE, Kharjan TE, Mohmora TE, Dikom TE, Manohari TE, Rukong TE, Mayajan TE, Kaliapani TE, Dewan TE, Doloo TE, Amranagar TE, Kurkorie TE, Poloi TE, Bhubrightat TE, Longai TE, Kalinagar TE, Jalalnagar TE and Sephinjuri TE.

⁶² Tulip, Shyamguri, Sukanjuri, Amluckie, Tinkong, Mohmora, Megha, Manohari, Rukong, Bokel, Balijan (N), Doloo, Amranagar, Kurkorie, Poloi, Bhubrightat, Longai, Kalinagar, Jalalnagar and Sephinjuri.

⁶³ Tinkharia, Tulip, Shyamguri, Salonah, Burrapahar, Sukanjuri, Amluckie, Moran, Tinkong, Megha, Manohari, Rukong, Bokel, Kaliapani, Thanai, Doloo, Amranagar, Kurkorie, Poloi, Bhubrightat, Longai, Kalinagar, Jalalnagar and Sephinjuri.



Kutcha approach road in labour line at Monahari TE, Dibrugarh

Broken corrugated sheet/rooftop of worker's house at Bokel TE, Dibrugarh

House with crack in wall at Kurkoorie TE, Cachar

(b) Responses of workers on housing facilities

87 per cent of the workers interviewed did not have their own houses or land, leading to a sense of insecurity and dependence on the tea estate for accommodation.

Out of 590 beneficiaries interviewed, 11 workers from Budha TE were not residing in



Interaction with workers at Kharjan TE, Dibrugarh

the TE. Out of the remaining 579 workers, 353 workers were residing in *pucca* houses and 226 workers had *kutcha* houses. The tea garden authorities provided rent-free accommodation for permanent workers and had the responsibility to ensure better housing facilities for the tea garden labourers and their families. Out of 579

plantation workers living in houses provided by TEs, 278 (47 per cent) had stated that housing was one of the most pressing problems for them as their houses were not in good condition and repair and maintenance was not carried out by the management. They also expressed anguish at the abysmal sanitation facilities. Further, 513 (87 per cent) workers out of 590 interviewed were not having their own houses or land. As verbally stated by some of the workers during the interview, absence of their own land and house made them feel insecure and also compelled to work in the tea garden in order to retain the accommodation in the tea estate.

As discussed in **Paragraph 2.6**, The PMAY scheme, provides financial assistance to eligible beneficiaries for making houses at their own land. This scheme, however, was not applicable for majority of tea garden workers as very few of them had their own land.

Recommendation 12: Labour and Welfare Department should implement the basic housing facilities as enshrined in the Plantations Labour Act, 1951 and Assam Plantation Labour Rules and on par with similar schemes being implemented in Assam.

Section D: Other Welfare Facilities

The street lighting facility across all Tea Estates were non-existent making the movement of workers difficult. Canteen, *crèche* and recreational facilities were available in 35, 76 and 86 *per cent* of test checked tea estates respectively. There were shortcomings in the *crèche* and recreational facilities. Protective equipment such as umbrella, *chappal* and raincoat were not provided in some tea estates. However, drinking water facility was provided in all test checked tea estates.

4.9 Roads and Street Lights

As per Rule 60 of APLR, the employer shall maintain in good condition the approach roads and paths to the area where houses are located. Audit observed that:

- a. The roads across all the test-checked labour lines were found to be kutchra, uneven and surrounded with trees and bushes. Streets had severe water logging issues during the rainy season, which further led to inconvenience for the patients to go to the hospital, and for the school going children. Moreover, due to water logging, there was also a risk of spread of water borne diseases among the inhabitants of those areas.
- b. None of the TEs had street lighting facility across labour lines due to which it was difficult for residents to move or travel during night hours.

4.10 Canteen, *Crèche* and Recreational Facilities

Physical verification of canteen, *crèche* carried out in test checked 39 tea estates, revealed the following position:

Table 4.9: Number of tea estates fulfilling the criteria for maintaining canteen, *crèche* and recreational facility

Relevant Rule of APLR	Brief Description of Rules	Number of tea estates fulfilling the criteria and physically verified by audit	Facility available in number of TEs
Canteen: Rule 44	Tea estates having 150 or more workers are required to maintain canteen facility on no-profit basis.	34	12
<i>Crèche</i>: Rule 46, 47, 48, and 49	Tea estates having 50 or more women workers need to maintain <i>crèche</i> facility.	37	28
Recreational/ Club Facility: Rule 50	Tea estates having 175 or more resident families need to make provision of recreational facility for workers and their family members.	29	25

As evident from **Table 4.9**, canteen, *crèche* and recreational facilities were available in 35, 76 and 86 *per cent* of the tea estates respectively.

Audit observations relating to canteen (12), *crèche* (28) and recreational facility (25) are discussed below:

Canteen:

- Six⁶⁴ out of 12 available canteens were extremely untidy and unhygienic and were not run by garden management committee. These were run by individuals on profit basis.
- There were canteen management committees only in four TEs⁶⁵. The committees were unequally represented because majority of the members were from the management side. Except in Nahorani TE, no other canteen management committee held meetings on a monthly basis.
- Toilet and washroom facility was not available in any of the 12 TE canteens except two TEs (Nahorani TE and Manohari TE).
- Canteens of five TEs (Salona, Shyamaguri, Kellyden, Greenwood and Tinkhong) did not have drinking water facility.
- List of food items was displayed in two (Greenwood TE and Kharjan TE) canteens and that too without indicating the cost of the items displayed

Photographs depicting condition of worker's canteen provided through the garden management:



Crèche: Details of facilities to be provided in *crèche* and shortfalls thereagainst in test-checked TEs are shown in **Table 4.10**.

Table 4.10: Shortfall in *Crèche* facilities vis-à-vis norm

Provisions to be made	Audit Findings in respect of 28 test-checked TEs
Hammock, furniture and bench arrangement for children	15 (Tinkharia, Shyamaguri, Salonah, Burrpapahar, Tinkhong, Kharjan, Rukong, Kaliapani, Thanai, Satispur, Balijan (N), Dewan, Bhubrighat, Kalinagar and Sephinjuri) <i>crèches</i> did not have adequate furniture arrangement for children.
Fenced and shady open air play-ground.	10 (Tinkharia, Shyamaguri, Salonah, Burrpapahar, Kaliapani, Satispur, Dewan, Bhubrighat, Kalinagar and Sephinjuri) <i>crèches</i> did not have open air play ground.
Posting of <i>crèche</i> in-charge	8 (Tinkong, Mahadeobari, Manohari, Rukong, Mayajan, Kaliapani, Satispur and Kalinagar) <i>crèches</i> did not have any provision of <i>crèches</i> in-charge.
Washroom and latrine arrangement	17 (Tinkharia, Shyamaguri, Salonah, Burrpapahar, Tinkhong, Mahadeobari, Greenwood, Mayajan, Bokel, Kaliapani, Thanai, Satispur, Balijan (N), Dewan,

⁶⁴ Greenwood, Kharjan, Tinkhong, Kellyden, Gingia, Salonah.

⁶⁵ Kharjan, Kellyden, Monabari, Nahorani.

Provisions to be made	Audit Findings in respect of 28 test-checked TEs
	Bhubrighat, Kalinagar and Sephinjuri) <i>crèches</i> did not have washrooms and toilet arrangement.
Provision of milk and wholesome food	Five (Kaliapani, Satispur, Bhubrighat, Kalinagar and Sephinjuri) <i>crèches</i> did not provide milk or other wholesome food to children in the <i>crèche</i> .
Provision of cloth, soap and oil	Only five (Nahorani, Monabari, Mijicajan, Ginjia, Kellyden) TEs had supplied cloth, soap and oil in <i>crèches</i> .

Apart from the above, the following shortcomings were also noticed:

- *Crèches* in only two TEs (Khowang and Thanai) had maintained visitors' book for recording visiting records of mothers.
- *Crèches* in 16 TEs (Tinkharia, Shyamaguri, Monabari, Mijicajan, Gingia, Salonah, Burrapahar, Tinkhong, Kharjan, Manohari, Rukong, Mayajan, Kaliapani, Satispur, Kalinagar and Sephinjuri) did not have attendance register for recording attendance of children staying in the *crèche*.
- In Tinkharia TE, milch animals were seen being reared in the *crèche* area.
- In Manohari and Rukong TEs, *crèches* were not functional since 2017.
- In Bhubrighat TE, the *crèche* was used as a godown.

Photographs depicting the condition of *crèche*:



Recreational Facility: Details of facilities to be provided in Recreational Club and shortfalls thereagainst in the test-checked TEs are shown in **Table 4.11**.

Table 4.11: Shortfall in Recreational Club vis-à-vis norm

Provisions to be made as per Rule	Audit Findings in respect of 25 test-checked TEs
Radio set and indoor gaming items	13 (Monabari, Salonah, Burrapahar, Amluckie, Thanai, Moran, Greenwood, Manohari, Kurkorie, Bhubarighat, Dewan, Doloo, Sephinjuri) TEs did not have provision of indoor sports/entertainment items inside the recreation centre.
Sports equipment for outdoor games	6 (Amluckie, Greenwood, Thanai, Bhubarighat, Kurkorie, and Sephinjuri) TEs did not have provision of outdoor sport items.

Photographs depicting the condition of Recreational Club Facility:

4.11 Protective Equipment

Rule 71 of the APLR states that every employer shall provide to every worker free of cost (a) one umbrella every two years, (b) one blanket or jersey every two years, (c) one pair of *chappals* every year, and (d) one rain-coat every two years. However, during scrutiny of records related to distribution of protective equipment to labourers across the test-checked tea estates, it was observed that not all tea estates had distributed



protective equipment during the period covered by audit. Further, the periodicity of distribution of equipment as mentioned in APLR was not adhered to by 22⁶⁶ out of 40 TEs. Details showing distribution of protective equipment by TEs is shown in **Table 4.12**.

Table 4.12: Details of protective equipment distributed

Norm as per APL Rule 71	Audit Findings in respect of 40 test-checked TEs
Umbrella once in two years	Two TEs (Doloo and Jalalnagar) did not distribute umbrellas.
Blanket/Jersey once in two years	Nine TEs (Sukanjuri, Amluckie, Thanai, Doloo, Amranagar, Poloi, longai, Jalalnagar and Sephinjuri) did not distribute blankets/jerseys to workers
Chappal every year	Six TEs (Amluckie, Satispur, Amranagar, Longai, kalinagar and Jalalnagar) did not distribute chappals to workers
Raincoat once in two years	10 TEs (Sukanjuri, Satispur, Doloo, Amranagar, Kurkorie, Poloi, Longai, Kalinagar, Jalalnagar and Sephinjuri) did not distribute raincoats to workers

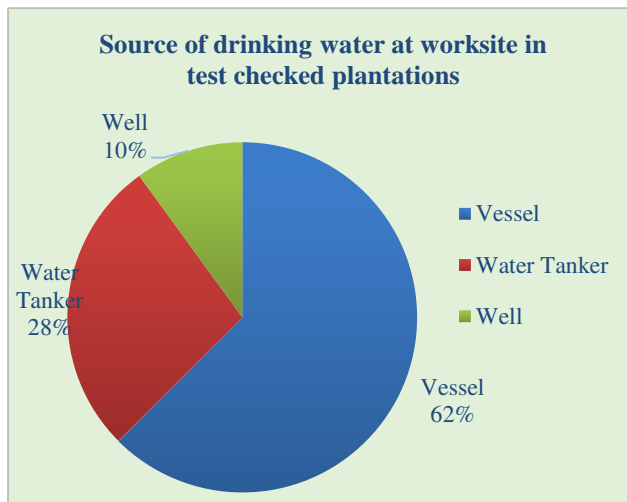
Thus, there were shortcomings in providing workers with the prescribed protective gear.

4.12 Water Supply and Sanitation

Rules 7 to 12 of APLR prescribe conditions about drinking water supply, source of drinking water, cleanliness of the source of water and quality of drinking water at worksites in the plantation. **Chart 4.5** shows the source of drinking water facility provided at worksite.

⁶⁶ Amranagar, Bhubarighat, Doloo, Jajalnagar, Kalinagar, Kurkorie, Longai, Poloi, Sephenjuri, Budha, Bokel, Kaliapani, Mahadeobari, Megha, Moran, Rukong, Satispur, Thanai, Amluckie, Sukanjuri, Tinkharia, Tulip.

Chart 4.5: Source of drinking water facility provided at worksite



Drinking water facility at the worksite was provided by all the test-checked tea estates. Source of drinking water was Vessel (in 25 TEs), Water tanker (in 11 TEs) and well (in four TEs).

Garden management having vessel as source of drinking water stated that vessel water is renewed on a daily basis but no supporting documents regarding upkeep of the vessels were made available to

audit.

Sterilisation was not carried out in respect of the four TEs⁶⁷, where source of water was ring well.

Thus, all 40 TEs failed to provide assurance on quality of water supplied to workers at these work sites.

4.13 Miscellaneous

Some of the topics though not covered under the PL Act, 1951 are discussed below considering its importance in the context of tea tribes workers.

87 per cent and 54 per cent of tea workers surveyed did not own land and LPG connections respectively. Further, 24 per cent did not have any health card to access health insurance schemes.

(i) Landless tea workers

Land is considered an important resource as it is used for different purposes such as agriculture, forestry, mining, building houses, roads and setting up of industries. As per census 2011, landless agriculture workers constituted 11 per cent of India's population at 14.43 crore.

Out of 590 workers surveyed, 513 (87 per cent) workers stated that they did not have their own land/houses. Thus, the majority of community which migrated to Assam long back from the different parts of the country and are engaged in the Tea Estates are still landless, and without owning their own homes.

(ii) Partial Coverage of Workers for LPG Connection under Ujjwala Scheme

Government of India introduced 'Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY)' with an objective to provide clean cooking fuel (Liquid Petroleum Gas) to the rural and deprived households which were otherwise using traditional fuels for cooking like

⁶⁷ Doloo TE, Monabari TE, Salonah TE, Mijicajan TE.

firewood, coal, cow-dung cakes, etc. Usage of traditional cooking fuels has harmful impact on the health of rural women as well as on the environment. The scheme guidelines included Tea and Ex-Tea Garden Tribes as one of the groups which was to be given preference while selecting beneficiaries.

In Assam, the scheme was launched on 13 May 2017. It was seen in audit that out of 590 workers surveyed only 271, or 46 *per cent* of the workers, had received gas connection under Ujjawala despite being priority beneficiaries as per the scheme guidelines. The workers who did not receive benefits of *Ujjawala* scheme stated that they did not submit the application for the same. It showed that the beneficiaries were unaware about the benefits of the scheme and the departments also failed to bring all the household of the tea garden tribes under coverage of the scheme.

(iii) Health Card of Tea Garden workers

- a) **Atal Amrit Abhiyan (AAA):** Atal Amrit Abhiyan is a health insurance scheme of Government of Assam launched in December 2016. Under the scheme, Government of Assam provides insurance coverage of up to ₹ two lakh per year to each family with income of less than ₹ 1.2 lakhs for 12 selected diseases.
- b) **Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY):** Government of India had launched PMJAY scheme on 23 September 2018, under which, cashless health cover of ₹ five lakh is available per family per year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalisation. The households included are based on the deprivation and occupational criteria of Socio-Economic Caste Census 2011 (SECC 2011).

In audit, 267 workers, out of 590 stated that they had Atal Amrit Health card and another 181 workers stated that they had a health card, but they could not specify the exact type of the card. Remaining 142 workers did not have any type of health card. None of the workers confirmed about the availability of PM-JAY card. Further, those workers in possession of AAA health cards had never obtained treatments utilising the cards.

Thus, non-availability of PM-JAY health cards, and non-utilisation of the available AAA health cards showed lack of awareness of the health insurance facilities available to them, and the inadequacy of outreach by Health Department and TTWD responsible in addressing this crucial information gap.